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Mardi
17 avril 2018

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 April 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 avril 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCESS TO CONSUMER CREDIT
REPORTS AND ELEVATOR
AVAILABILITY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ACCÈS AU RAPPORT
DE SOLVABILITÉ DU CONSOMMATEUR
ET LA DISPONIBILITÉ DES ASCENSEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 /
Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Good morning, Speaker. Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to lend my voice to today's debate about Bill 8, Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act. As you know, I put forward a private member's bill, the Reliable Elevators Act, back in 2017. The reason for it was because when I went out to meet with my constituents, the number one issue in my riding amongst all the residents of the high-rises is the availability of their elevators. Sometimes when they go down, they go down for weeks, if not months. You've perhaps seen quite a few articles in the news. I remember there was one about the Aura building where they had multiple elevators out at the same time, for weeks. It was really making it inconvenient. But sometimes it's a public safety issue.

Another building that I visited was a seniors' building. I had a meeting with them and I said, "What's the biggest concern in your residence?" They said, "The biggest problem is we only have two elevators, one of them is a freight elevator, and they're always down." When they go down, if something happens—as you know, in seniors' buildings the residents may have medical conditions and they need to call in the paramedics. They can't get through to their floor using the elevator, and in some incidents they have to carry the equipment up to the floor and bring the senior down. It really extends the time you

need to respond to the emergency situation, so it's a public safety issue.

Sometimes the seniors even have to cancel their medical appointments because they are afraid that they may not be able to get back to their apartment. I think it's a very urgent issue that needs to be looked after.

I came back and I spoke to my team. I said, "Can you guys do some research and see if there are any laws or regulations? Perhaps there is something that's just not being well enforced." They looked into it and, unfortunately, in Ontario right now there isn't anything that speaks to reliability of our elevators.

There is tons of stuff—actually very good laws and regulations—that speak to the safety of our elevators. Our elevators, under the watch of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, are in very good shape. Don't get me wrong; we have the safest elevators and devices in the world because of the oversight of our agency, the TSSA, but there's nothing that speaks to the reliability of our elevators and escalators.

So I asked them, "Let's do some research about previous private members' bills: Was there anything brought forward to this House for consideration to enhance the availability of elevators?" There was absolutely nothing.

When I looked into the requirements for the minimum amount of elevators or devices in a building that's set out by any Ontario legislation, there was one, under the fire code, that I think speaks to accessibility of a building, but it's not enough. It does not address the fact that now there are so many buildings that don't have enough elevator capacity.

What happens is, during peak hours, when residents try to get back home or try to get to work, there will be a lineup in front of the elevator of people trying to get on. To me, this is a part of the transportation that brings them to work and brings them home at the end of the night. We spend billions and billions of dollars on public transit to resolve the congestion issue, to improve transportation across the province. This is something that we don't have to spend lots of money on but that we can fix right away.

So I asked my team to put together something to consider. As you know, I put forward the Reliable Elevators Act, calling for a fixed time frame—14 days to get elevators repaired and seven days if it's a seniors' home or a medical facility—as well as to look at the building code to see if we can make it mandatory for any new builds to submit a capacity study before the building permit is granted. I thought that between these two measures, we could start looking into this problem. I received overwhelming support from the public, from my

residents, from the media, and also from the members of this House. I was very pleased that everybody understood and thought that was necessary for our province.

It's my privilege to represent a downtown riding. Having grown up in a downtown riding, I've seen the changes over the years. I've seen so many tall buildings being built and planned for our neighbourhood. So this is absolutely necessary to be looked at now.

I remember when I first went out and consulted with the sector, there were quite a few stakeholders. Very soon I started to learn that this is actually quite a complicated matter. You have TSSA as the regulator, an arm's-length agency to the government. Then you have the unionized mechanics. Then you have some mechanics who are not unionized. Then you have the independent contractors and the big four elevator companies, represented by NEEA. As well, you have the device owners. Right now, there's a lot of onus put on the device owners when it comes to the safety of these devices.

I've done quite a bit of consultation with as many stakeholder groups as I could, and the responses were very different. Some said, "The industry is good. Unfortunately, we have to order parts from another part of the world. We don't have parts ready to go here. That's what takes time." Some were saying, "No, the situation is terrible." So I was a little puzzled, because there wasn't any centralized data that we could rely on. Everyone was telling their own story.

That's why I came to the conclusion of, let's put forward a time frame of about two weeks. I consulted widely about this time frame. People were saying that, yes, two weeks was a reasonable time. Don't forget, that's 14 days; 14 days is still a lot of anxiety, confusion and frustration that the residents have to go through, waiting for their device to be fixed.

0910

Last summer, if you remember, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, the minister, ordered a study to be completed through TSSA. I had the pleasure of reading the report. I want to thank Justice Cunningham for his hard work. I know it's so hard to gather all the loose data and try to make sense of it. It's very, very difficult. But I remember, when I read the report, that it was a surprise to me. I remember that there were a couple of figures. Elevators in condos: On average, 93% of the time they are available, which means that 7% of the time in a year they are not available. If you do the math, that means that any condo, on average, will have one elevator be out of service 25 days of the year—25 days of the year, any given condo. So this is quite a serious matter.

Also I read—there's an entrapment report. There is some data from the TSSA. It talks about entrapment, because apparently we have to report to the TSSA if there is entrapment happening. There are 26 entrapments in this province on any given day—26 entrapments. Think about this. If we see elevators as a form of transportation—if the TTC has 26 incidents where passengers are stuck in their vehicle, we call that a crisis. So I'm so pleased that there is an action plan being announced by

the ministry. It's as part of the action plan that we have this piece of legislation in front of us to consider.

This bill, if passed, will help to address the availability of elevators in multi-storey residences and long-term-care and retirement homes. The proposed amendments to the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, would establish a legislative and regulatory framework for elevator availability. We understand that out-of-service elevators are a source of frustration for residents, especially for elderly people and those with disabilities.

We're in a province where we talk about making our buildings and public buildings accessible to all. So I think this piece of legislation is very, very timely. If passed, it would allow the TSSA to start collecting data and centralize data on extensive elevator outages. I think the time is about two days; if they're out two days, they have to be reported to the TSSA. Then, based on that data, the ministry will go as far as looking at setting a time frame for elevator repairs.

This is based on the recommendation put forward by the report done by Justice Cunningham. It is very important to recognize that there is a past history of the Liberal government, our government on this side, doing work on consumer protection. We've done something on gift cards. There used to be an expiry date. Think about this: You spend money to buy a gift card and give it to a friend, and for whatever reason the gift card wasn't used before the expiry date, and it becomes of no value. This is not right. Our government went out and fixed that.

I also remember that, as a service provider, at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services we're making everyday life easier for all residents of Ontario. If you recall, not too long ago, to replace a birth certificate or any sort of certificate, going through the Registrar General would take up to half a year, six months, and it was always the norm. But we said that that wasn't good enough, and the government moved forward to a model where we use current technology to put out a 15-day guarantee: If you don't get your birth certificate within 15 days, it's free. At the time, a lot of people had questions about it, thinking whether or not it's possible. We've proven that that is the new norm.

Through this bill, I think it's going to start a new norm of the elevator industry. I'm just looking at the detail of the bill. It talks about changing the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

If passed, it would create regulation-making authority to collect elevator outage data, ensure information about elevator performance is published so that prospective residents can make better-informed decisions before they rent or buy a home in a multi-storey building, and implement administrative monetary penalties in order to strengthen TSSA's enforcement of elevator safety and maintenance requirements.

I understand why some of the buildings are having trouble with their elevators, because the current regulation, the requirement on the maintenance, doesn't go as far. It's very minimal, in my mind. They only need to do sometimes quarterly, sometimes bi-monthly mainten-

ance. I think making it more frequent will start to avoid some of the outage problems.

It would also create a further standard for elevator repair timelines, as I mentioned before, and designate an appropriate regulator to enforce those standards. It could be a department of the government; it could be part of a stand-alone agency.

An addition to this bill: Our elevator availability action plan would help elevator owners negotiate better maintenance contracts through an education and outreach campaign and improve elevator access for our first responders in case of emergencies. This is so important for residents living in high-rises.

I spent a lot of constituency weeks knocking on doors and talking to residents. In my riding, as you know, Speaker, there are many living in high-rises. They're telling me that they're worried, in case of emergencies, whether or not the paramedics could get to their floor, because sometimes, if there is a fire alarm that triggered all the response, even firefighters are having trouble getting through to their floor.

My understanding is that there is a regulation right now that a universal key has to be made available to first responders, but access to that universal key sometimes is a problem, is a challenge for paramedics, especially. There have been articles talking about residents, that if you live on a certain floor, above a certain height, the survival rate—say, for someone unfortunately having a heart attack—is very, very low. So, improved access for first responders is so important, to ensure that safety is looked after and our first responders can save lives in those situations.

It would also create a new standard for new buildings to ensure they have enough elevators to serve the residents, and address the labour supply of elevator mechanics through consultations to determine options to meet labour market demands. My understanding is that currently there is only one college that delivers education programs for elevator mechanics. There is quite a bit of demand for it. They make good money. They make really good money in this province. There is a shortage. If you ask the people in the industry, they'll tell you that there is a shortage. Sometimes they can't get enough mechanics to go and perform their work. It is very, very important to address the labour supply issue.

When I go out and canvass those buildings and I tell people that there is an action plan in place to address the elevator availability issue in this province, many of them have told me that they have learned this through the media. I think that there is a good reporter, Colin Perkel, who has been on this file for more than two years. I've read many, many articles that he put forward, keeping this issue top of mind for many government officials.

So, the public is well educated about this issue. They understand the changes coming, they understand that it is necessary, and they do feel that this is the right thing to do. They tell me that in today's Ontario, with so many high-rises being built, it is absolutely necessary for the government to act on their behalf, to make sure their rights and their livelihood are looked after.

0920

Again, elevators are a form of transportation. We can improve public transit, and we can improve the condition of roads and build as many roads and bridges as needed to support our economic growth. But at the end of the day, if someone has to wait in front of the elevator for 10, 15 or 20 minutes—you've seen those lineups in front of elevators—it is very frustrating.

People sometimes don't consider elevators as a form of transportation. They think they enter the lobby and they're home, but that's not true. When they open the door and they enter their apartment, that's their home.

The whole point of this bill is looking at things that some may consider small but are very, very critical, to improve the quality of life of our residents in this province.

I have had the pleasure of serving my residents for the last four years. I try my best to find things that our government can do, whether they're big or small, that will improve the quality of their life not just for now but for many, many years to come.

Given today's growth that we've seen in urban settings, I think this bill is absolutely needed. I urge all members of this House to support Bill 8. Let's get this through this spring, to provide the support for residents of all high-rises.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this again. I spoke about it a fair bit yesterday.

I think what we have really been talking about here is to do things in balance, and to ensure that the industry is engaged and that we actually have the ability.

There was talk in one of the earlier iterations of a very short, condensed time period and then going after fines. Well, if people can't find the parts, if they can't find the workers because there has been a shortage and there are limited technicians out there, then it's very challenging to penalize, obviously, the owner of the building, who I'm sure wants it to be safe as well. So we've got to find a balance here.

Obviously, from a safety perspective, everyone is willing to support this type of legislation. We want good elevators. Certainly, in this building, with the age of it, there are challenges. They're trying to maintain it as an original building, but it becomes a problem with parts. It becomes a problem with being able to manufacture, and sometimes you have to machine the actual parts to keep it running. There are the realities of that.

One of the biggest concerns I have is, again, that they're going on the punitive mindset. This government has done this for many, many years, in regard to being punitive and going out with a mentality of "we're just going to fine, fine, fine everybody." They changed the legislation to whitewash across all people who aren't even impacting it in a negative way. Go after the people who really set it up.

The biggest concern that we keep hearing out in the community is actually the lack of technicians. If they hadn't shut down so many of our high-skills majors

programs in our province and shut down 600 schools—which, again, impacts kids coming through those types of programs—we would have more technicians to be able to have this, and then you would not have the backlogs for as long as you have.

At the end of the day, I'd say I commend the person for coming out.

We talked as well yesterday about consumer protection. I talked at length, in my 20 minutes, about the consumer protection by a government that doesn't come out and say things like, "We're going to sell Hydro One." That wasn't protecting the consumer.

When they spend billions of dollars, when they borrow \$25 billion, Mr. Speaker, and put it on the backs of our kids, who are sitting in front of you, our pages, that's not consumer protection. When they spend \$8 billion and waste a billion dollars on gas plants, that's not consumer protection.

There are some good things in this bill, but there are lots of other things that we need to be talking about and debating in this House as well.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening to the member from Trinity–Spadina in his 20 minutes on Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

It's interesting. I said, even when I was reviewing the legislation, that the maintenance schedule for our elevators in our current buildings was not stringent enough. He went to some effort to make the point about the safety of the current elevators in the province of Ontario. However, maintaining that current stock is going to be in question as it's defined in this bill, because we actually don't have the skilled trades workers to actually maintain the stock that we have. This was debated at length yesterday. It's unfortunate because I think everyone agrees that improving the maintenance schedule for the current stock of elevators in Ontario is needed and it should be legislated, because it is a safety issue, but then having the other side, the compliance of that schedule, is actually going to be very difficult.

I hope that this prompts a broader discussion of the importance of the skilled trades in Ontario and the value of ensuring that in the public education system, there is this streaming towards skilled trades. We need those jobs and, as I pointed out yesterday, they are good jobs. They are good jobs to have; they're well paid. Obviously when you improve the maintenance schedule per Bill 8, those jobs are going to be more plentiful.

As we plan for our cities differently—in Waterloo region, the student residences are going up in a very intense, dense way as per the good-places-to-grow legislation, and we need those elevators to work because it will be an accessibility issue, an issue of compliance with the AODA and an issue of safety for emergency workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I just want to again send out appreciation to the member from Trinity–Spadina for taking on this issue, which isn't very sexy and it's not on the front pages of the papers, but hundreds of thousands of people have to get to and from work, the store, up and down these elevators every day, three, four times a day—hundreds of thousands of people. If those elevators aren't working, seniors can't get to doctors' appointments and people can't get to work. This is a hidden transportation issue.

I really think he spent a lot of blood, sweat and tears on this. It's typical of the work that many MPPs do that doesn't get the appreciation it deserves. It is really something that, sure, is not going to make Power and Politics, but it really means a lot to ordinary folks. So I want to commend him, and other MPPs who take on these kinds of battles, and give a little praise.

I know the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked about protecting consumers. How dare he talk about protecting consumers when his party gave away the 407 built by the taxpayers? They gave it away to their Spanish friends so that every day consumers drive on the 407, they send money to Spain, to a consortium that bought that asset for \$3 billion. It's worth about \$30 billion right now. They talk about protecting consumers? Every time a consumer goes on the 407, that cheque goes to their Spanish friends. Shame on you Conservatives for selling off the 407 again; every day you sold it off.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate today on this particular bill, Bill 8. For those of you watching, Bill 8 is called the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act, 2018.

I just want to recap quickly. This particular bill amends the Technical Standards and Safety Act to add the power to impose administrative monetary penalties and amends the TSSA act to give the minister powers to define elevator reliability criteria and standards. Again, it's taking powers behind closed doors. It's the MO of this particular government that they take things out of the public domain and do everything behind closed doors, and look at the mess that we've gotten into over the last 15 years or so.

Finally, this bill amends the Consumer Reporting Act to mandate free credit score disclosure, quick and free disclosure of consumers' credit files by the credit reporting agencies, and creates ministerial power, again, to limit what can be used to determine a creditor's score.

I have to share with you, Speaker, that there are a few flags here. Of course we all want safe and reliable elevators; that's not the part in question. But time and time again—we heard it from the good member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and he echoes a message that we've heard time and time again from our critic from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: The TSSA is actually a perfect example of burdensome red tape with penalties attached that actually drag down our small businesses and our economy.

0930

Let's walk through some of the administrative penalties that the TSSA will acquire through this particular act. The most important thing is that the TSSA is not accountable to anyone or to stakeholders. Stakeholders, in particular, have expressed frustration with its practices for years. So why are we giving them more power? Again, it's the MO of this government to do things behind closed doors, and it's got to stop.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Trinity–Spadina for final comment.

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Kitchener–Waterloo, Eglinton–Lawrence and Huron–Bruce for providing their response to my debate.

I want to remind everyone: The former PC government has done quite a bit of work on the TSSA. In fact, I think they were the driving force on the TSSA. So hearing the member from Huron–Bruce talking about the TSSA adding red tape—public safety is not red tape. We remember the record that they had when they were in government. We are reminded of the Walkerton tragedy. Those were the direct result of cutting scrutiny, public safety and inspection resources. That is important.

Now we're in this House talking about public safety issues for high-rise residents, and I hear the Conservative colleagues saying, "It's just red tape. You don't need to add more stuff on this." It's absolutely unacceptable. I cannot accept this notion.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I agree with you: The maintenance schedule could be improved. But I remember the maintenance schedule was amended under the previous Conservative government. It used to be a lot more frequent to perform that maintenance as required. Now we have an opportunity to fix it.

Now, I do believe that they shouldn't be legislated; they should be regulated. Why? Because as the technology improves, we have to stay flexible, to stay nimble enough to make sure we put in regulation that addresses the current state.

I say to my Conservative friends, please reconsider. This is about public safety; it's not about the politics you try in this House.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Dufferin–Caledon to discuss Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

The key part of this proposed legislation is the creation of the standards and timelines for the repairing of elevators in the province of Ontario—seems reasonable. However, that said, I understand the importance of access to elevators to those individuals who choose to live in high-rise apartments and condominiums. We all know that we are building up; we are living up; we are moving up. Elderly individuals living with disabilities are particularly prone to issues when we have elevators go down. For many people, particularly in the core of our

cities, just taking the stairs is not an option. For many, even one flight of stairs is a barrier for them to accessing a business or a service or just visiting friends and family.

There is no better building to exhibit the amount of out-of-order elevators than the building we are currently standing in: Queen's Park.

I have to tell you a bit of a story, Speaker. At Queen's Park, when the building was opened many, many, many decades ago, they of course made it available to the public. The novelty of the building, as beautiful as it is—the architecture, and lots of craftsmanship went into the making of Queen's Park—the novelty and the interest surrounded the elevators, because when Queen's Park opened, we were one of the first public buildings in the province of Ontario that had elevators.

During those very early days where the public was welcomed to tour their new Parliament buildings, the elevators broke down. In fact, if you go to certain elevators in Queen's Park, you can actually see the installation number on the interior of the elevator. You will see installation numbers that are 04, 05, 06 and 07, which means they were the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh elevators installed in the province of Ontario. It's a neat little historical fact, but what I find most interesting is the fact that when we made the building open to the public, it was the elevators that broke down first, and it was because they were the novelty ride of the day. Anyway, I digress.

Several years ago, a member of my staff was actually stuck in an elevator here in this building for over an hour and a half, so I have some appreciation and understanding of the stress and concern that happens when elevators break down.

Okay, sorry. I want to get back to Bill 8. The history lesson got me off track.

I think it's important to highlight and thank Justice Cunningham. The TSSA Elevator Availability Study, which was completed less than a year ago, in December 2017, is an important background and base document for our conversations surrounding Bill 8. We must always ensure that our legislation that we propose and bring forward here has some basis of fact, has some background and material that are critical to making sure we make the right decisions. This elevator availability study is an important piece of what Bill 8 should be accomplishing.

According to the Cunningham report prepared for the Technical Standards and Safety Authority—or the TSSA, as it's known—there are approximately 655,000 elevator trips taken in nearly 20,000 elevators a day in the province of Ontario. So I understand and appreciate the reasoning behind this legislation. Ensuring accessibility is absolutely crucial for thousands of Ontarians who are trying to live, work and play in the province of Ontario.

That said, while I understand the concerns surrounding the timelines of repairs to elevators, I am hearing from the industry that they are concerned that providing prescriptive timelines for repairs looks good on paper but is complex, if not impossible, to actually accomplish. For

instance, there is an issue of finding parts for broken elevators from a company which no longer exists. Because these companies are out of business, finding spare parts for these elevators can be difficult, and in fact, in many cases, the repair companies are having to go back and machine certain repair parts to make sure that the elevators can be repaired. This is not a fast turnaround. This is not going on UPS and dialling up and calling for a part that's sitting in a factory somewhere. This has to be tooled and machine-designed.

There is a concern that if there are potential penalties for companies that do not repair an elevator within a specific set amount of time, they might simply refuse to sign on or repair elevators that are old or have uncommon parts. So while it makes absolute sense for us to ensure that elevators are fixed promptly, we have to be cognizant of the reality that some elevator problems require specialized and, indeed, complex work.

This holds particularly true in tall buildings. Again, the National Elevator and Escalator Association said that for buildings of 50 storeys or higher, this requires special—and despite prescriptive measures from the government on timelines, there may not be enough supply of technicians for such tall skyscrapers to fulfill those timelines.

This taps back into something that has already been raised in the debate today, and that is, we need to make sure we have the skilled trades people available who are able to do this type of work.

Despite the concerns of the industry about an overly prescriptive piece of legislation, they have been absolutely clear to me that they accept the Cunningham report for the TSSA and its call for greater accessibility. The Cunningham report was initiated by a debate by the MPP from Trinity–Spadina's private member's bill, the Reliable Elevators Act.

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To quote Cunningham's report, "To respond to emerging concerns associated with elevator availability and the lack of data on the topic, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority ... in partnership with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services ... and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs ... have engaged retired Superior Court Justice Douglas Cunningham to author this independent report."

The 77-page report outlines the ongoing pressures and issues with elevator availability and accessibility in Ontario and provides recommendations on how to move forward. Particularly interesting was the discussion surrounding the driving factors of availability, such as the information asymmetry and rigid contract terms in owner-contractor relationships, and insufficient labour capacity.

It also presented a picture of the state of elevator availability across Ontario. Members of the National Elevator and Escalator Association, which make up about 75% of Ontario's market, achieved 99% time operation last year. Meanwhile, estimates from the TSSA data found that the average in institutional buildings across

Ontario is 97%, or approximately 10 days, non-operational. I get it. I know that 97% is not 100%. I know that if you're living in a building or trying to access a building that is in that 3%, it's very frustrating and can be incredibly challenging. However, 97% is not something that we should be ashamed of.

The report also made clear that there are numerous organizations already engaged in elevator availability in Ontario, from the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, which deals with issues of licences for elevators, mechanic licences and incident investigations, to municipalities, who may have enforcement power with their building codes.

The report also talked about the lack of comprehensive data which discusses the state of availability of elevators. A particularly important line from the report reads: "Policymakers and building users need robust data on the state of availability to inform policy and regulation going forward. In general, the evidence gathered to date seems to indicate that non-availability is an issue in specific circumstances and due to a broad range of contributing factors."

I am concerned, given this passage from a report released less than five months ago, that there is not a clear picture in terms of the reality of elevator availability in the province of Ontario to shape how policy is formulated here.

If the government plans on pushing this legislation through before the election—and I'm going to digress slightly and suggest that the minister of government and consumer regulations, with whom Bill 8 lies, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, is bringing forward this legislation. As recently as a couple of weeks ago, she announced that she will not be seeking re-election. I wish her well in her next stage, but I hope that we are not bringing Bill 8 forward and rushing it because we want to have a check mark or a give-me to a retiring member of the Legislature. I hope that's not the motivation and the momentum to moving Bill 8 forward.

I hope that we have done the due diligence necessary to make sure that when Bill 8 ultimately receives royal assent, we've done the research, the prep, to make sure that it is a good piece of legislation. Let's not rush it through and find out in six months or a year that what we were attempting to do with Bill 8 was not practical or possible and that we have to reopen the legislation. I think we owe it to our constituents to do a better job than that.

If the government plans on pushing this legislation through before the election, it seems that it would be passing legislation without the information that the Technical Standards and Safety Authority expert report believed was necessary before formalizing policy was brought forward. To be clear, the TSSA is saying that they need to complete their report before formalizing the policy needed to make sure Bill 8 is accurate.

The Cunningham report also discussed whether the TSSA should have a role in the management of elevator availability in Ontario. Bill 8 empowers the TSSA, as the

assessor, to impose administrative penalties for those that contravene the elevator availability requirements established by the act. Crucially, the Cunningham report noted there is no clear link between non-availability and a risk to safety, and that expanding the availability issue to be under the TSSA's purview could potentially create a "perceived conflict" of interest "if directed to enforce safety and availability."

Again, we asked Justice Cunningham to bring forward a report. He, in his report, talks about his concerns of how the TSSA should be involved, in what form they should be involved and whether there is an oversight or perceived conflict position there. In the end, Cunningham said the following:

"I understand concerns that the safety and availability mandates may pose a conflict for TSSA inspectors, requiring them to choose between keeping an unsafe elevator out of service or returning it to service to restore accessibility (through availability).... If safety is assumed to take priority over availability in all circumstances, this should not be an insurmountable problem."

If I can interpret what Justice Cunningham has said, it is to make sure that safety is always the first priority and availability becomes the second priority. They cannot be equal; safety must override all other considerations.

Naturally, any discussion of giving the TSSA more power than we should be, considering the TSSA's track record—the TSSA is not accountable to anyone and many people have expressed frustration with its practices for years. Some of these concerns were brought forward by my colleagues who have discussed this legislation previously.

Bill 8 gives the TSSA the power to impose stiff monetary penalties, and the appeals against those penalties are likely to be given to the TSSA by regulation. They are, in effect, making the TSSA the judge and the jury. That's not how we do things in Ontario. You always must have the right of appeal. If you're going back to appeal something directly to the person who has laid the charge or the fine in the first place, we have a problem with Bill 8.

There are somewhat similar concerns taking place with the involvement of the TSSA from the Cunningham report. That is, the TSSA may be in a conflict, given their involvement at every stage in the process of elevator regulation. In the end, we can say that it is clear that we need to do everything we can to ensure that those in vulnerable populations are able to access services and their residences with elevators.

However, there is a complexity on how this will work on the ground. There needs to be a collaborative approach between the government, the industry, property owners and residents to ensure that the timelines and requirements created by this legislation are reasonable and doable.

The potential concerns about creating unattainable timelines and requirements were outlined in the Cunningham report. To again quote from the report, "the potential for debate around what is ... 'reasonable' ... runs

the risk of invalidating the requirement." The report goes further and says, "Many expressed concern that repair timelines might prompt contractors to refuse service or significantly increase charges for older equipment as the device might require more time to repair.... We also heard that elevator repair times could actually increase with prescriptive timelines, as contractors could prioritize repairs to meet the timeline rather than the actual, potentially shorter, time needed for repair. All of this might result in additional costs for building owners and, potentially, residents. Finally, the development and negotiation of appropriate contract terms to meet new requirements could result in significant additional cost to owners and, in turn, building users."

Again, Speaker, I am not an expert on elevator repair; I am quoting directly from the Cunningham report.

Instead of calling for specific timelines as Bill 8 does, the Cunningham report recommended a plan of action which records all outages that last over 48 hours and where 50% of elevators in a building are unavailable. The report believes that the 48-hour timeline is reasonable because, "Many of the contracts we reviewed specify a 24-hour response time for non-emergency calls. A 48-hour window would give contractors an additional 24 hours to return the device to service, the average time for 98% of devices" already being repaired today.

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The report concludes that this reporting requirement would "generate data on prolonged outages" and troublesome buildings and devices. Most importantly, the Cunningham report says that this is "workable for the contracting industry."

So there is concern that the expert report indicates that there's not enough data currently to determine the state of the issue of elevator availability, and that same expert report raises concerns about having strict timelines. That said, despite the concerns, it is clear that we need to take action because we know that elderly and disabled individuals need to have access to their residences, to government services and to businesses. They deserve equal access. Simply put, reducing barriers to people is a good thing.

The discussion around accessibility reminds me of the ongoing concern regarding the progress this government has made implementing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act passed the Legislature unanimously in 2005. That's 13 years ago. It required the Ontario government to become fully accessible to individuals with disabilities by 2015. The AODA, or Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, makes it clear that Ontario is not on schedule to meet this legislative requirement. To quote from the 2014 AODA review, "The novelty of the regime has also meant that the pace of change has been slower than many hoped. Although the AODA overall continues to be positively viewed—including by people with disabilities—the rate of progress is a widespread source of concern."

The AODA review went on to say, "Perhaps the most overwhelming number of concerns with barriers were

those raised about the built environment, specifically access to buildings and public spaces.”

Speaker, the point is that, yes, we need to do something to make sure that people have access to their homes, to their places of business, and the AODA actually mentions elevators several times, but that just reinforces to me that we have to make sure we do this right. We can't impose unrealistic and unattainable deadlines and assume, by putting in a piece of legislation, it's going to happen. Life doesn't work like that. We need to take the experts, such as the Cunningham report, study it thoroughly and make sure we get this right, because it's important to all of us.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening to the member from Dufferin–Caledon, and I still find it very interesting, after being here for almost six years, how differently we see legislation. The member feels that this piece of legislation is being pushed through and rushed through, and she did reference the minister and the fact that the minister has announced that she won't be running. I too want to extend my best wishes to the minister as she leaves this place.

That said, there's a reason why this legislation is before us. It has taken a long time for it to come to the floor of the Legislature—through two private members' bills already. One of the shocking things that we've learned is that contained within this legislation is now a more prescriptive maintenance schedule. Many people in the province of Ontario would be surprised that elevator inspections and maintenance were so lax for 15 years—15 years of this government. So I think that there is a call for us to ensure that safety is at the centre of the decision-making that happens here.

That said, I agree with her on the other side that it's going to be hard to uphold this legislation. Just because you say it must be so does not necessarily mean it will happen. The missing part of this legislation is the skilled workforce to ensure that the maintenance of these elevators happens. This is a very real issue in the province of Ontario, and it's because our education system has not recognized that as we grow as a province and as the workforce changes, the education system needs to adapt to uphold and encourage students to enter this guild work—skilled trades as a viable economic option. So I share her concerns that we won't be able to actually meet the objectives of this legislation.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm pleased to stand and speak about this bill. I would like to commend not only the minister, who we are very sorry to be losing—she has done a wonderful job—but also my seatmate, the member from Trinity–Spadina, who has worked so hard on this. He has talked to so many people about this and has done a lot of research and investigation into this.

The other thing I wanted to say was that, when you think about it, the most important people that this legisla-

tion—both the credit reporting and the elevator availability have to do with seniors who sell their homes and move into condos, hoping to have a less stressful life in regard to maintenance and getting the things done that they need to get done each day. This bill, particularly in regard to the availability of elevators, is very important for them, not only for getting their groceries or being able to get in and out of their condos in the condo building, but also in regard to health care.

As we get older—and we're seniors too—there are more chances of having a health crisis. If you're on the 44th floor of a condo and have a heart attack, and the elevator has been out for two days or four days or six days, your chances of surviving that heart attack are very, very low. Time is muscle, as the cardiologists say, and the faster you get to treatment, the more chance you have of surviving.

The other thing that I need to talk about—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Oh, sorry. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's all right. Thank you very much.

Further questions and comments? The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that warm welcome.

The position that we are taking is that we support this piece of legislation—however, with a caveat: The legislation needs some tweaking. There is a little bit better that we can do, and we believe that there's room for improvement. While it's important, with respect to the general pith and substance, if you will, of this legislation in terms of improving elevator services, which we agree with, there is a necessity to improve this. We hope that in the committee process, we'll be able to make some amendments to see this legislation be better at resolving some of the issues with respect to access to elevators.

Furthermore, one of the greatest difficulties we find with this piece of legislation is that the level of oversight of the TSSA just isn't present. It's giving the TSSA a level of autonomy and a lack of oversight—that it simply doesn't exist. We believe that providing that level of autonomy is problematic. There need to be checks and balances. There needs to be a way to ensure that we can monitor these actions and not simply provide *carte blanche*, so to speak, to the TSSA under these circumstances.

In summary, while we support the general intent of the legislation and find it to be positive, we hope that through the committee process we'll be able to resolve some of these issues and work together to find a happy medium through amendments in the committee process, and then we would be prepared to support this legislation.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Bill 8 is a two-part bill. The first part, of course, talks about the Consumer Reporting Act, and the second part is the Technical Standards and Safety Act. When the minister did her hour

lead, she really focused, at that time, on the Consumer Reporting Act.

One of the important pieces that we're addressing in this legislation is the consumer scores. A lot of times, what happens is that these scores are released to businesses, to the detriment of consumers. Or there's identify theft: People take your identity and then they rack up credit cards and they ruin your consumer reporting scores. Then you have to go back and make that right, and it's nearly impossible. So, one of the good things in that part of the bill is that a consumer can initiate it to be frozen. They can freeze their consumer reporting. That's a good thing in the bill.

The other thing we're talking about today is, of course, elevators and how important safety is for elevators. I'm the critic for seniors, and I'm also the long-term-care critic. We know that seniors need to have accessibility. Elevators are part of getting them to their homes. It's a form of transportation, if you will, inside their buildings. So we have to make sure that that keeps happening, so that seniors are able to be mobile in their lifestyle.

When we heard from the member from Dufferin-Caledon, she talked about the Cunningham report and how there are recommendations in there to strengthen this bill. Our concern, on this side of the House, is that the Legislature is going to rise very shortly. It's good that this bill is up here for debate, but I have concerns about whether or not it will actually get to the process of going through committee and consultations. I have my doubts about that.

It's a good first step that we're talking about it, but we need to get legislation enacted at some point in time, to protect our seniors from the elevator issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Dufferin-Caledon for final comment.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The member from London is absolutely correct: I focused exclusively on the elevator repair portion of Bill 8. I am confident that our critic, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, will spend an equal amount of time on the consumer protection component of the credit reports when he does his debate in the coming days.

I still believe that you cannot pass legislation, talking about what you want it to be, if you haven't actually spoken to the experts and reviewed the current situation, to prove that you can. The interest of stretch goals on the path of the government side cannot continue when we are starting to debate legislation and enacting legislation. Let's actually do the due diligence. Let's talk to the experts. Let's study the reports that are already out there, and make sure that what is being suggested under Bill 8 can actually happen in the province of Ontario.

I go back to the recurring theme of "I don't see that" with Bill 8. I see a lot of interest in how people want it to be. Nobody has an issue with an elevator they want working in their home or in their business. Nobody has an issue with that. What we have an issue with is, can you do it in the current situation, with the numbers in the

skilled-labour workforce that we have and the challenges that we have? Please keep that in mind when we're studying Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, no further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

Hon. Michael Chan: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further business, the House is now recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today, we have some special guests in the Speaker's gallery. I'll mention the family for the tribute later, but first I'll introduce former members. We have:

—Mr. David Warner, Speaker in the 35th Parliament and chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians;

—John Parker, MPP for York East during the 36th Parliament;

—David Turnbull, MPP for York Mills during the 35th and 36th Parliaments and MPP for Don Valley West during the 37th Parliament;

—Steve Mahoney, MPP for Mississauga West during the 34th and 35th Parliaments;

—Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments;

—Sandra Papatello, MPP for Windsor-Sandwich during the 36th Parliament and MPP for Windsor West during the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments.

And I'm sure somebody would always want to meet this individual: Gloria Richards.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Her importance to Speakers cannot be understated.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Émilie Hominuk is the page captain today, and her grandparents are from the riding of Peterborough. In the members' east gallery, I'd like to introduce Janet O'Rourke, John O'Rourke and her cousin Kristina Johnson. We'll give them a warm Queen's Park welcome today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Tim, Nancy and Kelly Morgan from my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome friends from my riding of Essex: Richard Wyma, who is the

general manager of the Essex Region Conservation Authority; and Rick Fryer, who is the chair of the Essex Region Conservation Authority board. They're here today for the conservation authority lobby day. We want to welcome them.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm happy to welcome the members from Conservation Ontario today—as we said, it's Conservation Ontario day at Queen's Park: Don MacIver, the chair; Mark Burnham, the vice-chair; Lin Gibson; Geoff Dawe; Dick Hibma, the outgoing chair after 12 years; and Kim Gavine, who is the general manager.

Let's not forget that everyone is welcome at the reception following question period in rooms 228 and 230.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Ashley Collins, Carol Vigneau and Victoria Vigneau, who are here today. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I see in the Speaker's gallery two distinguished planners in Ontario who, between them, helped plan a number of our local municipalities: Ed Sajecki and Barry Morrison. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to introduce Cathy Little, Sonya Skinner and Dick Hibma from the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. A special shout-out to Dick for his 20 years that he was just acknowledged for in our great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Thanks for all you do.

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce Shaminder Dhillon, the mother of one of our pages here and, of course, the wife of our colleague from Brampton West.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to welcome Mary Alberti, CEO of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. She is joined by George Bilof from the society's board of directors. They're in the members' gallery, and I would like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome two hard-working staff from the Liberal Caucus Service Bureau. It's their first time in question period. Please welcome Swaraj Mann and Warda Nasir to question period.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Chris Darling, who is at Queen's Park today with Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. Welcome.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I forgot to welcome Bonnie Fox as well, who is here from Conservation Ontario, and the ministry staff who have been working on the memorandum of agreement with Conservation Ontario. Welcome.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of my seatmate, the MPP for Brampton West, and on behalf of page captain Harsaajan Dhillon, I'd like to welcome his mom, who has already been recognized—and a good family friend of ours—Shaminder Dhillon, who will be in the members' gallery this morning.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'm not sure if he has been introduced, but I wanted to introduce the mayor of Newmarket, Mayor Geoff Dawe, who is here, I suspect, in his

role as chair of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. Welcome, Mayor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Point of order, the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I think I missed it, but when you were doing the introductions of the former parliamentarians in the audience, I did not have an opportunity to stand up and give them a round of applause. I would ask us all to stand up and applaud the people who are here today.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a rather creative point of order. I've never heard one like that before. That's wonderful.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Chris Ballard: I need to correct my record, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, I haven't had enough coffee today. The mayor of Aurora is here. Welcome. I'm so sorry. That is an unbelievable faux pas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have the right to correct their record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For the tribute, would all members please join me in welcoming the family and friends of the late Chris Stockwell, MPP for Etobicoke West during the 35th and 36th Parliaments, and MPP for Etobicoke Centre during the 37th Parliament, and Speaker in the 36th Parliament, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: his daughter, Victoria Stockwell; his son, Kale Stockwell, and his wife, Sarah O'Connor; his former spouse and the mother of Victoria and Kale, Charlene Thornley; his nieces Adrienne Stockwell and Taylor Knott; and many, many friends and former colleagues.

Welcome.

CHRIS STOCKWELL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament from Etobicoke Centre, Mr. Chris Stockwell, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my privilege to rise on behalf of Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats to pay our respects to Chris Stockwell.

On paper, Chris's political career is notable, even when viewed in short strokes—independent, ambitious young man wins a seat on municipal council, then goes on to a career as MPP, Speaker of the House and cabinet

minister. Even amidst the controversy that accompanied the end of his career, Stockwell was a valued member of the PC caucus and drew the begrudging respect of his colleagues across the aisle, as a capable and worthy adversary who gave as good as he got. But as impressive as those accomplishments are, they only tell a very small part of the story.

While only a small number of Ontarians have had the privilege of sitting in these benches, Chris is among a handful of MPPs whose service stretched beyond the boundaries of riding and party.

I never had the chance of serving with Chris, but it's clear from the research that he was a defining presence of life at Queen's Park for his generation in a way that few others ever have been, which is no small feat when you consider that he never held the office of Premier or party leader during the course of his career.

Chris's acerbic wit was a hallmark of his tenure as an MPP. Often, even the targets of his barbs couldn't help but laugh at his well-timed heckles as he established himself in the early stages of his time at the assembly.

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As one of the few rookie PC MPPs to win a seat in the NDP sweep in 1990, it was obvious that Chris knew how to handle a challenge; but his decision to run for Speaker in 1996 after being left out of Mike Harris's cabinet is perhaps the defining moment of his political career. It was no secret that Stockwell did not have the support of the Premier in his bid for Speaker, but his relationships with both his PC seatmates and other MPPs helped him win the position, and he would go on to leave his mark on the world in more ways than one. In the chair, Stockwell's notable rulings against his own party further earned him the respect of his colleagues across the aisle, largely on the basis of his ability to partner his fierce partisanship with an authentic appreciation for the values and traditions of the assembly.

Speaker, it's clear that Chris very much enjoyed the pageantry of the Speaker's job, as I have heard stories of how he made dramatic motions with his robe and sat regally perched in the Speaker's chair like a king on the throne.

Chris's impact on Queen's Park wasn't limited to his fellow MPPs. Undoubtedly, the Clerks-at-the-Table have a few of their own Stockwell stories—in fact, probably too many to count and maybe some that they shouldn't share. And because of his way with words, he fostered a special relationship with the press gallery of his day. However, it was his inclusion of his family into this role that would leave a unique imprint on the office. Actually, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh just told me a story about how Chris's kids used to play ball hockey in the hallways. As a Gretzky, I can certainly appreciate them wanting to play hockey anywhere.

During his time as Speaker, Stockwell's children were a fixture at Queen's Park and continue to be so in perpetuity, as Chris made the point of including their presence in his official portrait, which commemorates his service. While we remember Chris for his contributions to public

life, it was his commitment to his family that resonated most.

Today we are joined by members of Chris's family in the Speaker's gallery. Chris may have been the name on the ballot and the face in the public eye, but it's clear that you, his family, were very much a part of his journey and essential to his success. I want to thank you for sharing Chris with the people of Ontario.

Applause.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I wasn't done yet.

Although Chris left Queen's Park in 2003, he never left politics. In the words of his obituary, he "was never far away from the pulse of politics, working as a political adviser, radio commentator and consultant on all things political." As always, he carried the distinctive charisma and presence that made him stand out as an MPP.

In closing, I look forward to the tributes by the members—I believe the member from St. Catharines is going to speak and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, as we pay our respects to a great parliamentarian.

Thank you, Chris, for your passion for both this great city and our great province. May you rest in peace.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: This is a very difficult tribute to deal with in the House, because most of what I would like to say cannot be repeated in the kind of company that we have here today.

Chris was very colourful, if I may say, in much of what he had to say and in the choice of words that he would always make. So I wrote down a few words a few minutes ago that I thought would describe him very well: unorthodox, outrageous, irreverent, bombastic, ostentatious, loud, dramatic, incredibly funny, sometimes profane, excitable, intelligent, compassionate, likable—he had an infectious grin, of course—wide-eyed, quick-witted and politically incorrect. There used to be a show on television called *Politically Incorrect*. Stockwell would have been the person who could host that easily, because he was politically incorrect, but in a very nice way.

Yvan Baker, who is the member for Etobicoke, would love to give this tribute because he had the opportunity to attend a wake which some of us would like to have attended and didn't get a chance to. It was held in west-end Toronto just before a holiday weekend. There was a gathering of Chris's friends and admirers on that occasion, and one of them was Yvan Baker. It was very kind of him to permit me to eulogize Chris on this occasion.

There are many stories that you could tell about him, and some that you can't tell. Gloria Richards, who is in the gallery today, could tell many of those stories, because from time to time there might be a gathering in the Speaker's office—this doesn't happen now—that would go well into the morning where matters of mutual interest were discussed, with refreshments provided by the then Speaker, Chris Stockwell. That's the way he was. He could transcend political boundaries and political parties even though he was a strong Conservative.

I read a couple of things about him being a red Tory. I never saw Chris as being a red Tory. I remember one day he said to me—he was talking about the PC youth. He used another word instead of “PC” that I would never use in a chamber of this kind, but he said, “Bradley, you think I’m right-wing; you should see what the PC youth are like.” He did not, as I say, use the word “PC.”

He was prepared to, I think, be flexible on occasion, but always stuck to his principles. He may have been seen as a bit of a red Tory, because he certainly had a streak of compassion and something for the little person in our society. Again, you had to like him even when he was insulting you in a very nice way, always. You had to like Chris because of that.

There are many stories you could tell about him all the time. Some of you know that I am a hockey fan and a sports fan. One day, as we used to do, I called up two of our Speakers—Gary Carr and Chris Stockwell—and said, “Why don’t we go to a playoff hockey game in Buffalo?” So we had to pick up Chris in Etobicoke because he had insisted on being picked up there.

We arrived in Buffalo, and there’s a place called the auditorium club. You couldn’t get in unless you were properly dressed. In other words, blue jeans were not acceptable. You know Stockwell was wearing blue jeans. Only he would have the audacity to say to the maître d’ that it might be nice if one of the waiters’ pants could be provided to Chris so he could enter—not ones they were wearing; don’t worry. In fact, that happened. He was able to get in and enjoy it at that time. We had great conversations on the way.

We did support him, many of us, for Speaker, not just to stick our fingers in Mike Harris’s eyes—although that may have been, back in those days, one of the motivations one might think of—but because we thought he would be truly independent, and he was truly independent. It was an independent streak you don’t often see in politics. Even though he was a partisan, a PC partisan, he certainly showed that degree of independence.

When we had the all-nighter going on here at one time over a major piece of legislation and the House was brought to a standstill, I was sitting on that side of the House—yes, that side of the House on that occasion, as the opposition House leader. I said to him I was worried because we had been up all night. I wanted to go back to the apartment and perhaps get an hour’s sleep or so, but I was worried that Ernie Eves, who was the government House leader at the time, would come back and something would happen and I wouldn’t be there. Stockwell’s answer—and I know Ernie won’t be offended by this—was, “Oh,” he said, “don’t worry about Ernie. He doesn’t get up until 10:30 and his hair won’t be ready until 11:15.” That was vintage Stockwell.

We also knew—and, particularly, I think members of the PC party would know—of the McCoys and the Hatfields, who had their battles. Well, the Fords and the Stockwells had their battles as well. On one particular occasion, Chris emerged victorious to take the nomination over Mr. Ford, who was at that time the sitting

member. It was really a pitched battle. Chris said it was no-holds-barred and he emerged victorious.

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Again, you often hear today how things are hyper-partisan and that they aren’t always as nice as we’d like them to be. But Stockwell, he had that smile. I’m going to use a couple of props that you see in the newspaper. That was Stockwell. He always had that infectious smile on his face, that mischievous grin, when he was really up to something. That made him extremely popular with all of us.

He was not afraid to confront the highest people in the province. When it was announced that he was not going to be a part of the executive council—or the cabinet, as we know it—he did, in a very expressive way, inform Mike Harris what he thought. They said something about F-bombs, and I don’t know what that means, but several were used on that occasion. I think Ted Arnott has a more benign way of saying it, but he did use colourful language to describe why he was annoyed with Mike Harris not making the logical choice of putting Chris Stockwell in cabinet. He was not afraid to insult even the most powerful people.

A reference was made to the 1990 election. This is where you really see something about a person—1990 was not a good year for the Progressive Conservative Party. They finished third. They got about 23% of the vote, yet Stockwell won a seat in that particular election, which was something you didn’t expect. You would have expected that maybe the NDP would have won it, because there was an NDP wave coming on that occasion, but Stockwell turned out to win that particular one.

When I think of him, I’ll always think of him with fondness, as all of us will, whether he was a municipal councillor, an MPP, a Speaker, a cabinet minister or a media darling.

The last thing I want to say, because reference was again made to this: You remember kids when they were kids. I remember the kids when they were kids, and down the hallway, if you looked down the Speaker’s hallway, there always seemed to be a ball hockey game going on at that particular time. You try to envision in your mind these kids, and of course they’re now grown up. He was very, very affectionate towards the family. He wanted to ensure the kids could come down and enjoy the Legislature but not be a nuisance—except when they were playing ball hockey in the hallway; they were a bit of a nuisance then.

There are people who are unforgettable in our lives and certainly in politics. One of the people in this House and another person I thought of was Peter Kormos, whom most of us knew as well. When you think of people like that, they are truly unforgettable. We are very grateful to the family for sharing Chris with us for the period of time they did, and I know the municipal people would say the same thing. He will be remembered forever in our hearts and in our minds and in our memories.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The greatest of parliamentarians, Winston Churchill, speaking about his fellow political colleagues, once said: “We are all worms, but I do believe that I am a glow-worm.”

I remembered that quote when I first heard that our friend Chris Stockwell had passed away on February 10, just over two months ago, far too young and too soon. Chris had that same glow, just like Churchill. It lit up every room he entered, every speech he delivered in this House and every interview that he gave. Like Churchill, Chris was a politician, yes, but he was also one of the most remarkable and able parliamentarians who has ever paraded through these halls.

But enough things Churchillian; we’re here to focus on things Stockwellian.

Chris Stockwell was the embodiment of Etobicoke—its neighbourhoods and its politics. Steve Paikin recently wrote that Chris Stockwell was maybe “the funniest MPP ever.” It’s true; Chris was very, very funny. While serving with him, it once struck me that Chris had the talent to make his living as a stand-up comedian. Later, it struck me: During his time as an MPP, he did make his living as a stand-up comedian.

From 1990 to 1995, during his first term in the Ontario Legislature, he quickly clued in to the potential TV audience tuning in to the then relatively new legislative channel. Our primetime slot soon became around 4:30 or so to 6 p.m., because that was when Chris would take the floor, virtually every day. We could have called it the Chris Stockwell Show: Live and Unplugged, but some days it would have been better called the Chris Stockwell Show: Live and Unglued. It got to the point that the legislative channel’s ratings started to soar because people came to know that Chris would be speaking in the House and they began to plan their afternoons around it. It was an incredible time for this House.

Some of us in the PC caucus, who were modestly used to thinking of ourselves as the natural governing party of Ontario, found it a bit difficult to accept the humbling epithet of third-party status. We were at times frustrated and discouraged, but Chris single-handedly gave us the morale boost when we needed it the most. Energetic, exceedingly quick with a quip, sharp-tongued, sarcastic, dogmatic and a self-styled scrapper with no patience for hypocrisy or anything dull, his contribution in those years made him the class of the class of 1990.

Even though his criticism of Bob Rae’s NDP government made him the darling of the press gallery, I don’t recall his comments in this House as being overly personal. As a matter of fact, even though he deftly, and with precision, skewered them, there was always that grin on his face and that glint in his eye. In my memory, he was never mean-spirited towards our political adversaries—never mean-spirited. It’s something to think about today and remember in the coming weeks.

Of course he also took the time to learn the standing orders assiduously, so that one by one he could break each standing order systematically, which of course he did. That was why he was one of the most unlikely

Speakers this place has ever had. He said that he’d have an easier time as Speaker than most MPPs would because if he was in the chair, he wouldn’t have Chris Stockwell to deal with. Unlikely, yes, but he shone as Speaker—again, that glow.

He came to be recognized as one of the greatest Speakers in the history of the Ontario Legislature. Many of his rulings were precedent-setting, based on his own sense of humour and what was right and what was true as he saw it.

He never lost his impish sense of humour, and I’m convinced sometimes he said bizarre things just to see if anybody was paying attention. One time, shutting down the House at the end of a long legislative day, he said, “This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. tomorrow, according to the clam chowder act.” His office would later get a call from Hansard staff asking if the Speaker had actually said that. His assistant Maxine McGuigan would dutifully confirm that, in fact, yes, Mr. Speaker had said that.

He presided over one of the longest and most protracted legislative impasses, not just in Canadian history but possibly in the history of the Commonwealth. Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act, was intended to amalgamate Toronto and create the megacity, as the media called it, to drive greater efficiency and accountability and save money for taxpayers. The bill was very controversial at the time and apparently even inspired an activist or two to become involved in politics, one of whom became the Premier.

When the NDP tabled 13,000 amendments to the bill, we were here, stuck in the Committee of the Whole, voting on the amendments one by one. It went on and on, 24 hours a day, for nine days—one sessional day, April 2, 1997, that actually lasted nine calendar days.

Chris had to deal with many angry points of order from his former caucus colleagues. I remember one particularly heated exchange, and Chris pulled me aside and said, “Tell them they decided to go into the Committee of the Whole, and I can’t get them out.” Of course, he was right.

During that time, Speaker Stockwell, the Clerk and the table staff delivered 22 separate rulings, each one researched and written while everyone battled the exhaustion that accompanied the filibuster. He would tell Deputy Clerk Deb Deller, “Don’t worry. We’re on the side of the angels on this one.” Deb told me that his words had a calming effect on the table staff. I have to say that’s the first time I’ve ever heard anyone say that Chris Stockwell had a calming effect on anybody.

As his tenure as Speaker came to a close, he faced an uphill battle to be nominated by our party to run again in the 1999 election. This was caused by the fact that we’d adopted the Fewer Politicians Act and were dramatically downsizing the Legislature from 130 seats to 103 seats—a net reduction of 27 MPPs—to take effect for the 1999 election.

While it was popular to reduce the number of provincial politicians, of course it also meant that a large num-

ber of our caucus members would have to run against each other in nomination battles, some of which were epic. And what a battle we had in the new riding of Etobicoke Centre. In the end, Chris prevailed and was nominated to run again for our party.

Our government was re-elected a few months later with a second, albeit reduced majority, and Chris was invited to serve in the cabinet as labour minister. This time, they dared not keep him out.

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When the opportunity arose to seek the leadership of our party in 2002, Chris seized it and added colour and flair to the race. While he was not elected party leader the next year, he was appointed government House leader and Minister of the Environment and Energy, three onerous and significant responsibilities. He served in these roles with the same heart and determination to succeed which had been his hallmark going back to his first election to the Etobicoke board of control in 1982 at the age of 25, the youngest member they had ever had, and his term on metro Toronto council in the late 1980s.

We all know that in every political career, there are ups and downs. It's the same for all of us who are privileged to serve in elected public office. We all have qualities which cause us to seek the opportunity to serve, and all of us who are elected have the backing of our constituents. This is what makes our service possible. We all seek to make a contribution, make our communities better, and the province a better place for our efforts. But we're all human and fallible, and we all make mistakes. Nevertheless, we are sustained in the knowledge that every life is measured in its whole. We all seek to ensure that the good we have done outweighs the regrets. We live and we learn; we give and we grow.

Chris Stockwell lived and learned, gave and grew. He was a great man who achieved great things. I considered him a friend and I am honoured to pay tribute to him today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus.

We are joined today by the Stockwell family, whom Chris loved so much and who loved him as a son, husband, brother or dad. We thank them, just as we thank our own families, who sustain us with their love and support, but who also know the sacrifice that must be made in terms of time away from home as we do this job to represent our people.

Our former leader John Tory once said that if you looked up the word "maverick" in Webster's dictionary, you would see a picture of Bill Murdoch beside the definition. I would add that if you look up the word "maverick" in the Oxford dictionary, you will see a picture of Stockwell.

I cannot speak for Chris Stockwell, but I know that just like Winston Churchill, Chris would expect us to stand up and fight for our constituents, stand up and fight for what we believe in, stand up and fight—and fight on principle—whatever the consequences and, if need be, remind those who believe it is only the party leaders that people vote for and who forget that Parliament matters as the collective voice and will of the people—to tell them to think again.

God bless Chris Stockwell.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank the members for their very heartfelt and kind words about Chris.

I do have one little anecdote that I would share, and that is regarding Gloria. She is writing a book, and she is probably going to dedicate a chapter to Chris, and it's the longest one.

Having said that, I also would share with you that I did hear that this hockey game that kept happening in the hallway—there was another member who was in the hallway who kept getting disturbed, and one day this member opened the door, grabbed the hockey ball and shut the door. He stole their ball. I won't say anything about it being Gerry Phillips; I won't say anything. But he did give the ball back.

We do thank you for the gift of Chris. You heard how much we held him in esteem. I can tell you that with only about 43 people in the history of Ontario sitting in this chair, I looked to his guidance and some of his examples of how to be a Speaker. I only wish I could be half as good as Chris was. Thank you very much.

It is therefore time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning. My question this morning is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that a \$6-million salary is acceptable for the CEO of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, we recognize that executive salaries are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries. We remain committed to Hydro One's regulation, accountability and transparency through our government's involvement as a majority shareholder, Mr. Speaker.

That said, we've already seen the chaos created by the man in the White House who's governing by firing people all the time, and that's not working too well. The opposition's gimmick and their leader's gimmick will drag us down into that same mess and actually won't do anything to reduce hydro bills either. The company's rates continue to be regulated by the Ontario Energy Board; the member opposite knows that as well. The Ontario Energy Board is our province's independent regulator which has a mandate to protect the province's electricity consumers, and it continues to deliver on that mandate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The Premier has said in the House on numerous occasions that with the sale of Hydro One—the very unpopular sale of Hydro One—she retained and the government retained the right to remove the board and ultimately remove the CEO. So I'll ask the Premier again: Does she believe that a \$6-million salary for the CEO at Hydro One is acceptable? Yes or no?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, making sure that we reduce rates for the people of Ontario is what this government chose to do, and that's why we brought forward the fair hydro plan that reduced rates by 25%. What they're talking about on that side of the House, what their leader is talking about, won't reduce anything off anyone's bills.

We actually brought forward a plan, which they voted against. They voted against a 25% reduction. That reduction, Mr. Speaker, they then decided to keep in their People's Guarantee, and then immediately—well, not immediately; a couple of months later—they actually tossed that out and are now back as the party that has no plan when it comes to the electricity sector and helping people reduce their rates. We came forward with a plan and reduced those rates by 25%, and we'll continue to advocate for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: The salary that they're paying the CEO at Hydro One is five times the salary of the previous CEO. It's 10 times the salary of his peers in other jurisdictions across Canada; \$500,000 is the average salary for a CEO at a provincially run utility. It astonishes me that the Liberals will stand up in the House and defend this outrageous salary and compensation package of \$6 million for the CEO at Hydro One.

Why won't the Premier stand up in her place, after saying on numerous occasions that she retained the right and the government retained the right to remove the board and the CEO at Hydro One? My question for the Premier is, why are you defending your six-million-dollar man?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's actually this Premier and this government that are defending the people of Ontario from cuts that that party wants to bring in, Mr. Speaker. It is this party that is making sure that we brought forward a plan to reduce bills by 25%. They voted against it.

It is very clear what they will continue to do. They will continue to cut. They will bring forward bumper-sticker slogans, while we will bring substantive policy that actually helps the people of Ontario when it comes to the electricity sector. We've reduced rates by 25% right across the province. Hydro One customers have seen a reduction of anywhere between 35% and 50%, and they have voted against it each and every time. We will put policy over bumper stickers.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Energy this morning. There remain serious questions about the Liberals' very expensive hydro plan that the minister was just talking about. In regard to Ernst and Young, Deloitte and KPMG, the Auditor General has said the sum of all this work does not equate to approval of the accounting of their scheme and the financial books.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Energy: Is the Auditor General correct?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: Families in this province asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills, and that's what we delivered. We made a policy choice—not a bumper-sticker slogan, but a policy choice, Mr. Speaker—to ensure that we continue to have clean, reliable and affordable electricity for the ratepayers of today and the ratepayers of tomorrow. The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base, because that's the logical thing to do.

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Electricity financing should remain within the electricity system, so officials from the Treasury Board, finance, OPG, the IESO and the Ontario Financing Authority, along with external advisers that included EY, KPMG and Deloitte, worked with the accounting related to the fair hydro plan. They, along with the Office of the Provincial Controller, ensured that this plan was in accordance with public sector accounting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: That was a lot of rubbish that really said nothing at all, Mr. Speaker. The fact that the minister can even refer to this very expensive hydro plan as "fair" is unbelievable to the people of Ontario, who are going to be paying record high electricity rates after the next election, because they're doing nothing to address the cost of electricity in Ontario.

The Minister of Energy said this a while ago: "Our plan has been approved by her"—speaking of the Auditor General—"peers at some of Canada's top accounting firms, like KPMG, E and Y, and Deloitte." The Auditor General has said that that's not true. Did the accounting firms really approve the plan? That's what we want to know. To the Minister of Energy: Did those accounting firms really approve the plan?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is again up here criticizing a plan that has reduced electricity rates by 25% on average for all families and as many as half a million small businesses and farms. That plan is saving families in eligible rural and northern communities up to 40% and 50% on their hydro bills. First they voted against it, then they included it in their own platform just a few months back, and now their five-month-old People's Guarantee is absolutely gone and so is any type of plan for the electricity sector.

But let's see, Mr. Speaker, what two world-class accounting firms had to say in their statements regarding rate-regulated accounting. KPMG said, "On the basis of our extensive research, deliberations and an opinion from another major accounting firm, we believe that the accounting policies adopted by IESO are in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards."

Deloitte concluded that regulatory assets and liabilities recognized are appropriate to the applications of these policies—

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: And I'll have more in the supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did spend a moment to try to see if you could go without my warning program put back into place. It took two rounds, but we are in warnings. We're in warnings.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: The Minister of Energy said, "Of course, we've worked with KPMG; we've worked with EY; we've worked with Deloitte.... All of them agree that the accounting standards are accurate." The Auditor General, an independent officer of the Legislature, has said that that's not true. I think anybody looking at this will realize that we can trust the Auditor General a heck of a lot more than we can trust the Liberal government in Ontario.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: Was the minister telling the truth when he said these things?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, KPMG said, "On the basis of our extensive research, deliberations and an opinion from another major accounting firm, we believe that the accounting policies adopted by IESO are in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards."

Deloitte "concluded that any regulatory assets and liabilities recognized through the appropriate application of these policies would meet the criteria for recognition" under the Canadian public sector accounting standards. Additionally, Ernst and Young is OPG's financial auditor and is consulted on an ongoing basis.

Finally, the officials that work within these departments—the Treasury Board, finance, OPG, IESO and the Ontario Financing Authority—worked on the accounting related to the fair hydro plan, and all agreed with the Canadian accounting standards that we've moved forward, Mr. Speaker. So we'll continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It's now a new question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Why does the Premier believe that a mom who wants to go back to work should have to wait till her child is two and a half years old before having access to child care that she can afford?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to say to the leader of the third party that I did read her platform in the dark, early morning, this morning, and as I went through the document, I had my pen, and it was like, "Okay, we're already doing that. That's in our plan. Oh, we disagree there." But overall, there is a lot of common ground between what we're putting forward and what the NDP has put forward. I'm happy to talk about some of the differences, but I think it is very, very clear that the real threat to the caring, supportive province that has been built up over decades is coming from Doug Ford, is coming from the Conservatives.

I'm happy to talk to the leader of the third party about where we differ, Mr. Speaker, because we do differ on a number of points.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, yesterday at the launch of the NDP platform, a young mom with her little baby in arms talked to me about wanting to make sure that her son had access to high-quality, not-for-profit child care so that she could go back to work, confident that her son was getting the best possible child care. But she also talked about how hard it would be to pay for it.

I don't think that that mom or any parent should have to wait two and a half years for child care that they can afford. Why does the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that what the leader of the third party is putting forward will actually reduce choice for people in this province, Mr. Speaker. My grandchildren went to a great little child care in Orangeville. All three of them went there before they got into full-day kindergarten. Under the leader of the third party's plan, that child care would not be funded.

I believe that parents need to have choices. We know that two and a half years is when there is a real bulge of demand. That's why what we're proposing is free pre-school child care for two-and-a-half- to four-year-olds, and we'll continue to subsidize for zero to two and a half. The reality is that there needs to be choice.

There's more common ground between us and the NDP than not. I appreciate that she has stepped up and has put child care in her platform.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the reality is that Ontario has the most expensive child care in Canada. Here in Toronto, it is the most expensive in the entire province. That didn't just happen out of nowhere. It's because the Liberals have ignored the expense of child care in this province for 15 years.

If this government, if this Premier were serious about affordable child care, we would already have it in Ontario.

Why did the Liberals ignore all of those parents for those 15 years and not bring affordable child care to Ontario for 15 years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the leader of the third party for this important question.

I just want to make it clear that, on this side of the House, our Premier designated someone as minister responsible for early years and child care, and I want to point out that that's the first time that has happened in the history of this province. We recognized more than a year ago, almost two years ago, that this was a priority, and we made it a priority.

While I'm pleased to see that the third party's platform is embracing a number of key policies and priorities, many of them put forward by our party, we're a little bit disappointed by the plan that they have put forward, which actually puts at risk many of the progressive policies that we're moving forward with.

Let me just tell you some of the things that we've done. We've done an affordability study. We've done a

workforce study. We're building capacity for 100,000 more children in child care, and we are building that solid foundation to move to the next step.

I'm happy to answer more.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Toronto Life's cover story is about a woman who spent 47 hours waiting for surgery in Sunnybrook's ER with shattered wrists, a broken elbow, cracked ribs and internal bleeding. She was stuck in a hallway that was "noisy, with machines constantly beeping and people talking. There was nowhere for her husband and son to sit where they weren't in the way. 'It was like parking in a fire route.' ... She was entirely dependent on the nurses, who, despite being clearly overloaded, she says, took excellent care of her. Rather than venting or getting snippy, they just kept apologizing."

Does the Premier believe that that's acceptable in Ontario in 2018?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's not okay whenever someone has a frustrating, difficult experience in a health care setting, whether it's in a hospital or whether it's at home. Of course that's not acceptable.

We know—everyone in this House knows—that our front-line health care workers work every single day to make sure that they provide the care that people need when patients walk into their facilities. Our responsibility as government is to make sure that those front-line workers have the tools that they need. So we have continued to increase funding. We have continued to put supports in place for hospitals.

But we recognize that there's more that needs to be done. It was \$500 million last year—and this year in our budget, we're including \$822 million to support the front line and to support hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would suggest to the Premier that one of the tools that our front-line health care workers need in hospitals is beds and rooms for the patients, to do the important work that they do. That would be the most important tool.

The Ontario Hospital Association said this: "All across the GTA, you've seen hospitals spike as high as 140% at any given moment." This is in reference to the occupancy rates, Speaker.

Hospitals need stable funding that recognizes the realities that they face. Getting people out of hallways means funding hospitals. I have a plan to do that, Speaker. The Conservatives under Doug Ford will privatize and further cut our hospitals and health care.

Why did this Premier create this crisis in the first place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I didn't create an aging demographic. I may be part of that aging demographic, but I didn't create it. I think it was the post-war baby boom that created an aging demographic.

What we have worked to do is put in place a continuum of care. I agree with the leader of the third party: We need to put more funding into hospitals. We have \$822 million that we recognize needs to go into hospitals, on top of, every year, the increases that we've made—\$500 million last year. But we recognize that there is more that's needed.

We have been investing in home care. The reality is that more people are looking for care at home. They want to stay at home, which means that they are at home longer, and then when they get into long-term care or supportive housing, they are actually sicker and older. So we need to make sure that we build those long-term-care beds and continue to put supports in place so that people can get the care where they need it and when they need it, including in hospital.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, correct me if I'm wrong, but the aging demographic didn't just start this year; it was there 15 years ago when this government should have been planning for proper investments in long-term care, in home care and in our hospitals. But instead they froze and cut our hospital budgets.

Here's what the Toronto Life story continues to say: "Overstuffed hospitals are not just short on comfort and long on bad optics—crowding actually leads to more deaths."

As Premier, I will call the crisis what it is—a crisis—and I will fix it. The Premier won't even admit that there's a crisis and so she won't do anything to solve it. And we know for sure that as bad as things are with the Liberals, Doug Ford will make it even worse.

Why did this Premier allow things to get this bad, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, when I looked at the platform that the leader of the third party and their party is bringing forward, there's a lot of common ground in terms of what we think the solutions are. We've said that we need to put \$822 million into hospitals; there are a few million more that the third party is suggesting need to go into hospitals. We recognize that there need to be long-term-care beds built. The third party says we need to build long-term-care beds.

I agree with the leader of the third party that more needs to be done, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is that objective organizations have looked at our health care system and have said we have the best wait times in the country. We have a system that has the best survival rates for prostate, breast, colorectal and lung cancers, and life expectancy is higher than average, one of the highest in the OECD.

There's more to be done but we have an excellent health care system in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Liberals hosted four campaign-style

events, and there are three more scheduled for today. They are clearly campaigning on the taxpayer dime each and every day, so I ask the Premier: Will the Liberal Party reimburse taxpayers for their campaign-style events?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I say to the member opposite, I completely understand why he doesn't want me to be talking about a fair wage policy in this province. I completely understand why he doesn't want me to be talking about child care, care for seniors or more funding for hospitals. None of those things would be possible under their leader, Doug Ford, because he's going to cut across government.

Mr. Speaker, every year when we bring in a budget, we go out into the province and talk about that budget. That is what we are doing. That is what their party did. That is what the third party did. That is what governments do, to make sure that people understand what is in the budget so that they will know what to expect. That's how it works, and I know the member opposite knows that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned, and a few others.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: You have told the people of Ontario that the budget you just presented in this House is your campaign platform, so that means every event you have is promoting your campaign platform, using your own bloody logic. Stop doing it. It's wrong. Repay the taxpayers. The Liberal Party owes the taxpayers for thousands and thousands of dollars on these campaign-style events. Will you do the right thing and pay back the taxpayers?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier of this province is the elected leader of the province and of the government. In her capacity, she attends many events. In her capacity, she is out talking about important government policies that are going to improve the lives of Ontarians every single day. In that capacity, Speaker, she will speak about the budget that is providing a plan for care and opportunity.

I totally get why the opposition is all worked up on this, because they know they will be cutting all those important programs. They know that if they come into government, they're going to cut OHIP+, which is going to provide pharmacare for youth under the age of 25 and for seniors over 65. If they're in government, they're going to cut funding for our hospitals so that they can reduce wait times. If they're in government, they will cancel the OSAP program. That's why they're worked up and they don't want the Premier to talk about government policies.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Every family in Sudbury depends on our local hospital, Health Sciences North, and everyone who works there helps to provide excellent care each and every day, but this Premier's inadequate hospital funding has forced Health Sciences North to plan to cut 113 jobs. That's on top of the 352 jobs that have already been cut at northeastern hospitals because of this Premier's cuts and freezes to hospital budgets.

1130

Let me be clear: More cuts and layoffs at Health Sciences North are completely unacceptable to the good people of Sudbury and the northeast.

Why doesn't this Premier get it, and why is she still underfunding northeastern hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know if the member knows that over the past two years we've actually increased funding to Health Sciences North by \$10 million. There's been a substantial increase in funding to this organization.

I know that the ministry has been working to understand the financial pressures that have been identified at Health Sciences North. That work is ongoing. The ministry is working to support the Health Sciences North efforts to deliver patient-centred quality care, as well as to achieve financial sustainability. But to suggest that this hospital, this system, has not been supported is just not accurate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I saw something that I had never seen in my 10 years as health critic: On Wednesday, the board chairs of Health Sciences North, Timmins and District Hospital, Sault Ste. Marie hospital and North Bay Regional Health Centre took the unprecedented step of writing to the North East LHIN about how the lack of hospital funding "threatens basic financial survival." It's worth repeating: "threatens basic financial survival."

The leaders of our northern hospitals are ringing the alarm bells. Their resources are shrinking, and they face huge shortfalls once again this year. We all know what that means. It means longer wait-lists. It means hallway medicine. It means fewer services for the people of the northeast. Frankly, this is the last thing we need.

As the Premier enters her last 50 days in office, does she care enough to stop the damage that she has done and finally do something to help northern hospitals?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to talk to the member, but what the member has said really does not accurately represent the situation.

So \$10 million over the last two years—the ministry is working to understand the financial pressures that have

been identified at Health Sciences North. We've been working closely with the LHIN and the hospital to ensure that there's no impact on patient care in the community. That's exactly why the ministry is supportive of the LHIN's decision to not support Health Sciences North's proposed plan, and the hospital will be required to undertake an independent third-party review to look at potential strategies and mitigate any broader health system and patient impacts.

We've advised the hospital and the board that we're fully supportive of the North East LHIN's resolution. The ministry is working closely with them. We do care, absolutely, about patient care in Sudbury.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. In addition to the many developments in Etobicoke North—for example, Etobicoke General Hospital, Humber College and new schools—I know about the pressing need to improve transit in the west end of Toronto. That's why the strategic investments in transit will improve options for commuters regardless of where they live in Toronto or, in fact, the wider region.

I know that our government is moving forward on a number of projects that will make transit a more efficient option. For example, in my own riding of Etobicoke North, we have right now under way the Finch West LRT, a billion-dollar expansion with eight stops from Humber College and Westmore all the way to Kipling and Islington.

But beyond that, I'd like to ask the minister: Could she provide more information on how our government is making more progress connecting more Etobicoke residents to our regional transit network through the Kipling Mobility Hub?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his question and his unrelenting advocacy on behalf of his community.

The way people move around the GTHA isn't the same as it was a decade ago, let alone five years ago. As a former resident of Etobicoke, I see the changes in the west end of Toronto. More and more people are making the switch to transit because they see it's a convenient alternative to them taking their car.

But we know that there's more work that needs to be done. A huge part of that is bringing together different forms of transit, including the bus, the GO train, Toronto's subway system and cycling in an integrated way. That's why the Kipling Mobility Hub is such an important project and why I'm so pleased to say we now have shovels in the ground to see this project to completion. This project will not only serve commuters in Etobicoke but also those coming from surrounding communities like Mississauga.

It's a great day for transit riders and for those looking to hop on board. I look forward to saying more in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'd like to thank the minister not only for the answer but also for the integrated plan, which will benefit so many residents in the GTHA.

This past Friday, I know colleagues—for example, the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for poverty reduction, and the member for Etobicoke Centre—were excited to join TTC chair Josh Colle, Mississauga mayor Bonnie Crombie and Metrolinx COO Greg Percy to make an exciting announcement. Kipling already brings together GO Transit, the TTC and MiWay buses, so of course, it is a natural next step to bring them together in a more seamless, commuter-friendly way. I have heard from members in my own community who are excited to see how this project will unfold.

While our government has a proven track record of investing in projects like this one at the future Kipling Mobility Hub, not all parties see the value of investing in transit. As an example, as you might anticipate, Speaker, the Ontario Conservative Party is just running on empty, ready to slash, cut, claw back and trump up our social deficit.

My question is: Can the minister please provide the members of this House with more information?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for that supplementary question. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy for making this project a reality. As a city councillor, he fought tirelessly for the Kipling Mobility Hub, which I used to live nearby, and I'm so happy to see that his hard work is paying off.

When this project is complete, it will seamlessly bring together municipal and regional transit systems to make it easier to move, for example, from Mississauga's MiWay on to the subway or to the Milton GO line. At the same time, it will improve connections for those commuters who are looking to access the station by bike or by foot.

It's a huge step forward, but it's only one part of the plan. We're moving forward with a historic \$21.3-billion transformation of our GO network. At the same time, we're making your commute more affordable through initiatives like reducing the cost of transferring between GO and the TTC.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this morning I was joined by the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Treatment Society and cystic fibrosis patients who urgently require access to the life-saving drug Orkambi. Unfortunately, this government's back-of-the-napkin approach to OHIP+ coverage has resulted in children like Victoria—who is here today—unable to receive the life-saving treatment that she needs.

My question to the Premier is, why is the Minister of Health doing nothing to help the thousands of children requiring these life-saving drugs? And please refrain from talking about the Exceptional Access Program.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have every sympathy for people who are struggling to look after themselves, look after their families. Cystic fibrosis patients and their families struggle with the debilitating effects of this disease and look for hope in each new drug that comes forward. I understand that and we empathize with them. We want these people, we want these individuals and families to know that we are committed to finding solutions.

If we weren't, we would not have put in place OHIP+, which provides free prescription medication for young people from their birth until their 25th birthday for 4,400 medications, for all of the medications that are on the formulary. If we didn't care about this, we wouldn't have put that forward.

What we know is that there is obviously more that needs to be done as drugs are tested and more drugs come on the formulary. But we are committed to finding those solutions, working with the scientists and with the sector to make sure that children and families get the support they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Premier, OHIP+ has caused many barriers and actually reduced access to life-saving treatments for children across this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: If the government truly cared about children with cystic fibrosis—it has been over two years since this government has even tried to sit down with the makers of Orkambi to come up with a price. You have to negotiate to get these medications onto the formulary.

Mr. Speaker, every day we hear of OHIP+ failing Ontario's youth. Children aren't able to get their anti-seizure medication. Children aren't able to get the medication to help them to breathe. They're losing access to medications they have had for years.

1140

Contrary to this government's talking points and this Premier, no one here is against youth coverage. We want to see OHIP+ dealt with in a competent manner.

My question to the Premier: Will you stand up now and admit your policy has failed and—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Appreciating the sensitivity of the question and the answer, I will ask all members to come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: With all due respect, the member opposite must have taken his chutzpah medicine this morning, to have the nerve to stand up and to challenge this government on our record of putting in place support for children getting access to medication. It's quite unbelievable.

I understand that there are other medications that will need to go on the formulary, but the fact is that what this

party is going to do is cut across the board. This man is a member of a party that (a) does not support the plan that we've got in place, and (b) is going to cut any access that young people would have to any of those medications.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Dawn and Dave Warren have spent years trying to get better mental health services in London, and they have experienced first-hand the crisis of hallway medicine too. When Dawn needed urgent care, she was rushed to the hospital by ambulance, but instead of getting a proper bed, she was put on a gurney, and not just for a few hours but for five days. That is completely unacceptable.

When people like Dawn and Dave need urgent mental health care, they need to be able to get it. No one—no one—who needs mental health services should ever fall through the cracks. Why does the Premier keep letting this happen and keep letting families in London suffer without the mental health care services that our city needs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I completely agree with the member opposite that that should not happen. As I've said many times in public, as a society, we are building a mental health care system that really hasn't existed in the past. Forty years ago, there was not the awareness of mental health challenges. We have put more money in mental health. As part of our budget, we've announced the single biggest investment in mental health and addictions care in Canadian history: \$2.1 billion in new funding for programs that will literally reshape the mental health care system and provide more access for points of care that will provide more ability to navigate the system. We've had expert advice on how to do that.

I guess my question to the member opposite is why, in their platform, are they promising \$500 million less than we have put forward?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Our city needs a transformation of mental health care services. The mental health unit at London Health Sciences Centre is so overcrowded, it has been running at up to 165% occupancy. That's more than double the safe occupancy levels. Local psychiatrists have gone public saying that mental health supports continue to deteriorate, especially as the demand for services grows. People like Dawn and Dave Warren, who count on our hospitals to provide the care they need, have been left bitterly disappointed by the overcrowding crisis that left Dawn on a hallway gurney for five days.

It shouldn't be this way. New Democrats have a plan to end hallway medicine in our hospitals and transform mental health care for the better. Why doesn't the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We do have a plan, and in fact, the New Democrats' plan is \$500 million less for mental health funding than our plan. We agree. I said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've said that on top of the mental health supports that we have already put in place, there's more that needs to be done; \$2.1 billion is what we have been advised is needed. That is the investment that we're going to make.

The NDP is proposing to put less money than that into mental health supports. It makes no sense and flies in the face of the question that the member opposite is asking.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

As this week is Earth Week, I urge all members of the Legislature to encourage their constituents to do their part in protecting the environment. This could include small actions like I used to do in my classroom, such as taking the class out to clean up in the neighbourhood, recycling, taking public transit and reducing energy consumption.

In Ontario, we're making it easier for everyone to do their part by investing in cycling infrastructure and energy efficiency retrofits. Our cap on pollution for businesses has so far generated \$2.4 billion in funding for green programs that help Ontarians participate in the fight against climate change while saving money.

Speaker, can the minister please explain to the House how Ontario is taking action to protect our environment?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Barrie for that important question and highlighting that this is indeed Earth Week, and this coming Sunday is Earth Day.

As the member mentioned, we've taken a number of significant actions to help protect the environment here in Ontario. That includes our cap on climate-changing air pollution. That cap, through the cap-and-trade system, has raised \$2.4 billion in proceeds in just over a year, and we are investing every single penny of those proceeds in green initiatives to fight climate change.

Let me tell you about one, our GreenOn retrofits, which are allowing residents to make their homes more efficient at an affordable cost and helping folks fight climate change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Third-party experts agree that our cap on pollution is the best plan to reduce pollution at the lowest price possible. We know that now is not the time to back away from action on climate change. Just yesterday, California governor Jerry Brown was here in Toronto and he said, "Look, the scientists are clear; the world is clear through the Paris agreement; the biggest country in the world, China, is clear. So that's where the world is headed." Governor Brown also said, "Scrapping cap-and-trade would be foolish." I repeat, it "would be foolish." Who would do that, Speaker?

In Ontario, we're proud that climate change activists around the world are acknowledging the work our province is doing to reduce pollution and fight climate

change. Can the Minister please explain what actions this government is taking to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and fight climate change?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you again to the member from Barrie for that important question. We were delighted to have Governor Brown here in Toronto yesterday to talk about the importance of fighting climate change and the inevitability of fighting climate change. It is a real thing, Speaker, as much as the PCs might like to turn tail and hide from it. It is here. It is real. We have to deal with it.

We would have enjoyed having Governor Brown in the House, as all folks would have, but the PCs denied us the opportunity to have Governor Brown come to speak about climate change in the Legislature. Climate change should be a non-partisan topic. All parties should agree that climate change is real.

Speaker, the Conservatives have abandoned their carbon tax and they're walking away from any action to deal with climate change.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday the Globe and Mail ran a story describing the negative impacts that Bill 148 has had for Ontarians with intellectual and physical disabilities. Jobs for people with disabilities are being lost as a result of the rapid increase in the minimum wage, combined with the Liberals' elimination of the sheltered workshops program.

As Susan Wahlroth, the mother of an adult with Down syndrome who lost his job, said in the Globe article, "But for these workers, having a job, even one with a smaller paycheque, gave them a sense of purpose."

How can the minister justify playing crass political games with the minimum wage when the Liberals' policies are clearly hurting some of the most vulnerable among us, Ontarians with intellectual and physical disabilities?

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Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, crass political games are not what were intended by Bill 148. What Bill 148 intended was to raise the living—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, the premise of the question, as I understand it, is that despite the Human Rights Code in this province, the member opposite is prepared to pay somebody who has a challenge, whether that be physical or mental—is prepared to pay them less, is prepared to treat them less—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned, and the member from Haldimand–Norfolk is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, what Bill 148 did, and what the Conservatives voted against, was that if

you were working in the province of Ontario and you were putting in your 35 or 40 hours a week, you would be able to pay your way; that you would be able to pay expenses for your family, that you would be able to pay the rent, that you would be able to put food on the table and buy diapers for the kids. We're in favour of that on this side of the House. It's a shame they aren't.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: More of the political games. The minister knew that playing politics with the minimum wage was going to hurt vulnerable Ontarians. Witnesses repeatedly told Liberals exactly that last summer during committee hearings.

One such person was Mark Wafer, a business person who is widely known for his work advocating for, and employing, people with intellectual disabilities. There are few people who would have more experience and a greater understanding of the workplace realities that they face. He clearly stated that it was almost a certainty—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The Minister of Government and Consumer Services is warned.

Finish, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As I said, there are few people who would have more experience and a greater understanding of the workplace realities they face than Mark Wafer. He clearly stated that it was almost a certainty that they would be the first to lose their jobs. But once again, Liberals put politics before people.

Speaker, can the minister tell us why he has failed to protect Ontarians with intellectual disabilities?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question. Speaker, I've sat down with Mark Wafer on a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is warned, and the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I've sat down on a number of occasions with Mark Wafer, and he's a fine individual. He's got the best interests of people who are dealing with challenges, whether they be physical or mental—it's right at the core of his being. What he has always maintained is that he doesn't hire people with challenges because he feels sorry for them and not because he pities them. It's because they're excellent workers and they deserve to be paid fairly.

What the member is suggesting, Speaker, is that we have one level of pay for people who are dealing with challenges and another level of pay for the rest of us. That is shameful. That is what Doug Ford and Conservatives are all about. On this side of the House, we're not.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Niagara West-Glanbrook is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somebody is warned already, and I think the next move is a naming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Stephen Glazebrook from Goulais River has been taking prescription medicine for 24 years after experiencing a workplace accident at a steel plant. Stephen no longer has a family doctor and has to go to the ER in Sault Ste. Marie three days a week for prescription refills. That's a 70-kilometre round trip, and the costs are piling up.

Stephen receives ODSP and is struggling to pay for his travels to the Soo. He has been on a waiting list for a new family doctor, but there is a lack of doctors and other medical services in northern Ontario.

This government has failed many people in the same situation all across northern Ontario. When will this government invest in northern Ontario's health care to ensure that everyone has the same quality of care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specific circumstances of this individual, but I know that if there are specific issues, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care would like to address those.

What I do know is that we recognize that across this province, there must be the highest level of care. It doesn't matter whether you live in the north or if you're in the southwest, in eastern Ontario or in central Ontario. That's exactly why, in our budget, we have increased funding across the board to all of the hospitals across the system. We've increased the Northern Health Travel Grants because we know that it's a challenge when you have those distances to travel. And we will continue to work to make sure that there is equitable distribution of care across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: Stephen's quality of life has drastically shifted since losing his family doctor, as he cannot get out of the house some days due to so much chronic pain. The Sault Area Hospital will not accommodate Stephen's case since he has to go through the ER and sees a new doctor every time. Health Care Connect and the CCAC cannot prioritize him higher on a wait-list, and he does not live in Sault Ste. Marie, so he cannot utilize some services as they are not open on the days that he is able to travel. Stephen is also on a wait-list for different family health teams and primary care clinics.

This happens all across my riding. People do not have access to family physicians and nurse practitioners. How is this government going to ensure that people in northern Ontario have access to primary care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, Mr. Speaker, we have been working to increase those supports. We've been working towards system-wide health equity by addressing specific health inequities in the north. The

Patients First action plan: Health equity is a fundamental part of that, and it's part of the mandate of each of the local health integration networks, which are the planning bodies regionally. Their work is to address the needs of underserved populations and barriers to equitable access.

Nurse practitioner-led clinics are a perfect example of the way we are working to get that kind of primary health care to all parts of the province. We also introduced new Ontario public health standards in January that require public health units to embed health equity throughout their work.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize challenges. We raised the travel grants. We recognize that there's more to be done.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Speaker, we know that this government continues to make strategic investments in businesses across all sectors. Since 2004, this government has invested some \$3 billion in various businesses, leveraging 10 times that amount in private sector investment, helping to create and retain 185,000 jobs across the province.

Together, the people of Ontario and the government have helped make Ontario a world leader in many sectors. We continue to lead the G7 in economic growth, and we have the lowest unemployment rate in 17 years as we have helped create 820,000 new jobs since the recession.

Just today, Speaker, the Toronto-Waterloo tech corridor was named as one of the top 20 technology clusters in the world. With our world-leading institutions and our strong innovation economy, Ontario has become a world leader in med-tech. Can the minister please tell us what we're doing to support the med-tech sector?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, I want to begin by thanking the member from Beaches–East York for his question and for his advocacy. He is 100% right: The province of Ontario is in fact proudly a leader in the med-tech industry, and we've made it a priority as a government to advance health care innovation. We are home to North America's third-largest med-tech research cluster, with more than 37,000 people working at more than 1,400 companies across Ontario, and our government has been making strategic investments to further this sector's footprint in every corner of the province.

1200

Just last week, I was very happy to announce that Ontario will be investing \$50 million in response to Sanofi's \$500-million investment, to help them build a new state-of-the-art vaccine-manufacturing facility here in Ontario. This will help create and retain over 1,250 jobs. It will help Sanofi more than double its production capabilities and support Sanofi's largest manufacturing investment worldwide.

Also, last week we announced that we were providing support—a \$7-million grant and a \$9-million loan—

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank the minister for his clarification of what we're doing, and particularly for the \$22.6-million investment we made in food processing in the riding of Beaches–East York to support 450 jobs in my community, leveraging almost seven times that amount from the private sector—an excellent investment.

Ontario is currently the largest life sciences jurisdiction in North America, employing over 60,000 people, generating something in the order of \$38 billion in revenue in Ontario each year. This reputable life sciences sector has attracted the world's top health science companies and billions in investments from firms such as Johnson and Johnson, Bayer and, as the minister noted, Sanofi. With investments in Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Ottawa and Windsor, it's evident our government is committed to supporting the life sciences sector across Ontario.

Speaker, will the minister please inform the members of this House how we continue to support the life sciences sector in Ontario?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for that very good question.

This government has announced that it is investing up to \$50 million in the new life sciences venture capital fund initiative. This fund will ensure that companies specializing in medicine, regenerative medicine and digital health will have access to capital, and thereby scale up and reach global markets.

Moreover, in the 2018 budget, our government announced its continued support for the Ontario Brain Institute, with an investment of over \$100 million over five years. This funding will support research in cerebral palsy, depression, epilepsy, and neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative disorders.

This government understands that improving quality of life means making new and innovative investments in the province of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Premier, and I'm asking this on behalf of the region of Peel.

Peel region wants to know why the Liberal government has prevented the redevelopment of the Peel Manor long-term-care home in Brampton. Peel Manor is over 100 years old, making it the oldest of the region's five long-term-care homes. Seniors in Peel region are already waiting two to three years for long-term-care beds.

How long does the region of Peel have to wait for the Liberals to allow Peel region to expand beds and upgrade services at Peel Manor?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to speak to the specifics. I actually don't know the answer to this specific question about that long-term-care home. What I do know is that we are redeveloping thousands of beds

across the province. We are building 5,000 new beds and then another 30,000 over the next decade. We recognize that there need to be investments in long-term care. We have committed to those in our budget.

As I said, if the member opposite would bring the specific information about that situation, we will get an answer for her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Peel region and the Peel hospitals were the epicentre of hallway medicine. The region wants to upgrade Peel Manor to rebuild 177 long-term beds, including areas specialized for needs such as dementia. The plan is also to expand 24/7 adult day programming and respite, making it a hub for seniors' care. We need this in the region of Peel.

Instead of helping the region expand services for our seniors, the province has so far refused to allow Peel Manor to provide the services Peel region so desperately needs. Why does this government think that redeveloping Peel Manor is not a worthwhile investment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't think that that is at all the case. The reality is that we are working with Peel Manor, as the members from Peel have said, and we know that there is more work to be done. No one on this side of the House has said that it's not a worthwhile project. There are thousands of beds across the province that are being redeveloped; there are long-term-care beds that are being built. We recognize that in Peel, where there is a growing population and, along with that, a growing seniors' population, there is more need.

We will continue to work with Peel Manor and we'll work with the local health integration network to make sure that in Peel and across the province, people's needs are being met.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of Housing. Good morning, Minister.

Landlord and tenant tribunals are essential but, under this Liberal government, tenants are told it will take months and months to get an opportunity to air their grievances. The lineups and the delays are growing longer and longer; if a tenant files today in Windsor, they'll be told they can't get a hearing until the 18th of June.

CBC Windsor has done a series on this crisis. We were told of babies swaddled in blankets, freezing, shivering in heat-deprived apartments. The Liberals have to answer for this.

What do they say to the parents of these babies and children—freezing—with no easy access to a tribunal to listen to their grievances?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. When he first raised this with me, I immediately looked into the issue of whether there are vacancies on the tribunal; indeed, there are three vacancies. I know they're in the process of being filled,

and I would urge the opposition to assist that process in not delaying the appointments of any members to any necessary board.

On this side of the House, we are committed to helping tenants. We have a housing enforcement unit that assists tenants if they have an issue with their landlord. We've introduced the standard lease, which will also make it easier for landlords and tenants to understand what their rights and obligations are.

That's in sharp contrast to Doug Ford, who is against rent control and whose housing policy is about handing out \$20 bills in a TCHC building and cutting the source of funding that we're offering to help refurbish social housing in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my delight to introduce members of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. I have the CEO here today, Mary Alberti, I have George Bilof—he's on the board—and I have Chris Whittaker, who's here today to share his story. Welcome to the Legislature. It was a pleasure to meet with you today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

Introductions?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, that'll teach me, because I was going to introduce the CEO, director George and Chris from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. You'll just have to accept that I'm going to do a statement instead.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome representatives from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario to Queen's Park today. The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is Ontario's largest not-for-profit charitable health organization supporting those impacted by schizophrenia and psychosis.

Schizophrenia is a serious but treatable mental illness. The seriousness of schizophrenia is underscored by the fact that the lifetime risk of suicide among people with schizophrenia is between 4% and 10%. SSO plays a crucial part in treatment for those affected by schizophrenia by providing programming and services which seek to help families, caregivers and individuals dealing with schizophrenia, reduce stigma and increase education on schizophrenia.

Nearly eight years ago, during the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, members from all three parties heard testimony from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. The issues they raised then, like system capacity and coordination, access to treatment and lengthy wait times, are still a problem in Ontario for those looking for mental health treatment. However, the efforts of organizations like SSO can be seen in that it is essentially a political consensus in the province of Ontario that there needs to be more money and better service for those families and individuals dealing with mental illness.

I congratulate the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario on their ongoing work, advocating for and working with those affected by schizophrenia.

PROVINCIAL ELECTION

Miss Monique Taylor: For far too long, the people of Hamilton Mountain, like others all across Ontario, have had to endure a steady decline in their health care services, whether that's in hospitals, in long-term care or in home care.

They've seen our schools fall into disrepair and staff being cut, especially in special education.

They have had to struggle to pay their bills as hydro rates increased and child care costs went through the roof.

Those without benefits plans have had to find money to pay for their dental and fill the prescriptions they need to get healthy. Sadly, far too many have had no choice but to do without.

They've watched their kids suffer when they can't get the mental health services they need. They've had to fight tooth and nail for the services that their kids need for autism and developmental disabilities.

That's the legacy of this Liberal government and the Conservatives before them.

Yesterday, as our leader, Andrea Horwath, announced our NDP platform, I witnessed a declaration of hope and confidence for Ontario's future, a positive message that we don't need to settle anymore, that we can do better. We don't need to keep switching between bad or worse.

In just seven weeks, Ontarians will elect a new government, and I'm proud that in this election, they will have a choice of who will represent them next. They can make a change for the better.

PEEK FREANS PLANT

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure for me to rise today and talk about a very important investment that this government made yesterday into the expansion and modernization of Mondelēz Canada's Peek Freans plant in my riding of Beaches–East York.

Since the 1950s, the Peek Freans plant on O'Connor Drive has supported Ontario wheat farmers and numerous ingredient suppliers. In addition, the Peek Freans plant has been a significant employer in the area, running

around the clock and producing some of the most popular cookies being made in the world, like Fudgee-Os, Oreos and Chips Ahoy!, and all in a nut-free environment. You just drive by this plant and you can smell the goodness.

The \$22.6-million investment we announced through Ontario's Jobs and Prosperity Fund will allow Mondelēz to expand the production plant, install two new bakery lines, upgrade an existing bakery line, and produce new products like the Oreo Thins that they developed at the plant two years ago. Overall, some \$130 million is being spent on the expansion, so that for every \$1 we're investing, they're putting in \$5. In my community, this means supporting and enhancing over 450 jobs as well as supporting all the local businesses who serve the company and its employees.

In the words of plant manager Juan Carlos Rodriguez, this investment "helps us progress on our journey towards manufacturing excellence, which ensures that our products can continue to be made in the province" of Ontario.

Speaker, with this type of strategic investment, we create fairness and opportunity during a period of rapid economic change. Investments like these continue to ensure that global companies like Mondelēz can continue right here in Ontario's economy.

HALLMARKS OF HUMANITY QUILT EXHIBIT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I had the opportunity to attend the opening exhibition event for the Hallmarks of Humanity quilt exhibit at the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre. Let me tell you, Speaker, the exhibit was amazing. I appreciated the quilts and, more importantly, the stories that were on display, and I thoroughly appreciated the era and the sense of community that they represented.

The history was breathtaking. Back in the 19th century, quilts were often used to fundraise for charitable causes. Later, in the 20th century, during wartime, the Red Cross had volunteers work on quilts which were sent overseas to comfort soldiers and injured members of the military. The names of the people who worked on the quilt were embroidered onto the face, which makes the legacy of each and every quilt so special.

There's a particular quilt that was on display, the Culross quilt, and it was made by people from the Teeswater area. I have to tell you, it's the feature quilt in this particular exhibit, and it was sent to England in 1918. Some of the names that have been stitched lovingly onto that quilt were Collison, Donaldson, Cassidy, Holdenby, Armstrong, Pennington, Millen, Grant, Gillies and, of course, Thompson, just to name a few.

Seriously, Speaker, all of the names I just mentioned, plus so many more, continue to proudly call Teeswater home.

The Hallmarks of Humanity show that good things really can come from rural Ontario, and I'm so proud to be part of that.

JACK RICHARDSON LONDON MUSIC AWARDS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I would like to share an event that happened in London, and it had London rockin'. This past Sunday, the annual Jack Richardson London Music Awards honoured local talent and paid tribute to influential local artists. The not-for-profit Jack Richardson London Music Awards are a regional music incubator that aims to preserve the rich music history of our region.

The awards serve as a way to recognize and celebrate the music makers of today and encourage a new generation of musicians. Part of the celebrations also includes new inductees to the Jack Richardson London Music Hall of Fame, honouring outstanding musicians from London.

I was excited and proud to attend this event and to celebrate with so many talented individuals and groups from our city. I am incredibly proud of the hometown talent we have in London. They have worked incredibly hard for their success.

There is a special atmosphere at events like this, when the hard work and sacrifice come together and you are honoured by your peers and your own hometown community. These artists are telling the stories of our city in their music, sharing their voices with the world, and I'd like to thank them for that.

I would also like to thank the Jack Richardson London Music Awards for providing the opportunity to highlight local performers for their contributions to music and to our community.

It is so important that we provide all artists of any medium a platform for expression and encouragement. They are the storytellers and the recorders of our past, present and future.

And it was a rockin' good time.

KATYN MASSACRE

Mr. Yvan Baker: My grandparents immigrated to Canada from eastern Europe after World War II. They were not Polish, but they, like so many Poles, faced tremendous oppression under the Soviet Union. My grandmother faced persecution, lived through a genocide, and three of her brothers were killed by the Soviet secret police.

What upset my grandmother was not just the horror of these crimes but that the truth was never told or was officially covered up, that justice to the victims' memory was never done.

1510

The Katyn massacre was one of those crimes. In April and May 1940, over 20,000 Polish citizens were brutally murdered in an act of genocide by the NKVD on Stalin's order. The victims were mainly reserve officers, but also civilians. They were the flower of the Polish nation, and the intent was clear: Stalin wanted to decapitate the Polish nation.

Katyn was a forbidden topic until the fall of communism, and to this day, it remains a deep historical wound for Poles and for Polish communities around the world.

In 2010, while travelling to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, 96 people, including Polish president Lech Kaczynski, lost their lives in a tragic plane crash. On that day, a second beheading of Poland took place close to Katyn. These two tragedies will forever be linked.

Last week, Speaker, I introduced a motion calling on this Legislature to condemn the Katyn massacre as an act of genocide carried out against the Polish nation. By introducing this motion, it is my hope that we can do what my grandmother would have wanted and what Poles and Polonia have been fighting for, for so long: that accountability is brought to bear on the Soviet perpetrators, that the truth is told and that the utmost justice to the victims' memory is done.

Let us honour their memory. Cześć Ich pamięci.

YOM HAZIKARON AND ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mrs. Gila Martow: Today is Yom Hazikaron, when we remember the members of the Israeli defence forces who sacrificed their lives, as well as all the victims of terrorist attacks. But we should also remember the 11 Canadian members of Machal, which is a Hebrew acronym for volunteers from abroad, who gave their lives in 1948, and of course not all of them were Jewish.

We have George "Buzz" Beurling to remember, from Verdun, Quebec; Harvey Cohen and Ed Lugech from Toronto—and they were two first cousins; Reuben Schiff, Sidney Rubinoff and Sidney Leisure from Toronto; Leonard Fitchett from Vancouver; Ralph Moster of Vancouver as well; Wilfred Canter, a pilot from Toronto; Willy Fisher, a navigator from Winnipeg; and Fred Stevenson, a co-pilot from Vancouver.

Tonight at Beth Tzedec synagogue here in Toronto, the Israeli consulate is going to be hosting a memorial event that I will be at, as well as Mr. Colle from the government side and James Pasternak, a city councillor from Toronto. This Thursday, there is going to be the flag-raising here at Queen's Park with the Israeli consulate. It's 70 years, so a big celebration this year to celebrate 70 years since the Israeli War of Independence and all the accomplishments that we enjoy here today, with our smartphones, which sometimes get taken away from us, and all the technology and all the innovation.

I look forward to seeing many of the members here from the Legislature this Thursday. Hopefully, the weather is improving and winter has finally left us, and that we don't have to go to Israel to finally see some sun. Am Yisroel chai.

SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to welcome the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario to Queen's Park. I know that several members met with some of their group

this morning and had some great conversations about the great work that they do.

For almost 40 years now, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario has been our province's largest not-for-profit health organization that supports individuals, families and communities impacted by schizophrenia and psychosis.

Schizophrenia affects 1 in 100 people and occurs equally in men and women. It does not discriminate. Individuals with schizophrenia can experience psychotic episodes, such as delusions. They can experience profound disruptions in their thinking, the way they perceive the world and their sense of self.

While the cure for schizophrenia has not yet been found, we know that with the right supports, schizophrenia is treatable. That is why our government is making an unprecedented investment in mental health and addictions that will improve care for those who experience mental health challenges in their lifetimes, such as schizophrenia.

In our recent budget, we announced the largest investment in Canadian history in mental health and addictions services: a four-year investment of \$2.1 billion that will reframe the system to deliver more accessible and better integrated care. Despite the great work of the Schizophrenia Society, this condition is still severely stigmatized and feared. We need to work closely with groups like the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario to eliminate the social stigmas surrounding mental illness.

I am delighted to welcome to the House today CEO Mary Alberti, members of the board of directors George Bilof and Manish Dama, and mental health advocate and member of the society's Speaker's Bureau, Chris Whittaker. Welcome.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise today to speak about the Diocese of Pembroke and other faith communities' Call for Conscience, a letter-writing campaign which has resulted in much correspondence making its way to me over the past several weeks.

These constituents have ongoing concerns with the impact of Bill 84, Medical Assistance in Dying Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017, which was passed by the Liberals last year. They believe, as I do, that there should be a right to conscience for health care workers when it comes to medical assistance in dying, or MAID, which the current legislation does not allow for. They also highlighted the lack of access to quality palliative care here in Ontario. That is why I and my caucus colleagues voted against Bill 84 last year when the provincial Liberals refused to include our amendment that would have provided for conscience rights.

I strongly believe that, had the government adopted the legislation similar to what is found in Alberta, Ontario's patients would still be able to access MAID services while health care workers could maintain their right not to participate due to ethical or religious concerns.

I want to thank my constituents again for taking the time to write about this important issue and call on the government to address their concerns regarding conscience rights for health care workers and the shortage of quality palliative care here in the province of Ontario.

KRISTA DUCHENE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members. I wanted to add a little message of my own, if you will indulge me slightly.

All of you are aware of the very famous Boston Marathon. Well, one of Brantford's very own who lives in Brantford, Krista DuChene, at 41 years old, came in third place in the entire women's division. She dedicated her run to the memory of the Humboldt victims and their families.

An Olympian in the Rio games in 2016, she has always demonstrated an amazing spirit, dedication, determination, passion and love of what she does seldom ever seen. She's an amazing athlete, an amazing woman, amazing mother, amazing wife, and she carries a plate and three screws in her hip to remind her anything is possible.

Congrats to Krista DuChene of Brantford. Stratford, Ontario and Canada are proud of you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for your indulgence.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOUNT TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DU COMPTE À DES FINS PARTICULIÈRES DU MINISTÈRE DES RICHESSES NATURELLES ET DES FORÊTS

Mr. Yurek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

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. Jeff Yurek: This is a continuation of an ongoing effort to add some transparency to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to find out where the revenues are spent from the special purpose account. It also requires the ministry to establish an advisory committee to advise in the operation of that account and a procedure for receiving complaints from members of the public on decisions the minister makes regarding payments out of the special purpose account.

MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTIONS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE MINISTÈRE
DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE
ET DES DÉPENDANCES

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to establish the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions / Projet de loi 52, Loi créant le ministère de la Santé mentale et des dépendances.

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. Teresa J. Armstrong: The bill establishes the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to coordinate the transformation of Ontario's mental health and addiction services to ensure that every Ontarian can access the mental health and addiction supports they need when they need it and in their own communities.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT WAGES
ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LES SALAIRES
POUR LES MARCHÉS PUBLICS

Mr. Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant la fixation de salaires minimums pour les marchés publics.

1520

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.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The Government Contract Wages Act, 2018, establishes minimum rates of pay for people working under certain government contracts in the construction, building cleaning and security service industries. The bill would enable the government to require that contractors and subcontractors pay at least according to those rates, and would enable this new fair wage policy in legislation. The bill would create more opportunity and security for workers and help them get ahead in a rapidly changing economy.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Bill Walker: "Whereas in 2016 the Liberals promised to balance the budget, but instead the province is predicting at least six more years of deficit;

"Whereas paying the interest on the debt is costing Ontarians more than \$1 billion a month;

"Whereas these debt payments crowd out the ability to pay for the services that Ontarians rely on; and

"Whereas it is clear that the Liberal government will do, say, or promise anything to cling to power;

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

"To call on the government to stop making last-minute promises and immediately call a general election so Ontario voters can decide."

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Curtis.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

"Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes...;

"Whereas several Ontario coroner's inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix."

I agree, Speaker. I will sign it and give it to Harsaajan to bring down to the desk.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES
FOR YOUTH

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas:

"—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

"—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

"—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

"—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

"—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

"—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I'll sign my name to the petition.

TREE SEED SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is closing the Ontario Tree Seed Facility in September 2018;

“Whereas both public and private sector forest restoration experts have disagreed with the internal government decision and have expressed their concern;

“Whereas Ontario's forest restoration practitioners had expected that the MNRF seed services would not only continue, but be enhanced, in service to Ontario's forests, which face the triple threats of overdevelopment, invasive alien species and climate change;

“Whereas this decision is in opposition to other Canadian and global jurisdictions who support seed processing and banking as an essential social service to help forests adapt to climate change;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry take immediate action to put on hold any actions on the closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility and begin a comprehensive public review to explore innovative ways to revitalize government support for native tree seed services, as per the Ontario Tree Seed Coalition's letter to Minister Kathryn McGarry dated October 13, 2017.” I know the new minister has also received that letter.

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

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas Ontario's 627 long-term-care homes play a critical role in the support and care for more than 100,000 elderly Ontarians each and every year;

“Whereas nine out of 10 residents in long-term care today have some form of cognitive impairment, along with other complex medical needs, and require specialized, in-home supports to manage their complex needs;

“Whereas each and every year, 20,000 Ontarians remain on the waiting list for long-term care services and yet, despite this, no new beds are being added to the system;

“Whereas over 40% of Ontario's long-term-care beds require significant renovations or to be rebuilt and the current program put forward to renew them has had limited success;

“Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to support the needs of residents entrusted in their care;

“We, the undersigned, citizens of Ontario, call on the government to support the Ontario Long Term Care Association's Building Better Long-Term Care pre-budget submission and ensure better seniors' care through a commitment to improve long-term care.”

I fully agree. I will sign my name and give this to Madeline to bring up to the front.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas in 2016 the Liberals promised to balance the budget, but instead the province is predicting at least six more years of deficit;

“Whereas paying the interest on the debt is costing Ontarians more than \$1 billion a month;

“Whereas these debt payments crowd out the ability to pay for the services that Ontarians rely on; and

“Whereas it is clear that the Liberal government will do, say, or promise anything to cling to power;

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

“To call on the government to stop making last-minute promises and immediately call a general election so Ontario voters can decide.”

I affix my signature to this, as I agree with it.

LYME DISEASE

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

“Whereas Public Health Ontario's risk map for ticks currently underrepresents the risks of encountering ticks throughout the province; and

“Whereas black-legged ticks which spread the disease can be found anywhere in the province, but current methods for tracking are labour-intensive; and

“Whereas other jurisdictions have employed new methods for tracking ticks, such as mobile apps, to better inform the public and make it easier to report and map ticks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take concrete action to improve black-legged tick mapping throughout the province of Ontario to increase our awareness of the location of ticks while providing health care profession-

als with better information when encountering potential cases of Lyme disease.”

I totally agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with Hannah.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon to you, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas upwards of 30,000 Ontarians are on the wait-list for long-term care (LTC); and

“Whereas wait times for people who urgently need long-term care and are waiting in hospital have increased by 270% since the Liberal government came into office; and

“Whereas the number of homicides in long-term care being investigated by the coroner are increasing each year; and

“Whereas, over a period of 12 years, the government has consistently ignored recommendations regarding long-term care from provincial oversight bodies such as the Ontario Ombudsman and the Auditor General; and

“Whereas Ontario legislation does not require a minimum staff-to-resident ratio in long-term-care homes, resulting in insufficient staffing and inability for LTC homes to comply with ministry regulations;

“Whereas, on September 14, the Legislature voted 26 to 18 to immediately expand the scope of the public inquiry to address systemic issues in the LTC system;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act in the best interest of Ontarians and conduct a full public inquiry into seniors’ care with particular attention to the safety of residents and staff; quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and practices; capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; regulations, enforcement and inspections; and government action and inaction on previous recommendations to improve the long-term-care system.”

I agree, Speaker. I’m going to sign it and give it to Sophie to bring to the desk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Granville Anderson: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing

more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove 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 introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and will sign it and deliver it to page Will.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Robert Bailey: This is about Lyme disease, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Minister of Health direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, and to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I agree with this petition and send it down with Colin to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon again, Speaker. I have a petition started by Dr. Lesli Hapak, a periodontist in Windsor. It’s to the Ontario Legislature, and it’s to update Ontario fluoridation legislation.

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing

dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel”;

Speaker, I will shorten this down and just finish with this:

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

“That the Premier ... direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I’ll sign it and give it to Madeline to bring up to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just to let the House know, it is perfectly all right to shorten a petition, especially the really lengthy ones, because they still get handed in to the table anyway. So thank you for doing so.

At this point in time, I have to inform the House that the time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN FOR CARE AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2018 LOI DE 2018 POUR UN PLAN AXÉ SUR LE MIEUX-ÊTRE ET L’AVENIR (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 12, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 31, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: It’s a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on Bill 31, the government’s budget bill. This government’s delivering of a throne speech and a budget full of expensive goodies with an election just weeks away is nothing but a cynical attempt to deceive voters into believing they have fresh ideas and plans. They are campaigning for re-election on the taxpayers’ dime. They are decorating a broken window, and the people of

Ontario won’t be fooled. This is a tired and out-of-touch government that is desperate to cling to power—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There was a word you mentioned that I’m going to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Okay. Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: They will say anything to try and stay in office, and this budget is further evidence of their desperation. This is a government that talks a good game but fails to deliver time after time. It’s a government bereft of new ideas and soaked in its own self-interest. It’s a government that knows it is on the way out and will say anything to avoid losing the election on June 7.

The current government has presided over Ontario’s lost decade. Just recently, we learned that the data shows Ontario was mired in a prolonged period of economic weakness and lost ground with respect to the rest of the country on many important economic indicators, so it’s a good time to review the economic record.

Private sector job growth? Ontario is third-last. New debt per capita? Next to last. Real median household income? Dead last. As we can see, this government has been responsible for the decline of Ontario’s once-powerful economy. At one time, Ontario was the engine of Canada’s economy. Now it lags behind because of this government’s destructive policies.

Mr. Speaker, in Ontario we have out-of-control hydro rates, massive debt, never-ending deficits and a struggling economy. And how is this government proposing to fix this mess? Well, in this budget, we see more deficits—six years more—more spending and more debt. By the time those six years are up, our debt would be close to \$400 billion.

Hard-working Ontario taxpayers across the province are struggling because the Liberals have mismanaged the economy, and the government is promising more of the same. We need real action and policies that will strengthen our economy. It’s time to put an “Open for Business” sign, as Doug Ford says, up on our border in Ontario. That is not going to happen until this government is defeated. The Wynne Liberals don’t offer growth or expansion. They offer the same tired and ineffective policies that have made life more unaffordable and harder for Ontarians.

1540

The time for change is coming. The Wynne Liberals are not trustworthy. They will say or do anything to maintain their hold on power. But the people of Ontario, I believe, will not be deceived. Over the past 15 years—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw again. Was it the same word?

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Okay; all right. When I get to it next time—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You should know better than that.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I know you can use “deception.” I just didn’t know you couldn’t use the other one.

Over the past 15 years, the Liberals have slashed health care and closed more schools than any other government. They have also wasted a billion dollars on their own self-interest. Just look at the most recent report from the Auditor General. She found more than \$1 billion in waste in a single year by reviewing just a handful of ministries. The amount of waste under this government is stunning.

In 2016, the Auditor General told us this government wasted \$8 billion on eHealth. That is money that could have gone into front-line health care. It was wasted money that could have employed nurses, created more residency spaces for doctors and funded physiotherapy services for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, my two local hospitals, Stevenson Memorial in Alliston and Collingwood General and Marine, are planning redevelopment projects. Stevenson has spent \$1.3 million of its own money on stage 1 planning. That’s front-line health care money that they’ve had to spend because they haven’t had any assistance from the government. Collingwood General and Marine Hospital has spent \$1.2 million of front-line patient care money on planning.

Both hospitals need that money back, and so far the response from the government has been to promise to send just \$500,000 to each hospital. While I appreciate that, it’s really a token amount. Hospital officials tell me that using the government’s own formula, the total cost to plan and design the projects will exceed \$14 million per hospital. So to see \$8 billion wasted by this government on eHealth while important and critical items like the hospital redevelopment projects in my riding go unfunded is extremely concerning to me and my constituents.

Now, I’ve spoken about the hospital projects many times in and outside of this House. It’s important for both hospital redevelopments to proceed. Both of these facilities were built in the 1950s and 1960s. The infrastructure is old and it’s out of date. Both hospitals need more space to deliver services that patients depend on. These projects are about planning for the health care needs of patients into the future.

This government can’t be trusted when it claims to defend our health care system. Consider this: \$815 million cut from physician services in 2015 alone; 50 medical residency positions eliminated—I see the government has made an announcement today to try and rectify that, but it will take years to rectify that mistake—\$20 million slashed from the Assistive Devices Program; \$50 million cut from physiotherapy services for seniors; 1,600 nurses cut since the beginning of 2015; and nine consecutive years of hospital funding cuts, including four years of frozen hospital budgets, which has created what the NDP rightly calls “hallway medicine” in the province of Ontario.

I have it in my own hospital in Alliston. They’ve recently put up two beds in a hallway just outside the

emergency room, or just down the hall from the emergency room, and they were getting tired of wheeling out portable curtains, so they’ve actually put permanent curtain rods in the ceiling. These beds have now become permanent beds in the hallway—truly hallway medicine, recently brought to you by this government.

We’ve all heard about the lost decade in Ontario, as I mentioned earlier. Under this Liberal government, Ontario has become a have-not province. It’s a stunning fate for a province that once had the strongest and most robust economy in Canada. For 15 years, Premier Kathleen Wynne and her predecessor and the Liberal government have made life harder for Ontario families. But life is good for Premier Wynne and her Liberal insiders.

Families and hard-working citizens have suffered under this government. Jobs have left the province. Hydro rates have soared. Taxes and fees have ballooned. Our debt is the largest of any province or state in the world, or as we say, any subnational government in the world. And what are the Liberals promising in this budget? More debt, more deficits and \$2 billion in tax increases. This budget is all about the government’s survival, not fixing our ailing economy.

Across Ontario, hard-working people are feeling an economic pinch. Business owners feel left behind and marginalized. The government does not treat our small business owners as economic generators and job creators. No, this government treats small businesses like ATMs or bank machines: Whenever they need money, they just increase fees and taxes on small and medium-sized businesses.

Just recently, my constituents in Simcoe–Grey saw the result of Liberal anti-business policies. In the great town of Alliston, Jay and Ryan Klausen told the Alliston Herald newspaper that they will close their Bistro Burger Joint. The tipping point for them was this government’s decision to increase the minimum wage in Ontario from \$11.40 to \$14, and then to \$15 an hour. The Bistro Burger Joint opened in 2013. Jay and Ryan told the Herald that they had hopes to grow and expand the business, but found it was no longer sustainable with the rising cost of business in Ontario. The Bistro Burger Joint made all of its food from scratch, and used local Ontario-grown products for its menu items. This was a business that supported Ontario farmers.

How many more stories are there like this in this province? This government implemented the minimum wage increase so suddenly, it gave business almost no time to prepare. The Liberals promised support and help for businesses struggling with increased costs due to this decision, but where was the support for the Bistro Burger Joint? Instead, we get new taxes, which total about \$2 billion in this budget, affecting 1.8 million Ontarians and over 20,000 businesses.

We also now know the impact the minimum wage has had on society’s most vulnerable citizens. I must say that during committee hearings a few months ago, pre-budget hearings, the government was warned that this would

happen. In yesterday's *Globe and Mail*, reporter Noella Ovid had an excellent story about the impact this change has had in our province. In the article, we learn that organizations like Torchlight Services and Community Living Guelph Wellington were providing work contracts to citizens with disabilities—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Point of order: I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm listening intently and I wish more people would, because I don't believe we have a quorum in the chamber at the moment.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I return to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: These jobs represented wonderful opportunities for many people. The pay wasn't important. The jobs were about experience, opportunity and positive interactions in the workplace. The government's minimum wage bill has eliminated the exception for sheltered workshops, and these jobs are now drying up and disappearing.

Changes made by this government are negatively impacting our society's most vulnerable people. Jobs that provided positive experiences for many people are now disappearing because of this government's reckless actions. As I said, Mr. Speaker, they were warned about this.

Under a PC government, our society's most vulnerable aren't going to see their jobs disappear; they're going to be taken off the tax rolls altogether. Our leader, Doug Ford, is going to eliminate provincial income tax for anyone earning minimum wage. This promise will save a hard-working citizen earning \$28,000 up to \$800 each year. It will apply to full- and part-time workers, both youth and adults.

The Liberal government will do anything to find more ways to tax the people of Ontario. Anything they can think of, they will find a way to tax it. If the desperate Liberals remain in power, taxes will be going up. Just consider their history on this front. Since 2003, when they came to power, tax revenue has gone up 111%, increasing from \$49 billion to \$103.6 billion. Inflation over that same time has been 29%, certainly not 111%. Who would have dreamed, when I was in government over 15 years ago, that the government of Ontario would bring in tax revenues today of over \$100 billion? It's gotten out of control.

Despite this massive increase in taxation, this government has still increased the provincial debt by 125% to more than \$325 billion, and they're planning more debt and deficits in this budget—as I said before, six more years of deficits, in fact, bringing up the debt of the province to \$400 billion, with well over \$1 billion a month in interest. That could build a lot of hospitals in Simcoe–Grey—at least two each month.

1550

The government's record is clear, Mr. Speaker: new taxes, higher income taxes, eco taxes, fee increases, skyrocketing hydro bills, the HST, the cap-and-trade tax. This government has one goal in mind: to take more of your money and to spend it on enriching its insider friends.

The government wants everybody to believe that this budget presents a new, bold path forward. It hopes that, with some nice words and expensive promises, all of its mistakes, scandals and poor treatment of Ontarians will just disappear in time for the election in a few weeks.

Nowhere has the government's mistreatment of Ontario's residents been more evident than on the long-term-care file. I've seen this evolve over the years, as a constituency person. Not a week goes by in my offices in Collingwood and Alliston that I'm not contacted about the desperate need for more long-term-care beds. In fact, I've done two resolutions: one not passed by this government a few years ago and one passed by this government. In total, they've built 18 beds since 2003 in my riding—18 beds. The largest municipality outside of the GTA is Simcoe county, and we've gotten 18 beds.

In Simcoe–Grey alone, we're quite desperate for beds. There are more than 27,000 seniors in Simcoe–Grey. My offices often deal with seniors or their family members trying to find long-term-care solutions. We often see elderly residents—even under hospital care—trying to navigate the system. There are never enough PSWs or PSW hours to meet demands out there, so home care is very difficult to get and sustain and to get enough of.

The wait-lists for a long-term-care or a nursing home bed are astounding. At long-term-care homes in my riding, the majority of wait-lists exceed 300 days. That's almost a year. A lot of people just pass away before they ever get the care they need or the bed they need, or they're stuck in hospital as—that's what we call an ALC patient. They don't want to be there and their families don't want them there, but there's nowhere else to go. Many are forced to make the difficult decision to accept care outside their local area. This creates pressure on long-term-care centres in neighbouring communities and creates hardships for families who must travel to see their loved ones.

Today, our long-term-care facilities are 99.9% full 100% of the time, and the wait-lists continue to grow. Current statistics show us that wait-lists in Ontario by 2021—so that's just around the corner—will be close to 50,000 people. That's more than double the current wait-list. Something must be done.

What have the Liberals done in long-term care over the last 15 years? According to them, since 2003, they've created just over 10,000 new beds. That's just over 700 beds per year, at a time when the wait-list has stayed constant at more than 20,000 people. In Simcoe–Grey, we received a total of, as I hope I said, 18 beds since 2003. We know this government is desperate. We know they're promising to build new beds. But look at the government's track record. They've had 15 years to

deliver new beds, and they've done virtually nothing. So why should we trust them now?

This budget is not an agenda for a government; it's a desperate attempt by a government to stay in power when it knows it is on its way out. The election is just a few weeks away. The Liberals know that they are in trouble. That's why they've broken their promise to balance the budget, and that's why they're presenting this list of expensive promises they have no intention of keeping. The time has come for change.

If you look at the budget bill carefully, there's nothing in the bill that starts to implement the government's big-ticket and expensive promises. This is clear and obvious evidence that this bill is nothing but empty Liberal election promises that will never see the light of day.

Now, look at this bill even closer: Schedule 33 of the bill allows the government to implement their \$2-billion tax hike on the hard-working people of Ontario. It also shockingly gives the Premier a loophole to raise taxes after the election through any bill introduced in 2018. There's no doubt of their intentions: The Liberals are going to raise taxes again and again, one way or another, should they win the next election. They can't be trusted with Ontario's economy, our health care system or our education system. They won't lower hydro prices to offer relief to hard-working families. They're in it for themselves.

Just look at the government's record on hydro: Under the Liberals, since 2013, Ontario residents have seen their hydro bills triple. The average family is now paying more than \$1,000 a year for hydro more than they did in 2003. While hydro bills have gone through the roof, the friends of this Liberal government are getting rich and laughing all the way to the bank. We only have to look at the CEO of Hydro One, who last year gave himself a bonus of \$1.7 million and took home, in total compensation, slightly over \$6 million.

I don't think that sounds right, and I don't think the people of Ontario think that's right. Hydro customers are angry and tired of getting ripped off, and the man in charge is walking away as the six-million-dollar man.

A PC government is going to use every option it has to remove the CEO and the entire board at Hydro One. It's time for trust and accountability to the people of Ontario to return.

Mr. Speaker, Premier Kathleen Wynne can't be trusted. Her government will say anything to stay in power. Right now, they're spending taxpayers' money to tour the province, to make expensive promises in a desperate attempt to get re-elected. They're writing all kinds of cheques in this budget, but the budget bill is proof that they know those cheques are going to bounce. They are promising more deficits and more debt at a time when our provincial debt is already, as I said, more than \$325 billion. They've been in power for 15 years and have ignored the needs of Ontario citizens while helping their insiders get rich.

This budget contains \$2 billion in new taxes. They have introduced \$2 billion—that's actually in the budget

bill, in one of the schedules—in new taxes. This is an election year; we're seven weeks before an election. Think what they're going to do to you, folks, after the election. They have some \$6 billion or more in promises. They need another \$6 billion after that spending spree, to even come close to balancing the budget six years from now. So it's a six-six-six program. It's pretty easy to remember. That means they need another \$6 billion in either revenue or cuts or "efficiencies," as they call them. When we talk about efficiencies, apparently they're cuts. When they talk about cuts, they call them "efficiencies."

It's smoke and mirrors. The numbers don't add up. The auditor has consistently said that for years, and I take the auditor's word over the Liberal Party's word or the Liberal government's word.

I know the people of Ontario won't be fooled. They know they're being bought with their own money. They know that when it comes to the hydro scheme or any of these big, new, expensive promises, we're past their children paying excessive taxes in the future and not having any money in their pockets to raise their own families and put food on the table. We're down to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who will be saddled with these bills.

Enough is enough. Please, people of Ontario, speak out on June 7. Do the right thing and throw these people out of office.

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

Do you have a point of order?

Hon. Michael Coteau: No. I never said anything.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, all right. I saw you standing.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I was hoping he wasn't going to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): So I'll move over to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was beginning to think that the Liberal caucus had Prozac soup for lunch, because they've been sitting there so calmly, not interjecting to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

I was taking down notes, Speaker, and I had difficulty at the beginning of his presentation, because every time I took down a note, you would stand up and ask him to withdraw, which he did, which left me little to say.

But what I have written down is that he was calling the Liberal government "cynical" and "out of touch." Then he started talking about hospital redevelopment projects in his riding and about hallway medicine, and now it's permanent because the hospitals have had to install permanent curtain rods in their hallways.

He called Ontario "a have-not province." I didn't hear one member of the government object to being called a have-not province, so it must be true, or else they would have said, "No, your information is out of date."

He talked about how full the hospitals and the long-term-care homes are in his area. It's the same down my way. He told us how they've been there for 15 years, and

we still have 20,000 people on the waiting lists for long-term care.

He called the government “desperate.” He said, when we look at their track record, “Why should we trust them now,” just weeks before a provincial election?

He said the Premier has a loophole in there to raise taxes after the election. He said the Liberals can’t be trusted. He said they’re in it for themselves.

He talked about the six-million-dollar man at hydro who Doug Ford, his leader, is going to get rid of—and the entire board of Hydro, I guess—despite the cost. He didn’t go there.

All in all, a very informative 20 minutes, I thought, Speaker.

1600

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the two members for their comments. The member from the Conservative Party just dusted off an old speech that’s been passed around, and the NDP member over there just repeated everything the Conservative said, which is pretty much the NDP tactic these days: just repeat what other parties are saying.

But I’d like to say this, Mr. Speaker: We have a government in place in Ontario here, the Ontario Liberal Party, that has put in place, I believe, some very progressive, forward-thinking policies, and it’s reflected in our budget. When I’ve knocked on doors and spoken to people in my constituency, they talk about how we continue to move Ontario forward.

This morning, I had the opportunity to go to North York General Hospital. They talk about hospitals and a lack of funding. I was there, and it was the 50th anniversary of the hospital. In the budget there’s a proposal to expand the budget by \$10 million, in addition to that, to support their capital plan to build and expand on that hospital. So there are a lot of good things going on in my community and in many communities across Ontario.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, when they talk about our plan, and we look at them as a party, they have no plan at this point. People are worried here in Ontario. They don’t know where Doug Ford is going to take this province. The thing that really scares people at the door when we talk about the budget is the fact that the Conservatives would remove rent control here in Ontario. I know the NDP would agree with me on this point: that we could see rates go up by 20%, 30%, 40% if the Conservatives got into power.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, someone came to see me recently when their rent was proposed to go up 100% before we put the changes in. So I would be very wary of a Conservative government here in Ontario.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I had other comments to make, but I’ve never heard so much fear-mongering, Chicken Little comments: “The sky is falling. The sky is falling.” There are a lot of great things hap-

pening around this province, I would say, in spite of the government. We’ve got some great things going on in my riding, in Sarnia–Lambton, and I’ll talk about them a little later.

I did want to make a few comments on the member from Simcoe–Grey, who has got a lot of experience here in this House. He’s seen a lot of budgets. He’s seen a lot of different governments that are in trouble, that are on their last legs and come out with these kinds of budgets and communications documents.

I noticed that he said—I think this is true for all the provinces; I know it’s true in my riding—that there’s a lack of long-term-care beds. There’s a waiting list in Sarnia–Lambton as well as Simcoe–Grey. I’m sure I speak for across the province: the wait-lists exist that exist.

He talked about how they’re going to introduce in the budget, that they’ve admitted to, \$2 billion in new taxes. Like the member says, what waits for the general public after the election if by some slim chance this government were to be returned? Which I don’t think is the case. But it would be very costly for the taxpayers of Ontario. The 1.8 million hard-working Ontarians would actually see their taxes going up. Some 20,000 businesses would see their taxes increase right after the election.

I met with some small business people in my riding the other day, and they’re very impacted by Bill 148. I hope I get a chance to touch on it later. I don’t have time in this comment. But it’s the matter of unintended consequences. It’s been very costly for businesses in this province. I hope some of the members would acknowledge that in some of their comments.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It’s my pleasure to rise and add just a few comments to what the member from Simcoe–Grey had said.

First, I’m going to talk about what the member from Don Valley East said, though, the Minister of Community and Social Services. I don’t know how he can say it with a straight face, that the NDP agree with the Conservatives and the Liberals and take their stuff when, in fact, it is the Liberals, as everybody in this province knows, who, every time we announce something, take it and throw it in a budget. They don’t put money to back it up. They just announce it in the budget. It’s a haphazard, pulled-together idea. It’s not the full plan like we have.

For instance, we talked about pharmacare, and two days later, when they were bringing the budget forward, they scrambled to get it in because we announced it at a convention. The pharmacare plan is not universal pharmacare even though they want to say it is.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I’ve struck a nerve, obviously, Speaker.

We’re talking about dental care, and suddenly—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock. Excuse me. I’ve asked for order. I will insist upon

order or I'll enact an act that you haven't heard of before. So therefore—

Interjection: The clam chowder act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now that we have order, I will revert to the member from Windsor West to continue her comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. I struck a nerve. Unfortunately, under the Liberals' dental care plan you wouldn't be able to afford to get a root canal once that nerve was struck, but with our plan you can.

The point is, it's laughable that the Minister of Children and Youth Services would say that we're taking ideas from other parties when people have seen time and time again that the Liberals are the ones that take somebody else's plan and then rip it into shreds and come forward with some kind of haphazard plan that doesn't really help the people of the province of Ontario.

The one thing I do agree on with what the member from Simcoe-Grey said is that we have a crisis in our long-term-care sector. We have a crisis in our hospitals. We have a crisis in our education sector. We have a crisis when it comes to helping people with developmental disabilities. We have 15 years of Liberal crises over and over and over again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I revert to the member from Simcoe-Grey for final comments.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh and the members from Don Valley East, Sarnia-Lambton—it was very kind of my colleague—and Windsor West.

I guess the member from Don Valley East, the honourable minister, and his colleagues across the way often—in fact, the one line they have memorized is, “You don't have a plan, PCs.” Well, you ain't seen nothing yet. Just keep holding on to your horses.

Since I have this opportunity to do some free advertising and I'm not spending \$7,500 per visit going around the province announcing my campaign platform on the government's dime, as this government did four times today and 25 times in the past two weeks, so far Mr. Ford has talked about fixing the hydro mess. One way you do that is to fire the six-million-dollar man and the board that refuses to do the right thing. Yes, you can legally do it. I'm a former Minister of Energy, so there are ways to do it.

The leader of the PCs, Doug Ford, has also said that there will be no income tax on anyone making under \$30,000. Cut out the middle man. Why give you money and then you give grants back and all that sort of nonsense? It's a straight, clean way to do it. People flip their cheque over and they see that their income tax is reduced to zero.

He announced today restoring responsibility, accountability and trust in government, and one of the big things there is to restore the Attorney General's power to monitor government advertising. The government changed that law. You can drive a truck through it now, which is pretty clear. If you're ever on your PC or watching a

hockey game or reading a newspaper—although the newspaper association says you don't do enough advertising in newspapers—there's \$40 million or \$50 million in government advertising out there at any given time.

Also, have an independent audit—I got applause when I said this on Saturday to a group in my riding in Creemore: Audit the Liberals' 15 years in office to see what they did do and spent the money and how they raised it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Why, thank you, Speaker. As always, it's an honour to be called upon by you to stand and speak in the provincial Parliament.

My constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh are tuned in. They know an election is coming and they are aware of the key elements in this bill and they have indicated to me that they're very suspicious. That's because few people in my riding believe in this Liberal government anymore. They've had too many disappointments, as have I.

I gave a bit of thought on how to start my discussion this afternoon. I reread the throne speech and counted more than 70 times the word “care” was used. I deduced that the Liberals were rebranding themselves as a party that actually cares. I think perhaps they had “great expectations” that they could sell that concept.

1610

Speaker, you may remember the Charles Dickens novel by the same name, where Pip fights to see good triumph over evil. It's a story about poverty, wealth and rejection. Here in Ontario, we're starting to see the great divide, the widening gap between those who have a well-paying, full-time job with benefits, who can afford to buy a home and raise a family, and those who can't and likely never will.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo reminded us just yesterday that two people earning good money will take 15 years or more to save up enough money to afford a down payment on a house in the greater Toronto area, because of the \$200,000 or more that is required for a down payment because of the cost of housing in this area.

The Liberals, as we know, have been in power for the past 15 years. The polls suggest they are about to see first-hand a rejection of their great expectations.

For me, Speaker, the throne speech, the budget and the election will all come down to just two things: trust and credibility. It's been said that the most expensive thing in the world is trust. It takes years to earn and it can be lost in a matter of seconds. Credibility is lost when there are big discrepancies between what our political leaders and parties say and what they do. Trust is built on credibility, and credibility comes from acting in the interest of others before your own.

Let's start there. Let's start with the trust and credibility that sits like a foggy day in Newfoundland atop the Liberals' so-called fair hydro plan. At the time the fair hydro plan was brought in, the polls, as they are

today, were not very favourable for the Liberals. The Premier said she had no intention of ever selling Hydro One. Then she was told that some of her more wealthy donors thought they could make a lot of money on a Hydro sell-off, so she changed her mind. She changed direction. She risked her credibility.

Remember, Speaker, credibility is lost when there are huge discrepancies between what a leader says and what a leader does. A hidden agenda destroys trust with the electorate. Credibility matters, at least to some of us. Trust takes years to build, seconds to break and forever to repair. Without character there is no credibility, and without credibility there is no trust. So this election comes down to trust and credibility.

The bill was presented almost by way of asking us to imagine the scales of justice. Close your eyes, Speaker, and get a picture of this: the scales of justice. Now, if you put the Liberal trust and credibility in one cup on the scales of justice, and we put their broken promises, our disappointments, their stretch goals, their hidden costs, their scandals and their political baggage on the other side of the scale—it doesn't matter where we start, be it eHealth, Ornge air ambulance, the gas plants, the Sudbury bribery scandal, the prison sentence for the former Premier's senior aide for wiping evidence from computer hard drives, the questionable fundraising pressure tactics, and the list goes on and on—those scales tip. They tip downward for the Liberals. They have a lot to answer for.

They may wish to rebuild a relationship with the voters, but a relationship without trust is like a Windsor-built Fiat Chrysler minivan that has run out of gas. You can sit in it on the side of the road all day long, as comfortable as it is, but the sad fact of life is, without gas in that tank, it's not going anywhere.

During the last 15 years, our hydro rates climbed by 300%. And yet when the so-called fair hydro plan was introduced, the Liberals couldn't understand why not everyone was doing backflips over a 25% reduction in the cost of residential hydro after it all went up by 300%.

The Liberals sold off a majority share in our hydro system, our publicly-owned and -controlled hydro system. We used to receive revenue from our shares, money that was used for health care, education and infrastructure.

When they couldn't stand the political heat and public pushback from the fallout from that decision, they got out of the kitchen, retreated and lowered rates by 25%. But in order to do that, they mortgaged our future. The cost of that rebate, the cost of that so-called fair hydro plan, will be, according to the Auditor General, \$28 billion.

I asked the auditor once when, at the public accounts committee, we were discussing another issue, an egregious issue that was so outrageous. Taxpayer money was misspent. There was no challenge to shoddy workmanship. Contractors had their work signed off on despite sloppy work and were given new contracts even though they went way over budget. No one ever went after the project designers and consultants, who were not really qualified to do the original design. They were never told

to repay the extra costs, so the taxpayers had to pay, and these incompetents were given new contracts. Contractors subbed out 100% of the work. And at least once, a huge delay on a major project was caused when a subcontractor walked off the job, taking the only set of blueprints with him.

All of this, and I said to the Auditor General, "In all of your years as an auditor, have you ever seen a situation as egregious as this, such a disregard for taxpayers' money?" You know what she said, Speaker? She said, "You won't like the answer, but the so-called fair hydro plan is worse."

In fact, here's what the Auditor General has written about the so-called fair hydro plan in her document "Concerns About Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Value For Money," a special report issued just last October:

"The Office of the Auditor General recommends that the government:

"(a) record the true financial impact of the fair hydro plan's electricity rate reduction on the province's budgets and consolidated financial statements; and

"(b) use a financing structure to fund the rate reduction that is least costly for Ontarians."

The Auditor General didn't like the way the Liberals had devised a new accounting procedure, saying it was "not in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards." She worried that "when organizational structures and transactions are designed to remove transparency and accountability, and unnecessarily cost Ontarians billions of dollars, the responsibility of an Auditor General is to apprise the Legislature and the public in accordance with the Auditor General's mandate."

In her summary, it was clear to her that "government's intention in creating the accounting/financing design to handle the costs of the electricity rate reduction was to avoid affecting its fiscal plan. That is, the intention was to avoid showing a deficit in the province's budgets and consolidated financial statements for 2017-18 to 2019-20, and to likewise show no increase in the provincial net debt."

Speaker, I know it's tough to fool you, and you likely knew what was happening, but for those who didn't quite grasp the nuance, the Auditor General put it quite bluntly, saying that "it was known that the planned financing structure could result in significant unnecessary costs" for the people of Ontario.

To put it another way, she says, "The substance of the issue is straightforward. Ratepayers' hydro bills will be lower than the cost of the electricity used as a result of the electricity rate reduction. However, power generators will still be owed the full cost of the electricity they supply, so the government needs to borrow cash to cover the shortfall to pay them."

Speaker, the bottom line: The government created a needlessly complex accounting and financing structure to the hydro rate reduction. Why? Well, in order to avoid showing a deficit, or an increase in the debt, in its

budgets and in the province's consolidated financial statements.

1620

Here's the result of that, according to the independent watchdog, Ontario's Auditor General, who says that "the only electricity rate reduction lasting beyond 2027 will be a 9% reduction mainly from the HST rebate and other taxpayer-funded programs. From 2028 on, ratepayers will be charged more than the actual cost of the electricity being produced in order to pay back the borrowings. The total borrowings to be repaid will be an estimated \$39.4 billion, made up of \$18.4 billion borrowed to cover the current rate reduction shortfall and \$21 billion in accumulated interest over the term of the borrowings."

She also says this new financial arrangement dreamed up by the Liberals for their own political purposes could result in the people of Ontario, the taxpayers—you and me and our kids, grandkids and great-grandkids—paying the extra interest costs over 30 years. That could total up to \$4 billion more than necessary.

Speaker, people ask me why it's so hard to trust these Liberals. I ask them, why is it so hard to keep a promise? The most expensive thing in the world is trust. It can very well take us years before we earn the trust of the electorate, and we can lose it in just a few seconds, hours or days. I submit that the Liberals have lost the trust of the electorate on the hydro file. Their hidden agenda has destroyed that trust.

They wanted to run an election claiming to have balanced the books. Just a few months ago, they were claiming not only to balance the books this year but to keep them balanced for many years to come. Now they want us to believe that they really did balance the books—honest—but now they need to run deficits for the near- and mid-term. That's the hydro file, Speaker.

Let's turn the page to Ontario's health care system. It's anything but. It's not healthy, it's not caring and it's not a system that functions well. If anything, it's a health care system in crisis, and it has been for a long time. For years, the Liberals had other priorities. Hospital budgets were frozen or sometimes just given a bare-bones increase to try to match inflation.

Mental health was set way back on the back burner. I've told you before, Speaker, about the Maryvale facility in my riding. I did a tour there a while ago, and nothing has changed. For 15 years, Maryvale has not had even an extra penny given from this Liberal government to base funding.

The dedicated people who work there deal with children and youth with mental health challenges. They see 450 kids at their facility a year. When a child psychiatrist admits as many as 320 other kids with serious mental health issues to a hospital, the Maryvale people attend to them as well. On top of that, their five child psychiatrists see 350 kids a year when their family doctors have noted serious concerns. And here's the kicker, like I say—and the Liberals have to wear this; there's no way around it—Maryvale has not had a penny increase in their base budget in 15 years. Not one penny,

despite the rising cost of utilities, insurance, WSIB, maintenance and repairs. Not one cent in 15 years. They survived because of their fundraising from the public.

Speaker, I don't know if you're aware of this, but children's mental health is not a mandated service in Ontario. It's discretionary. The Liberals are failing our children and youth, and they have been for the past 15 years, at least when it comes to base funding at Maryvale. We have to find the money if we want to fix the solution.

I think that half a million dollars might help Maryvale. They have 69 young people waiting for outpatient counselling. The wait-list is five to six months. They have 23 kids waiting for day treatment; they have to wait as long as a year. Money is needed for four and a half full-time counsellors to keep teens safe and enrolled in school. They need too to pare down the waiting list for outpatient counselling. Two counsellors are needed to service Essex, Harrow and Kingsville, and a half-time equivalent in your riding, Speaker, to increase to a full-time position in Leamington. They need money for two child and youth workers to service the outpatient needs of the 23 youth waiting for day treatment.

Windsor's Maryvale is just one example of the Liberal failure in mental health. Just recently, the members for London West and London—Fanshawe told us about one of their constituents, David Warren. His wife, Dawn, waited in a hallway—not overnight, not two nights, not three, not four. She waited five days and nights in a hallway at the London Health Sciences Centre before a bed opened up for her in the mental health ward.

If you listen to the Liberals, they try to tell us that they've been on top of this file and there's more money in the budget to help with situations such as this. But this election is about trust and credibility. None of us on the opposition benches have any faith or any trust in this Liberal Party that has been in power over the past 15 years. Their credibility is shot. No one believes them anymore, and who can blame them? They'll say anything and promise anything, in a last-ditch attempt to cling to power.

Watching them on a daily basis, I'm reminded of a quote by Peter C. Newman. He was writing in his book *When the Gods Changed*. He was discussing a certain federal political party, but I think his quote is applicable here. These good folks across the aisle, the Liberals—who have been the government, making decisions, bungling files and budgets, for the past 15 years—to borrow a quote, are "a disorganized gang of desperadoes with an insatiable appetite for power." How true; sadly, how true.

They have passed their "best before" date. Their shelf life has expired. Their mandate is up. On their watch, we have hallway medicine: people on stretchers for days in hallways, in broom closets, TV rooms, washrooms and linen closets. We heard earlier from the member from Simcoe—Grey how they have now put permanent curtain rods in the ceiling in the hallways up his way. They have no alternative because of a lack of funding but to implement full-time hallway medicine.

We have lengthy wait-lists for long-term care, with patients being told that they have no choice but to be transferred to homes in communities they have never lived in. They've never lived there, and unless loved ones have a vehicle to get there, they can't visit them. It's just unreal.

We don't have enough trained personal support workers. We don't staff our long-term-care homes the way they should be staffed. We don't fund the PSWs in a manner that convinces them to stay in the profession. Oh, the Liberals say all that will change with a budget that no one believes in. Who do we trust, Speaker? We know what the Liberals have done.

We know what the Conservatives did the last time they held the reins of power—you knew this was coming. Mike Harris and his government closed 28 hospitals, did away with 7,000 hospital beds and fired 6,000 nurses. Hey, Speaker, no party is blameless when it comes to the health care crisis, but the Liberals have to carry the can for what they've been responsible for during their 15 years in power.

I can tell you, Speaker, in my humble opinion, change is coming to Ontario, a change for the better. An NDP government would end hallway medicine. We would fix seniors' care. We have a plan to provide drug and dental coverage for all Ontarians. We'll convert student loans to grants and we'll create thousands of co-op jobs. And middle-class families will be protected because we'll tell the most wealthy taxpayers to pay their fair share.

We have a daycare plan: free child care for families who need it most, and we'll charge, on average, \$12 for all others.

Hospitals will get an immediate funding increase of 5.3%, with another \$916 million in additional investment. That's right. We have \$19 billion set aside for hospital capital expansion over the next 10 years. We'll create 2,000 new hospital beds.

To my friends in the long-term care sector, I say to you, we will create 15,000 more long-term-care beds over the next five years and another 25,000 after that. We will implement a standard of care that will see each resident accorded at least four hours of hands-on care a day.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm happy to respond to my colleague across the way. I think the quick summary of his speech is that he's very critical of Liberals if they have proposed a deficit budget. But, in fact, if the NDP are elected, he has a long catalogue of additional funding that they would spend. So I'm not quite sure how those two thoughts fit together.

1630

I thought I would take a novel approach and discuss what is actually in the budget bill that we're debating this afternoon. I thought I would talk about retirement security, because retirement security is a top priority for our government, and we recognize that members and bene-

ficiaries of pension plans are concerned about their pensions. That's why we have been a leader in retirement security and why last fall we passed legislation to increase the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This fund guarantees payment of certain benefits from the pension plan if the employer becomes insolvent or goes bankrupt. Did you know, Speaker, that we are the only province in Canada to have a pension guarantee fund?

As I say, last fall, we had legislation to increase the guaranteed payment from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per month, but what we have done in this budget is to actually introduce part of the legislation that would make it retroactive to May 2017. The reason for that is we're very concerned about those people who worked for Sears Canada. As we all know, with Sears stores in our neighbourhoods—certainly I'm in one—we have pensioners who are very concerned about the loss of their pensions. We're making that increase to the pension guarantee fund retroactive specifically so it can apply to the employees of Sears. That's what's really in the budget bill, Speaker.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to rise to add a few comments to today's debate. I have listened to both the government members and the NDP members, and it sounds to me as if they're trading laundry lists of goodies for people in Ontario to be bribed with their own money.

I thought back a little ways to an opportunity where we saw the way in which the Premier has operated the responsibilities of being the Premier. It takes me back to the opportunity that was just an astounding example of the lack of confidence that people have in this government. That was the publication by the eight officers of the assembly of an open letter to the Attorney General. Some of you may remember it was about two years ago that this took place.

I bring it up because of the fact that it was unprecedented. It was unprecedented for independent members of the assembly, the eight people who have these responsibilities, like integrity and environment, privacy and so forth. Those people came together and wrote this open letter, which said to the Premier that they were very concerned with the manner in which the budgets were being analyzed and being divided out, particularly the question of oversight and the reduction of oversight for something like Hydro One, and the need for performance audits.

I thought that it was an opportunity to look forward at the laundry lists and look back at an earlier demonstration of the Premier's leadership over the powers in Hydro One and various other responsibilities.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on his contributions in this debate with regard to Bill 31, the budget bill.

There is a lot of speculation as to the timing of this bill coming forward in the House, and the member's theme through his debate talked about faith and trust. We have

to talk about that, because a lot of people are losing, as he mentioned, faith and trust in government. Specifically, I think this Liberal government bringing this forward is kind of a little too late; 15 years, it took them, to address things like mental health.

The member talked about Maryvale in his riding—which has had frozen funds for 15 years—which helps children and youth with mental health issues. It's not just in his riding where we find that these things are now being squeezed and coming to a point where, literally, public agencies are publicly coming out and saying, "We can't continue. We're going to have to shutter our agencies." I had that happen. I met with several agencies during the summer of 2017. We went to Vanier, an organization that helps with youth mental health issues. Various agencies throughout London came together. The member from London West and I were both there. We sat at the boardroom table, and they told us, "We cannot continue the programs that we offer if we don't get some help with funding. We are doing so much more with less. We cannot keep this capacity going."

It is so important that we get this right. There's an election coming up, and the people of Ontario have an extremely important decision to make. The fact that this government is now throwing \$2.1 billion at mental health—people are saying, "A little too late."

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, I'm a little baffled by what I'm hearing from the opposite side. I hear comments from the member, who I really respect—but nevertheless, he's calling people on this side "desperadoes." I'm hearing the word "bribery" coming from the member from the PC caucus. What's interesting is that every morning here in question period—and they're alleging this presumably because they're saying that we're investing in programs that are going to help people live a better quality of life, that we're going to improve health care, that we're going to improve education, that we're going to help support families who are trying to provide child care to their kids. Nevertheless, they're criticizing us for making these investments at this time. And yet, every morning in question period, I listen to those same members from those same parties and their leaders talk about how we're not investing enough in health care, how we're not investing enough in education, how we're not investing enough in child care: "You need to do more."

So I think both parties opposite need to figure out what they actually stand for. It's a little late in the game for them to do that, but I urge them to get on it, because when you go to see the voters, you need to pick a lane.

Right now, on the one hand, folks are saying that we're desperate and we're bribing people, and on the other hand they're saying, "Invest more." They're basically saying, "Do more bribery. Do more desperation"; on the other hand, they're criticizing us for it.

That's the first thing.

The second thing is, the comments from the NDP member about mental health are totally misplaced and

show that she doesn't have an understanding of what we've done in past budgets. If you look at the amount of money we've invested in mental health year after year after year, it has increased. Whether it be in post-secondary institutions, whether it be in schools, whether it be in communities, those investments continue to increase—various forms of mental health for all segments of the population.

So I'd ask the members opposite to get a hold of the facts, and I'd ask the members opposite to pick a lane. The people of Ontario deserve that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for final comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I picked a lane. For 15 years, you guys have been in the middle of the road. You haven't done anything. Mental health for children in Ontario is still discretionary; it's not mandatory. I'm not taking any lessons from you on the mental health aspects. For 15 years, you've been sitting there doing nothing—nothing your party has done for 15 years to help children with mental health issues in my riding. I've given you a perfect example of that.

Speaker, I started off by saying that the throne speech and the budget would be a test of the Liberals' credibility, and I'm not the only one saying this. For example, the people who write the editorials in the Liberal-friendly Toronto Star wrote, "These aren't announcements from a government with a clear path to turning them into reality." Their editorial writers read between the lines and said it was a "promise-everything budget." I guess it's like rolling the dice, hoping for the best, with great expectations. But the Liberals, according to the Toronto Star, were "offering too much of a good thing at a moment when their credibility is stretched very thin." They were tossing a lot of stuff at the wall, hoping some of it would stick in the minds of the voters, hoping the icing on the cake was sweeter than that sour taste they've left us with over 15 years.

It will be up to the voters to pass the final judgment on this. No matter what we say today, no matter what the Liberals promise or the Doug Ford Conservatives eventually say they will do, the final word, as always, goes to the voters, and they are never wrong. No matter what choice they make, the voters are never wrong, and they'll be judging us all on our trust, on our credibility. When they look at our record over the past 15 years and they look at that Liberal record, they will be making a judgment based on 15 years—not what you just put in a budget and hope it will chase everybody's memory away. The people in Ontario have a longer-term memory than that.

1640

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes this afternoon on the budget. I'm going to start by just reflecting a bit on my time here in the Legislature and how fortunate I have felt to be elected on a number of

occasions by the constituents of Thunder Bay–Atikokan as an MPP, as a minister. I also feel very fortunate to have been elected into government. It's an amazing place, and we all have an incredible opportunity to be here and represent our constituents and do what we can on their behalf.

As much as I have appreciated and enjoyed my experience, I can tell you that it is not every day when you sit in this place that you don't occasionally reflect on maybe what you are doing here, because as incredible a place as it can be, it can be a really ugly, ugly place. I have watched—I will tell you my opinion—the debate deteriorate over the last three years or so. It's my opinion that both of the opposition parties made strategic decisions about three years ago that they were going to spend a great deal of their time not discussing policy or programs, but focus on accomplishing only one thing: to attack personally the Premier of the province of Ontario, and to demean and diminish, as best as they were able, her popularity with the people of this province. That's my opinion. I've talked about this in our caucus a number of times.

I would say with all likelihood, to some degree, that they have had some success—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh—

Interjection: Stop the clock, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes, stop the clock, please.

I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order, Speaker: I really like the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I'm listening to him and I really like what he has to say. I just wish more members would be in here to hear him, because I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Speaker, a quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A quorum is now present. I will now return to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for further debate.

Hon. Bill Mauro: So that's my opinion. That's what I think the opposition parties tried to do. I think that, unfortunately, they did it with some success. When you ask people what it is their feelings are about the leader of our party, they can't really articulate anything. All they know is they have a sense, I think, owing a great deal to what both opposition parties did. That's why I find this place can be a very ugly place from time to time.

I would use as an example the Sudbury by-election so-called “scandal,” and what was an incredible abuse of what I would say parliamentary privilege is, where often-times things were said in this chamber that they would never dare to say outside. What did we find as the Sudbury by-election so-called “scandal” concluded? The judge dismissed it out of hand. It was a directed verdict. He didn't even make the defence in the so-called

“scandal” present an argument; he just simply dismissed it.

We all had a sense that it was going to go that way, and I think the opposition parties did too, but do you know what, Speaker? They didn't care. They simply just wanted the Premier on her feet, day after day, answering questions about that. That is my opinion. I don't think that they cared what the result of the Sudbury by-election investigation was; they just wanted to try and tar and feather, and create a narrative around our Premier. And to sit here day after day and listen to that is not an easy thing to do. It speaks to what I believe is a significant deterioration of the debate in this place.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke previously for 20 minutes. He spoke at length and often used the words “trust” and “credibility.” I would ask the member—he predates the 2014 election. He wants to talk about trust and credibility. I would raise a little bit of an example with him. I remember very clearly that it was the NDP who opposed the budget in 2014 and created an election in a minority situation where we could have continued to govern—a budget that was full of very progressive ideas and policies and that would have been voted against by the NDP.

Speaker, here's my opinion again: The NDP were talking trust and credibility, and they didn't care about what was in that budget. What they saw was an opportunity—not to form government, in my opinion, but to try and kick the Liberals into third place; and maybe they could become the official opposition, and then they could be ready in the next election to try and run for government. That's my opinion.

The NDP abandoned their traditional base. I want the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who has come back into the chamber, when he has an opportunity—perhaps in a two-minuter—to tell me about trust and credibility in his own party when, in that 2014 election, they completely abandoned their base. They could tell us perhaps why that was. We all have our own sense of why they did that.

It's easy to throw these words around. I go back to what I said about the deterioration of debate in here. Many things are said in here that are never said out there, but the people watching on television—and that's the goal, of course, of the opposition. They don't care, really. They want that clip on television; that's the end of it.

I would talk, as well, a little bit about the PCs, going back to around 2007, 2008. I see a lot of similarities between their new leader, Mr. Ford, and former Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper in terms of where I think they are on the political continuum when it comes to their particular ideology.

I remember very clearly the 2008 recession—30 million to 40 million people around the planet were losing their jobs. Ontario was affected, as was the entire country, and the federal Minister of Finance at the time says what? As people's pension plans are going down the tube and the market is crumbling, he finds a way to a microphone and says, “I think there are good buying opportunities here.”

The provincial Conservatives in opposition were calling our plans and our programs “corporate welfare.” They did not come willingly to the table and support industries like forestry, in my neck of the woods, like the auto sector, in the neck of the woods of a couple of the members from the NDP who are here who represent Windsor-area ridings—a very heavily invested auto sector in Windsor. Yet the provincial Conservatives of that day called it “corporate welfare.”

Eventually, the federal Conservatives did come to the table, but I remember it very well. They were not interested—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock for a moment, please, just out of courtesy.

I’ve given you some leniency, but I believe we are talking about Bill 31. I would ask, with your comments, that you direct them more to Bill 31 as opposed to, perhaps, history lessons of the past, unless you’re going very quickly to make a point. Thank you very much.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It speaks very clearly to decisions of government, Speaker, and it speaks to what is contained in the budget. And history is a good teacher.

Part of the narrative that I’ve appreciated around this place for the last little while is the opposition parties doing their best to make it appear that everything we’ve announced in our budget, and everything that we have announced recently, is the starting point on that particular file—as if the \$800 million that’s in this year’s budget is the starting point of investments, when just last year another \$500 million went into the health care budget specifically for hospitals, with another \$800-million-plus this year invested in the hospital sector. Hospital spending now represents \$55 billion to \$60 billion, or 45% to 50% of total provincial spending. It continually increased year over year: 6,500 or 7,000 more doctors, and 25,000 to 30,000 more nurses over 15 years. And yet the opposition parties want the people who watch on television to think this is a starting point, that finally we found religion after 15 years when, of course, that’s not the case.

1650

They’ll say the same thing about education, but they won’t remind people that the investments we made in this budget around education are not the starting point. They won’t remind people that when we had the greatest recession since the Great Depression in 2008, we created a program called Second Career that paid for the ability of thousands of people in this province who were laid off and side-swiped by that recession to go back to school for free and try to get an education.

They won’t remind people that, previous to this budget, we created about 200,000 more spaces for people to get into university because we realized the economy was changing, that the knowledge-based economy was coming, that people needed more than ever to have a post-secondary education and that the generation that I grew up with, that could get by on grade 10 or grade 12, couldn’t do it anymore. But they won’t remind people about that stuff. They want people to think this is where

we started on post-secondary education, which now provides free tuition to about 235,000 people, as well as grants for many more. But they want it to be framed to the people who follow this debate on television as if it’s the starting point.

Mental health funding: To suggest that the \$2.1 billion in this budget is the starting point for this government on mental health funding—and the member behind me just made a wonderful two-minuter, speaking to the details of where we’ve been on mental health funding over the last number of years. To suggest that this is a starting point for us on an issue as serious as mental health funding, Speaker, I would tell you, from my perspective, is a bit offensive.

The PCs, when they had their opportunity, made their choices, and they weren’t choices that were good for the people of the province of Ontario. They simply were not, but that’s where we find ourselves.

Speaker, over the last number of years—again this is not a starting point. This government has shown leadership on at least a couple of very important files, and I will thread this back to the pharmacare announcement.

We can go back to 2008, in that same recessionary time when, for the first time, there was a provincial government in Canada that was advocating to the federal government that it was time to enhance CPP—long past time; long past time. I think the average was around 600 to 650 bucks that a person got in Canada; the maximum was \$1,100 or \$1,200. Sixty-six per cent of the people in the province, or in the country, don’t have a private sector pension plan. That’s what they have, and we began advocating on pension enhancement a very long time ago, at least eight or 10 years ago—not a starting point.

The member from Guelph just talked about what we’ve done on pensions—the only province in the country with a Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. We’re the only province, and we’ve just increased it significantly so that Sears pensioners will be eligible retroactively. We’re the only ones that have it. But on CPP we were leading the charge 10 years ago, and of course we had a federal government that was not interested. Fair game. That’s their choice, but they weren’t interested. We now had a government come into power that was, and I would say it was the leadership of the previous Premier and this Premier who continued to advocate on pension reform that has led to the enhancements of CPP that are going to benefit people in the entire country.

I would say the same thing on pharmacare. I remember very clearly as an MPP in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan when we took on Big Pharma—I don’t know how many years ago that was. When you take on Big Pharma, there’s a reaction. I remember, personally, some of the things that went on in my own constituency office, the attacks and the games that Big Pharma were playing. The point is this: We took them on. We showed leadership on pharmacare, getting drugs on that formulary and saving money so that we could find savings and reinvest them back into health care. The result of that fight was that we found about \$400 million or \$500 million in

savings annually that were plowed back into funding drugs on the formulary and other health care initiatives.

Now, we find ourselves in the position—and we have been advocating for a national pharmacare program for a significant length of time, and now we've seen our previous Minister of Health, Dr. Hoskins, who has gone off and is working with the federal government to exactly try to do that. I would say that threads back directly to the efforts of this government over a long period of time to try to get a federal government to bring forward a national pharmacare plan. It would benefit all of us. It will make it better for the people in all of our provinces and all of our municipalities, and the economies of scale and the buying power of the country as a whole will definitely lead to savings.

Ontario, I think, is the biggest or the second-biggest purchaser of generic drugs in the world. That's one of the reasons why we took on Big Pharma eight or 10 years ago and found that \$400 million or \$500 million of savings.

I'm talking about leadership. I'm talking about substantive policy-making that takes time, that takes effort, and sometimes takes a little longer than maybe we would like, but eventually we get there. I've just given you two examples of that, one on pension reform and one on pharmacare. I believe strongly—I have no inside information on this—that Dr. Hoskins will hopefully come forward with something in the near term that's going to see all of us in this chamber and all of our constituencies benefit from the work that Dr. Hoskins is now doing, but that in my opinion—and I can't speak to exactly what was going on in every other province. I know the leadership and the effort that we've put into the pharmacare file nationally for a long time—it was not a starting point, but a long time ago—will yield a result that will benefit all of us, in all of our ridings.

Speaker, I've been told I only have one minute left. I thought I started with 20; they've cut me back to 15.

In this budget, I see reflected something that will speak to a great number of people in the province of Ontario, if you're a senior, if you're a middle-income family, if you're a low-income family. People can call it what they want, and they can say that just now this budget is trying to speak to the issues that affected people for a very long time. As I've said, on every one of those files, I can show you investments, programs and policies that we've had in place for a very long time. These programs and policies in this budget continue to build on the work that we have been doing for a great deal of time.

I would add in my last few seconds that there are a number of issues that were contained specifically in the budget for my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North that my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and I both take great pride in. We feel very strongly and proud about the advancements we have made in our two northern ridings. I know the Minister of Energy would feel the same about what's happened in Sudbury. We have this narrative that continues to be repeated about the north being ignored. It

has never been further from the truth. I could do an hour just on that. Time does not allow. Northern highways, nurse practitioner clinics, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund: The list goes on and on.

Unfortunately, I have to stop. I thought I had a few more minutes left, but I got the word: I'm done. Thank you for these 15 minutes this afternoon.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise to add my comments to this debate because—really and truly, let's take a look at the title of this bill: Bill 31, Plan for Care and Opportunity Act. Let me tell you, Speaker, if this Liberal government under Premier Wynne actually had a plan to care, they would have never introduced the Green Energy Act in 2009 that this government is responsible for—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, it does, because for goodness' sake, we can't afford any more unnecessary contracts, like they approved just yesterday in Chatham-Kent.

Secondly, if they had a plan to care prior to 2011, they would have never cancelled the gas plants, which ultimately saw a senior Liberal operative get a four-month jail sentence.

Another example: If this Liberal government truly had a plan to care, they would not have wasted \$8 billion on eHealth. What a debacle that was.

Fourthly, if this Liberal government under Premier Wynne had a plan to care, they would have taken great care to manage a path forward eliminating and reducing the mismanagement that this government's legacy will be in the history books. In terms of an example, we're now spending \$1 billion on interest every month; \$12 billion of hard-working Ontarians' tax dollars are being spent to pay for their mismanagement.

Fifthly, if this Liberal government under Premier Wynne had a plan to care, they wouldn't swap laundry lists with the NDP, as the good member from York–Simcoe pointed out, and increase the burden on Ontarians by increasing taxes. Schedule 33 of this particular bill points to a \$2-billion increase in taxes—unacceptable.

On June 7, we need a change.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I listened intently to the minister and member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who brought us through some revisionist history. He tried to pinpoint where exactly the Liberal Party came on board with initiatives like public pensions and supporting public pensions, enhancement of public pensions, and pharmacare and now dental care. These are ideas and principles that are foundational to the New Democratic Party that date back to the beginning of the party, Speaker. I only wish this government and other governments across the country had listened to New Democrats decades ago—in fact, generations ago—where these priorities were put in place and promoted by our party,

the former CCF and the NDP, by leaders like J.S. Woodsworth and Tommy Douglas. If we want to go back in history and we want to point to where these great ideas were born from and where a political party actually had its priorities right in terms of supporting the people of their constituencies, New Democrats have always led the way, Speaker, and we continue to today.

1700

Andrea Horwath, as our leader, put forward a comprehensive, practical, pragmatic plan just this week to support the needs and the priorities of the province of Ontario. The more that I think Ontarians look at that plan and understand and give it credibility—I think that will be the plan that leads this province forward and supports all of the needs that we understand are so pressing in our communities. On any given day, I have people coming into my constituency office and meeting with stakeholders that have deep, deep concerns about the degradation of services that are provided in this province. They aren't asking us to do less. They are asking us to do more, and we certainly have put forward a comprehensive plan.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have to commend my colleague the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan on his absolutely excellent address to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. I was part of that government that came in in 2003 that was greeted with a surprise \$5.6-billion deficit. Setting most of the rhetoric aside, the attitude at the time was, “None of this is going to change. Let's roll up our sleeves. Let's solve this problem. Let's get back to a balanced budget,” which the province did ahead of schedule, and then ran back to back to back surpluses—three in a row. In the middle of that, when the forecast was for an additional six more surpluses, then the bottom fell out of the world financial markets.

Everybody, everywhere in the world had to make choices at that time, very few of them pleasant. In Ontario's case, one choice that we made was to avoid some of the things that dragged down the UK, the USA and Europe, which was a failed policy of austerity. When the private sector wasn't spending, if the public sector didn't spend, there would be nothing for small and medium-sized businesses to sell to, no way for people to earn and nothing for them to save. So while interest rates were very nearly nothing, what better time would there have been to replenish our run down infrastructure than when we had the labour available and the money was cheap? Now, after spending nearly \$200 billion, those costs are amortized out over the lifetime of those assets. What it means is that the people who are going to use those things that Ontario bought at a time when people needed the work and needed to be able to be paid to build them—those people will have the ability to pay them down over the entire life of their assets. I cannot believe the assertions of my colleagues that all of that money and all of the interest payments on assets we desperately need was just wasted.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: With respect to the budget, let me first say, I think the line I would like to use, and it's not mine—but this budget, to me, I just see this as nothing more than bribing voters with their own money. If you look at some of the things that I've seen in my short time since getting here, you've got Bill 148 and the absolute disaster that has caused. They were warned time and time again. It's a failure. We know it's a failure. We see it's a failure. You can't defend that it's anything but a failure. The Green Energy Act: great theory, nice idea—it's a failure. You can't acknowledge that it's anything but a failure. The debt—and I will use the correction. Yes, we don't have a \$12-billion-per-month payment; we have a \$12-billion-a-year payment—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, thank you for that.

Mr. Ross Romano: Yes, and the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan really wanted to confirm that. But do you know what? At the \$1-billion-plus we pay in interest per month, that is absolutely zero to be proud of. It is another sign of failure by this government. One billion dollars: That is the third-largest ministry in the entire province. It's shameful that that's the kind of money we're paying on debt. What happens if the interest rates go up? Where does that put us? It's a clear sign of failure.

I understand we're embarking upon an election, so everybody wants to point fingers at the other. All I've heard from the NDP over the course of the last two months here is how the Liberals are terrible in the current government and the PCs and their former governments were terrible, and just chastising and chastising. Perhaps it's time to look in the mirror. How did it go the last time and the only time the NDP ever had a government? How did that work out?

Then looking at the current situation we have with this particular government of today, I look at the comments from the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and I actually respect a lot of those comments. You acknowledged that maybe on at least a few occasions, there has been some good governance and leadership. That is not something to be proud of, though, Mr. Speaker, and that demonstrates failure as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for final comment.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the members from Huron–Bruce, Essex, Mississauga–Streetsville, and Sault Ste. Marie.

To the member from Huron–Bruce: She commented on fiscal concerns that she shared. Speaker, as the member from Mississauga–Streetsville explained in his two-minuter, when we came to government in 2003 after eight years of a strong economy in Ontario, the Conservatives still left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit that was really, in my mind, about \$8.5 billion because they had just finished downloading about \$3 billion worth of expense onto the municipal sector. If you want to

compare through a recessionary time as opposed to strong economic times and you still manage to leave an \$8-billion or a \$9-billion structural deficit, I'm not sure that speaks very well to your fiscal management qualities.

To the member from Essex: On some of the initiatives that he mentioned that I had mentioned, I think it's fair to say that on a number of files there is not necessarily a lot of daylight between the two parties from time to time. But what I would say to the member from Essex is, you would expect that you wouldn't have to go back to the 1950s or the 1960s to find where there was a supportive position on these files. I would have expected maybe you would have only had to go back as far as a 2003 NDP platform or a 2007 NDP platform or a 2011 NDP platform or a 2014 NDP platform. It was absent.

As I said in my opening remarks, your leader made a very conscious choice in 2014 to rush us to the polls because she thought you had an advantage, and she came out with about a six-page document that had nothing in it. People remember that she abandoned your base.

To the member from Sault Ste. Marie: Thank you for the comments. I really do appreciate it. It is a bit of a funny time that we are all in.

I will just close by saying—this is on the budget, Speaker—when people are hearing this ridiculous narrative that's trying to be created that those budget items that are contained in our budget are a starting point for us on those files, it is absolutely ridiculous. Whether it's mental health or hospital investments, and the list goes on—pharmacare, drug coverage—this is not a starting point; it's a continuation of the investments we've been making over a very long period of time.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to correct my record. I mentioned earlier the amount of interest that this Liberal government is accruing on a monthly basis. Given the fact that they've tripled the debt in 15 years to \$354 billion, the interest per month is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You're correcting your record, please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, I am. The interest per month on the \$354-billion debt is \$1 billion per month, or \$12 billion a year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I now ask for—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Order, please, because we're going to have more debate.

Having said that, further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the budget bill, Bill 131. Just months after promising balanced budgets for years to come, this Liberal government is breaking this pledge and looking

to plunge Ontarians into six more years of deficits while tripling the debt. It's like a final spasm of the Liberal government's incompetence on the eve of an election.

This government is looking to run deficits to fix the problems they created in the first place, Mr. Speaker. They created a crisis in education when they targeted as many as 600 schools for closure; created a crisis in mental health when they wait-listed 12,000 children for care; created a crisis in energy when they jacked up hydro rates, which resulted in thousands of hydro disconnections and tripled rates; and created a crisis in health when they wait-listed patients, cancelled surgeries and queued up 34,000 seniors for long-term care. The wait is now so long and out of reach that it makes aging in Ontario a source of national shame.

1710

Now this government is looking into getting into even more debt to fix the problems that they have created over their 15 years, which many are saying is too long. It's time for change, Mr. Speaker.

The problem is, they're writing checks that they know will bounce. Sadly, these young pages in front of you are going to be the people of their generation that bear that debt, because they just keep moving it out and out and out for their own political convenience—ironically, on the eve of an election. The party could not keep their promises even if they had extra money. The truth is, after 15 years, Ontarians are saddled with higher taxes, a higher cost of living and definitely a higher cost of debt.

As my colleague from Huron–Bruce just said, it's going to be \$300 billion-plus at the end of their tenure, and that is money that they're paying every month—a billion dollars a month that is not going to front-line services across the board.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians deserve better than they have received from this tired, out-of-touch Liberal government—the best health care possible, the best education for our kids, the best access to health care affordability, all which have been elusive for the last 15 years.

My constituents continue to worry about rising hydro rates and rising insurance rates, all of which this government promised to tame but has failed to do. For example, Bruce and Kathy King's insurance rates just went up 25% for the same car even though no additional coverages have been requested.

In 2013, Premier Kathleen Wynne promised to lower auto insurance rates by 15%. Then she came back, saying, "Well, that was a bit of a stretch goal." I've always been taught that if you're going to say something, you should have the numbers, you should have the clarity, and you should be able to honour that and make sure you're held accountable for it. Rising insurance rates are yet another Liberal broken promise.

Premier Kathleen Wynne cannot be trusted. Her party is tired and out of touch, and they will promise anything to get elected. This 2018 budget is a prime example. Personal income taxes: They're going to raise them. What the government didn't tell you when they read their the budget, and what they tried to hide from Ontarians, is

\$2 billion in new taxes on families and businesses, and skyrocketing debt that will further cut our public services.

As we all know, our historically low interest rates—what happens when they start to notch up? More and more of our money will go to paying the debt retirement. Our principal payments will not change—just the debt payments—and there will be less services on the front line.

What the Wynne Liberal government tried to hide from Ontarians is their plan to remove the two surtax brackets and instead create seven tax brackets. This will allow her to step in with tax hikes for almost two million Ontarians of \$200 each, and this personal income tax will take \$275 million out of families' pockets.

Her second tax hike will be on businesses, as if they haven't done enough damage to our businesses with the tripling of hydro rates, Bill 148 and all of the unintended consequences—a term they keep using. Certainly, our businesses know what those unintended consequences are, and it's really putting a strain on them.

The government is adding to the employer health tax, impacting 20,000 businesses. Medium-sized businesses will pay an additional \$2,400 every year. That's \$45 million more in taxes.

They will also match the recent federal government tax changes—who have also been going after small and medium-sized businesses—including reducing tax exemptions on passive income, which will allow them to collect even more taxes from small businesses, these very similar small businesses across all of our great province that are struggling today to survive.

Not only did this budget offer nothing for small businesses, whose owners have been looking for relief, they're actually going to hit them with higher taxes.

The total tax increases are \$2 billion over the next three years: \$510 million this year out of your pocket, \$715 million next year and \$780 million the following year. Does that sound like a caring Premier and a caring government to you, Mr. Speaker? Is that a government that has actually listened to our business community and the taxpayers out there, who are already saying, "Enough is enough. I can hardly afford to heat or eat. One of them has to stop."

It sounds like the same old same old. The Liberals have invented countless new taxes. If you can name it, they have and they will continue to tax it.

Their tax hikes are going to devastate businesses in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across the province, who have been seriously hurt by the bad hydro policies of this government.

Kathleen Wynne has set the province back decades with her reckless policies. Manufacturing jobs are disappearing, businesses are leaving, hydro rates are skyrocketing, and people are being forced to choose between heating and eating.

Here's another item from that budget bill that shows how much the Liberal government cares about Ontarians. Empty election promises: None is included in the budget.

The Liberals have been talking about prescription drugs, dental care and mental health care, but it's all talk. The actual budget bill does not include any one of those funding announcements. Nothing in this bill implements or even starts to implement their big-ticket budget promises on health care, child care or transit. It's undeniable proof that these are just empty Liberal election promises that they can't be trusted to keep.

So, here's what is in this budget.

Schedule 33 is a \$2-billion tax increase, on budget pages 283 to 287, and gives the Premier a loophole to raise taxes, after the election, through any bill.

Schedule 32 implements the federal tax changes impacting small business. It also affects small business deduction reporting; expands eligibility for the Small Beer Manufacturers' Tax Credit—on page 283—and makes small changes to the digital media tax credit and rules around mutual fund trust acquisitions.

Mr. Speaker, I should have said, when I started, that I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Huron–Bruce, Lisa Thompson. I will be doing that very shortly, at about the 10 minute mark.

Schedule 30 requires businesses to have an electronic cash register. It also allows for ministry inspectors to enter properties to ensure enforcement.

Schedule 3 gives the government free rein over cap-and-trade funds, which they can divert and use as they please.

Mr. Speaker, you would have at least expected them to put it into a trust fund that could only go to environmental causes, and causes that are actually going to show true improvement. It could even go to funding new spending scandals, like the eHealth scandal, that cost Ontarians \$8 billion; the gas plant scandal, that cost over \$1 billion; the Ornge scandal, that cost around \$700 million; the Ontario Northland railway scandal, that cost \$820 million; and the SAMS computer scandal, that cost at least \$300 million. Every single one of those billions of dollars is not available now for health care, long-term care, social and community services or mental health.

And they have yet to quantify the wasted millions of dollars to shut down those 600 schools they talked about, and the countless daycare spaces in those schools. Just how many millions of dollars did they waste shutting those schools down, Mr. Speaker?

How egregious that all this money that should be going to Ontarians struggling to make ends meet is instead going to Liberal scandals and waste. At a time when my constituents are facing rationed health care and a lack of mental health supports, and when they're waiting longer and longer to access health care, and particularly long-term care, the best this Liberal government can offer is an endless list of spending scandals and empty election promises.

Did you know that last year we had nearly 2,200 people in Grey and Bruce who were without a doctor? That's up 65% from 2016, and going in the wrong direction, I would suggest.

Wait-lists are growing because of this government's lack of care. They have wait-listed 34,000 frail seniors

for long-term care, a queue that will reach 50,000, shamefully, by 2021.

It's interesting that in this budget—in the last three, they hadn't had a cent in there for new beds. This year, in an election year, they found money for 5,000 new beds. Hmm, it's a little interesting, Mr. Speaker, that all of a sudden it's a big concern. I don't think it's fair that seniors have to wait even longer to find out when and where this government will build the needed nursing beds.

Between the wait-listed seniors and crumbling nursing homes, this is really a sordid record that may make aging in Ontario a source of national shame.

Under Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals, Ontarians are paying more and getting less. Consider that despite tripling hydro bills and saddling Ontarians with what the Auditor General called a hydro shell game, this government moved to leave ratepayers on the hook for power we don't need when they signed 390 more FIT contracts. Since 2009, Ontario has given away \$6 billion in surplus electricity to neighbouring jurisdictions, while Ontario ratepayers overpaid \$9.2 billion for green energy.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify: It's not actually giving it away. We pay the States and Quebec to take our surplus power, making them doubly competitive against our own, and we're continuing to add to that surplus. It makes no sense.

It's this incompetence and waste that has gotten hydro rates out of control while Ontario families are working harder, paying more and getting less than ever before.

Nothing in this budget talks about actually reducing those rates, other than the \$25 billion they borrowed, on the backs of the next generation, to give you a two-year relief, knowing full well that those rates will start to go up. And they don't address the core issue. I find it unacceptable. It certainly isn't fair, and it certainly isn't a caring government that would borrow another \$25 billion just for another hydro election scheme.

Mr. Speaker, it's simply unacceptable, the way this government is going. We need to rein it in. This budget is not going to do anything other than be an election promise.

At this point, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Huron—Bruce to take the rest home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing the debate, I recognize the member from Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the honourable member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, because he was very eloquent in proving why Bill 31, the Plan for Care and Opportunity Act, just is not fitting with Ontarians.

I, too, find it an honour to represent the interests and concerns of the constituents of my riding of Huron—Bruce in this debate.

1720

I think when we examine this bill, it's important to understand the context—both the historical context of past Liberal budgets and the timing of this document just

weeks before a provincial election. Now, Speaker, I'll be the first to admit there are not many great things about the last 14 years or so of Liberal rule. In fact, if you ask most Ontarians, it's been a pretty abysmal period of waste and mismanagement. But it's important to point out that I've noticed that patterns have started to emerge, and I want to speak about those patterns in particular.

It's interesting. Prior to an election, the Liberals make lots of promises and they're giving away everything but the kitchen sink. What they're doing this year, through Bill 31, is actually spending without a plan. When you take a look at Bill 31, honest to goodness, all the promises that we've been hearing about—we don't see any details. The scary part is, when we get to the details, it's in the schedules. It's in the fine print yet again. It's in the fine print that we find that taxes are going to go up because of the mismanagement and the waste that this government has become renowned for. That's going to be their legacy. They have mismanaged for years and, as a result, what did they do as they're gasping for air approaching the 2018 election? They're going to put taxes up to the tune of \$2 billion. Do they talk about that? No. They'd rather bury it in a schedule.

It's not only the taxes going up for Ontarians, but it's actually the hit that our small businesses throughout this province are going to take as well. I'll come back to that in a little bit.

Again, Ontarians need to get ready. No matter how they slice and dice it, there are no details about these grand promises we've been hearing over the last few days on the taxpayers' dime. But we do know for a fact that taxes are going to go up.

When I talk about these promises, Speaker—you know, we even heard the Premier describe previous election promises as stretch goals. We won't forget that. Liberals have been using stretch goals as election promises for years, and it's up to Ontarians to distinguish what's fact and what's just a stretch. But I'll put it this way, and I'm sure people will remember this: Remember when the Liberal government promised to reduce auto insurance premiums in 2014? When that didn't happen, the Premier herself said it was a stretch goal. And now we know, in 2018, as we see auto insurance go up, it's nothing but simply another broken election promise.

Again, there are other words for Liberal stretch goals. I repeat: Liberal stretch goals are essentially broken promises. They again are stretching it when they say that their platform is fully costed. This stretch goal of theirs is only going to happen on the backs of our children and grandchildren, and it's unacceptable. In fact, I believe it is disingenuous for the Premier and her caucus to say that their plan is fully costed when the fact of the matter is, to make this happen, they are either borrowing or kicking the can in terms of payments down the road.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Forgive me, I was replaying the tapes and I'm going to ask that you withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Very good. Thank you, Speaker.

I'll paraphrase what I just said: I believe it is not right for the Premier and her caucus to say that their plan is fully costed when the fact of the matter is, to make their budget happen, they are either going to borrow money or they're kicking payments down the road for future generations. How is that fully costing a budget?

These promises the Liberals are making, in the hopes of attracting new voters and hanging on to the voters and support that they do have in the upcoming election, are just happening on the backs of generations to come. They've deemed this budget a plan for care. There's nothing further from the truth. I'll put it that way, Speaker. How is it fair?

It's odd to talk so much about their plan to care while ignoring the \$354-billion debt that they're saddling our future generations with. Ontario currently pays, as I mentioned before, \$1 billion per month on debt interest. That's \$12 billion a year of hard-earned tax dollars that are going towards paying off mismanagement and wasteful spending.

You know what, Speaker? They're doing this because they've run out of things to sell. They say they will balance the budget by 2024 or 2025, but again, I have no doubt that that is just a stretch goal as well.

I'd like to recap, Speaker: These promises that we're hearing from the Liberal government turn out to be stretch goals, and then we experience broken promises, and then we see more spending and mismanagement, and that is the Liberal pattern that we all need to be very, very wary of.

I want to dig a bit deeper in my final minutes with regard to examining the Liberals' approach to health care and what they're doing in the upcoming election.

An important example for my constituents is the Kincardine hospital. Kincardine is a member hospital of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre. In the weeks leading up to the 2011 election, the Liberal government promised a \$53-million emergency room in Kincardine. When I defeated the then-Liberal minister and won that seat, guess what happened, Speaker? The Liberals scrapped that project.

Time and time again, Liberals have shown in the last 14 or 15 years that, if you don't vote for them, guess what, you just don't matter. And that is unacceptable.

This government talks about evidence-based policies, but that is almost laughable, as is the idea of a stretch goal. It pains me to say this, but this government doesn't represent Ontarians. They represent Liberals and their friends, and the rest of us get pushed out of the way. On issues like front-line health care, Speaker, that's just unacceptable.

The challenging thing for my constituents this time around is that, yet again, the Liberals have made another supposed promise for the Kincardine hospital redevelopment. This is a poison pill, Speaker. I can see the

headline now that the Liberal kids will spin out—"Thompson Votes against the Kincardine Hospital"—when I vote against the budget coming down the pipeline.

But don't even bother. You know what? Take this to your cabinet: Everyone is onto the games you play. In fact, there is plenty out there to confirm my support and advocacy for the Kincardine hospital. Actually, it was at the 2017 ROMA conference where Dr. Hoskins, the former Minister of Health, talked about the productive relationship he and I had working for the funding of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre, specifically the redevelopment of the Kincardine hospital. And just a few weeks ago, Dr. Jaczek, the new Minister of Health, confirmed that she realizes full well that Kincardine deserves that redevelopment money.

The fact that they've placed it in the budget to play games with headlines is ridiculous and it's absolutely nonsense. I'm glad to say the community around the Kincardine area are onto this government, and they don't need to do it again. Don't play politics with a reasonable approach that has been taken to ensuring quality front-line health care for the community of Kincardine.

Speaker, I feel very strongly about that, but to recap, what we have seen over the last 14 or 15 years is a whole bunch of promises that turn out to be stretch goals that eventually turn out to be broken promises, and then as they get worried and they start experiencing knee-jerk reactions, we see wasted spending and more mismanagement. That's the Liberal pattern that has to come to a stop on June 7.

Let's look at another issue around infrastructure. We've heard about lots of money for infrastructure. There have been organizations across the province advocating for the much-needed access to natural gas and broadband and other infrastructure items like bridges. We need to make sure, Speaker, that this government is seen for what it is. They're going to say anything and do anything to get elected, but at the end of the day, the constituents of Huron-Bruce and the rest of Ontario are onto this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm going to go to questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is a pleasure to follow the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Huron-Bruce here in the House this afternoon. They were talking about the 15 years the Liberals have been in power and what they've put in their Liberal budget, the goodies that are in there to make up for the inadequate care on some of the political files that have turned into somewhat embarrassing media coverage on the eve of an election.

1730

We've heard previous Liberal members talk about what they've been talking about over the years. They said they've been talking about pharmacare for years. Well, talk is cheap—until the New Democrats announced that they were bringing in a pharmacare program. All of a sudden, within a couple of days, on the back of a napkin,

the Liberals have something called—some kind of a pharmacare plan—

Interjection: OHIP+.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: OHIP+. Until we said that we were going to bring in dental care—a few days later, “Oh, we have a dental care plan too.” It could have been on the back of a napkin.

Go back to the minimum wage. Under the Liberal plan, under inflation, it would have taken to 2032 to get to a \$15 minimum wage. We say that we’re going to a \$15 minimum wage and—bada bing bada boom—the Liberals have an overnight plan written on the back of a napkin.

Public auto insurance: We made a deal with them and took them at their word. They were going to reduce auto insurance by 15%. How many—was that five years ago? It hasn’t happened; another broken Liberal promise.

They can put anything they want in their budget. No one believes them anymore. The election will be on trust and credibility, and they will be lacking.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I’m responding to the member from Huron–Bruce. I got to listen to most of her debate.

I do have to say to the member of Windsor–Tecumseh, if he actually thinks that it takes three days to put those things together, I’d be glad to sit down and talk with him to tell him about how long it takes.

I know that the member from Huron–Bruce was saying that we’ve done nothing for 15 years. I’m proud, in my community, that we’ve had a crane at every hospital. We built a new cancer centre, a new heart institute that we’ve just introduced. We’re going to do #1door4care, and a new civic hospital. We have newborn screening.

I can give you a long list of all the things that have helped Ontarians over the last 15 years. I know for a fact that members on the other side are always over here, talking about what they want for their hospitals, talking about what they want for their schools.

But here’s the thing: A budget is a plan, and having a plan is important. But do you know what? You and your leader don’t have a plan, and that’s disrespectful to the people of Ontario. Do you want to know why? “You need a plan.” That was from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound at a long-term-care meeting last week. He was passionate, as he always is.

But do you know what? You didn’t have one thing in a plan: no plan for how to take care of our parents and ourselves in long-term care over the next 20 years; no plan for drugs for seniors; no plan for schools—there’s no plan for anything.

The only thing that’s happening over there—and it’s not my colleagues across the way—is that their leader likes to make these big pronouncements with no plan attached to them; no plan at all. You can’t tell me one plan that he has that has a cost on it.

Do you know what’s important about that? We’re watching an experiment south of the border where that’s

happening right now, and we don’t want that here in our province of Ontario.

Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: We talk about the record. It’s always good to look at a person’s record, right? The best predictor of future behaviours is the past. And what do we have here? Just continually minimizing what the effects of this debt that this province is dealing with are. It’s a debt that is currently—as we’ve discussed many times today, but it’s worth saying; it’s worth the people knowing—\$350-billion-plus deficit.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Since this government took over 15 years ago, that deficit has increased by three times. We have a deficit in the \$350-billion range and we’re paying \$1.1 billion per month in interest alone. Again, I said it earlier: What happens if the interest rates go up? What’s going to happen to this province? We are a province that now receives equalization payments from other provinces like Newfoundland. What are we going to do with the future of this province at the rate we’re going?

We have these pieces of legislation coming in that are nothing more than seeking to buy people’s votes, bribing the voters with their own money. Bill 148, the Green Energy Act—don’t even let me go to the Green Energy Act. We’ve got a hydro disaster here. The fair hydro plan—

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order.

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

Point of order from the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: The language the member used was not parliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Ross Romano: I’m not even sure what I said—
Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’ve got it under control. Thank you very much.

Again, I’ll ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Ross Romano: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Please continue.

Mr. Ross Romano: The whole nature of some of these pieces of legislation—the fair hydro plan is a perfect example of buying votes with people’s money. That’s exactly what it is.

Mr. Speaker, let’s look at that fair hydro plan. It’s a \$25-billion loan that the people are going to have to pay for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

Interjection: He’s done it again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I have this under control. But I appreciate the assistance.

Again, I’ll ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Ross Romano: I will withdraw.

Perhaps we can think of a better way to say it.

What are they doing? They're taking advantage of the voters. That's what it is.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Well, perhaps.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm always happy to contribute to Bill 31, this budget bill.

The member from Ottawa South pointed out something that was very true: The Conservatives do not have a plan. But I see that one of the members has a book under their arm right now, walking towards you.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This book?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes.

They're actually reading other people's plans to get ideas because they don't have one of their own.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, of course. Because we come up with plans that actually work for people; we come up with platforms that are effective.

I'll talk about the fact that we came out with a pharmacare plan. Guess what happened? Yes, it probably doesn't take three days to write it on a napkin, but they probably got a whiff that we were going to work out our pharmacare plan, and they got working on it. We announced it long before the Liberal government. Our pharmacare plan is actually a wholesome plan that works for everyone. Liberals are picking and choosing who they're going to have pharmacare given to.

In this budget, their pharmacare is going to now expand to seniors, because they've just woken up and realized the mistake from two years ago, when they wanted to increase the deductible for seniors from \$100 a year to an extra \$70 on their prescription drugs. They had to pay that deductible of an extra \$70. All of a sudden, they've woken up two years later and are saying, "We're going to give seniors their drugs for free. They're not going to have to pay the deductible." What a ridiculous way to govern. Two years ago, you wanted to increase seniors an extra \$70 to pay for their drugs, and now today, in Bill 31, they don't have to have that happen.

Make up your mind. Are you actually creating a policy for people or are you creating a policy for the next election?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for final comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to start off by saying thank you so much to my colleague from Huron–Bruce for her impassioned speech in regard to her riding, and for how much great work she does there. What she was really summarizing is that after a 15-year-long slide into deficits, debt and scandalous spending, she thinks, and I think the people of Ontario think, Ontarians will be faced with a clear choice. We understand the challenges families are facing. Kathleen Wynne is running around

spending cheques that she knows are going to bounce. People do not believe that.

I want to close by saying that I believe change is on the way.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh always brings good thoughts. He talked about—

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a point of order from the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I don't think that we are supposed to call each other by our names. We're supposed to refer to people by their titles or by their riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. If I missed that, I apologize.

I will remind the member to refer to members by their riding name, not by their name.

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Back to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll be happy to reiterate that Kathleen Wynne, the Premier of the province of Ontario, has been running around the province continually writing cheques that she knows will bounce. We know people know she can't be trusted. My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh said that the goodies are inadequate care and embarrassing media coverage. I think he was probably referring to David Livingston, the only person under our government who has gone to jail, Mr. Speaker. I think I quote: "Talk is cheap," he said. They've had 15 years to implement all this stuff. Why in an election year?

The member from Ottawa South said nothing about the plan when we were at that panel. I want to just remind him that I actually did stand up and declare that we will be building 15,000 long-term-care beds. Your government, by the way, up until this year, an election, did nothing, and now you've come out miraculously with 5,000 beds.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie—and I just want to make sure we know that the Soo and I normally agree, this member from Sault Ste. Marie, except the Attack is going to beat the Soo tonight in game seven, Mr. Speaker. But he did make a good point. The best predictor of future action is the past. Debt, tripled debt, this government is in. One billion dollars a month and how do we know they're not going to do more of that?

London–Fanshawe talked again about more debt. I think the only thing now with their plan and the Liberal plan is, who is out-lefting the left? But at the end of the day, I have to ask a question: Who is going to pay for all the debt that they're creating and all the deficits they're creating? We know that, Mr. Speaker: the taxpayers of Ontario today, who are already burdened with more debt and more payments than they can afford.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I honestly don't even know where to begin this afternoon. It seems there has been a lot of spirited debate. There seems to be a lot of back and forth, with "My plan is better than your plan" and "My government was better than your government." Well,

except for the Conservatives, because the Conservatives don't have a plan. They say they do. They won't share it with the people of the province.

I'm not even sure where to begin. Where I think I'm going to start—it was the Conservatives that spoke last, so I'm going to go back to the Conservatives and their plan to have no plan, and talk about what we do know about the plan that the Conservatives have for this province, which is at least \$6 billion they say they're going to save. At least \$6 billion, yet they will not say where they're going to cut. They say they're going to do it without cuts.

Let me be clear about something, because the people on this side of the House know this. I'm pretty sure the folks on the other side of the House know this. Anybody who has lived through a Conservative government will know this. Just because you say you are not going to cut doesn't mean there won't be cuts, because what they do is they wait for people in the public sector to retire and then they do not replace them. When they say that they are going to save through efficiencies and attrition, what they are saying is they are going to cut. I want to be clear about that, because anybody who has lived through a Conservative government knows that through attrition, through not replacing people who retire—that is a cut.

People in this chamber also want to know, as parents out across the province want to know, based on comments that their leader, Doug Ford, has made about people with developmental disabilities, what is he going to cut? He was going to buy one of their homes to force them out of it, to get them out of his community. He sees them as a blight on the community. If he was willing to go to the extreme of buying their home and kicking them out, if he's willing to go to that extreme, what services in the developmental sector is he going to cut? How many jobs of people who support people—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I've listened intently and I've given some leniency. We are talking about Bill 31, a bill introduced by the government, so I would ask that your comments in this debate reflect Bill 31. I now turn it back to the member from Windsor West to continue with debate.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you for the reminder. I will bring it back to the bill before us, the Plan for Care and Opportunity Act (Budget Measures). Maybe what I'll do to bring it back is that I will make a comparison between the Conservatives' past history of cutting services and the Liberals' current history of cutting services and not investing in communities. Since I was talking about supporting people with developmental—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. Point of order: the member from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Do we have a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Do we have a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Windsor West to continue debate.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: When we're talking about the budget bill that the Liberals have recently brought forward, the promises that they're making in this going into an election—actually, I just want to point out that prior to this, there were many, many private members' bills and government bills that were on the order paper. I had one that had been sitting in committee for 16 months just waiting for the majority Liberals on committee to call it and pass it. What they did was, they prorogued government to make a throne speech, to start off their re-election bid before they brought forward their budget in an attempt to get re-elected.

So here we are today. There are very few people in this province who believe that after 15 years, anything that was promised in the throne speech, anything that's been promised in the budget before us—after 15 years, very few people in this province believe that the Liberals are actually going to deliver on those promises. Everything that they have in their budget, they could have delivered on over those 15 years.

Instead of actually delivering on 15 years of promises, what we see is more and more people sitting for hours, in some cases for more than a day, in an emergency room just waiting to be assessed, so that once they are assessed, they can be shuffled into a hallway—or into a closet or even into a bathroom—in order to yet again wait for hours or days in order to be put into a proper room where they can recover from their illness.

What we've seen more and more after 15 years of the Liberals are people who are in hospital beds who really should be in a long-term-care facility. But we have wait-lists, so you go into a hospital and you wait. You get assessed and you get moved into a hallway—or a closet or a bathroom—and again you wait. If you're in a room and you need long-term care, you wait. There's a cycle. It's a waiting cycle.

If you are a person who has an adult child with a developmental disability, if they've just turned 18, you're never going to guess what happens, Speaker.

Mr. James J. Bradley: The Passport Program.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The Passport Program. The member from St. Catharines nailed it: the Passport Program. But do you know what happens?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: You have to wait. The government cuts you off from services and funding, you reapply for Passport funding, and you wait and you wait and you wait. During all that time, if you are lucky enough to have the money, you have to buy the services yourself and get the supports yourself.

For some reason, this Liberal government thinks that at 18 you mysteriously no longer have a developmental disability, you mysteriously no longer need supports and services, and that you can sit on a wait-list.

Speaker, we have aging parents of children with developmental disabilities who become adults them-

selves. You know what happens when they need to move their adult children into supportive housing? They wait; they're on a wait-list. Many, for well over two decades, over 20 years, sit on that wait-list, waiting for supportive housing.

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This government hasn't addressed that. In 15 years, they've made the issue worse. Rather than taking a proactive approach and ensuring that there are enough supportive housing spaces for these people and for those who might be able to live independently; ensuring that there is enough social housing, affordable housing, appropriate housing, where the upkeep is done on these units—rather than doing that, this government has created a crisis.

If you want your child to go into supportive housing, you go on that wait-list, and you are personally required to consistently update them, so that if your child is now seen, in their eyes, to be in crisis, they get bumped to the top of the list and they get put into supportive housing, should there be a unit available. But if they don't deem you to be in crisis, you could be on that list indefinitely.

The other thing they've done in developmental services is, they have frozen base funding—no increases to the community agencies that provide support for those with developmental disabilities. Ten years—no base funding increase.

What's interesting is that for 15 years, as my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh pointed out, Maryvale in Windsor also hasn't had a base increase in funding.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Not a penny.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Not a penny. They assist children and youth with mental health.

So we're seeing a pattern here. We're seeing a pattern of a Liberal government that has had 15 years to be proactive, to actually invest in the people of this province—15 years—and what they've done, for numerous years, is frozen hospital budgets and created a crisis in our hospital system.

What they have done is chosen not to really invest in social housing and affordable housing. If you are lucky enough to get a unit, there is often no money for the upkeep of that unit. As those units decline, the stock of social housing becomes smaller and smaller and smaller.

They're not investing like they want everybody in this province to believe. They haven't really been investing. Over 15 years, they have not really been investing in mental health supports for children, youth and adults, because if they were, we wouldn't see wait-lists in every single one of those areas.

So, here we are, with a desperate attempt by the Liberals, though a throne speech and now a budget, a desperate attempt to look like they actually have planned for care and opportunity. They have had 15 years to not only plan but to actually show that they care about what is going on in our health care sector, in the developmental services sector. Fifteen years is a long time to sit there and plan and not act.

The other part of this is, it says "A Plan for Care and Opportunity." For 15 years, they've had opportunity to do everything they're promising to do in this budget. They want to talk about it being a progressive budget, and, sure, there are some steps forward in this, steps they should have been taking over their 15 years.

But let's talk about their drug and dental plan. They can't call it "universal," because it's not. It's not universal. It's only universal if it covers everybody in the province. Their drug coverage, their OHIP+, only covers up to age 24, and then will kick in over the age of 65. That's a pretty large demographic between 25 and 65 that isn't covered. That's not universal.

Their dental plan: To say it's laughable is actually stating it lightly. Their dental plan will only cover \$50 per child. I worked in the dental field, Speaker. I know what it costs to go to the dentist. Fifty dollars is going to get you through the door at the dentist and will get the dentist to look at your teeth. If they actually find an issue, if a child actually needs a filling or a restoration, that \$50 isn't covering it. It's not going to cover a root canal.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has asked the Premier and the Minister of Finance several times if they know what it costs, the specific costs. "Do you know what it costs for a filling? Do you know what it costs for an X-ray? Do you know what it costs for an exam?" And they didn't.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They didn't know?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: They deflected, because they didn't know. Their plan is not a well-thought-out plan, Speaker.

When you look at it for adults, a single adult would get \$400 and a couple would get \$600. Now I'm not sure why the second adult isn't worth as much coverage as the first one—that one is a mystery to me—but it's \$400 for a single and \$600 for a couple. But that's not for dental, Speaker. If they're over the age of 24 and under the age of 65, they get \$400 and \$200 respectively. If they're a couple, they only get an extra \$200 for the second person. Again, I don't understand why the second person isn't worth what the first person is. But that money has to be divvied up between your prescription medication and your dental. So you have to decide if you're going to go out and get the medication that you need to be taking on a regular basis or whether you're going to go to the dentist.

And then if your problem is that you need to go to the dentist, so that's where you go; you have a toothache and you get to go to the dentist, rather than the emergency room, which is a cycle that happens all the time. People go to the emergency room. The doctors there say, "We're not qualified to diagnose or treat dental problems. We don't have the equipment we need to do that nor the training. But here is some medication to help you with the pain or what we think might be an infection."

So you've now gone to the emergency room and you've been given a prescription, and that doctor in the emergency room says, "You really need to see a dentist." And you're standing there with a prescription and your

\$400 or \$200 and you have to decide, “Am I going to take that prescription and then go to the dentist and find out that I’ve now used all of my coverage and that dentist can’t actually treat me? Or am I going to just get the prescription and hold on to what little coverage I have left?”

Speaker, their plan is not a universal plan. It was not a well-thought-out plan. It was a plan that they rushed to get out. Both their drug coverage and their dental plans were only put together after they found out we were going to do it. They were trying to outdo us. But when you don’t sit down and think about it—although they did have 15 years to think about it. When you don’t, when

you’re rushing something through and you don’t take the time to think about it, it shows.

I believe that we’re out of time for today, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’d like to thank everyone for a fair and good debate today.

To the member from Windsor West: You will have time left on the clock and the 10-minute questions and comments the next time this bill comes up and you’re present in the Legislature.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 6 o’clock and this House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	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)	York–Simcoe	
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation 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)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	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, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
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, Hon. / L'hon. Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
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	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Vacant	Parkdale–High Park	
Vacant	St. Paul's	
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 / Président: Michael Mantha
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Bob Delaney, Catherine Fife
Michael Harris, Monte Kwinter
Michael Mantha, Mario Sergio
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Brad Duguid, Ann Hoggarth
Lisa MacLeod, 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: Arthur Potts
Yvan Baker, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Sophie Kiwala
Sam Oosterhoff, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Sophie Kiwala
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Brad Duguid, Wayne Gates
Sophie Kiwala, Cristina Martins
Sam Oosterhoff, Randy Pettapiece
Shafiq Qadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
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Jim McDonnell, Arthur Potts
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Liz Sandals, Monique Taylor
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Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Amrit Mangat
Michael Mantha, Deborah Matthews
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
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Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod
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