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Jeudi
18 août 2022

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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Plan to Build Act (Budget Measures), 2022, Bill 2,
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 August 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 août 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO BUILD ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2022 LOI DE 2022 POUR FAVORISER LE DÉVELOPPEMENT (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 17, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / *Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Good morning to the members. It's an honour today to rise to speak to Bill 2, the Plan to Build Act.

I want to start my remarks by sharing my first impressions. I want you all to know—and I think you do know—that I'm new to Queen's Park, having come here from city hall after serving 12 years as a city councillor. So I have a little bit of experience in working with budgets.

As someone who is elected to hold government accountable for my constituents, I want to share with you some of my observations. I need to see the numbers—I think we all need to see numbers when it comes to budgetary decisions, but it's really hard to find out exactly what's in there. Given the very limited documents that we have available to us as MPPs, this is certainly something that I think could use some improvement.

Just to give you an example of how things could work in another government, the city of Toronto is the fourth-largest government in North America. The various city departments draw up their respective budgets based on city council decisions, often established based on motions established the year before. Therefore, municipal priorities are established by the city council, including the mayor, and then costed by staff. The budgets are then launched at the budget committee, and the financial planning staff and senior departments each present their budget request to the budget committee, the executive committee and, ultimately, the city council, for a final decision. During this time,

members of the public can review the budget's department spending, line by line, briefing notes and analysts' notes. Budget town halls are held by city councillors, where we and the CFO or a financial planning staff representative will then go and present this information to the public, and the public can ask questions and dive deeper into some of their priorities.

Toronto residents are also available to submit their communication and their budget deputations in person to the committee, including to the mayor, who chairs his very powerful executive committee—each member hand-chosen and selected by the mayor and appointed by him.

The entire process from the city of Toronto's budget is launched from—and it takes about six to eight weeks, from the beginning of the year. Therefore, we adopt the 2022 operating budgets, the tax-supported budgets and the capital budgets for a city of three million people by, roughly, February, which is in line with general accounting principles. Since the spending has already begun in January, we try to make that decision on the budget final deliberations as quickly as possible. Therefore, we don't delay; we get it done. The problem with having a budget adopted so late in the year, when the spending has already begun, is that programs and services are already rolling out.

At Queen's Park, we're debating a budget that few have actually read. Having spoken to a number of media reporters and asking them how they review the line-by-line spending, how they are able to do that review and account—they tell me that it's difficult because they don't have access to the information either. This could change, and I hope that it can, and it should.

Ontarians need to have access to the detailed budget and any relevant data and information. This will empower our stakeholders and citizens to make informed decisions to better grow their businesses, to better understand particular issues, and to hold government to account. A much more detailed copy of the Ontario budget should be made available and accessible to everyone. The Ontario budget should inspire and invite universal participation, where everyone should be encouraged that they have a place here in Ontario and that they can also participate in important decision-making processes. We are sitting here; they are not. We're making decisions about their lives with very little input.

After all, a government budget is the apex of every single policy tool. You can have all the strategies and the plans you want, but without a line item and discretionary spending, it just won't happen. It cannot be operationalized.

As members here in this House, we can have the opportunity to make lives significantly better, or significantly worse, just by adopting a budget. So if we were to invert that process and bring residents in closer to help us design a better budget that better reflects their priorities and needs, we think that everybody would be better off. I hope we can do that together. It will allow us to create an open and accessible budget process in Ontario that can better create business, drive innovation and help us design citizen-centred services.

It's extremely valuable to all of us and to our constituents to understand how government money is being spent. I know that fiscal responsibility and accountability are important values to all my colleagues here in this House.

I think we can do better. I hope we can do better. I look forward to learning with you how we can improve this process here at Queen's Park.

I understand that I can now use my laptop in this chamber because of specific and long-overdue changes to the standing orders. I think we can do the same thing with how we modernize our budget process so that financial spending information is made available to all residents. After all, our residents, the citizens, the constituents of Ontario, are our best assets. They will help us live up to the potential and the inspiration of what we consider the concept of Ontario.

I know that the government was elected by a majority in the first-past-the-post system, and I want to honour that. But I also want to remind all of us that 43% of voter turnout—having less than 18% of eligible voters vote for the PCs—doesn't give you a bulldozing mandate when it comes to the budget. We are here to work together, and I'm going to continue to echo this theme throughout my four years here at Queen's Park.

What are the challenges of the day? I know we're going to spend a lot of time talking about health care because, in this budget, we need to find the solutions to our health care crisis. As my colleague the member for Waterloo has said, health care spending has increased only by 5.2% in this quarter, when inflation was 8.1%. This means, according to Statistics Canada reporting of inflation at 7.6% in July, this effectively makes that budget spending a cut. So we are not investing actively in the health care system by adopting this budget as it is today without any significant amendments; we are making a cut, especially when health care investments are needed the most.

My constituent J wrote to me: "Health care workers are overworked. My dad is in hospital with lymphoma. While his condition is getting worse, nurses and doctors have been too busy to follow up with me when I ask about my dad.

"How much more suffering must my family and I endure before things can change for the better?"

I don't see the answers to what J is asking for in this budget. In fact, what we're hearing this week is that the government is considering privatized health care delivery. Privatization will not solve our health care crisis. Rumbblings of privatization and the planning of privatization have my constituents worried.

0910

My constituent Lee, a nurse who immigrated to Canada from the United States, wrote to me describing what he is seeing: "My clinic is the great equalizer—you receive the same level of care no matter your socio-economic status, language, race, religion, sex, creed, title" and so forth. Furthermore, he adds that competition between health care providers for the same pot of limited government dollars will create inefficiencies and increase the cost of health care delivery.

My constituent points to recent data that came out from the University Health Network, which the Toronto Star reported on earlier. The UHN's spending on temporary nurses increased in the last fiscal year to \$6.7 million. Compare that to the year before: It was \$776,000 only, which means that our publicly funded hospitals are already in the business of privatization, because we are systematically starving them of the funds they need to do their work.

Inflation and privatization are burning through our hospital and health care budgets, and they're doing so at both ends. This is a crisis that needs our attention.

To end this crisis in the hospitals, we need to do some things. We need to scrap Bill 124 immediately. We need to pay nurses, health care workers and PSWs more. We need to accredit tens of thousands of internationally educated health care professionals, and we need to start a hiring and training blitz immediately, right now.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario has called for this government to hire 30,000 more nurses. They are the experts, and that should be our goal as well.

I want to now focus my concerns on how this budget has no measures to enhance gender-affirming health care. As the 2SLGBTQIA+ critic, my office reached out to stakeholders in trans and gender-diverse communities for their thoughts and lived experiences.

Fae Johnstone, the executive director of Wisdom2Action, told me, "Gender-affirming health care literally saves lives, but trans and gender-diverse people in Ontario are facing huge—and growing—barriers to access. Our gender-affirming health services have been neglected by government for decades, even as increasing social acceptance results in more coming out and seeking these medically necessary services. Our communities have been hit hard by COVID, with increased isolation and access to safer spaces reduced by the pandemic, all of which has been exacerbated by rising anti-trans hate. Now is the time to invest in gender-affirming care, particularly youth. If we can" do this "now, we can save lives. If we keep on with the status quo, we will be complicit in the continued suffering of trans and gender-diverse" people.

I know this government likes to talk about innovation. This is one area of the health care sector that you can innovate.

Hannah Hodson, another advocate for trans health, told my office, "Happiness comes from living honestly and feeling comfortable in who you are. Gender-affirming care is simply allowing people to see themselves in the mirror. It is about becoming who you really are. I was born

appearing as a cis straight white man. I had won the lottery. I wouldn't have transitioned on a whim and subjected myself to abuse and harassment just for fun, or because it was a trend. These services are essential for people to live their honest and true lives."

Speaker, gender-affirming health care is life-saving health care. But it is a complicated and nuanced kind of health care that needs medical professionals with the capacity to respond to the needs of their patients. Ontario's ability to deliver gender-affirming, high-quality health care is at odds with the health care crisis.

Trans activist Susan Gapka described this to me, and I share this with you: "Now, wait times for referrals and access to trans-affirming care and surgeries has dramatically increased, causing distress to those requiring these essential services. People desperately need equitable access to" life-affirming health care.

Speaker, in the near future, I will be re-tabling my predecessor's bill, the gender-affirming health care act. It calls for an advisory committee made up of people with lived experiences into the barriers that are being faced by trans Ontarians as they try to access gender-affirming health care. Some of those barriers that they face are poverty, disability and perhaps being a sex worker.

Later this year, at the Trans Day of Remembrance, I hope every single one of us will remember when we go out to participate in these events that it's too simple to simply raise the flag and say a few nice words. That is too ceremonial. It's too perfunctory. What we need to do is confirm to this community that we actually understand what their needs are and that we are willing to be real allies, and that's going beyond the events and going beyond the symbolic gesture of raising a flag.

On a similar note around emerging health care trends, we need to talk about monkeypox. I know from Hansard that this is the first time the word "monkeypox" is being mentioned in this House. So let's have that conversation right now.

While monkeypox has been recently reported for its transmission through sex, it is not exclusively transmitted through sex. It can be spread through droplets, skin-to-skin contact and contaminated objects. I am worried about this monkeypox virus for my constituents. We live in a dense city. Many of us come from urban centres, and so many of my constituents have roommates. Sharing towels, sheets, utensils and clothes can also spread monkeypox.

We have to be honest that many men who have sex with men also have sex with women.

We know that the isolation with monkeypox can be several weeks long. As this budget confirms, this government will only be extending its three-paid-sick-days program until March 2023. Those three days were never enough to cover the spread of COVID-19, and they certainly aren't enough to cover the spread of monkeypox.

Discussing the monkeypox quarantine period, Dr. Darrell Tan from a local hospital in my riding said this to the CBC: "Many folks during that long period, if they're forced to isolate, are not going to be able to go to work,

are not going to be able to pay their bills, pay the rent, put food on the table."

We all have a duty of care to protect the health of Ontarians. Three days doesn't come close to empowering our communities to fend off this emerging infectious disease.

My constituent Peter Kelly, who recently contracted monkeypox, told the CBC that the pain of having monkeypox was so bad: "You can't control it. It feels like razor blades in a way, shocking you constantly."

The Decent Work and Health Network has commented to the media that their doctors anticipate up to 10% of monkeypox patients will need emergency room care, because that is how powerful this infection is. Does anyone think our hospitals are ready and staffed to manage a new wave of an infectious disease?

For now, monkeypox is mostly infecting gay and bisexual men.

The clock is ticking, and the rates of infection are growing. We have the time to take hold and reverse that trend, but we can't do it with an inadequate sick pay program that is only three days.

I wonder if the government's response would be different if most people getting monkeypox were not men having sex with men.

This budget doesn't reverse the cuts to public health care. And this government has made it clear from the beginning of their first term—this is now your fifth year in government—that funding for health care is the price of modern living. We all agree to that. We cannot defer health care spending, because it is going to be much more expensive down the road when we are in a deeper crisis than we are in today.

I want to turn my comments now to social assistance and what Ontarians need from this budget.

As I discussed in my inaugural remarks in this chamber only yesterday, social assistance was there for me when I needed it, when I came out of the closet, and when I was trying to finish high school. Getting student welfare enabled me to recover from what was a traumatic life experience. That safety net no longer exists, and I think we need to think long and hard on how we're going to address that. When it's so fractured and beyond a state of repair, it is so difficult to build those institutions up. But worse than that, the potential of Ontarians and Canadians who want to give back to their country and help build this great province and give back to our communities—they won't be able to do so because they won't be able to get up when they've been knocked down.

My office was reached out to by Ivan Brochu, a tenant activist in Toronto who lives on ODSP, who says this about the Premier's 5% increase and what his actual needs are: "A 5% increase completely ignores the reality that is ODSP hasn't seen a raise since 2018 and most recipients live halfway below the livable income cut-off. Nothing less than doubling ODSP recognizes the dire situation" that people are currently living with.

Yesterday, Cally, another constituent, reached out to me to share her story. I'm going to share this with you today: "I am a newly diagnosed diabetic who now has a

blood glucose meter. I only get enough lancets and test strips for 100 tests and I have to pay extra for the needles for my injector pen I need once a week. I have to cover the rest of the strips and lancets! This eats into what I have left for food. My extra \$58 per month will now have to go mainly towards test stuff and needles. This should be covered by ODSP. I am so angry. Today I spent \$64 I don't have at the pharmacy!"

0920

Speaker, this Legislature has the opportunity to end legislated poverty, and to do that we need to double the ODSP.

Speaking of legislated poverty, we need to be able to see more measures in the budget to also end evictions.

My riding is home to an organization called the Toronto Rent Bank. With my support as a councillor, during the pandemic they began providing tenant grants to avoid evictions. This is good. It actually keeps people housed. It also diverts people away from social assistance. The Toronto Rent Bank has helped over 1,700 tenants in Toronto avoid eviction.

I hear this feedback, and this is what I'm going to share with you today: "Thanks to Toronto Rent Bank I was able to make it through the worst of the lockdowns and stay in my apartment. Their service is an invaluable part of keeping communities intact."

With skyrocketing inflation, tenants need support from more than the city; they need real help from the government and from the province—tangible support to keep people in homes and out of encampments. Instead of helping, this government is burning and hurting Ontarians, especially renters, by allowing rents to be raised by a historic 2.5% this year, and this is despite all the different challenges that we've now seen in the tenant and landlord tribunal. We need to be able to do more and act faster.

With skyrocketing inflation, vacancy control is the least expensive way that this government can curb the cost of living.

I want to be able to bring our attention to the fact that there are many people who are being hurt, and this budget is not necessarily helping.

Ontario's tribunal backlogs need investments so that they can function at the level that Ontarians rightfully expect from their government and courts. The wait times for cases before the Landlord and Tenant Board, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the Social Benefits Tribunal and the family courts are creating avoidable costs for our constituents and businesses. I hear about how legal firms are increasingly worried that they cannot take on more cases, which means people will not have access to justice, something that I believe this government should care about. I want to be able to see those investments in legal aid and so much more.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the time and opportunity to address this House today. I look forward to any questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is to my colleague, who presented a very eloquent speech and compared our process with the city process.

For years, we saw nothing but neglect from the previous Liberal government in Ontario's long-term-care sector. Now that we are proposing so many new investments and expansion of home care, a billion dollars' worth, which will allow people to stay in their homes longer—why are the members opposite not supporting these critical investments in the long-term-care system?

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

Not only should we be investing in home care, but we should be expanding it and making sure that we are meeting the needs of Ontarians where they are. The ability to draw up a budget and to meet the needs of Ontarians is all our responsibility, and we do that by listening; we do that by asking questions; we do that by really leaning in with the experts to determine what the solutions are. I believe that the solutions when it comes to health care are really quite evident, whether it's home care or personal support workers, or an extension of them both. This is an equal system of health care that has to be designed to meet Ontarians where they are, and if that means meeting them at home, then that's where it should go. But it has to be said that residents are crying out because it is too limited.

So, yes, absolutely, we need to do more, but we need to do it faster. "Scaling up," "building up," which I know are very sexy terms that we sometimes like to use—I really want us to put that into practice. If we were to really take a look at what the harm was in Ontario and how we can actually build up that system, this is what I would suggest. Listen to the experts, bring the residents in, and let's get to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for providing a personal story, for showing their strength and providing a human face to social assistance. I also want to thank the member for their thoughtful discussion of issues that are facing the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, which are completely ignored by this government and their budget.

In their discussion, they mentioned that budgets should have universal participation, and that's missing from this discussion and this budget. Why is so much detail in this budget left out?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member for the question. That is a really good question that I'm going to have some difficulty answering, because I don't sit on that side of the House. But I know that when it comes to budgetary decisions, they're often best made when you have the participation of the residents you purport to serve, which means that if we're truly listening, then what we will hear is that residents in Ontario are crying out regarding the cost of living, the cost of borrowing, the cost of doing business. All of that is a concern. At the same time, we've got a looming recession, we've got a housing crisis that has no solution—and, certainly, it's not contained in the strong-mayor strategy. It's not there.

I think that the stakes are too high. So I want to see the details of the budget; I think we all deserve to. But, more

importantly, Ontarians need to know how you are spending their hard-earned tax dollars and how you are going to be accountable to them when the ERs continue to close and the wait-list continues to grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next question, the member for Richmond Hill.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member opposite for your presentation this morning.

I realize you noticed what we have made, which is an historic investment for the 5% we addressed for the ODSP. In fact, we're saying that in the future we will be adjusting that because of the inflation rate.

I would like to hear from the member something that we really highlighted in this budget, which is in highways and transportation—we know that, in the budget, we say that we are going to have \$158 billion invested in highways and key infrastructure over the next 10 years, and \$20 billion just for 2022 and 2023 alone. Can you give us a comment—why, and what we can do with this investment for the future development of this province?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member opposite. And thank you for raising that point around the construction of highways and, perhaps, free-ways.

I am actually a big proponent of active transportation. I believe that we need to build infrastructure that meets communities where they are, but I don't believe that we should do it over the objection of local communities or over the compromising of preservation lands, wetlands, endangered species and any other type of environmentally sensitive areas.

For us to be able to build up Ontario and to build the network of roads and highways that we need, we need to be able to make sure that those growth areas are going to connect to other places. So it can't be so random that the highway shoots up along a particular route and enriches certain developers who have massive landholdings. That is not necessarily smart development of highways and road networks.

What we do need to do is invest in transit, high-order transit, low-order transit, and make sure that that system of transit, especially for all those areas that are underserved, including rural areas—are going to be better served. Not everyone is going to have the ability to own a car. We need to recognize that, especially in a growing climate crisis.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre. I want to congratulate them on their success in the election.

One thing she said earlier on—she was talking about health care—was, we're not investing; we're in fact making a cut. She was talking about the dollars towards—versus the cost of living and the inflation rate being at 8.1%.

Some 27 years ago, Speaker, as you know, the former Conservative government under Mike Harris cut OW and ODSP by 21%.

Then, in 2018-19, they started bragging about the 1.5% increase.

And then this budget is looking at 5%.

With your lived experience of being on social assistance, can you explain what it means when you can't make ends meet, when you don't make enough money even to pay for rent, let alone for food or hydro?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you, member, for the question.

I think for those who have grown up in poverty, whether it's inflicted by war, perhaps political dissent, or challenges of not being able to just make ends meet, you will recognize that everything in your whole self is compromised. Not only are your relationships compromised because you can't necessarily go out with your friends or perhaps are not able to engage in social activities that take money; you can't send your children to programs they desperately need. Your body starts to break down. You have a lot of mental health—you have a lot of anxiety and stress. Your blood sugars are weakened. You are malnourished. Your teeth and gums start to erode, and everything starts to fall apart. You cannot possibly think well if you are not eating well. If you're worried about not having a roof over your head, you're constantly in a state of precarity when it comes to housing. At any given point in time, you could be on the street.

0930

Each and every one of us is fortunate enough to have enough money to actually live in Ontario, but we know that it is expensive, especially for those on social assistance. This is why we can do better in this government, in this hall, to support people on ODSP.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to congratulate the member from Toronto Centre on her election to the province's Legislative Assembly. I've known the member for quite some time, and I know how passionate she is in representing the people in her community.

Speaker, I want to ask the member, in her review—and it seems as if she did quite a thorough review, bringing her knowledge and experience from city hall to this Legislature.

In the \$198-billion budget that was just tabled, could you tell me what you believe ought to have been the priority of the government and what you see is missing from this budget?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you for the question.

There are so many things that are missing from this budget. There are probably too many to list, as I've got a minute left. But I do want to highlight one thing which I think is critically important.

Earlier this month, Statistics Canada released some new data and it specifically talked about the rise of gender-based violence and how Canada is seeing no end in sight. We've seen the highest level of gender-based violence that we have seen in past years, and this has grown an astounding 18%. There's absolutely nothing in this budget

that addresses gender-based violence. I couldn't even find the words "gender-based violence." I couldn't find the words "sexual assault." And yet we know it's an epidemic in Ontario.

That is one example of the things that are missing, but we also know that when it comes to missing one critical policy piece, the others fall apart—with respect to court services and support, with respect to housing for women who are fleeing violent situations, with respect to children who are losing the capacity to stay in school because their housing situation is so unstable.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is always an honour to rise in this House on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood who elected me. I want to thank them for electing me for a fourth straight term.

Today, we're debating Bill 2. The province's budget bill ought to be a road map for the people of Ontario, to show them what the government's vision, plans and priorities are for their well-being, and yet, in the midst of an affordability crisis that has been steadily worsening, with health care staffing shortages that are literally closing down hospitals, closing emergency rooms, at a time when Ontarians are looking to Queen's Park, their Legislature, for leadership, it has fallen well short. We have no road map to guide these uncertain times.

The budget failed to provide the support that is desperately needed by so many people, and in this way, it has offered no solutions to the problems that threaten not only the present but also the very future of this province. Imagine a budget that does not mention the climate crisis. How could that be possible?

With its heavy focus on infrastructure projects, this budget sent a clear message—even just on the cover of the budget, with the smoggy highway—to the increasing number of Ontarians lining up at food banks to eat; it sent a clear message to the growing number of residents unable to afford their rent; and it sent a clear message to the province's most vulnerable, trying to navigate skyrocketing inflation while living on ODSP.

The Premier and the finance minister are either unable to see or they are unwilling to acknowledge that Ontarians need more support. Either way, it simply is unacceptable to prioritize things like roads and highways over people. Instead of working to improve circumstances for the people with their annual budget, the Ford government made a choice to double down on an approach to governing that refuses to allocate support to the alarming number of Ontarians who continue to struggle for the very necessities of life.

Speaker, in re-tabling their pre-election budget, virtually unchanged, while the situation around them has completely shifted, the Ford government showed Ontarians that despite changing circumstances in the form of rising inflation and a deepening crisis of affordability sweeping across the province, they have priorities that do not include taking action that is needed right now to address soaring rents and skyrocketing inflation.

More than 500,000 people, individuals and families in Ontario count on ODSP for part or even all of their

income. Many of them live in my riding, in Scarborough–Guildwood. A 5% rate increase is not nearly enough for our province's most vulnerable people to survive on. Even when asked—to the finance minister—if he could live on \$1,169 a month, the minister's response, admittedly, was that it is merely a step in the right direction. But this is wrong; this isn't even a baby step.

In my own riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, my staff receive so many troubling calls from residents, including emails from distressed residents who are wondering when more help is coming and asking why the government has not just provided those supports that are needed right now in the face of the rising cost of living. There is so much urgency to do that. When the government is projecting higher-than-expected revenues driven by this very inflation, and when the budget that they just re-tabled features \$7.2 billion in underspending, including in our troubled health care system, these are very difficult conversations to have with Ontarians who, quite justifiably, find the government's accounting difficult to reconcile.

The bottom line here is a shameful one. By prioritizing themselves, the Premier and his government failed to get it done for the province's most vulnerable, while effectively abandoning Ontarians they are duty bound to support.

Speaker, we already know the PC government's and this government's history when it comes to supporting public education and education workers. Even prior to the pandemic, thousands of education workers were standing right outside of this House and circling Queen's Park and rallying outside of schools to call out the government's cuts to education. Unfortunately, since then, and even throughout the global pandemic, the government has demonstrated time and time again that the safety of children and education workers is not a top priority. In fact, privatization is more of a priority versus public education.

Two years of learning in a global pandemic has left many students struggling, while the full impact of the pandemic on student outcomes is still unknown, and we are just scratching the surface of this. One thing we do know is that a return to normalcy for Ontario's world-class public education system is sorely needed right now. That means a proactive plan to return to in-person learning. After two years of disruption, what our students need the most is consistency, stability and a safe, in-person return to a well-funded public education system, not privatization.

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Adoption of an ongoing hybrid model or expansion of online learning requirements is solely about cutting costs at a time when our children need more support, not less. We simply cannot exacerbate the issues caused by the pandemic when there are other pathways available. The government, in fact, needs to consult with education partners to set these priorities.

It also means a return to classrooms that aren't overcrowded. If we're going to close the learning gap that was created by COVID-19, our students need the focused, individual attention from teachers and education workers that can only come when we keep class sizes manageable.

My students and parents, frankly, in Scarborough–Guildwood are asking for this support.

We also need to ensure that our students have access to the support services, the programs and the personnel that they need to succeed, and that means ensuring our schools not only have the appropriate number of educational assistants, speech-language pathologists, mental health professionals and other support workers needed to deliver those services, but also ensuring that those professionals are valued as vital contributors to our strong public education system.

I'm going to take a minute to say thank you. Thank you to our teachers. Thank you to our education workers. Thank you for all that you do on an individual basis, frankly, without the help and support from this government, on behalf of our students, even in the face of these challenging times.

Speaker, having school-board-employed support professionals immediately available within schools would help to ensure that our students get the help and the support they need.

I know that right now our students are crying out for help. I want to remind the Premier and the minister that it is still not too late to do the right thing and to table a plan for a safe return to in-person learning in our education system. School is not yet open. There is still time. We know that our students, right now, are suffering. There's rising anxiety, mental health and other concerns that we're hearing about. What is this government doing to support their learning and their well-being?

Speaker, I also want to say that it is an absolute shame what is happening in our health care system. It is particularly distressing that the Premier and his health minister refuse to take proactive action in addressing the staffing crisis that our health system is currently facing. Why are they dragging their feet when the needs are so clear? For months, hospitals have been closing emergency rooms—and yet re-tabling a budget that was drafted pre-election, without acknowledging this problem, is absolutely shameful. The government is failing to react to this crisis and actually letting the system fail. They are being called out by our front-line health care workers—our nurses, our emergency room doctors—and they need to respond. Scrapping Bill 124 should have happened long ago—and yet Bill 2 does not do that. In fact, the Premier and his health minister are doubling down on this health crisis that needs to be fixed right now.

I mentioned in my opening remarks that one of the failures in this budget is not even mentioning the term “climate crisis.” In fact, there was less than a paragraph on the environment in general. It's as if it does not matter at all. But what about the future of this province? As I said, a budget needs to be a road map; it needs to be the government's vision, telling Ontarians, the people of this province, where its priorities belong. And we know that it does not align at all with the needs that we have in the environment.

What about housing? The budget falls well short in recognizing that we are in a housing crisis and that people need help and support.

The people in my community, in Scarborough–Guildwood, are struggling. They are struggling with the rising costs of food, of rents and of basic needs.

This budget that we are debating today does not acknowledge the priorities and the needs of the most vulnerable people in Ontario, and it is a shame.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Rob Flack: I'd like to thank the member opposite for a very eloquent speech and address to the House. She touched on many very important issues that we obviously addressed during the election. And we won a historic victory.

We also understand—this House, this party and this government understand—that all Ontarians are struggling, not only with inflation but the rising cost of living in all the areas she touched on.

A simple question to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood: Does the opposition not support the historic increase to the ODSP that we are presenting, that will be adjusted, I might add, for inflation in the future?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the member opposite.

It does not meet the current needs that people have. It actually doesn't come close to meeting the inflation cost and pressures. Someone in my community said to me, “Milk is so expensive right now, and babies need milk.” People on ODSP need the government to recognize that. It does not meet the current need of the affordability crisis that people are facing in this province, and it's actually forcing them into food bank lines.

In my riding, there has been an over 25% increase in food bank use. When you look at the faces of those individuals, it's really changing.

There's a real, desperate need there. If you talk to people who are part of the ODSP coalition, you'll hear that it needs much more than that.

We, the Ontario Liberals, say 20% immediately, with a review of the basic income pilot so that we can provide adequacy for people who are most vulnerable in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: We often rise in this House and put questions to the government, but sometimes those questions are best coming from our constituents. I want to raise this one from a constituent back home for the member for Scarborough–Guildwood. It's from Donna Behnke. She's from Elliot Lake. She writes: “If any of them had a single ethical bone in their body or even the slightest hint of common decency, they would do what is right. Does”—she used “Ford,” but I'll change it to “Premier”—“not realize some people on ODSP are fighting mental illness? People with cancer, people that had strokes, people that had multiple sclerosis—the list goes on and on. He needs to stop painting everyone with the same paintbrush. The Premier and prior governments always target the poor. You can't make healthy people by destroying them. They will never be fit to hold a job. But what it will do is push more people to seek out MAID.”

My question to the member is, do you agree with Donna?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Many years prior to being elected, I worked in the field of workforce development for Goodwill Industries, which sought to provide work access and jobs for people who face barriers to employment, including people with disabilities. Some of our most amazing employees came to work every day and they had a disability.

So I do believe that all Ontarians should be able to have a choice in how they live in our society, and our society should accommodate that.

What is very distressing in this situation is that the government creates so many hurdles for people who are on ODSP, even just to access support. During the pandemic, there was a \$200 amount that they had access to, but they had to go through their caseworker. So many people contacted my office because those offices were closed, or people were working from home and they were inaccessible. So why would the government put an extra burden on people on ODSP, rather than just distributing the funds to the cases that they know they have on record and have on file?

Absolutely, there is more that can be done to support people with disabilities in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood for her re-election to this august House.

For 15 years, the Liberals—my colleague was part of that government, as the Minister of Education and other posts or positions—did not plan for the growth of our city or province. The best demonstration is Scarborough—for 15 years, Scarborough has been ignored.

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During our government's last term, we brought so many important infrastructure projects, like subways, building hospitals, community centres, medical centres.

Wouldn't my colleague support our plans—which will also benefit individuals in Scarborough—to improve the quality of life?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I thank my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt. We are on the same side, when it comes to fighting for the people of Scarborough–Guildwood. That's why I was elected nine years ago. Speaker, on August 1, which is Emancipation Day, I was elected by the people of Scarborough to do this very thing, to fight for them.

Scarborough is a community I grew up in—went to high school; went to University of Toronto, Scarborough campus. I know Scarborough needs more infrastructure. In fact, the extension of the subway is something I fought for. I was elected in 2013 as the “subway champion,” to bring that very infrastructure to the people of Scarborough. I continue to fight for the people of Scarborough.

You recently announced a medical school for Scarborough. That was a project that I helped to co-create with the former principal of the University of Toronto

Scarborough campus because I noticed that we had a gap in that area. I pushed for that.

Oftentimes, that's what the people of our province expect—that in successive governments, you will build on the work that has already started for their benefit.

I will always continue to fight for the people of Scarborough and for what they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for her presentation.

My question is quite simple: What, in their mind, would be an acceptable increase in ODSP and OW?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: As I have said in addressing the questions in this House, the 5% increase that the Ford government is jamming through in the budget bill, Bill 2, is completely unacceptable, and we need to see an increase. The Ontario Liberals are calling for a 20% increase. We know that we have to have a balance with responsibility with that. We would like to see the review and the implementation of the basic income pilot so that people can have their needs met. There are many needs— income is just one of them—and the basic income pilot would do that for people who rely on income supports in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for her always passionate advocacy for the beautiful riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

We've heard over and over again from the government side that the Liberals have done such a terrible job, even though they earned the trust of the people of Ontario for four consecutive mandates.

While, of course, no government can brag of having a perfect record, I want to ask the member: What are the policies or the initiatives from the previous Liberal governments that you are most proud of—and what policies the current government is actually able to build on?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am most proud of full-day kindergarten because I know giving our earliest learners the opportunity to be in school and to receive that support, both from a certified Ontario teacher as well as from an ECE in their classroom, is extraordinarily important.

I'm also very proud of the environmental contributions that were driven by the former Liberal government. The closure of coal plants was recognized even by President Obama as the most significant contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases in North America by any jurisdiction, and that was led by a Liberal government.

I'm also proud of how the former Liberal government handled the Great Recession. We remember how precarious everything was. We brought back over 800,000 jobs. All of the jobs that were lost during the Great Recession were brought back under our leadership. That is why I call out this current government in terms of what they are doing—with the lack of vision, the lack of a road map, the lack of a plan in this budget—when we're facing such precarious economic times.

Of course, on health care, we have some of the most innovative approaches—Cancer Care Ontario—to our health system, in terms of leading the transformation and renewal of our health system.

That form of innovation and leadership is needed today and always. And I give credit to the great people of Ontario for our great education system, and the people who work so hard—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate this opportunity to speak to our Plan to Build Act. But in my first official opportunity outside of question period to speak in this place, Mr. Speaker, I want to express a heartfelt thank you to the people, my constituents, of Kenora–Rainy River for five elections—four of them, I had an opportunity to come to either the other place, the House of Commons in Ottawa, and here now for my second session. I appreciate the support, the confidence that you have put in me.

Standing in this place today, I reflect on the past four years. I would make the observation that it went quite quickly, as these sessions often do. Just getting back from AMO in Ottawa—the seven years that I spent there and the seven years since seem a bit of a blur. But in sitting down with some of my older old colleagues from that other place and looking around this magnificent Legislature, I am struck by the opportunity for renewal—most notably, in this session, the strong, stable majority that the people of Ontario have given the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and some fresh new faces to join us here today, because they rejected out of hand the platforms of the opposition parties and, in particular, if you will, the gaggle of non-affiliates across the way there who used to form the governing party for some 15 years. So if there's anything to be proud of there, it is the fact that they'll have an opportunity to sit in this place and take note of the fact that in this legislative session, the people of Ontario have sent a strong message that they want our government to continue to build.

I'm going to focus, for the purposes of my remarks, on northern Ontario, where not only did we pick up a few new seats, but we also got a couple of those NDP members out on the doorstep a lot more vigorously than they're used to, as we replaced a couple of seats in northern Ontario and finished a strong, notable second in every other seat across northern Ontario—a historic finish in and of itself. I want to thank the candidates who ran for us across northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, from hospitals to highways, from bridges to broadband, we're committed to building northern Ontario and rebuilding our economy across northern Ontario. In the past four years, several new mines moved to construction or transitioned into electrification only. This isn't just sound environmental policy; this puts significant demands, positive pressure on our northern communities to ensure that we're ready and that we continue to be ready, as some northern communities across the province will see exponential growth and therefore requirements for infrastructure and community enhancements moving forward.

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We understand the opportunity to ensure that our highways, our modes of transportation, are upgraded. We saw, in print, our budget highlighting a plan to twin Highway 17 from the Manitoba border to Kenora, and hopefully points beyond, as we make a commitment not just based on safety, but based also on the economic opportunity to link our northern communities across some 800,000 square kilometres and ensure, as we move from earth to electric vehicles, from mining to motors, that for the first time we have a fully integrated supply chain in our transportation modalities—most notably buses, transport trucks and electric-powered vehicles—that northern Ontario is part of that integrated supply chain. More importantly, it would start there. So, safe transportation modes, rail into the Far North out in northeastern Ontario, and a plan to link our highways with two-plus-one and/or twinning is a great way to get started.

My colleague the Minister of Mines and I have an extraordinary opportunity to continue on with our growth plan to open up what I've referred to as the corridor to prosperity, leveraging what governments do. Let mining companies build those mines; we will be there to support the regulatory pieces, but most notably, to create a highway or road infrastructure to leverage health, social and economic opportunities for those isolated communities in the north. I know a thing or two about that. I spent more than eight years of my life living and working as a nurse in those isolated communities. Retired in that capacity, I also served as a lawyer—I asked my constituents not to hold that part against me—and then as a politician, ensuring and committed that the northern communities—I even got a smile from the Speaker on that one. Lawyers are good people, Mr. Speaker, just for the record—just to ensure that we understand the opportunity to connect our communities.

There has been much discussion about health care. As a former health care provider and someone who has worked with communities across northern Ontario to improve access to health services and programs—we're investing \$142 million, starting in 2022-23, to recruit and retain health care workers in underserved communities. This will start with \$81 million, beginning in this fiscal year, to expand the Community Commitment Program for Nurses, which includes compensation and recovery for the cost of full tuition for nurses.

We see at Seven Generations Education Institute in Fort Frances and Kenora an incredible opportunity, as that Indigenous post-secondary education institution, now accessible for all students, is training in paramedicine, PSWs, RPNs and registered nurses.

There is a plan and a relationship to work with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine to address one of the greatest opportunities we've seen perhaps in a generation, and that is to ensure that students attending northern high schools—and now northern colleges and potentially northern medical schools—will have an opportunity to play out and live out their dream to be educated and then

work in their region. As a young man coming from southern Ontario, armed with a diploma in nursing in the very late 1980s, early 1990s, I came there, I settled there, I made it my home, and went on to other things. We need to ensure, moving forward, that as many northern students have that opportunity.

The expansion of these kinds of programs—the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant—will support and attract the retention of a whole host of human resources, health human resources, moving forward. We think that is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a couple of other programs that are highlighted in this bill but that find their importance in the previous session—because this is about building. It's not just building Ontario as a legislative exercise; it's about a government building on the previous session.

A couple of those key things for northern Ontario were found in the Northern Energy Advantage Program. This wasn't just a rebrand. This was a program that replaced the northern industrial energy rebate program. NEAP, as it's called, is kind of neat, because it provides—now, as opposed to before—large industrial electricity consumers with competitive and predictable electricity rates. This program is now broader in scope and will assist more major and larger operations, through a new investor class, to be competitive. In the forestry sector, margins are razor-thin. Mines are pivoting to full electrification, in some cases, and they need to know that that cost has certainty—unlike from the previous government—and that it's competitive.

Listen to the names of companies that have rallied behind our government, Mr. Speaker, to support this and access this:

—Algoma Steel, which is now transitioning to an electric arc furnace thanks to the investments that we're putting into their operations;

—Domtar, one of the most efficient pulp producers across northern Ontario—in fact, in the world—right there in Dryden, in my own riding;

—Evolution Mining;

—Vale Canada in Sudbury;

—Impala Canada;

—GreenFirst Forest Products;

—Pan American Silver; and

—Agnico Eagle.

These have a couple of interesting features. They are anchor tenants and major employers in all our ridings.

Historically, we've brought these programs to this legislative floor.

And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Are you curious?

The Speaker is curious.

They have two features: They were transformative programs, and the members of the NDP, for reasons I don't understand, voted against them. They have a chance at redemption here today and as we vote moving forward. They're going to get an opportunity to support these programs. They're going to get an opportunity to ensure

that their constituents, especially the younger ones, have an opportunity to transition out of high school or out of college or other training, Red Seal training, into the industries that have characterized northern Ontario for well over a century. This is a plan to build, but this is a plan for opportunity.

I mentioned transportation modalities earlier in my remarks, and I just want to return to that for a moment. Our government's efforts in the last session and moving forward, as highlighted in our plan to build, include cutting the gas tax and fuel tax by a combined 11 cents. That doesn't sound like a lot, until you fuel up jets and my 133-litre tank in my pickup truck, to serve one of the largest ridings in northern Ontario with highway networks.

It's a commitment to make investments through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, widely acknowledged as one of the most robust efforts to modernize the investments for municipalities and northern businesses moving forward. But it also made investments in airports—the town of Hearst, to replace the René Fontaine Municipal Airport in-ground fuel system; the town of Iroquois Falls, to make improvements to the Iroquois Falls municipal airport; Confederation College, to improve and expand and modernize its aviation programs so pilots can move out across northern Ontario to ensure safe passage across some 800,000 square kilometres of this amazing part of the province; and, of course, closer to home, for my purposes, in the city of Dryden and the town of Fort Frances, improvements to their facilities and terminal buildings.

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I'm so pleased to serve with an amazing Premier and a caucus, frankly, who have made sure that every time discussion substantively comes up in caucus or cabinet, it is viewed mandatorily through a northern Ontario lens, and that we continue to understand that through things like the Northern Ontario Resource Development Support Fund, we are ensuring that our towns and cities, where pressures are put on them as a result of the resource sector, are accounted for and are stackable to work with other levels of government, including our own, for meaningful upgrades to their infrastructure that's targeted towards the impact of resource development.

I'm going to take up the last few minutes to talk about, in my capacity as Minister of Indigenous Affairs, some of the tremendous progress that has been made not just historically but for the purposes of this plan to build.

We sat down with Indigenous business and political leaders to talk about a wealth creation table and a prosperity table. We took our direction from then-Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald, now the national chief. We took our lead from people like Matt Jamieson, president and CEO of Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corp.; my friend Kevin Eshkawkogan, president and CEO of Indigenous Tourism Ontario; Brenda LaRose, partner and head of the national diversity and Indigenous board practice; Desiree Norwegian—one of my favourites—owner and chief executive officer of

Atunda Inc., working in the nuclear sector; and of course, a dear friend of mine, Darren Harper, co-founder and president of Maawandoon Inc. What they know is what we know: the tremendous opportunity for Indigenous communities and businesses to prosper. It's why we've advanced and built on resource revenue-sharing agreements between Indigenous communities in the province. It's why we have invested in increased funding for Aboriginal financial institutes to access capital. We're going to have more to say on that as budget 2022 endeavours to address the Indigenous Economic Development Fund highlighted in our plan to build.

This is exciting because this is organic. It comes from Regional Chief Glen Hare's pen and his adviser Ted Nolan—you will remember him as the coach of the Buffalo Sabres and a former player in the National Hockey League. My only wish is that he had played for my beloved Toronto Maple Leafs. But forget all that. For the purposes of this discussion, Ted, who has one of the largest business networks the province over and the country over, with Indigenous partners, has come to the table to advise Regional Chief Hare and create an opportunity to the tune of \$25 million.

The Chiefs of Ontario office and their Indigenous leadership, the Grand Chief included, know that access to capital, investing in Indigenous businesses is the right way to go.

Mr. Speaker, finally, on that note and making a quick pivot, Indigenous businesses, now more than ever, under the revamped Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, are seeing exciting opportunities—expanding existing businesses, helping to support the creation of new ones, and, vitally, by virtue of our business programs in the new-look Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, ensuring that they are an essential part of the supply chains.

As I mentioned earlier, not only does northern Ontario count itself in from mines to motors, from the earth to electric vehicles—from some of the most northern communities that you can contemplate, right down to the Stellantis plant in Windsor that we intend to onboard—but we want to include Indigenous communities in that opportunity.

So, Mr. Speaker, already we're seeing the results in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund revamp. This budget accounts for an ongoing commitment to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund.

Once again, my NDP colleagues across the way will have an extraordinary opportunity to stand with the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, to focus on the opportunities and support this important bill as we build Ontario and as we build, importantly, for the purposes of my representation, northern Ontario.

Thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Terence Kernaghan): Unfortunately, there is no further time for questions and comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RECONNECT ONTARIO PROGRAM

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Terence Kernaghan): I recognize the member from Sarnia–Lambton. And happy belated birthday.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

It's an honour to rise in the Legislature today to announce another important investment in Sarnia–Lambton by the government of Ontario. Recently, I was pleased to share the good news with a number of different organizations in Sarnia–Lambton that our government is investing nearly \$550,000 in five different community festivals through the 2022 Reconnect Ontario program.

The Bluewater Health Foundation Block Party, the South Western International Film Festival, the Victoria Playhouse Petrolia, the Bluewater BorderFest Music Festival, and the Revelree Music Festival have all been selected by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport as local Sarnia–Lambton recipients of the Reconnect Ontario program grants that support entertainment and jobs in the tourism, culture and entertainment sectors.

In total, your Ontario government is investing more than \$48 million across this great province through the Reconnect Ontario program to help create amazing staycation experiences and boost local economic growth.

By investing more than \$500,000 in Sarnia–Lambton, in these festivals and events, our government is delivering much-needed support for local businesses in our community as it continues to recover from the effects of the pandemic. This is great news from the government of Ontario—to ensure that Ontario is making a positive difference in my community.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today is the start of the 138th Providence Bay Agricultural Fair. This is a mainstay of Manitoulin Island that brings families from across the province for fun and entertainment.

However, there are concerns going into fair weekend this year, as Highway 542 and Highway 551 leading to Providence Bay remain in a state of disrepair. I was travelling on these highways last weekend, and I can understand why people on Manitoulin Island are frustrated with the government's quick-fix solutions. Roads are being left in conditions where the pulverizing of the old surface is leaving large chunks of material, causing dangerous driving conditions and damage to windshields, shock absorbers and tires. This has an effect on the cycling and cyclist community as well. This level of work and road resurfacing would not be accepted in the Muskokas. Then why shove it to Manitoulin?

This government needs to step up to the plate and ensure that residents and visitors alike can safely travel on Manitoulin highways.

Speaker, Manitoulin Island is the largest freshwater island in the world. So I say, on behalf of all Haweaters, do them once, do them right, and pave our highways properly.

RECONNECT ONTARIO PROGRAM

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Terence Kernaghan): Next, I recognize the member from Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair this morning.

I'm happy to rise in the House today to showcase both a government of Ontario program and a happy recipient in my riding of Brantford–Brant. Through the great work of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Reconnect Ontario 2022 program is making an investment of more than \$48 million. This program helps festival and event organizers carry out events that encourage people to travel, participate and rediscover the beauty and diversity of all that Ontario communities have to offer.

1020

I was so pleased that the Paris Agricultural Society was successful in their application and that they were awarded \$105,000 from this program a few weeks ago. The fair is constantly changing as the agricultural sector evolves, but it never strays from the commitment of over 160 years to bring entertainment and agricultural education to the community.

Agriculture is the single biggest economic sector in Brantford–Brant, and this festival funding for the great folks of the Paris Agricultural Society cannot come at a better time. Learning about agriculture, having fun, and speaking with the men and women who grow the food that is on our dining room tables day in and day out is partly what the Reconnect Ontario program is all about.

Congratulations to the Paris Agricultural Society. And between September 1 and 5, see you all at the Paris fair this year.

RIDING OF OSHAWA

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am proud to join this 43rd Parliament, re-elected for a third term to serve Oshawa. It is an honour and a privilege to come here and stand in my place on behalf of constituents, families and workers across my riding. I'm appreciative of the trust and hope that I bring with me from my community.

Thank you to my staff, who have been working these past eight years to support constituents with compassion and care. The load is heavy, and none of us would be able to do this work without our team.

To the volunteers who spoke to voters, knocked on thousands of doors, raised money and committed their time and heart to our bright, positive, motivating campaign: Thank you.

To my core campaign team, CFO, manager and volunteer coordinators, who put their lives on hold to work tirelessly during the election: Thank you.

To my family, friends and loved ones: I love you, and I appreciate you.

And, Speaker, I am blessed to still have my little grandma in my life. She's 101 years old and was very proud to vote for her granddaughter.

Applause.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I get it; I know that applause is for my grandma. I will pass it along.

Speaker, all of us in this room heard sincere and heartfelt concerns during the election. We're still hearing from distraught families and workers—letters and calls from real folks concerned about collapsing health care systems; public education; a lack of safe, affordable and available housing; rising poverty; and the terrible suffering of so many without the addictions and mental health supports they seek. We have vital and important work to do on behalf of real people who have trusted us to listen and serve them well.

I will continue to serve sincerely and be the strong voice I have now three times been elected to be.

Thank you, Oshawa.

RIDING OF MISSISSAUGA–LAKESHORE

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Speaker, I'd first like to congratulate you on your re-election and to congratulate all our colleagues—both new and returning, on both sides of the aisle—on being elected to this House.

I'm honoured to be back for another term, representing the people of Mississauga–Lakeshore.

I'm proud of all the progress we've made over the last four years, especially in south Mississauga. That includes a multi-billion dollar project to build the largest and most advanced hospital in Canadian history. It includes 1,152 new long-term-care beds, more than any other riding in this province, and the first residential hospice in Mississauga. It includes the new \$5-billion Hazel McCallion Line and a new rapid transit corridor along Lakeshore that will support the Lakeview Village and Brightwater communities along the lakefront. We've come a long way, and last week the throne speech laid out a plan to ensure the progress continues.

Earlier this week, I joined delegations from Mississauga and the region of Peel at the AMO policy conference in Ottawa, meeting with ministers, focusing on the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, our shared infrastructure priorities, and fixing the housing supply crisis.

I look forward to working together with municipal partners and with all members here to deliver positive results for the people of Ontario over the next four years.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Like all Hamiltonians, Speaker, I was heartsick to learn of the massive raw sewage spill into Chedoke Creek and Cootes Paradise. Today I want to share some good news on the progress Hamiltonians are taking to restore this beloved, provincially significant wetland: Step 1 of the remediation activities has begun,

with an expected dredging of 11,000 cubic metres of sediment.

Thanks to city staff for the tour of the area, and thanks for sharing your expertise and your obvious pride in playing a role to restore Chedoke Creek.

Why is this area so special? Cootes Paradise is the largest wetland at the western end of Lake Ontario. It is a magnificent example of plant biodiversity and is home to 35 endangered species. This location is also an important migratory bird stopover. One of our more famous inhabitants is our local bald eagle. The return of the endangered bald eagles to this area is a fantastic story. Catching a glimpse of them soaring over Cootes Paradise is truly a remarkable sight.

And in more good news, an incredibly rare Blanding's turtle was released back into Cootes Paradise to join only two other Blanding's turtles presently living in Cootes.

Hamiltonians are rightfully proud of our natural areas, and we are taking action. The city of Hamilton and community environmental partners are collaborating on the Biodiversity Action Plan. Partners include Hamilton naturalists, Environment Hamilton, the Royal Botanical Gardens. Their work will protect, enhance and restore biodiversity in Hamilton.

With great gratitude to all of you who stand up to defend our environment, I thank you.

THE LOFT AT THE ALGOMA CONSERVATORY

Mr. Ross Romano: The arts, culture and entertainment industries are crucial in every community. They enhance our lives. They attract tourism, boost economic growth and preserve our culture and our heritage.

Earlier this year, I was privileged to witness an incredible preservation of our community heritage and growth of the arts and entertainment in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, through an investment of \$500,000, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, into a space known as the Loft at the Algoma Conservatory of Music. The Loft is located in the attic of a building that over 100 years ago housed the offices of the historic Sault Ste. Marie Pulp and Paper Co. Although the paper mill was, unfortunately, closed in 2012, the site has been completely transformed over the last decade into a community hub. The Loft is now a huge part of that transformation. A dusty and forgotten storage area has been converted into a warm, beautiful, inviting performance venue, while preserving the heritage of a national historic site.

The Loft hosts a state-of-the-art recording studio with some of the best equipment available in the world, and it is connected to a live performance hall in the machine shop next door. This incredible innovation allows for live performances to be captured with the absolute best in sound and video capabilities. The unique possibilities of this one-stop shop for performance and recording is unparalleled.

I am so excited to see what opportunities the team at the Loft can continue to bring to the arts and entertainment industry in Sault Ste. Marie.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: I had the chance to listen to the minister this morning talk about her plan to stay open in Ontario, in our health care system. While—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: You may not want to clap yet.

While the thousand beds of isolation opening up are welcome, they are months late. Forcing residents to go to a place outside of their community seems cruel. It really doesn't reflect the lessons we learned in the pandemic, in long-term care.

The thing that's most concerning is the minister's refusal to rule out private, for-profit care—increasing that in our system. Some 25 years ago in this province, a government of the day told us that was our only solution for long-term care. We have all seen the results of that in the pandemic.

This government seems to be set on establishing separate, parallel systems—private, for-profit.

Here's the challenge: The greatest challenge that exists right now in our health care system is people—having enough people to care for the people we care for most.

Our public system is in crisis, and what this government is proposing is—they are proposing to set up another parallel system that is going to compete for those personnel, to make a profit.

What this government needs to do is to repeal Bill 124, get serious about foreign-trained health care professionals, and actually talk to front-line workers.

NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL SENIORS' HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Vincent Ke: As of this moment, the North York General Foundation Radiothon, in partnership with A1 Chinese Radio, is holding an annual major outreach event to raise funds for a landmark new seniors' care home at North York General Hospital. Among the first designed using insights from the pandemic, the home will be fully integrated with the hospital to provide residents with full access to emergency and specialty services. To better serve the seniors from different cultural backgrounds, the new home will be offering culturally diverse programming, resources and food.

1030

The government is not only adding beds; it is creating long-term-care spaces for seniors in modern, safe and comfortable surroundings where they will feel truly valued and at home.

Speaker, I want to thank North York General Hospital and its leadership team for their commitment to provide the best care and experience for our community. I also want to thank all those involved in this great event. It is

your participation that made Ontario a better place that we are all proud of.

PAUL ARCULUS

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It gives me great pleasure to rise in this chamber today to recognize an outstanding resident from my riding of Durham. Recently, my office had the pleasure to congratulate Mr. Paul Arculus from Port Perry for his 25 years of outstanding service as the president of the Lake Scugog Historical Society and the curator of the Scugog museum.

Paul and Eleanor Arculus settled their family in Cartwright township in 1970 and, for the past 52 years, established themselves as pillars of the community.

In his many roles as teacher, author and renowned storyteller, Paul has shared his love of local history with thousands of residents in working toward the preservation of historical buildings, sites and cemeteries.

Just last year, Port Perry High School renamed a scholarship the Paul Arculus bursary, which is awarded to a local student pursuing post-secondary studies in the field of history.

On behalf of all Ontarians, thank you, Paul, for celebrating our past and honouring those who were a part of building the great province of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In the Speaker's gallery today, we have constituents from the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills: John Mann and his daughter Samantha Mann, from Georgetown. I'm pleased to inform the House that Samantha is starting her training for the page program at the Senate of Canada next week. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 9(h), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required. Therefore, orders of the day on Monday, August 22, 2022, shall commence at 9 a.m.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

The government is planning to force ALC patients waiting in hospitals to move to long-term-care beds far from home, without their consent. This is going to tear

seniors away from their spouses, their essential caregivers, their grandchildren, and everything that's familiar to them.

Doctors and nurses rarely need to provide medical care for ALC patients, so this won't free up nurses or doctors. This government is sacrificing seniors to free up furniture.

Why is the government hurting seniors instead of tackling the hospital staffing crisis?

Hon. Doug Ford: We can't continue doing the same thing over and over and over again for 15 years that the NDP and the Liberals have done, and expecting a different result. We're pouring billions and billions of dollars into the health care system. But guess what? The status quo is not working. They feel the status quo is fine. They'd leave everything alone. They'd end up having zero beds.

We're building thousands and thousands of beds, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue focusing on fixing the health care system that they broke for 15 years.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: The government also announced this morning that it's expanding surgeries in for-profit private clinics—same surgeon, same surgical team; just in a for-profit clinic, not in a hospital. For more hours every day, nurses and doctors won't be in hospitals. They'll be in private clinics, and patients will get a bill—not for your surgery, but for everything from a consult with a nutritionist to upgraded cataract lenses.

Why is the government expanding for-profit care and making the staffing crisis in our hospitals even worse?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Our plan to safely stay open really focuses on five main points, and it speaks exactly to what we need to do, which is, we need to shore up long-term-care beds. We've done that by an unprecedented expansion in the province of Ontario. We need to make sure that community care is available in our homes for our loved ones when they need it, because that's what they want. They want to be close to home. They want to be in their own home. Our five-point plan speaks to all of those pieces.

Surgical backlogs, absolutely—the COVID pandemic did not stop surgeries. What we need to do is ensure those regularly scheduled surgeries can continue, and we are giving hospitals that expanded opportunity to, in many cases, allow the surgery suites to be open for longer. We're funding those opportunities because we see that as a way to ensure people get the care they need, when they need it, where they need it.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Every expert has been clear that the solution to the staffing crisis is to hire more staff, especially nurses.

This scheme doesn't hire a single nurse. It doesn't hire a single doctor. It doesn't keep ERs open this weekend.

Will the government scrap this scheme and instead launch a plan to recruit, retain and return nurses with better

pay, better working conditions and the respect that they deserve?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: A couple of numbers that I think are really important for the members opposite to understand—we are already hiring, having people in community, in hospitals, in long-term care, around 10,000 people. With our expanded opportunities, we're going to have 19,000 new HHR hospital—individual professionals who are here. It is exactly why two weeks ago I met with the College of Nurses, I met with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and I said, “You have two weeks. Bring me a plan to show me how all of those individuals who are waiting for accreditation and licensing in the province of Ontario can get expedited through the process.” We've done that.

We will continue to work with our partners to make sure that all opportunities are explored.

We've done the work. Now join us and be part of the solution.

FOREIGN-TRAINED HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, more than a million Ontarians don't have access to a doctor or a nurse practitioner. People are waiting for hours and hours in pain in emergency rooms, waiting for months and years for surgeries, and more than 1,400 died last year while waiting.

There are over 12,000 internationally trained doctors and thousands more internationally trained nurses in Ontario ready to help fill the gap in primary care.

Why has this government failed to remove the unfair barriers for these doctors and nurses?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I will repeat what I just said, which was, two weeks ago I met with the College of Nurses, I met with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and I said, “You, as colleges in the province of Ontario, need to expedite these licences.”

When people have the qualifications that we deserve, that we expect in the province of Ontario, there should not be a block to get those people in community. We are doing that. That work has been done.

The ongoing expansion—unprecedented. In Scarborough, in Brampton, we have two new medical schools. We're doing the short term, we're doing the medium term, and we're doing the long term—because we want health care to be in the province of Ontario, wherever you live.

1040

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Nothing the minister says actually removes the barriers that internationally educated health care workers face in this province. The government says that they're doing everything they can to work with internationally trained doctors and nurses to address the staffing shortage in health care. And, yet, data from the CPSO shows that only 739 applicants became members in 2020, compared to the 2,074 in 2019.

My question is, why was there a decrease when we're in the middle of the pandemic and we're facing a health care crisis?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We removed the Canadian experience barrier. That ensured that people have access if they were trained in other parts of Canada or the world. We want individuals who are practised, who are educated and who want to work in health care, because we understand how important these health care workers are. We understand that if you want to work in health care—we want you to be part of the solution. And we're doing that with our hospital partners, with our long-term-care partners, with community care, with primary care.

All of these things together mean that when people need the help they need, it will be there for them.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I just want to clarify, just in case government members didn't understand: There were less doctors that came through in their field in 2020 than in 2019. There was a cut made by this government.

The practice-ready assessment program, which was standardized, that this government cancelled in 2018, is actually working very well in seven other provinces. The model could have been used to implement a similar or even improved assessment process for doctors and nurses in Ontario. We could have had thousands of health care workers added to the system in as little as 12 weeks. I want everyone in Ontario to listen: In as little as 12 weeks, we could have had more health care workers in this province.

Will this government reverse its cuts? And why is this government dragging their feet in bringing in the solutions that can save lives in Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We've expanded the residency program in the province of Ontario. We've ensured that the Canadian experience that, frankly, was a barrier for some internationally trained nurses and doctors was removed during the pandemic, and that has increased the numbers.

I get it; I know that there are still challenges and there are people who want to have a primary care physician, who have no access. But the work that we are doing with the medical schools, with the colleges, with the expansion of the residency program means that that is ongoing. We are seeing the expansion. We are seeing those numbers increase. I would love to have them go faster. But we have done the work, and we will continue to work with those partners to make sure any barriers are removed as we move forward.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

On July 26, a senior named Shirley, who lives in Fort Erie, had a fall in her home. Injured and alone, she pressed her Lifeline alert button. Ten minutes later, she received a call from Lifeline, who informed her that they were told she would not get an ambulance for six hours.

Workers are doing everything they can, but this government has ignored their pleas for more resources and, in fact, cut health care resources.

Is the Premier proud that, under his watch, residents who dial 911 have to wait six hours for an ambulance?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member opposite.

There is no doubt that when we hear these stories, it only drives our motivation further to make sure that we do everything possible in all continuums.

The 911 model of care that we referenced at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference earlier this week has been embraced: community paramedicine that allows community paramedics to go into those homes, for individuals who are able, in most cases with very little support, to stay safely in their home. The municipalities that have embraced that 911 model of care have loved it. In fact, our satisfaction rate, I believe, is in the 97th percentile.

We are going to ensure that that 911 model of care is expanded further to other municipalities across Ontario, because we see it as one of the opportunities to make sure that when individuals like Shirley have a fall in their home, there is a community paramedicine program in place that can quickly assist them and get them back to their—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Premier: Shirley was able to get hold of her daughter-in-law, who herself is fighting a battle with cancer. Thankfully, her daughter came to her house and cancelled the ambulance. Despite this, a taxi showed up at her house five hours later. The taxi was dispatched to take them to the hospital.

I raised this issue back in February.

To the Premier: Just days ago, the Premier said very clearly that health care was just fine. Once again, is the Premier proud that, under his watch, residents are getting taxis five hours late instead of the emergency care that this government is supposed to provide?

Also, I want to be very clear: Taxi drivers in the province of Ontario are not paramedics.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will reinforce—when we find these successful models, when we work with our partners, whether that is hospitals, municipalities or paramedics, we want to expand those models into other communities. We are doing that with the 911 model of care. Currently, there are approximately 40 municipalities who are using it, love it, find it a very effective model to serve the people within their communities.

Community paramedicine—paramedics, in general, have been amazing partners throughout this pandemic; in many cases, assisting with vaccine rollout, ensuring that people were at home and able to be monitored safely.

Ultimately, when we see those models, we're going to expand them. That is the innovation that we're looking for. Those are the kinds of stories that I heard for two full days of meetings at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We will take those best practices and ensure that

other municipalities and other communities in Ontario have access to the same opportunities.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Donna Skelly: My constituents are hearing about staffing pressures at our local hospitals, and they're very concerned. They're concerned that their loved ones are not going to be able to get the care they need when they need it.

Under the previous Liberal government, we saw how the health care system was neglected, how hallway health care continued to get worse year by year, with no thought or planning for the future.

When I hear the government speak about innovation in this health care sector—my constituents want to know more about what we are referring to. Is it additional supports and new solutions, ideas to address the problems we have previously faced?

Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell this House how our publicly funded hospital system is innovating to improve the patient experience?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you very much to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

The short answer is, all of the above. Ontario's hospitals are leading innovation in Ontario, transforming our health care system and improving the patient experience. Let me give you just one example that you would be interested in, coming from your own community.

Our government invested over \$25 million to modernize and expand the stem cell treatments at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre at Hamilton Health Sciences. The centre is one of three world-class hospitals offering all forms of stem cell transplants to adult patients here in Ontario. With this expansion, more patients will be able to access world-class cancer treatment sooner and closer to home, and they get that treatment they need where and when they need it. That's innovation, Speaker.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Speaker, I know my constituents in the Hamilton region are supportive of these types of health care investments. They realize more needs to be done and more supports need to be provided to our front-line health care workers and world-leading research centres.

My constituents have seen the news coverage and have personally experienced surgical delays. Going into surgery is a very difficult experience for many, but in Ontario we have the best front-line health care workers who provide support through the entire process and act with excellence.

1050

Can the Minister of Health share with the Legislature how our government is investing in innovation to reduce wait times for my constituents and all Ontarians, giving

them peace of mind and access to surgical procedures when they need them the most?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We all understood that as the pandemic was at its height, there were going to be challenges related to surgical and diagnostic backlogs. So we proactively worked with our hospital partners through a government fund of \$86 million—the Surgical Innovation Fund. We are supporting hospitals as they develop the innovative solutions they need to continue to provide high-quality care and ramp up surgical capacity, reducing wait times and improving access to surgical services for patients.

I think we all appreciate and understand that when an individual is going in for surgery, it can be a very stressful time. Anything that we can do as a government to smooth that opportunity and make sure that they get access to that surgery quickly is what we are seized at.

At Hamilton Health Sciences, they've partnered with Niagara and Mohawk College to successfully develop the operating room assist program. And because of a micro-certification program begun by our government, we will attract more health human resources. They've already recruited the first 16—

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier.

Premier, I want to tell you about Jennifer LeFeuvre. In 2019, Jennifer signed a contract and put down a deposit for a new home to be built in Stayner, Ontario, by Briarwood Development Group—whose CEO happens to be a big donor of the Premier and the PC Party.

Three years later, Jennifer is still waiting for her home to be built, and now the developer has told Jennifer that she needs to pay an additional \$175,000 for the home or the contract is broken and she won't be getting her home at all.

Jennifer is devastated. As she describes it, “These people are getting away with murder and there's nothing that I can do.”

Premier, can you step in and ensure this developer honours the deal they made to build Jennifer a home at the original price?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Our government is promoting trust and confidence for Ontarians when they are investing in one of the biggest purchases of their lifetime: a new home. That is why we continue to enhance public protections while holding builders and vendors to high professional standards. The Premier spoke about it as well.

Through the New Home Construction Licensing Act, HCRA has strengthened regulatory tools for addressing licensees' conduct, created a formal complaints process,

and enhanced the Ontario builder directory to reflect disciplinary actions taken by the registrar.

Additionally, a new mandatory code of ethics for licensed builders and vendors, which came into effect on July 1, protects buyers and owners even further against bad actors.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: This government and the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, which you refer to, are clearly not doing their job to protect homeowners from developers who are taking advantage of first-time homebuyers. Developers continue to break deals and raise home prices because they know they can get away with it in Ontario.

This is my question to the Premier: Can you properly strengthen Ontario's laws so homebuyers are protected from developers who price-gouge?

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Premier Ford vowed to stop bad developers from trying to make extra money off the backs of hard-working Ontarians, and our government strengthened the regulatory tools available to address this concern. These include much heftier fines for bad builders and enhanced power for HCRA to proactively investigate potential bad behaviour by developers.

All together, these stronger penalties and approaches would cost unlawful developers very dearly on a single home, from hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines to the loss of their builder's licence.

We are making bad builders think twice before trying to take advantage of our homebuyers.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Matthew Rae: My constituents in Perth–Wellington have been asking for support for our local land ambulance service because paramedics often have to travel long distances across our rural area. They've heard of the off-load delays across the province and have been asking for peace of mind to know service will be there when their family needs it.

Can the Minister of Health update this House on how our government is supporting land ambulance services across the province and in my riding of Perth–Wellington?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Yesterday, our government was proud to announce nearly \$764 million in funding to assist municipalities with the cost of land ambulance operations. It was equally well-received at AMO recently. This represents an average increase of 5% provincially, compared to last year.

Additionally, of course, we are expanding the 911 patient model of care that I recently spoke about, so patients can get the help they need in community without having to go to an emergency department. Patients participating in this program received the care they needed up to 17 times faster, with 94% of patients avoiding the emergency departments in the days following. By expanding this service, our world-class paramedics are

able to provide even more care for patients in the right place in their homes in community.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the Minister of Health for the response, for your leadership and for our government's support to ambulance services.

Can the Minister of Health elaborate on the 911 patient models and explain how this investment is supporting our paramedic services and patients on the ground across the province?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As you can imagine, at the AMO conference, there was a lot of interest in the municipalities which do not have the 911 model of care yet. It allows patients to receive timely access and appropriate treatment in the community from their paramedics and helps reduce unnecessary emergency department visits.

As an example, the Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service, which covers the member's riding, has a partnership with Hospice Wellington. Eligible patients who call 911 with care needs related to palliative care have the option of being able to be treated at home by paramedics for end-of-life care. Once it's time to go into a hospice, they are transferred directly there, instead of going through the emergency department first. Patients and families have seen improved outcomes by getting treated immediately in their own homes, with their families by their side, and they get that help faster. It's working. The communities and the patients and families love the program, and we're going to expand it.

DENTAL CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier.

In my riding alone, there are 25 residents who are no longer eligible for the senior dental care program for 2022-23 as a result of a 2.8% increase to seniors' CPP and OAS due to inflation. It is a welcome bump for seniors living on fixed incomes. However, due to an outdated income requirement program, now Ontario has seniors who do not have access to stable dental care.

Speaker, through you, is this government going to commit to increasing the income ceiling for the dental care program to accommodate for inflation?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member opposite would know, all government programs, whether it is drugs, seniors, rental—they all have embedded in the program the threshold of income. That has been something we have done, as governments, to ensure that the people most in need are getting the services they need.

The seniors' dental program is clearly one that is embraced and one to be expanded in the province of Ontario, but we have to ensure that those most in need, with that income threshold, are the ones first in line to receive the service.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the Minister of Health: It's shameful that seniors have to live in pain and poverty because they cannot afford basic dental care.

I figured the minister would say what she said; however, when looking into this issue for my residents, I received the same response from this ministry. In fact, we were told that no changes to the program eligibility will be made, and citing that, there is not a need for it after all; the rollout of the federal dental care plan will be in place by 2025.

1100

Through you, Speaker, does this government intend to leave low-income seniors living in pain without basic dental care until 2025 because their CPP was increased by a mere \$50 to \$100 a year?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member opposite would be well aware, the federal government is looking at expanding dental. They have not made any determinations of how that pathway is done.

In the province of Ontario, we've acted. We have a seniors' dental program which—again, as with every other income-based program, whether it's drugs, whether it's rental—has an income-threshold base to it.

Is the member opposite suggesting that individuals most in need, most at risk, should not have access to the dental care that we are currently providing in the province of Ontario?

The federal government is talking about it. We in Ontario have acted and implemented it.

NURSES

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: The Conservative government often talks about the need to be fiscally responsible. As a chartered accountant, I completely agree. The residents of Don Valley West completely agree.

Could the Minister of Health please tell us why she believes it is fiscally responsible to limit nurses' pay to a 1% increase per year, contributing to them leaving the profession in record numbers, to only then have to desperately try to fill those vacant positions and possibly hire back those same nurses through private agencies at an estimated cost that is three times higher than what the hospital would pay if that same nurse were on staff?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This government has a strong track record in supporting and investing in Ontario's health care and health human resources. In fact, we have added over 10,500 new health care professionals since March 2020.

We've also put forward plans that would create the first new medical school in over 100 years in the city of Brampton and in Scarborough—as well as doubling the amount of doctors in the north.

Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, any action that this government has taken to increase the amount of health care professionals in Ontario—the members opposite have always voted against those measures.

We will continue to make historic investments into health care and supporting our health human resources across this province.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: In its last fiscal year ending March 2022, the University Health Network had already spent \$6.7 million on agency nurses, a significant jump compared to 2018 and last year, when it spent about \$1 million, as reported Tuesday in the Toronto Star.

The Conservative government often speaks about how it is fighting for Ontario workers.

Could the Minister of Health please tell us why more taxpayer dollars are being shifted to private agencies, giving those agencies a healthy profit, instead of repealing Bill 124 and paying that money directly to Ontario's health care workers in our public health care system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Congratulations, and welcome to the House, the member from Don Valley West.

Mr. Speaker, she referenced fiscal responsibility, and we completely agree. This province is focused on delivering value for taxpayer money.

Let me go back to the 15 years of the Liberal government, supported for three years by the NDP: \$200 billion of extra debt—\$200 billion. Did we get more subways? Did we get more highways? Did we get more hospitals? Did we get a long-term-care bill? Did we hire nurses?

Mr. Speaker, the case: We went to the people of Ontario. They endorsed our plan to build Ontario.

You have an opportunity to vote in favour of the budget. Please join us.

Interjections.

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

Members will please take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

Start the clock.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ross Romano: Under the previous Liberal government, we saw how the north was treated and how our region felt shut out of discussions at Queen's Park. After years of Liberal scandal, waste and mismanagement within the energy sector and the harmful impact of the carbon tax—the impacts were tremendous for the northern Ontario's economy. Worst of all, a previous Liberal government member actually referred to the north as a “no man's land.”

Last month, the Northern Policy Institute and Lakehead University released a report on the impact that COVID had on the state of northern Ontario's economy, which confirms what many of my constituents have been feeling first-hand, and that is, economic recovery is slower and

taking longer than what is experienced in southern Ontario.

No longer should the north be treated differently and only be considered as an afterthought when it comes to economic growth.

Can the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development please tell this House what this government is doing to make northern Ontario an economic superpower once again?

Hon. Greg Rickford: [*Inaudible*] Mr. Speaker, in making sure that Sault Ste. Marie, like every town, city and Indigenous community across northern Ontario, is fully integrated to a new and modern supply chain. From mines to motors, earth to electric vehicles, we want to ensure that northern communities are in, and one of the important ways we do that is through the Northern Energy Advantage Program. Algoma Steel and Tenaris, Borden mine, Resolute, Evolution Mining, Vale Canada, Impala Canada, GreenFirst Forest Products—they all have something in common; in fact, a few things. They're rallying behind this program which, under this budget, is going to expand from \$120 million to \$176 million and increase the scope by which they can access this program so northern communities and northern businesses are in play for this extraordinary opportunity to build Ontario.

Wouldn't it be neat, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP could support that?

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

Mr. Ross Romano: It's evident that the people of northern Ontario are seeing the advantages of the work our government is doing.

We have heard loud and clear as well now from our Indigenous leadership across the north that they want to see the same opportunities provided to their youth as the youth are receiving in southern Ontario.

Indigenous youth will be a major part of our Ontario economic success now and into the future, and we know that Indigenous people are one of our fastest population growth sectors across the entire country of Canada. We know that economic prosperity for our Indigenous people is a key component of reconciliation.

Speaker, can the minister please let us know what our government is doing to create opportunities for Indigenous people across the north? And what are the exact policies that will support and foster innovation for our Indigenous youth who will be the future leaders of our province?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade would share the view that we have an incredible Premier who has shown great leadership and a real commitment to Indigenous communities and Indigenous businesses.

One of the first things we did with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund was ensure we had a stand-alone program to incentivize businesses to hire Indigenous interns— young people who get a chance to work in businesses, for an opportunity to get a job, to keep a job out of the internship program, over 80% retention rate—and support a new opportunity that's emerging from the revamped

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. That is clear support for Indigenous businesses. In the last quarterly meeting alone, we saw a significant improvement and amount of resources to help Indigenous businesses across northern Ontario that will enable them, in turn, to hire Indigenous people.

We want to make sure in this new modern supply chain that Indigenous people have an opportunity for a prosperous job and a prosperous community moving forward, and that's what this government is committed to.

1110

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Premier.

A report just surfaced indicating inflation of groceries is sitting at over 9%. The human right to food is moving out of reach, along with everything else. Meanwhile, a separate report has shown that while this is partly caused by labour or supply chain issues, grocery store chains are capitalizing on it by raising prices even further to up their own profits.

When will this government rein in the wealthy few to give working people and families a chance at simply catching up?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite, through you, for that question.

Many in Ontario are feeling the pinch, whether it's at the grocery store or at the gas pumps, and we're committed to putting more money back in their pockets. That's why, under the leadership of Premier Ford and our team, we cut the gas taxes. And the inflation rate going down to 7.6%—that was driven by Ontario leading the country in the biggest drop in gas prices right across this country.

Mr. Speaker, what I would ask respectfully of the member opposite and all the members opposite is, that while they voted against reducing gas taxes for the people of Ontario, join us this time and vote for the budget bill so that we can build Ontario together.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Back to the Premier: Whether it's food on their table or paying their rent—people are literally having to choose between the two.

A report from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario showed that 60%, sir—60%—of Ontario renters are cutting back on food to pay for rent. I know this is the case in my riding, where 60% or more of us are renters, and I've heard from folks like Ross Ashley, Lisa and Carla. They are not alone.

My question is to the Premier: How is it when our economy is on the up, basic life necessities are moving further out of reach for working people, like the tens of thousands of folks who have signed this petition calling for a poverty reduction target strategy in Ontario? Where are the fruits of people's labour going if not into their own hands?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you for that very important question.

We are acting. Look at the record. Look at the 241 pages of the budget. Let me highlight a few things, Mr. Speaker.

Minimum wage—it's going up again. In 60 days, it's going to go up again to \$15.50. That's amongst the highest in the country. But we're doing more.

The low-income individuals and families tax credit means that 1.1 million people in Ontario are going to pay some of the lowest personal income taxes in the country.

We're helping seniors so that low-income seniors can live at home longer, by providing a tax credit so they can retrofit their home and have home care come to their home.

We're providing job training tax credits so that people can get retrained for the jobs of tomorrow.

The child care tax credit—we doubled it.

Please join us and vote for this budget bill.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: It is an honour to rise today to ask my very first question in this 43rd Parliament. I am humbled by the trust the voters of Mississauga Centre have put in me for a second time.

Speaker, I have spoken with many women in my riding and across Ontario who have expressed challenges with not being able to successfully enter the workforce and stay employed.

We must lift women up and empower them to excel in business, leadership roles, as entrepreneurs, and in sectors where they are under-represented, like in the skilled trades, for example. Ensuring that women are economically, physically and emotionally safe requires a broad network of support.

Our government has taken action in breaking down barriers that exist for women, including women who are Indigenous, Black or racialized, but more work needs to be done.

Can the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity please tell us about what investments our government is making to empower women in my riding and throughout the province?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you to Mississauga Centre—thank you for the question.

And thank you to the Brampton Centre constituents for trusting in me to be their voice.

I wake up every day motivated to see women in Ontario live in a social and economic landscape that they can grow in, because when women succeed, Ontario succeeds. Us women belong in all spaces, at every table and in all sectors.

That's why, under the leadership of our Premier and our government, we have invested in empowering and supporting women entering and re-entering the workforce. As part of our proposed 2022 budget bill, we have announced we are investing an additional \$6.9 million over three years into enhancing the Investing in Women's Futures Program. This constitutes the largest—

Interjections.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: —yes, it's huge. This constitutes the largest investment in the IWF program since its inception.

We are making sure that women and girls of Ontario have well-paying, stable jobs that align with their passions—and I'll say that again—with their passions and their skills.

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock.

Supplementary.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I thank the minister for her response. I would also like to congratulate her on this appointment. It is so wonderful to have so many strong voices in Peel at the table.

As a result of COVID-19, women and girls have faced additional challenges, such as increased economic insecurity, greater burden of caregiving responsibilities, and a rise, unfortunately, in the incidence of domestic violence. Women across Ontario were disproportionately impacted by the personal effects of the pandemic, including increased needs around child care, balancing home and work responsibility with children staying home during closures.

Our government established Ontario's Task Force on Women and the Economy to ensure that women would not be left behind in a post-pandemic economy. Can the associate minister please highlight some of the initiatives that have been launched as a result of the work of the task force?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Thank you, again, member from Mississauga Centre. Go, Peel.

I do want to acknowledge the leadership taken by the Minister of Finance and my predecessor, the Minister of Colleges and Universities, in establishing Ontario's Task Force on Women and the Economy. That program and that task force resulted in leading initiatives that we are taking action on to see women's full economic participation. For example, implementing the largest agreement in Canada, \$13.5 billion, to lower the cost of child care—that is going to unlock many opportunities for women. Also, the skilled trades strategy: We are investing in several initiatives that support women and girls entering the world of trades, which aims to get more women and girls good-paying jobs. We are also modernizing our school science and technology curricula to better prepare students for the jobs of the future in STEM—science, technology, engineering and mechanics.

We are supporting the economic empowerment of women because, again, when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jamie West: CUPE's Ontario School Board Council of Unions represents 55,000 education workers. These are the early childhood educators, the administrative workers, the bus drivers, the custodians, the

maintenance workers. Despite being the backbone of the education system, their pay is so low that many of these full-time workers have to work part-time jobs just to make ends meet. This is shameful.

My question is to the Premier. The OSBCU contract expires on August 31. I'm wondering, will the Conservative government ensure these workers can keep up with the rising cost of affordability by providing them with a pay increase that keeps pace with this rising cost of living?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Education.

1120

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

We do agree that we value these front-line workers in our schools. They play critical roles, from custodians to EAs to ECEs. That's why we brought forth a fair deal that we have tabled before them, which ensures we achieve the number one priority for this government, which is stability for children. We want them to return to normal schools and have a more enjoyable start this September, and that starts with keeping them in school.

What we're asking of CUPE, and all unions, is to be reasonable. When you aggregate the asks made by that union, which sets the floor for the negotiations for every other union negotiation, it is a 52% increase, akin to the combined budgets of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and BC. It is larger than the Minister of Colleges and Universities's entire budget.

So we want to be fair for taxpayers. A good deal for these workers, one that keeps kids in class—that's exactly what this government will deliver.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Back to the Premier: Speaker, as the Minister of Education knows, the majority of these workers are women.

I met with Charity, one of these workers, and she told me that despite having a full-time job, she goes to food banks on a regular basis to feed her children.

Education workers like Charity keep our communities safe and running. They put their heart and soul, and their health and safety, on the line to protect our children. They should earn enough to be able to feed their families without going to food banks.

Speaker, all workers deserve dignity.

My question is, will the Conservative government commit to a pay increase, so education workers like Charity won't have to rely on food banks to feed their children?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We've offered a deal of up to 8.24% over the course of a four-year program. We've indicated our preference for a four-year deal, providing an additional year of stability for children and for the very workers the member opposite speaks of.

We want kids in school. It has been two difficult years for families. I have not met a parent in this province, in every region that we have toured, who has said to me that they don't want to see their kids in school in September—

and that they stay in school right to June. Normal, stable, enjoyable—that is the policy commitment of this government, and we'll do whatever it takes to achieve that for the children of this province.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Mike Harris: When we took government, we inherited a health care system that was badly neglected by the previous Liberal government, which was consistently supported by the NDP. Because of their chronic mismanagement, scandal and a once-in a-lifetime pandemic, our government needed to take immediate action to bolster all aspects of our front-line health care system.

In my riding, people are hearing reports about concerns regarding the health human resources needs and staffing for hospitals and emergency rooms.

Speaker, can the Minister of Colleges and Universities please elaborate more on what the government is doing to continue to educate more health care workers to help combat the shortage of nurses and doctors that we face here in the province?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question.

Our government understands that a high-quality health care system starts with a high-quality post-secondary education system, and our government is working to support students in all health care fields at Ontario's strong post-secondary institutions.

I was very excited to announce our innovative Learn and Stay program earlier this year. As a first step, the government is investing \$81 million to support the expansion of the Community Commitment Program for Nurses, targeting newly graduated registered nurses, registered practical nurses and nurse practitioners. This program shows our commitment to working for workers by helping newly licensed internationally educated nurses and nurses returning to practise. Over the next four years, 3,000 nurse graduates can receive financial support to cover the costs of their tuition, in exchange for committing to practise for two years in an underserved community.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Harris: I will say that health human resources shortages go far beyond nurses. It's impacting doctors, as well, here in the province. Many Ontarians don't have access to a family doctor, and that, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable.

I'm curious as to what is being done by our government to support medical education in order to support our future doctors and address the doctor shortage.

Can the minister please inform the House of what she is doing to support medical students, to ensure a more resilient health care system here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that great question.

Our government understands that in order to keep Ontario safe and open, we need to ensure we have a high-

quality and resilient health care system, and that requires that Ontarians pursuing medical studies have access to world-class post-secondary education right here in the province of Ontario.

So 2022 has been an exciting year for aspiring doctors and both current and future medical school students. Earlier this year, our government outlined our transformative expansions of medical school education as we continue to build a stronger, more resilient health care system, especially in growing and underserved communities. Our government is proudly adding 160 undergraduate seats and 295 postgraduate positions to six medical schools over the next five years. This is the largest expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate education in over a decade, and this is in addition to the expansion which will include a new medical school in Brampton and Scarborough.

NURSES

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

Speaker, Ontario is in the midst of a health care crisis. Dr. Marc-André Blier, an intensive care and internal medicine physician with LHSC, has observed, "a steady uptick in the number of experienced nurses leaving intensive care," and explained they are "the lifeblood of a critical care unit." He told me about multiple cardiac cases being cancelled, and noted many bays with no nurses to staff them. In his letter, he asked the Premier and the Minister of Health to repeal Bill 124.

Will this government finally listen to front-line experts and repeal Bill 124?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This government has an unprecedented record of investing in health care and health human resources across this province. We have added over 10,500 health care workers since March 2020, and every step of the way the members opposite have opposed that. We have added over 3,100 new beds into the system since March 2020—that's almost the equivalent of five new hospitals—increasing capacity across the province. We've also put forward a bold plan to invest over \$40 billion to build over 52 capital projects across this province. Mr. Speaker, every single one of those projects have been rejected by the members opposite; they voted no to each and every single one of those.

We will continue to support health care and health human resources across this province by investing in our nurses, investing in our doctors and investing in health human resources across this province.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Premier: Investments in health care are not just about buildings and furniture; it's about people.

Dr. Blier—just listen to the doctor who has seen empty bays while urgent surgeries are being cancelled. Wake up.

According to front-line experts like Dr. Blier, the obvious reason is that a 1% raise annually cannot match the inflation rate. “Our health care professionals are worth it.”

My question is simple: Will this government be fair, show front-line nurses that they are worth it, and repeal Bill 124? Yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question.

I'd love to expand on all of the things that we're doing for nursing education right here in Ontario. As I mentioned, we have the new Learn and Stay program, which will come into effect in the fall of 2023. This will ensure that we have nursing opportunities across the province in some of our underserved areas. This will ensure that students who will make a commitment for two years in an underserved area will have their tuition and educational costs covered to serve in those communities—something I'm particularly excited about.

We also included access to stand-alone nursing programs at colleges across Ontario—in my own community, at Georgian College; at Lambton College in Sarnia, at Loyalist College. So 14 colleges in Ontario are now able to offer stand-alone nursing programs. This will ensure that we have more nurses added to the system and that we have access to nursing in our underserved communities across Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier.

The Jeffs family has come to my office looking for help. Their son has autism. He received \$20,000 under the Ontario Autism Program, in March 2020. Unfortunately, COVID-19 hit and this government could not get their act together, and they were not able to use that money. Their son was five at the time. Now, services are open once again, but they're still not able to use the money. The child is now eight and this government is asking for them to pay the money back. This is supposed to be a needs-based program. There is no age cut-off at five, yet this government is asking for the \$20,000 to be returned.

1130

Can the government explain why they're asking for this family to return \$20,000 that they need for their child's services?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for that important question.

I am unable to address an individual case in the chamber, but if you provide that information to me, I'd be happy to look into that.

I will say that we are making historic investments in the Ontario Autism Program. This is a world-leading program. We doubled the funding. We have five times as many children receiving services through the OAP than under the previous government. We have approximately 40,000

children receiving services under a multiple layered program with multiple pieces, including the core services program, in which we are bringing 8,000 children in through the fall. We already have over 6,000 invitations out. We are getting positive feedback with our initial pilot, and we are moving forward, implementing a very, very important program that young children and youth depend on, and their families, and that's why we have been receiving the positive feedback. We are creating the AccessOAP program and creating resources to help people navigate through that program. We are implementing a world-leading program and will continue to do that.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I don't think the minister actually understands what's happening with her own program.

There were 6,000 letters sent out, but there have only been 30 children actually enrolled into the program. They have hardly no uptake when it comes to the letters, and they have no idea why. Ask the government; they have no idea why this is happening. When you talk to families—they have zero trust in this family. There are letters that were sent out in the 6,000 that are now seven years old, from the time the program started. Those kids are now—some of them are 17 years old. Of course, there's no uptake for the program.

The government needs to actually understand what they're doing.

And if you think that this is a one-time spinoff of your government asking for this \$20,000 back, then you really must be completely out of touch. This is obviously a systemic issue within the program.

This minister needs to understand her file, ensure that families are not being clawed back for their government's failure of providing an OAP program and for a global pandemic that is not the fault of a child. Make sure that the child receives—

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

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, Premier, for your work on creating and doubling the program funding to get more children into this program.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I will take no lessons from the member opposite, who supported the previous government—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: —who said no to the program that will bring in more children, no to our children's treatment centre, no to historic investments in the well-being of children with autism. I will not take any lessons from the opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s, come to order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: —the opposition or the Liberal Party.

GOVERNMENT’S AGENDA

Mr. Ross Romano: Mr. Speaker, we watched as our government went through this last election cycle, and the people of Ontario, on June 2, clearly saw that the policies of our government were getting it done for the people of this province—getting it done so much so that the official opposition was reduced to the tiny caucus that we see before us today.

I’m wondering if the government House leader can please explain to this House and to the people of Ontario his thoughts on why they felt it was so important to elect such a strong majority government for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I want to thank the member for the question.

I think it has become very clear why the people of the province of Ontario elected a strong, stable, province-wide, Conservative majority government: It is to continue the good work that was started in 2018.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has been very, very, very aggressive in helping bring jobs back to the province of Ontario. Of course, we lost those 300,000 manufacturing jobs under the Liberals, supported by the NDP.

We went backwards in health care under the Liberals and the NDP. We didn’t build long-term-care homes. We didn’t build transit and transportation. We talked about—an argument; well, not us—the Ontario Line and subways for years, but this Premier, this caucus and these members on both sides, represented their community and got the province moving back again in the right direction.

We’re creating jobs, opportunities and investment. We are the envy of North America, and we will continue to do all that we can to ensure that—

Interjections.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m rising on standing order 59, just to outline the status of business for next week, and to once again congratulate members on all sides for what was a very productive week here in the House.

I saw a lot of members at the AMO conference. It was a wonderful conference. Again, I congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for putting together such a wonderful opportunity.

On Monday, August 22—just to note again for colleagues that the House will return at 9 a.m. On both the

morning and afternoon, we will be dealing with government motion number 3.

On Tuesday, August 23, in the morning, we will be dealing with government motion number 3, and in the afternoon we’ll be moving over to a government bill that will be introduced later today.

Work on that bill will continue on Wednesday in the morning and afternoon.

On Thursday, August 25, in the morning and afternoon, we will move onto replies to the speech from the throne and continue to hear what have been wonderful maiden speeches from a lot of our new colleagues in the process.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONG MAYORS, BUILDING HOMES ACT, 2022 LOI DE 2022 POUR DES MAIRES FORTS ET POUR LA CONSTRUCTION DE LOGEMENTS

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

Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council / Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs et fonctions spéciaux des présidents du conseil.

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

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On August 11, Mr. Clark moved second reading of Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council.

On August 17, 2022, Mr. Harris moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hogarth, Christine	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Romano, Ross
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Ke, Vincent	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Learidi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.

Ford, Doug
Fullerton, Merrilee
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn

Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David

Wai, Daisy
Williams, Charmaine A.
Yakabuski, John

Fullerton, Merrilee
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn

Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David

Williams, Charmaine A.
Yakabuski, John

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

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Begum, Doly
Bell, Jessica
Bowman, Stephanie
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

Gélinas, France
Kernaghan, Terence
Mantha, Michael
Pasma, Chandra
Rakocevic, Tom
Schreiner, Mike
Shaw, Sandy
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)

Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanhof, John
Vaugeois, Lise
West, Jamie
Wong-Tam, Kristyn

Nays

Andrew, Jill
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Begum, Doly
Bell, Jessica
Bowman, Stephanie
Collard, Lucille
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

Gélinas, France
Hsu, Ted
Hunter, Mitzie
Kernaghan, Terence
Mantha, Michael
Pasma, Chandra
Rakocevic, Tom
Schreiner, Mike
Shaw, Sandy

Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanhof, John
Vaugeois, Lise
West, Jamie
Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 72; the nays are 22.

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

Mr. Clark has moved second reading of Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I heard a no.

On August 11, 2022, Mr. Clark moved second reading of Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Barnes, Patrice
Bethlenfalvy, Peter
Bourma, Will
Bresee, Ric
Byers, Rick
Calandra, Paul
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Cho, Stan
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Crawford, Stephen
Cuzzetto, Rudy
Dixon, Jess
Dowie, Andrew
Downey, Doug
Dunlop, Jill
Fedeli, Victor
Flack, Rob
Ford, Doug

Ghamari, Goldie
Grewal, Hardeep Singh
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Mike
Hogarth, Christine
Jones, Sylvia
Jones, Trevor
Jordan, John
Kanapathi, Logan
Ke, Vincent
Kerzner, Michael S.
Khanjin, Andrea
Kusendova, Natalia
Leardi, Anthony
Lecce, Stephen
Lumsden, Neil
Martin, Robin
McCarthy, Todd J.
McGregor, Graham
Mulrone, Caroline
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy

Pirie, George
Quinn, Nolan
Rae, Matthew
Rasheed, Kaleed
Rickford, Greg
Riddell, Brian
Romano, Ross
Sabawy, Sheref
Sandhu, Amarjot
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Saunderson, Brian
Scott, Laurie
Skelly, Donna
Smith, Dave
Smith, David
Smith, Laura
Surma, Kinga
Thanigasalam, Vijay
Thompson, Lisa M.
Tibollo, Michael A.
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Wai, Daisy

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 72; the nays are 25.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

MORE BEDS, BETTER CARE ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 POUR PLUS DE LITS ET DE MEILLEURS SOINS

Mr. Calandra moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 with respect to patients requiring an alternate level of care and other matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2021 sur le redressement des soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne les patients ayant besoin d'un niveau de soins différent et d'autres questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. What the bill does is help facilitate the transfer of alternate-level-of-care patients into long-term care. What the bill does not do, of course, is move patients into ward bedrooms. What the bill does not do is forcibly move patients out of alternative level of care. What the bill does not do is force people into homes at a great, massive distance away from their families.

I look forward to the opportunity to debate the bill in the coming days.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING IN HOUSING ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LE BLANCHIMENT D'ARGENT DANS LE SECTEUR DU LOGEMENT

Ms. Bell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to enact the Anti-Money Laundering in Housing Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 8, Loi édictant la Loi de 2022 sur la lutte contre le blanchiment d'argent dans le secteur du logement.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will invite the member for University–Rosedale to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The bill enacts the Anti-Money Laundering in Housing Act, 2022. The act requires the minister to develop and implement a landowner transparency plan so that numbered corporations, trusts and partnerships will be required to reveal their true, individual, beneficial owners in a public land registry. The purpose of this act is to clamp down on money laundering, tax evasion and fraud, which is taking place in the real estate sector in Ontario.

SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ACT (ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE), 2022

LOI DE 2022 POUR DES COLLECTIVITÉS SAINES ET SÉCURITAIRES (TRAITANT DE LA VIOLENCE ARMÉE)

Ms. Hunter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Health Protection and Promotion Act in respect of addressing gun violence and its impacts / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne la violence armée et ses répercussions.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. On behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood who elected me, I am reintroducing this bill.

Gun violence and its devastating impacts on communities is a deepening public health crisis in the province of Ontario. With the number of firearms incidents increasing each year and the widespread trauma associated with acts of gun violence often going unrecognized, unmentioned and untreated, the Safe and Healthy Communities Act (Addressing Gun Violence), 2022, would amend the Health Insurance Act to ensure that services include prescribed hospital-based and community-based violence intervention programs. Additionally, this bill includes provisions for trauma-informed counselling for survivors and others affected by gun violence.

The Safe and Healthy Communities Act (Addressing Gun Violence), 2022, also amends the Health Protection and Promotion Act to allow boards of public health to have programs and services for reducing gun violence and for increasing the capacity of communities to assist survivors and others affected by gun violence so that they can heal.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition to raise social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and woefully inadequate to cover the basic costs of food and rent;

“Whereas individuals on the Ontario Works program receive just \$733 per month and individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program receive just \$1,169 per month...;

“Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada’s inflation rate in January 2022 was 5.1%, the highest rate in 30 years;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to increase social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works and to increase other programs accordingly.”

I support this petition. Since this petition was given to me, the rate of inflation has gotten worse and the Ontario government has only increased social assistance rates for ODSP by 5%, which means they’re still below the poverty line, so this petition is still relevant. I give this petition to page Lucia to take to the Clerk.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank Jacqueline Leduc from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

"Gas Prices...."

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition" and regulating the price of gas.

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to Rhythm to give it to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Dave Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas as part of Ontario's commitment to building a stronger health care workforce, the government is investing \$142 million, starting in 2022-23, to recruit and retain health care workers in underserved communities, which will expand the Community Commitment Program for Nurses, up to 1,500 nurse graduates each year to receive full tuition reimbursement in exchange for committing to practise for two years in an underserved community; and

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"Whereas starting in spring 2023, the government will launch the new \$61-million learn and stay grant and applications will open for up to 2,500 eligible post-secondary students who enroll in priority programs, such as nursing, to work in underserved communities in the region where they studied after graduation. The program will provide up-front funding for tuition, books and other direct educational costs; and

"Whereas the government also proposes to make it easier and quicker for foreign-credentialed health workers to begin practising in Ontario by reducing barriers to registering with and being recognized by health regulatory colleges; and

"Whereas to address the shortage of health care professionals in Ontario, the government is investing \$124.2 million over three years starting in 2022-23 to modernize clinical education for nurses, enabling publicly assisted colleges and universities to expand laboratory capacity supports and hands-on learning for students; and

"Whereas Ontario is accelerating its efforts to expand hospital capacity and build up the province's health care workforce to help patients access the health care they need when they need it;

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

"To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to build on the progress of hiring and recruiting health care workers."

I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Adele.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled "Stop the Bradford Bypass.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed Bradford Bypass is a \$2.2-billion, taxpayer-funded, 16.2-km, four-to-six-lane highway through the greenbelt between Highways 400 and the 404;

"Whereas according to a Toronto Star/National Observer investigation, the main beneficiaries of this project are land speculators with political and donor ties to the Premier and the PC Party of Ontario, and together own nearly 3,000 acres of land along the proposed highway corridor;

"Whereas the highway would threaten the Holland Marsh and the Lake Simcoe watershed, cutting through 27 waterways, damaging prime farmland, wetlands, woodlands, and significant wildlife habitat;

"Whereas the most recent EA for the project is nearly 25 years old, and this PC government has exempted it from the Environmental Assessment Act;

"Whereas due to this exemption, the government is now free to ignore impacts on agriculture, fish and fish habitat, property, human health, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and other impacts that would have otherwise required an updated assessment under the act;

"Whereas the highway will also destroy one of Canada's most significant archaeological/historical sites, the Lower Landing;

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

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

"To cancel the politically driven, wasteful, and destructive plan for the Bradford Bypass, and redirect all funding for the Bradford Bypass into investments that better serve the regional transportation and mobility needs, including evidence-based plans for transit and regional road improvements, and other investments in the public interest."

I absolutely support this petition. I've affixed my signature and will hand it over to page Pania.

HOME CARE

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s seniors deserve high-quality, patient-centred care and our government is making significant strides toward better meeting the needs of long-term care residents by hearing directly from them; and

“Whereas people, including seniors, should have the option to stay in their homes and receive the care they need, if they choose and if it is possible; and

“Whereas home and community care keeps people healthy at their home, where they want to be, and plays an important role in the lives of more than 700,000 families annually; and

“Whereas a strong home and community care sector is key to the government’s plan to help end hallway health care and build a connected, patient-centred health care system; and

“Whereas home care supports will prevent unnecessary hospital and long-term-care admissions and will shorten hospital stays; and

“Whereas our government plans to invest up to an additional \$1 billion over the next three years to expand home care, improve quality of care, keeping the people of Ontario in the homes that they love longer; and

“Whereas the additional funding is intended to support home care providers, address rising costs and support recruitment and training, as well as expand services; and

“Whereas these types of investments and other developments, such as virtual care options, care at home, can become a choice that seniors, recovering patients and their families make instead of only relying on more traditional venues of care;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to build on the progress this government has made on building a patient-centred home and community care system.”

I thoroughly endorse this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Julia.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I’d like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for providing me with these petitions. It’s a petition to raise social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and woefully inadequate to cover the basic costs of food and rent;

“Whereas individuals on the Ontario Works program receive just \$733 per month and individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program receive just \$1,169 per month, only 41% and 65% of the poverty line;

“Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada’s inflation rate in January 2022 was 5.1%, the highest rate in 30 years;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized through the CERB program that a ‘basic income’ of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to increase social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works and to increase other programs accordingly.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to Elya to bring to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Deepak Anand: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas as part of Ontario’s commitment to building a stronger health care workforce, the government is investing \$142 million, starting in 2022-23, to recruit and retain health care workers in underserved communities, which will expand the Community Commitment Program ... for two years in an underserved community; and

“Whereas starting in spring 2023, the government will launch the new \$61-million learn and stay grant and applications will open for up to 2,500 eligible post-secondary students who enroll in priority programs, such as nursing, to work in underserved communities in the region where they studied after graduation. The program will provide up-front funding for tuition, books and other direct ... costs; and

“Whereas the government also proposes to make it easier and quicker for foreign-credentialed health workers to begin practising in Ontario by reducing barriers to registering with and being recognized by health regulatory colleges; and

“Whereas to address the shortage of health care professionals in Ontario, the government is investing \$124.2 million over three years, starting in 2022-23, to modernize clinical education for nurses, enabling publicly assisted colleges and universities to expand laboratory capacity supports and hands-on learning for students; and

“Whereas Ontario is accelerating its efforts to expand hospital capacity and build up the province’s health care workforce to help patients access the health care they need when they need it;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to build on the progress of hiring and recruiting health care workers.”

Speaker, I wholeheartedly accept this petition, and I’d like to hand it over to you through page Noella.

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EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jill Andrew: This is a petition entitled “Paid Sick Days for All Ontarians.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas paid sick days save lives;

“Whereas all Ontarians should have the right to recover from illness or attend to personal emergencies without the loss of income;

“Whereas the Employment Standards Act does not provide access to permanent paid sick days for the approximate 60% of Ontario workers without them;

“Whereas the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shown that paid sick days are vital to stopping the spread of contagious illnesses and avoiding economically disruptive lockdowns or business closures;

“Whereas multiple studies have shown the cost benefit for employers to provide an adequate paid sick day program for their employees;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide all Ontario workers 10 permanent paid sick days, with an additional 14 during an infectious disease emergency.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I'll affix my signature and will hand it over to Natalie.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas our government was elected on a promise to the people of Ontario to rebuild the economy after the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on our businesses and workers; and

“Whereas the creation of new jobs, new opportunities and bigger paycheques will enable Ontario workers to bring home more money for their families and to their communities; and

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is seizing on opportunities in industries and fields that the Liberals and the NDP gave up on; and

“Whereas we are investing \$1 billion for critical mineral infrastructure, such as all-season roads to the Ring of Fire and the implementation of our very first Critical Minerals Strategy; and

“Whereas through hard work and good policies building an environment for economic growth we have attracted more than \$12 billion in new investment in electric and hybrid vehicles, including Canada's first full-scale electric vehicle battery plant in Windsor; and

“Whereas our plan for driving economic growth includes building an end-to-end supply chain for electric and hybrid vehicles from mining to processing to manufacturing, all of which will happen right here in Ontario; and

“Whereas our government has delivered an estimated \$8.9 billion in cost savings and support for Ontario employers, especially small businesses, who are the backbone of our economy; and

“Whereas the province has created more than 500,000 new jobs since 2018, 500,000 new paycheques and opportunities for families in every corner of the province;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to build on this progress and rebuild Ontario's economy.”

I thoroughly endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Adele.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO BUILD ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2022
LOI DE 2022 POUR FAVORISER
LE DÉVELOPPEMENT
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 18, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} Lise Vaugeois: Boozhoo. *Remarks in Ojibway.*

Bonjour. Je voudrais remercier les citoyens de Thunder Bay–Supérieur-Nord qui m'ont envoyée ici pour être leur représentante dans cette Chambre.

Greetings, Mr. Speaker. My name is Lise Vaugeois. I represent Thunder Bay–Superior North. I would like to congratulate you, Speaker, on your re-election to this important position and would also like to congratulate new members of the assembly and those who have been returned. And I want to thank and send my best wishes to my predecessor, Michael Gravelle, who served this riding for an amazing 27 years.

I would like now to offer a land acknowledgement for Thunder Bay–Superior North, which is on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg and the Fort William First Nation, signatories of the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. In addition, there are two communities that are signatories of Treaty 9, known as the James Bay Treaty. Regardless of which treaties each one of us falls under geographically, we are all treaty partners, and it is important for every member of this House and, indeed, all Ontarians that we learn what is in the treaties and how they came to pass. We are all represented in these agreements, and despite the deception and skulduggery enacted by various governments in the negotiation of these treaties,

we have the opportunity today to learn from Indigenous elders, scholars, teachers and activists to adjust our notions of what constitutes prosperity. The time is now to move in new directions to achieve respectful nation-to-nation relationships as we do the hard work of learning to move forward together.

I must add, though, this is not just a matter of including Indigenous peoples in our projects but a matter of rethinking everything from the ground up: putting environmental stewardship at the forefront and thinking ahead to the effects our actions will have on the well-being of the seven generations that follow us.

I raise this here because climate change and its effects were invisible in the throne speech, and I believe addressing climate change needs to be at the forefront of every decision every government undertakes. This refusal to even name climate change as an issue, let alone responsibly address climate change, is a failure that is actually contributing to the mental health crises so many young people are experiencing.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank my partner, Maureen Ford; my mother, Yolanda Hall; my sister, Paula Vaugeois; my Kam family; my friends such as Diem Lafortune; my fantastic campaign team; and the people of Thunder Bay–Superior North for supporting me in this election and bringing me to this Legislature. It’s an honour to be here and I look forward to repaying people’s trust in me by representing the interests of our northwestern Ontario riding at every opportunity.

We had a fantastic campaign that brought people together from so many different constituencies, including teachers, students, social workers, professors, office staff, cleaning staff, health care workers, geological engineers, construction workers, environmental activists, carpenters, members of First Nations communities, artists, people living with disabilities, queer and straight activists, musicians, anti-poverty activists, seniors, teenagers, local business owners, people from small resource towns, and people from the more urban city of Thunder Bay.

I also want to take this moment to pay tribute to Miriam Ketonen, who was such a key member of our riding association—so smart with numbers and money, so funny, and above all, so kind. Miriam died almost a year ago from lung cancer that seemed to come from nowhere. It took her very quickly and we are still mourning her loss. Thank you, Miriam, for being such a good friend and anchor to so many in our community.

For those who don’t know much about Thunder Bay–Superior North, I want to offer a short geography lesson. People are often deceived about the distances in the north because when you flip a map of Ontario over, the scale is completely different. I’ve met more than one traveller who mistakenly thought the distance between the Soo and Thunder Bay was merely four hours. In fact, it is a good 16-hour drive from Toronto to Thunder Bay, and it’s eight hours from the Soo.

Thunder Bay–Superior North covers 92,928 square kilometres of beautiful and challenging country. Along the spectacular North Shore of Lake Superior—Highway

17—the communities include Thunder Bay, Red Rock, Nipigon, the Red Rock Indian Band, Schreiber, Terrace Bay, Pays Plat First Nation, Marathon and Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation. But that’s only the places on the North Shore of Superior. Along what we refer to as the northern highway, Highway 11, there are seven First Nations communities: Rocky Bay, Sandpoint, Poplar Point, the Lake Nipigon Band, Long Lake #58, Ginoogaming, and further north, Aroland. Municipalities along Highway 11 include Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac, Nakina and Caramat. These are all now amalgamated as the township of Greenstone. And throughout the entire region, there are long-standing and vibrant francophone communities. Finally, along the west side of Lake Nipigon there are Gull Bay and Whitesand First Nations, and the town of Armstrong.

In fact, there is so much distance covered and there are so many distinct communities involved that when the men’s a cappella chorus I directed for the last six years did our own version of the song I’ve Been Everywhere, we could not fit in all the different place names. We had a lot of fun trying, though.

Thunder Bay–Superior North has people living and working in urban spaces, on farmland, producing lumber, pulp and paper, involved in mining, tourism and, as well, many who are engaged in traditional, land-based Indigenous economies.

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The city of Thunder Bay itself has a college, a university that includes a school of education where I taught for many years, a law school, a school of nursing, a school of forestry and a medical school. We have a professional theatre company and dance, theatre, musical and visual arts collectives, both community-based and professional. The Ahnisnabae Art Gallery, owned by Louise Thomas, is a fantastic business where it is possible to buy the works of many esteemed Indigenous artists.

The Thunder Bay Community Auditorium is a fully professional facility that produces touring as well as community shows. In fact, the auditorium was originally built to house the wonderful professional Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, and it was this orchestra that brought me to Thunder Bay in the first place. I was a member of the orchestra for 13 years before pursuing my PhD at the University of Toronto, where I studied the relationship between colonization, culture and systemic racism, returning in 2011 to teach educators at Lakehead University.

What has become apparent to me after living for 30 years in northwestern Ontario is that this region is often an afterthought for people living elsewhere in the province; yet Thunder Bay–Superior North generates an incredible amount of wealth that benefits the rest of the province. The people of northwestern Ontario need and deserve access to the same services needed in all other parts of Ontario. Advocating for the people of the region and speaking loudly and proudly about the significance of northwestern Ontario is what I intend to do in my role here.

There are, of course, other issues that I hope to address.

Thunder Bay is the home of the first injured workers support group in Ontario, where I learned just how badly injured workers have been betrayed, first by the 1995 Conservative Government and Mike Harris, then by subsequent Liberal governments and, most recently, when the Ford government took money that should have been going to injured workers and returned it to employers. This was a complete betrayal of the original purpose of the Workmen's Compensation Board, as conceived of over 100 years ago by the Conservative minister, Sir William Meredith.

The WSIB, formerly known as the Workers' Compensation Board, was meant to be a no-fault insurance plan to benefit both employers and workers. Today, the WSIB is a travesty. Almost all applications from workers with permanent injuries are denied compensation, forcing them to enter an appeal process that can take years to complete. In the meantime, injured and unable to work, workers often lose their homes and wind up on ODSP—a fast track to becoming homeless. And please note, when workers are forced to go on ODSP because their employers and the WSIB have chosen not to meet their obligations, it becomes a public problem to solve—a public expense. This is contrary to everything that the original Workmen's Compensation Act was intended to address.

This brings me to the rates for ODSP and OW. It was the Conservative government of Mike Harris that slashed Ontario Works and ODSP rates by 21.6% in 1995. The Liberals raised the rates by small amounts, and at the end of their mandate they suggested a small increase of 3%—not close to the rate of inflation; however, that was still too rich for the Ford government that cut that increase in half the moment they were elected. The Conservative minister of the time characterized this increase as compassionate. Well, I beg to differ.

So Mr. Speaker, when members from the other side of the House talk about an historic increase of 5%, they are forgetting the previous Conservative cuts and the failure of subsequent governments, including this one, to increase ODSP and OW to at least meet the rate of inflation. In other words, the amount has been effectively cut for the last 37 years. If we wonder why there is so much homelessness and suffering evident in communities all over the province, we need look no further than the policies of previous Conservative and Liberal governments. In a wealthy province like Ontario, this level of deep poverty is cruel and, frankly, completely unnecessary.

Now to health care: Let's also go back again to the Mike Harris government, which fired 6,000 nurses, cut 28,000 health sector jobs and closed 28 hospitals. The Harris government also opened the door to long-term-care privatization that he now personally benefits from. Flash forward to the pandemic, and these same privately owned long-term-care homes became the site of thousands of lost lives due to poorly run and insufficiently regulated homes. And yet, in spite of all the evidence telling us that privatized long-term care puts profits over people, at the end of their first mandate, the Ford government sold 35-year licences to the same egregiously run for-profit long-

term-care homes. It's very hard to understand how this could even be remotely acceptable to members on the other side of the House.

So what about today's health care crisis? I remember vividly the assault on public services initiated by massive cuts and an aggressive campaign to destroy unions that began in their earnest with the Mike Harris Conservative government. The Liberals did little to nothing to reduce the damage and indeed made it worse by instituting even more cuts and privatizing a significant portion of hydro.

I would like to recall the incredible admission made by a former Conservative Minister of Education, John Snobelen, who was overheard stating that the government should create a crisis in order to create public appetite for private alternatives. In the mid-1990s, when Minister Snobelen stated that a "climate of panic" would be necessary to mobilize public support for cuts to education, the strategy was described by Snobelen as "creating a useful crisis." These machinations were followed by brutal cuts to Ontario classrooms and attacks on the professional standing of teachers.

Those of us who are old enough to have long memories have been watching the destruction of our public systems develop over the last 37 years, with the most recent attack being the removal of collective bargaining rights and the repression of wages brought about through Bill 124—this at the same time as encouraging for-profit nursing agencies to charge hospitals two and three times the wages paid to the front-line health care workers. In other words, wage repression has nothing to do with saving money and has everything to do with breaking unions by creating crisis conditions for patients and for health care workers. In fact, I suggest that Bill 124 was designed to create exactly the crises we are experiencing today in our health care and education systems, with people quitting the fields they love because they can't take the overwork and abuse from this government anymore.

I worry when the government finds ways to pay its own members extra wages by creating new ministries and positions, costing taxpayers far more money at the same time as it supports excess spending on for-profit nursing agencies while refusing to acknowledge the sound recommendations of health care workers, those who provide the front-line work. Yes, the government is saying that people will continue to use their health cards to access services, but where will our public dollars be going? Will surcharges be allowed? What regulations will be maintained? What kind of job security will be available to workers once unions have been beaten down, and how much will be sucked out of public resources to be wasted on private profits?

Clearly, the NDP has a very different analysis of which government policies have brought us to the housing, health care and education crises people are experiencing across the province. In spite of our cross-party differences, however, I come here with hope and optimism, because I believe that many, if not the majority of members of this House, want to see change that will allow health care workers, teachers and all public sector workers to do what they signed up to do: serve the interests of the public.

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I agree with the Premier when he says that the status quo cannot go on. The state of crisis instigated by the imposition of Bill 124 is in fact the status quo, manufactured and delivered by a Premier determined to turn public dollars into private profits. This status quo, the disenfranchisement of current health care workers, is what must end.

The government can talk all it wants about what it is doing, but clearly what it is not doing is showing existing health care workers that they are wanted. These are the people working in our hospitals right now who are being ignored, who are being disrespected, being kept from having decent wages and kept from having the right to actually bargain.

The current status quo, with its goal of privatizing health care and education, goes right back to the Mike Harris government of 1995. We know this. I believe the government knows this, and I hope that the people of Ontario come to know this as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

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

Questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. Welcome to the Legislature. It's good to have you here. I know your predecessor was here for many years, a very honourable gentleman.

My question relates to the statement you made about the environment. You mentioned that in the budget, there were no words related to that. I did want to just get your thoughts on what we've done with respect to electric vehicle manufacturing in the province.

The previous government had a subsidy for multi-millionaires to go and buy \$80,000 vehicles, and get money for vehicles that were built in California. What we've done as a government is to put a focus on manufacturing right here in Ontario, so we can have good-quality jobs—in my community of Oakville, but also in other parts of the province—and build the vehicles here, which is (a) good for business, (b) good for local communities and (c) good for the environment. I just want to get your thoughts on the government's proactive approach to getting electrical vehicle manufacturing right here in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Lise Vaugeois: First, thank you to the union workers who I hope will be doing that work. But I'd also like to point out that there is nothing in the discussions about the manufacturing of electric vehicles that addresses the undoing of environmental policies that took place during the last government. I think it's fantastic that we will be building these vehicles, but what are we doing about making sure that our building processes guarantee that future generations will have a livable world to live in? That has to be a part of every project, and so far I have not heard that from this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member—or, first, to congratulate her on her election. I know how

tough it was for you to actually get here. This is not your first crack at the polls. Your perseverance is what got you here, and your perseverance is what is going to keep you here.

You know what needs to happen. You basically need to listen to the voices that brought you here, and I know you realize that. Your constituents are going to be the guiding force and the strength that you're going to need each and every day when you take your place in this House. It's also going to be very enjoyable to listen to that lens that you bring to northern Ontario-based issues, because it's not that we're asking for more, but we're certainly not going to accept anything less for our communities and our constituents in northern Ontario.

My question to the member is, what can your constituents expect from you in the years to come, and what are you going to be doing in order to make sure that you stay engaged and have the pulse of your constituents in your riding?

Ms. Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the question. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin knows well that we actually need to travel frequently—in fact, every weekend—back to our ridings, because it is a long way to get there. I will be doing that. I think it's a little bit exhausting—it adds to the weight of responsibility—but it's an important piece.

I will certainly be listening and fighting hard for what we need. We have recently gone through an exercise in which ambulances have been cut from the region. This means that people in Beardmore, for example, are at least two hours away from getting any assistance in an emergency.

Now, Beardmore, for people who don't know, is on Highway 11, mostly a two-lane highway that has thousands of trucks travelling on it every day—many truck drivers, who unfortunately have not been well-trained and who are under a great deal of pressure to get where they're going fast. More reputable employers actually don't put the same pressure on their drivers, but what we are seeing is a constant number of trucks going off the road, and some of these accidents can be severe.

When I think of the area near Beardmore and Rocky Bay, which is just down the highway, there is no turning lane, and yet a school bus has to go back and forth from Rocky Bay to Thunder Bay or to Nipigon, which is about an hour, and there's no safe way for that bus to get in and out of that community. So I will be—

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

The next question.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I, too, want to take the opportunity to welcome the new members to this wonderful House of democracy. I think I speak for all of us that it is a huge privilege and a very humbling responsibility that all of our voters bestowed on us when they voted us into the 43rd Parliament.

But, Speaker, I wanted to ask the member, because she mentioned that it takes her a long time to get here when she commutes to get to Queen's Park: Bill 2 would see over \$158 billion invested in highways and key transit

infrastructure over the next 10 years, as well as other critical infrastructure including hospitals, long-term-care homes etc. Could the member across explain why her party does not support these measures to get shovels in the ground as soon as possible to get Ontarians moving and grow Ontario's economy? We are saying yes on this side of the House, and we're encouraging members opposite to join us in saying yes to building Ontario.

Ms. Lise Vaugois: First of all, people in the north do not support the building of an \$11-billion highway in southern Ontario that goes through prime farmland. We would rather see that money spent improving roads across the province. They certainly need help in northwestern Ontario, where I am.

We could also use money to improve snow clearing. I believe it was brought to this House last term that we need to change to an eight-hour snow-clearing cycle, and not the 16-hour one that we currently have.

We certainly want to see money invested in health care, and I would support this bill if I truly believed that that was what was happening, but what I see is that there is punishment taking place of the workers who are there right now, the workers who have been there during the pandemic and are being punished—for what? For being there—while private services continue to be funded excessively out of the public purse. That's why I don't support it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next question? The member for London Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I don't think I've had the opportunity, so congratulations on being re-elected as Speaker. I know all of us here are delighted that you were successful in the chair, and I wish all the best to your contested opponent that didn't make it.

I want to congratulate the member from Thunder Bay—Superior North for getting elected this session. She mentioned in her speech many very relevant things about the north, and one of the comments she said was that sometimes the north is an afterthought. We've heard that a lot from our northern members.

She highlighted that the first working group of injured workers was developed and created in Thunder Bay, and I wondered if she could speak to the challenges of how they get pushed into poverty, into ODSP, and the challenges around finding housing. I know in London it's really difficult to find affordable, geared-to-income housing, especially when you're on things like ODSP and OW.

And then the other thing that I hear a lot, and I wonder if it's a commonality in the north, is about access to doctors. I'm getting, almost daily, constituents saying that Health Care Connect is not working and they cannot get a doctor.

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Ms. Lise Vaugois: Thank you. I will try to remember all the pieces of that.

Yes, the Thunder Bay injured workers support group is an amazing group of very hard-working activists, and the problems they face are—first of all, if they experience an injury and can't work anymore, it's a loss of self; it's a loss

of identity. And then to be told, "No, you haven't been injured" or "We're going to deem that you can be a parking lot attendant" after having a good job is extremely demoralizing.

Now, finding a doctor: We know that the waiting list for doctors in Thunder Bay has as many as 2,000 people on each list, so it's extremely difficult. But in addition to that, the WSIB has created a policy where it does not listen to the doctors of those who have been injured. Instead, it chooses to listen to doctors who never actually meet the people—it's done over the phone—and they deem that they are not permanently injured. So it is a massive crisis for people who receive permanent injuries on the job, and then if they're put on ODSP, well, there is no housing.

Social housing lineups are also very, very deep. And frankly, social housing has not been maintained and funded to be maintained for a very long time, and so it's actually quite dangerous if you wind up living in social housing. It shouldn't be. We have fantastic co-operative housing in Thunder Bay that should be a model for the entire province, and that is the best place for people with disabilities to live. However, they have a seven-year waiting list.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise in the House and today, to participate in the debate on Bill 2, the government's budget bill.

Speaker, since the budget was first introduced back in April, there have been significant changes in the province of Ontario that are not reflected in the new budget the government has presented. First, we are facing an unprecedented health human resource capacity issue that is not addressed in the re-introduced budget. Second, inflation and housing costs are especially hitting the most vulnerable, especially those on Ontario Works and Ontario disability support, making it impossible for them to pay the bills while living in legislated poverty, and the government has failed to address that. And third, the costs of the climate emergency are escalating. We had a city in Ontario, the city of Ottawa, go without power for weeks because our infrastructure is not ready for the hammer blows of the climate emergency, and the budget fails to make the necessary investments to address that.

I want to start with health care. Speaker, the budget talks about buildings and beds. It doesn't talk about the people who deliver care. If the government truly wants to address the health care crisis, they need to repeal Bill 124 and allow nurses and other front-line health care workers to negotiate fair wages, fair benefits and better working conditions.

Instead of talking about privatization, let's actually invest in our public health care system. The bottom line is the province of Ontario spends less per capita on health care than any province in the country. No wonder the system is in crisis, especially when the government underspent their health care budget by \$1.8 billion last year.

Speaker, people with disabilities are being forced to live in legislated poverty. Poverty costs this province \$33

billion a year, so it's not only the right and moral thing to do to bring people out of poverty, it's the right thing to do for the fiscal health of our province. Homelessness and poverty are putting huge pressure on our health care system, which is why so many health care leaders are saying they want to write prescriptions to end poverty and end homelessness. This budget fails to do that.

Finally, instead of spending billions on highways to go to million-dollar homes that people can't afford, let's build climate-ready communities that are affordable, livable—where people can live, work, play and shop locally.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'd like to congratulate the member from Guelph for his recent re-election. I wanted to address his remarks on the topic of health care, because he's saying that our budget is not addressing health care issues in Ontario and I couldn't disagree more. In fact, yesterday I received an email from the CNO in my inbox and it reads, "CNO Sets New Record for Registering Internationally Educated Nurses."

"As of June 21, 2022, the number of new internationally educated registrants reached 3,967—a 132% increase compared to this time last year.

"This record marks the sixth consecutive year of increasing registrations for internationally educated nurses," says Carl Timmings, CNO's acting executive director and chief executive officer."

My question to the member is, what is his suggestion to increasing our health care? Because on this side of the House we have a multi-pronged approach through internationally trained nurses, through giving free education to PSWs, to increasing the standards of care to four hours a day in long-term care. What are his suggestions? Because so far, all we're hearing is complaints but no tangible solutions.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to congratulate the member from Mississauga Centre on her re-election and also thank the member for your work as a front-line nurse. It's deeply appreciated. I want to thank you and all nurses across the province of Ontario for the great work you do, which is exactly why I want Bill 124 to be repealed, so that nurses can negotiate fair wages, fair benefits and better working conditions.

Over two years ago, the Ontario Greens put forward a retention and recruitment strategy to deal with the health human resource capacity crisis we're facing. I don't know why it's taken the government so long to finally start to act. There are between 15,000 and 20,000 internationally trained health care providers, according to the RNAO. They've been pushing the government to fast-track their accreditation. It's fantastic that there are now 3,967, but if we had started this two years ago, what about the 15,000 to 20,000 who could be working in our emergency rooms right now, taking pressure off of the system? What about paying nurses' wages so we don't have to spend millions on private agencies when we could be hiring full-time permanent nurses?

Speaker, there are many solutions, and it starts by supporting publicly funded, publicly delivered health care in this province.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much and congratulations to my good friend on your re-election. Keep up the good work. I've got a couple of softball questions for you because I know you're probably a little tired from the election. Do you support Highway 413, and if you don't, why? Do you support Bill 124, and if you don't, why? Why do you think this government will not repeal Bill 124? And my understanding is, because I'm not always correct, inflation was running at 8%, their raises are capped at 1% and that's a pay cut to our most important nurses—not just nurses; paramedics, corrections officers, education workers—a pay cut of 7%. Why do you think this government will not support repealing Bill 124?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I want to congratulate my friend from Niagara Falls on your re-election, as well. I always appreciate your passion in the House. I'll just quickly add one more point to Bill 124: It's not just a 1% freeze on wages, but it's wages and benefits both. And think about that when you think about the mental health strain, in particular, that front-line health care workers are facing. Limiting them to 1% is essentially a pay cut when inflation is 8%.

On Highway 413: I don't understand how any government can call themselves fiscally responsible and spend \$10 billion to \$12 billion on a highway that all the independent experts say will save 30 to 60 seconds. It will pave over 2,000 acres of prime farmland. And I want to remind the members opposite: The food and farming sector in this province contributes \$50 billion to the province's GDP, employing over 880,000 people in this province. Why would we pave over the asset base of all that prosperity and all of those jobs, especially at a time when global geopolitical events and climate-fuelled droughts are driving up food prices? If we want to keep food prices low in this province, let's protect farmland and let's support the local farmers and the local supply chains that feed people in our communities.

1400

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak about what our government is doing to support hard-working Ontarians. The plan to build is the blueprint to prosperity, with ministries coming together with a common goal to build a better Ontario—in post-COVID times, a stronger, prosperous Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I call this "Team Prosperity."

The budget is about how we are ensuring that Ontario is the best place to live, work, raise a family and thrive. In the last four years under the leadership of Premier Ford, we've seen—and I was attentively listening to the member from Peterborough-Kawartha when he was reading the petition. He talked about creating an environment where the government has delivered an estimated \$8.9 billion in cost savings and support for Ontario employers. Then he talked about hard work and good policies, building an

environment for economic growth. Because of that, we have actually attracted over \$12 billion in new investment in electrical hybrid vehicles, including Canada's first full-scale electrical vehicle battery plant in Windsor.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the things that we do, and the results are obvious. The results are in terms of how when we started in 2018 and when we finished the first term in 2022, there were 500,000 new cheques and new opportunities for families across the province. That's what was the result was out of that.

Last week, I remember that all of us—most of us on this side—were at AMO, the municipalities conference. We had an opportunity to meet many municipalities, so I just want to take a moment and thank the municipalities that I had the opportunity to meet, including Bonnechere Valley Mayor Jennifer Murphy, Mayor Sandy Brown and councillor Joe Andrews from the town of Orangeville, Mayor Barb Clumpus from the municipality of Meaford, Mayor Bonnie Crombie from my city of Mississauga-Malton and Mayor Brian Bigger from the city of Greater Sudbury.

Mr. Speaker, when we were there, as I was listening attentively to them, they were applauding the efforts that we've done and talking about the issue which the majority of them were talking about: the shortage of labour and more opportunities for the skilled trades. That's something which, when I was thinking about what I should talk about today—because in this plan or this budget we're talking about, there's a lot of things that it has and a lot of things we can unpack.

But what I want to talk about is something that resonates with me as an immigrant who landed on January 15, 2000, and started my first full-time job as a lab technician, as a worker. I had an opportunity to get the micro-credentials. I went back to school, so I know the value of the skilled trades. I know the value of training and how this benefitted me. So I thought what I would be focusing on today would be employee training and skills development, areas overseen by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skill Development. These areas are a critical part of Ontario's pathway to a more prosperous future, as well.

Mr. Speaker, what we're doing in this budget is that we are actually making an investment of \$89.5 million in Employment Ontario over the next three years. This will assist in Ontario's economic recovery. Then, along with this, as I said earlier, when we created this environment, which has attracted a lot of investment, it increased the number of jobs that have been created. But another thing we have seen is that at this moment, as we're talking, there are over 350,000 jobs that are unfilled. As we all know, each one of them is a paycheque waiting to be collected, and that's something which, through this project, we want to address as well.

Things that we're doing—there are multiple tools. The first tool which I will really talk about is addressing the problem through immigration. We have a program called the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. In this budget, we are making a historic investment to fund and develop

this program. What's going to happen is this investment will allow the program to meet and exceed integrity requirements for its immigrant nominee targets as set by the federal government and position us for continued growth.

I just want to draw every member's attention to this: At this time, through the OINP program, we are receiving 9,000 immigrants, and if you really look at the total number of immigrants who come to Ontario, it's about 200,000. So if you really do the math, it is about 4.5% of the immigrants we get, the province has a say in that. When you take a look at the contrast just next door, in Quebec, wherein it is about 52% of the immigrants, the Quebec provincial program has a say in it. So if you really put these together, all I'm trying to say is that we need to have more say, and our ask is very simple and small. Our Premier and the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development are continuously advocating to the federal Liberal government to increase the number of immigrants we get, wherein we have a say. From 4.5%—we're not asking for 50% or 52%—we're just saying from 4.5% to 9%. That is equal to 18,000.

At this time, I will urge all the members, whenever you meet and see your member of Parliament, who has a seat and a say with the Prime Minister, ask them to support it. Why? Because it is the right thing to do. We know, by having those people and getting them here, getting them to fill those jobs, that they're actually able to contribute more to the government. Thereby, we will be able to contribute more to society through service. I think what is good for them is good for Ontario. So I will encourage, again, one more time—I would appreciate, all of us, every time you meet with your member of Parliament, please do share this story with them.

Talking about the OINP program, what we're doing at our own end: We are making a robust online application system, added 26 full-time employees and investing \$4 million more in the program so that we are able to welcome newcomers with the skills we need to build our province. As I said earlier, we are facing a historic labour shortage. With these measures and investments, I'm glad to see that we are on a mission to build a better Ontario.

Some of the other things which we're doing: There's another one called Better Jobs Ontario, wherein we're investing \$5 million in the Ontario Workers' Plan, which will allow for workers to upgrade their skills and find good jobs. Under this program, the applicants—including the self-employed, gig workers, youth and newcomers—will be eligible to get up to \$500 per week in financial support for basic living expenses. This program will pay up to \$28,000 if you take short-duration micro-credential courses for job-specific training.

Another thing which I quickly would like to add—I know time is flying—is about the OYAP program. The name stands for Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. Skilled trades are so important that we are starting to reach out to our youth while they're at school. The OYAP program is a specialized program for high school students to explore apprenticeship and consider careers in skilled

trades. I would encourage, again, all the members to reach out to the high schools in your own riding. This is a great program. You're able to support those young leaders for the future.

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Another program, another tool which I want to talk about is the Skills Development Fund, wherein we're investing about \$34.8 million in the Skilled Trades Strategy, along with programs like the Hammer Heads. Along with the other over 140 successful organizations, the Hammer Heads Program was created by the Central Ontario Building Trades in 2009 to support at-risk youth. It is a skill- and employment-based training within the construction industry. As we all know, there are over 100,000 jobs in the construction industry which are unfilled as we are speaking. What it does is it brings these at-risk youths with the specific training in the skilled trades and gets them job-ready.

These are some of the things that we are doing, Mr. Speaker, in this budget. Our government is making these investments because it is what people in our province need to thrive. This budget outlines our government's priorities and continues the legacy of our government, which is creating for the workers. I want to say, let's work together to make Ontario the best place in the world to live, work, raise a family and thrive. Let's seize the opportunity to grow. I encourage everyone: Let's support this budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Malton on his debate on the Plan to Build Act (Budget Measures). He talked a lot about the Ontario nomination immigration program, which I really appreciate because at one point I was a critic on that file. I remember back when the Auditor General actually did a report on that and how that ministry really needed to be corrected and fixed. So I'd be interested to find out if some of those recommendations under that Auditor General's report were actually fixed, while we are now talking about bringing more nominees into the province, which we all want. We want to see them thrive and build our workforce, because we do need that. We don't have enough population in Ontario to continue that. So that is one of the things I urge you to look at and find out: As you're asking for more immigration and nominees to come, have those problems been fixed in the Auditor General's recommendations?

There was also a question I had—I get oftentimes emails about the delays of the nomination program in Ontario. Can you speak to that, about how that's being repaired?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite from London–Fanshawe, thank you for bringing that important thing. You definitely talked about the clog in the system at the OINP program. That's exactly what we've done: We have moved on to the online tool that we are using right now with an additional 26 employees. Full-time employees have been added on so that we can take care of those issues.

Definitely, I understand and agree with you that we need to do more because at this time, we have over 350,000 jobs being unfilled. We need more immigrants to fulfill those jobs. Thank you for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rob Flack: I enjoyed my member across the way here, his comments especially when it comes to labour and when it comes to the shortage of labour in this province. Whether you're in Mississauga–Malton or in Elgin–Middlesex–London, we have a labour crisis in this province.

I would ask the member, through you, sir, how do you see Bill 2 helping alleviate that dilemma in this province and the labour shortage that we have?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for this wonderful question. As you said that, you said it so right. When we were at the AMO conference, we heard from across the province all the mayors coming together and talking, and one common thing that they were talking about: "We need more people. We've got jobs, but we need people to fill those jobs." That is exactly what this bill is doing, the budget is doing. We are investing a billion dollars into the Skilled Trades Strategy so that, through Better Jobs Ontario, through the OYAP program, through our Skills Development Fund, we are able to attract more people.

I always say this, Mr. Speaker: People need jobs and jobs need people. But what is the missing link between the two is the skill set required for the people to do those jobs, and this is exactly what this bill is doing: helping and supporting those Ontarians to get those skills and fill those jobs. Those jobs are extremely important. When they bring in a cheque, they're not only bringing financial stability to themselves; they're actually contributing to our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, member, for the wonderful question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

Ms. Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Malton. I am also very happy to be hearing about skilled-trades opportunities for young people, and for international people interested in becoming permanent residents.

I do worry about worker health and safety, however. We know that workers keep dying at Fiera Foods, we know that young truck drivers are dying on the highways—many of these come here as temporary foreign workers—and we also know that WSIB is not there when workers receive a permanent injury. So what I'm wondering is, what is in the plans? What will this government do to protect the health and well-being—in other words, the safety—of workers, whether Canadian-born or here hoping to become permanent residents, when businesses are warned of inspections before they take place?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Of course, I was a worker when

I came, and I still have a lot of respect for the wonderful workers in our province who are bringing prosperity.

My thoughts are always with those families of those who have been injured in a workplace accident, and those who have in fact passed due to a workplace incident. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe everyone deserves to come home after a hard day's work. One life lost is too many, in fact. This is why I truly believe that we have a responsibility at our ministry. Our government is making sure it's doing everything in its power to keep workers safe, and this includes boots on the ground. Today and tomorrow, we actually have—that's the reason we actually had invested heavily through Working for Workers Acts 1 and 2, and hiring a lot of those inspectors, as well.

So to the member opposite, I want to assure you that we are a government that works for the workers. The health and safety of our Ontarian workers will always be a top priority.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to congratulate my colleague from Mississauga–Malton on his re-election. I think the residents of Mississauga–Malton made the right choice, and the commitment that the member brings will serve them well.

I want to touch upon the major investment that Bill 2 is doing in health care. We have seen some of these commitments in the Scarborough area, especially in Scarborough–Agincourt, and I'm sure that the residents of Scarborough will immensely benefit from this investment. But can the member elaborate more on how those major investments in health care will keep Ontario safe and open?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you for the flattering words, to the member from Agincourt. It's good to see you, as well. In fact, it's good to see most of us back here. This is a wonderful place. We actually can accomplish a lot by working together, supporting the community and giving back, and that all can be done here. So thank you for those words.

Talking about health care, Mr. Speaker, our government continues to ensure that its health care system is prepared to respond to any crisis and protect the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. We are investing an additional \$3.3 billion in 2022-23, bringing the total additional investment in the hospitals to \$8.8 billion since 2018-19.

The member talked about the investment; we are actually building up a hospital in Brampton. We are redeveloping a hospital in Mississauga with Trillium Health Partners. These are critical investments, and to build on the 10,600 health care workers added to the system since the winter of 2020, the government is investing a vital \$230 million in 2022-23 to enhance the existing program.

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Mr. Speaker, we believe the health of Ontarians is our top priority. We are investing into it. We will keep investing the important, vital dollars into this health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A quick question, the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your debate here today. You talked about health care, and you said that your government is ready to respond to any emergency. But the people of Ontario need to know that you underspent your own health care budget by \$1.8 billion. You underspent what you planned to spend, in a health care crisis.

In Hamilton, we've had already, to date, 200 code zero events where there is no ambulance available to respond to an emergency; that's double the number for all of 2021, so far this year. We heard from the member from Niagara Falls, who had a constituent who called for an ambulance through Life Line, was told she had to wait six hours, only to have a taxi cab sent to her home. This is really not a situation where you're responding to emergencies.

The health care system is in crisis. People need to be able to rely on ambulances when they have an emergency. What is your government going to do to make sure there are no more code zeroes in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

The question is, how are we making sure to keep Ontario open? What is our plan to keep Ontario open? So that's what I'm going to talk about. What we're doing is—Ontario's progress against COVID-19 has been hard-fought. Our province has fared well compared to the other places.

I want to say thank you for the tireless efforts of our health care workers on the front line and for your everyday sacrifices.

Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for giving me the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm happy to have this opportunity today to rise and speak about the budget on behalf of my constituents in Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ontario is facing multiple crises right now. Our health care system is collapsing around us. The rapid increase in the cost of living is hurting working families, forcing them to cut down on essentials and, in some cases, to choose between food and rent. Poverty is increasing. Visits to food banks are increasing. Homelessness is increasing. We see it in our ridings and communities every day, urban and rural. We have a system right now that is letting the majority of Ontarians down.

This budget was a chance for the government to meet the moment and address these challenges, Speaker. They have failed. There is nothing to fix the health care crisis, nothing to fix the cost-of-living crisis that is hurting so many families, nothing to fix the housing crisis that is making it so hard to find a place to call home and pushing so many people out onto our streets.

Budgets are moral documents; they show our government's priorities. One thing this government and this Premier have been consistent about is that their priority is their wealthy and well-connected buddies, not ordinary Ontarians, not vulnerable seniors, not people

living in poverty, not people with disabilities, not our health care workers and not Ontarians who need to call an ambulance or go to the emergency room—what a lost opportunity to help those who need help the most.

This budget is essentially the same one that was tabled just a few months ago. However, since then, our situation in Ontario has significantly changed. Our health care system—which was already under stress, and let's be honest, should have received significant investment already back in April—is collapsing after years of being underfunded and ignored.

Our health care heroes who got us through COVID have been so worn down by this government, so disrespected and so poorly compensated that they are now leaving the profession, switching to agency work or cutting down on shifts. It's not because they don't want to be nurses working in our public hospitals—they absolutely do—but the mistreatment they've suffered, the conditions they've been forced to work in every day, and the significant cut in wages that they've endured with a 1% wage cap when inflation is over 8%, have led many of them to leave.

This significant increase in inflation is affecting everyone, Speaker. People across the province are being squeezed when they go to the grocery store or pay their bills. Prices are exploding and working people are the ones paying the bills. As I've knocked on doors over the past year and talked to thousands of constituents, I've heard again and again the struggles that people are facing because incomes aren't keeping up with prices. Everybody is feeling the squeeze.

So does this budget do anything to address these problems? Absolutely not. This is a stay the course, nothing is wrong, everything is fine budget that maintains the status quo. No problems to see here. But that isn't true, that's not what I hear from folks across Ottawa West–Nepean every day. It's not what I see when I go to the grocery store or fill up my tank. It's not reflective of reality.

The Premier and his government seem to be living in a different reality than my constituents. This is an Alice in Wonderland budget, Speaker, where up is down and wrong is right. They keep on saying there are record amounts of money going into our health care system, but no one on the ground can see it as they wait 12 hours for care at the Queensway Carleton Hospital.

They say they're building record amounts of new housing, but McMansions that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars aren't affordable for everyday Ontarians, and they're certainly not providing any help to my constituents earning minimum wage or on social assistance.

This was an opportunity for the Premier to show that he understood the problems that we are facing and to do something about it. Now, it's those who can least afford it who are being asked to pay the price for the Premier's inaction.

Take the health care crisis for instance. People are waiting 12 hours to be seen at the emergency room at the Queensway Carleton Hospital. The Queensway Carleton

staff, meanwhile, are trying to deal with a situation where some days there are more patients in the ER who have been admitted but are waiting for a bed in the hospital than there are beds in the ER. Patients are receiving emergency care in the hallway and in the waiting room. Only 60% of the hospital's surgical capacity is being used even though we have this massive backlog of surgeries and procedures because there are no nurses to assist the surgeons.

And if you call 911 in Ottawa, Speaker, there's a good chance you may be waiting several hours for an ambulance. The number of hours where there is no ambulance available at all in the entire city is increasing.

I spoke to one constituent this spring who called an ambulance because of chest pain and dizziness. She waited two hours, worrying the entire time that she would die before the ambulance got there. Her daughter finally came and collected her and took her to the ER. If we don't do something about this soon, someone is going to die before the ambulance gets there.

Our nurses and doctors and other health care workers are so burnt out. They were here for us during the height of the COVID pandemic. They fought for us and now it's time for us to pay them back and be there for them when they need it. I know how hard they work because I've needed emergency care myself over the past few years thanks to long COVID. I saw how hard these folks work day after day, the personal sacrifices they make to ensure that people like me get the care they need even when the emergency room was packed and there was only one doctor on shift and not enough nurses. But they've gotten no respect and no help from this government.

If the government wants to start showing that they are taking this crisis seriously, they could start by repealing Bill 124. They could start implementing the recommendations of the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Medical Association. These are the experts. They're the ones on the front line every day—not the Premier, not the health minister. These people, who save countless lives of Ontarians every day, they're the ones who know the true needs of our health care system.

When we talk about numbers in the budget, we forget at our peril that budgets are about people. They're about what happens every day to people in Ontario. And the decisions within budgets can have massive consequences for people. I hear it every day from my constituents, so I want to share some experiences that illustrate the human cost of this do-nothing budget for people across Ontario so that the government can understand how their lack of action is hurting people.

Sherry, a constituent in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean, reached out to my office because she's extremely worried about the state of our health care system. Recently, she had to take her 92-year-old mother-in-law to the ER at the Queensway Carleton Hospital. After waiting hours to be seen, her mother-in-law was finally taken in for a CT scan. The results of the scan were inconclusive so she was sent home with the impression that everything would be okay. After two days of not eating or drinking anything, it was obvious that there was something seriously wrong.

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Sherry took her mother-in-law back to the ER, this time at the Ottawa Hospital, where they waited seven hours before she was finally seen. She then spent two days in the ER, which she described as a nightmare, with incredible crowding and disgruntled patients waiting six to eight hours to be seen by a doctor. And when patients are admitted, there are no beds available for them. Just imagine waiting days and days for a bed in a little ER cubicle, with bright lights, the impossibility of sleep and the difficulty of obtaining food.

When Sherry's mother-in-law had her second CT scan, they discovered lymphoma in the brain. After doing an MRI late in the afternoon, she was finally admitted to a room but had to shuffle between hospitals for the next five days while undergoing radiation treatment.

As the mother of a doctor, Sherry sees unequivocally that nurses and health care workers are suffering, and many are leaving the profession because this is just such a difficult time. They do not feel supported by this government.

Another constituent of mine, Peggy Mansyk, recently moved to Ottawa West–Nepean from Niagara with her husband. She was unable to get an appointment with a nephrologist to continue her husband's care for his condition. When she booked two appointments to see the doctor in July, they were cancelled each time and she was then told that they would be unable to rebook an appointment this summer. Why? Because the clinic is too busy. Because there aren't enough staff to see the volume of patients required. It will now have been over six months since Peggy's husband has seen a nephrologist for his care, and they can't get a family doctor either. The story is shocking and unacceptable, but unfortunately I hear similar stories every day.

Another constituent in my riding suffers from Crohn's disease. As a result of complications, she has been hospitalized five times in the last two years. In January 2021 she was referred to a colorectal surgical group at the Ottawa Hospital. Because of the great deal of pain she was experiencing, she was eager to have this done as soon as possible. But her consultation was booked for six months later. However, shortly before the consultation she started feeling severe abdominal pain and was rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery to remove two thirds of her colon. Post-surgery her colon flared up, which resulted in another two-week stay at the hospital. She was booked for another surgery in February 2022 to have the rest of the diseased colon taken out, but again it was delayed and rescheduled for April of this year.

Two months later, while visiting family in BC, she was hospitalized once again because of a post-surgical infection and internal abscess. She was treated with antibiotics and told to consult with her health care team once she returned to Ottawa. She was also told to keep an eye on her symptoms for anything similar and that she would need to go straight to the ER if anything similar happened.

Now, with recent ER closures in the Ottawa area, she's living with the constant fear of being unable to access the

health care she needs if she finds herself in an emergency once again. It is also very likely she will need another major surgery in the next few years, but is quite concerned about when that surgery might be scheduled, given the state of hospitals in Ottawa, and what impact this might have on her care.

A key point that I need to make, Speaker, is that the privatization of our health care system that the Premier wants to force on Ontario will only make matters worse. The health minister just announced this morning that the government's response to our crisis is going to be privatization. What does this mean for Ontarians? It means, instead of getting the quality health care services you deserve through an efficient and highly professional public system, you'll have to get worse care for more money. Health care costs will soar because middlemen investors will now be pocketing profits on top. The only people that benefit from this will be shareholders making more money at the expense of taxpayers.

Let's deal with the argument being parroted by the government that outsourcing and privatization will lead to shorter wait times. They absolutely do not. In fact, what is already happening—and if this government's plan is pushed through, it will get even worse—is that the crisis of short staffing will continue. The public system will bleed doctors, nurses and other health care workers away to the private system. We will continue to have a chronically understaffed public system that lacks the resources it needs to serve the public.

Will the private system that is being foisted on Ontarians serve the public with higher-quality service? Absolutely not. Wait times won't go down, but private shareholders will make more money. This isn't scare-mongering, because we have a clear example of what a private, everyone-for-themselves health care system looks like. It's the system used by our neighbour to the south, which is consistently ranked as having some of the worst health outcomes of any Western country. In fact, it is often used as an example of what a health care system shouldn't look like because it leads to high costs for patients, poor health care services and a huge amount of money for private companies, who make extraordinary profits at the expense of working and middle-class families.

The evidence is clear: Privatized health care leads to poor services. Just look at our long-term-care system and what happened there during the pandemic and what continues to happen to our seniors, persons with disabilities and loved ones living in long-term care. Companies like Chartwell homes put profit and their shareholders before people. Shame on them, and shame on a government that wants to do the same thing to our health care system that they did to our long-term-care system.

Let's also talk about the cost-of-living and affordability crisis that is hurting families in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean. Again, this budget does nothing for them. It has nothing in it to protect working people from the rapidly rising price of groceries and rent, with inflation devastating families' purchasing power. This is a do-nothing budget.

One of the biggest problems we are facing is that large corporations are now using inflation as an excuse to gouge working people. The oil and grocery companies are making record amounts, yet you don't see gas or groceries coming down. Where in this budget are measures to make these companies accountable to Ontarians? They are nowhere.

For working people and families, this means that every month their paycheques lose more and more of their buying power. This is forcing families to choose between basic necessities, pushing back getting their car repaired, not being able to sign up their kids for a summer camp, not sure if they're going to be able to get their kids' school supplies this year.

Everyone, not just those on low incomes, is having to cut back on their grocery shopping. For those on Ontario Works and ODSP, it's even worse. They have now officially been legislated into poverty. A 5% rise only for those on ODSP is an insult to those who have already been pushed to the brink. They face a situation that's gone from bad to worse. This will mean that seniors and children are going hungry and homeless. That will be this budget's legacy and record: profit for those at the top and cuts in real terms for everybody else.

On housing, this government's answer is simple: give developers more money and let them build more unaffordable McMansions. That doesn't do anything for my constituents who are struggling to get by. They are being exploited by predatory landlords, with their rights and protections increasingly eroded and disregarded by a Premier who cares more about developers making money than actually fixing the housing crisis and building genuinely affordable homes. I'm hearing stories every day from vulnerable constituents who are paying the price for this government's inaction.

To give you just one example, a constituent in my riding has been in contact with my office with concerns about safety in her community and a request to transfer housing. She is pleading for help. This constituent has been targeted because of her advocacy for LGBTQ2+ rights in her community, and she is a survivor of multiple assaults. After a recent midday shooting in her small community, she has requested a transfer with Ottawa Community Housing and has been listed on the urgent safety priority list.

Speaker, the current wait-list for urgent safety transfers with OCH is averaging two and a half years. Non-urgent transfers are up to eight years.

This constituent has stated that she is overwhelmed with stress because of the fear for her safety, and incredibly concerned for her mother's health, who was recently diagnosed with stage 3 lung cancer. She is on Ontario Works and cannot afford to leave community housing because rent in Ottawa is simply unaffordable. She needs the transfer, but fears the harm that the stress will cause both herself and her mother if she has to wait another two and a half years before she gets one.

I hear stories from constituents every day about the unending wait-lists. In Ottawa alone, 500 families are

living in motels, including children, because there just isn't enough affordable and safe housing for them to access. That means parents washing their children's clothes in the bathtub. It means the only option to prepare food is a microwave. Just imagine 500 families living in these conditions. This is a disgrace. This government should be doubling both Ontario Works and ODSP rates so that people can actually afford to live in this province.

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I urge the government to go back to the drawing board and to come up with a plan that will actually address the challenges facing Ontario. It's not too late to save our public health care system. It's not too late to help people living in poverty or experiencing homelessness. It's not too late to support people with disabilities. It's not too late to invest in genuinely affordable housing. It's not too late for the government to side with ordinary Ontarians and the issues that matter most to them. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite for her commentary and congratulations on being elected here. I do take issue with—you did mention affordability, and, in your view, the government's lack of action on that. I want to remind the member of a few things that we've done and that are part of the budget and get your thoughts on it.

Number one: In this budget, we've expanded the LIFT tax credit. The LIFT tax credit we brought in a few years ago; it was the largest provincial tax cut for low-income families in the history of the province. We're expanding that now and that's going to be over \$300 million in savings to over one million lower-income Ontarians. So we are providing relief on taxes to low-income individuals. We've cut the gas tax by 10 cents a litre to help consumers. We've eliminated the renewal fees for vehicles on the stickers—\$120 a year, \$60 to those in northern Ontario. Removing highway tolls—we're providing more affordable public transit, which I strongly believe in, by allowing those who take local public transit with the GO train to pay lower fares—for kids 12 and under, lower fares on the GO train.

These are just a few of the initiatives we've taken. We are working hard; we know inflation is an issue. I think we all agree on that. We've taken a lot of steps here to help families, low-income individuals—why would you be opposed to these steps?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I thank the member for the question. I've heard from many of the food banks and service agencies that are located in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean that they've seen an incredible increase in demand over the past few months. I've heard the same from Meals on Wheels and other organizations that are serving seniors. I've met with the community health centre, that says they're seeing a real increase in need for their programs and services. I've met with tenants who are living on Ontario Works or ODSP who are terrified that they're about to be squeezed out of the only housing that they've been able to afford. I've spoken with people who have their kids living with them at home because they

can't afford to move out. There are incredibly desperate needs across Ottawa West–Nepean for a government and a budget that actually takes the affordability crisis, that actually takes poverty seriously and I know that my constituents would only want me to vote in favour of a budget that actually addressed the challenges that they are facing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to our new member from Ottawa West–Nepean and her comments on the budget. One thing I think a lot of people don't understand is what really the dangers of privatization are in the health care system. Why a contract nurse is so much more expensive to the system than nurses employed in the public system. Can you please elaborate on what that extra cost is?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for that question. It's a very important one. This is something that we see in the United States all the time and, unfortunately, here in Canada. We've seen in the system of disability care, which is often privatized, that when you have to make a margin for profit, the amount of money that is actually being spent directly on care goes significantly down. So now you have the same amount of money being spent and less money being spent on care.

I also had the opportunity to meet with the nurses of Local 83 in Ottawa last week from the Ottawa Hospital, and they explained to me in clear terms there's only a set number of health care workers and nurses and doctors in Ontario. We can't magically expand it with a wave of a wand because we've created a private system. So now that same number of workers has to spread out over a private system and a public system—a private system which can refuse to take those patients who have the highest care needs, who have the greatest complexities, who actually need doctors and nurses the most. Those private care companies can focus only on those with the easiest problems to address and solve. So now those patients are ahead of the line and the lineup for care at our public hospitals and at our public clinics is even greater. This is a solution that will only make the crisis much, much worse.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. John Jordan: As a reminder, over 30,000 new long-term-care beds—shovels are in the ground now; 3,100 new hospital beds; 10,500 new health care workers since 2020; 5,000 new nurses being hired; 8,000 PSWs being hired; streamlining, bringing on internationally trained health care workers; tuition reimbursements for health care workers and nurses; training opportunities for health care workers. This budget is doing something for health care. Why does this opposition insist on opposing the policies to improve our health care system and address the high needs at this time?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Well, I have some numbers too, Speaker: 500 to 800 nurses short at the Ottawa Hospital; 12-hour wait times at the Queensway Carleton Hospital; zero ambulances available in Ottawa; a surgical backlog

that has our operating rooms only operating at 60% despite the fact that people have been waiting 12 to 18 months for surgical procedures.

The need is absolutely great. Not a single constituent that I spoke to in Ottawa West–Nepean over the course of a year said, “Please privatize our health care system.” What they said was, “Please fix our system. Please support our hard-working health care heroes so we can actually get the health care we need, when we need it.”

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm very pleased with some of the comments the member is bringing to the floor of the Legislature, particularly from the perspective of her riding. That's really important and key, and it's a reminder to all members. It's so important for us to learn from each other by bringing those stories.

I want to bring some stories from my area of Algoma–Manitoulin. Our seniors across this province, and in northern Ontario, many of them are on fixed incomes. They're very limited as far as what they're getting on their pensions. They budget everything to the last penny that they spend every month. The increases in gas that they've experienced in order to get to and from either Sudbury or Sault Ste. Marie in getting to a doctor's appointment has had an impact on their budget. The small increase they received on their CPP has now made them ineligible—by \$40—to get dental coverage and others now, the big whammy that's really hit them, have received a 25% increase on their propane costs where they've done everything to try to eliminate the high cost of hydro.

I'd like to hear from you what seniors in your area are experiencing?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for the question. I'm hearing very similar stories from seniors in Ottawa West–Nepean who are feeling very squeezed on their fixed incomes with the rising prices and a lack of supports to actually address the challenges they're facing in their daily lives.

I've heard from Meals on Wheels and Jewish Family Services, which provides Kosher Meals on Wheels, that there's an increased demand for these services, but unfortunately the government's funding for these services has been frozen and isn't keeping pace with the need. So they're afraid they're going to have to raise prices, which means that some of these seniors are going to go hungry rather than actually getting the food services they need.

I think the refusal to address the challenge with dental care for seniors because of the rise in CPP is an example of being penny-wise, pound foolish because we know that these seniors will now go without dental care, but we also know that when dental problems aren't addressed, they result in other health care problems, including heart problems, which means that some of these seniors are going to end up in our emergency rooms when the problem could have been addressed early on if they could have simply afforded to see a dentist.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question? Any further questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: The government must have run out of speaking notes to be able to ask questions to our member.

I'm always happy to have the opportunity to be able to stand in this Legislature. We've definitely heard from a lot of folks on social assistance, ODSP and Ontario Works, who are struggling day in and day out, and I'm pretty sure the member touched on that in her speech, talking about how people were struggling to not only make the rent, but to have a little bit extra at the end of the day for food. We're clearly hearing from many folks who have little more than \$50 a week to be able to feed themselves.

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How does the member think that is for folks on social assistance? Does she think it's the right thing for this government to give a meagre 5%, and will that actually make a difference for people living on social assistance in this province?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for this question. It is something that I hear about constantly from constituents in Ottawa West–Nepean.

The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Ottawa is \$1,160. Unfortunately, that's about the amount of ODSP for a single individual. That means you pay the rent and you have no money left over. Ontario Works is even less, which means that you can't even find a place to live if you collect Ontario Works, let alone have enough money for food and for anything extra.

I have a friend who is living on ODSP, who is not only struggling to make ends meet, but also lives in constant fear that this government is so mean-spirited that they are going to find additional ways to claw more benefits back from him. I think it's incredibly cruel. I think it's time that the government actually address poverty by doubling Ontario Works and ODSP rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, in this, my inaugural speech, I just want to congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker. I hope you serve many, many more years.

I rise today with gratitude toward the people of Kingston and the Islands, who have given me the opportunity to serve as their representative in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and gratitude towards Ontario and Canada, which have given me peace, safety, education, health and opportunity. These were received gratefully on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee.

J'aimerais également rendre hommage aux députés précédents de la circonscription de Kingston et les Îles : Syl Apps, Keith Norton, Ken Keyes, Gary Wilson, John Gerretsen, Sophie Kiwala et Ian Arthur.

This sense of gratitude motivates how I approach politics. It makes me continually ask: "How I can support and improve this society which nurtured me, and what responsibilities do we have toward each other?" Gratitude makes me believe in this idea of a common good.

Speaker, 50 years ago my Chinese immigrant parents could never have imagined that their son would be elected

to the Ontario Legislature or the House of Commons. Even 12 years ago, when I entered politics, many were still surprised. Why? Because I was a scientist, and not many scientists enter politics. My science training has taken me from Atomic Energy of Canada in beautiful Chalk River, Ontario, to working overseas as a financial executive and to heading an eastern Ontario sustainable energy association.

Science gave me a practical tool, the scientific method. The scientific method has worked in so many places and times because it welcomes criticism. When you honestly respond to criticism, your ideas change and grow, and they become stronger. My scientific background also motivates how I approach politics. I believe that a government that welcomes criticism is more honest, and an honest government makes better decisions for a better future.

Scientific humility makes me continually ask, "Could I be wrong? Is there a person with a viewpoint I haven't heard from? Have I tried to understand experts, but also thought for myself?" I believe that the people we serve through politics would benefit from this approach, adopted by as many as possible.

Today I also rise with pride as part of the Ontario Liberal caucus, and to say that the members of this small but nimble team have a spring in their step, fire in their belly and purpose in their heart. We hear you, Ontario, and we will fight for you. We have experienced parliamentarians as well as community leaders, bringing diverse experiences from outside politics to hold this Conservative government to account for all the people. We will remember that thoughtful spending of taxpayer money can foster economic growth and, at the same time, weave a strong social fabric.

We believe that good government is thoughtful, not knee-jerk partisan; listens to all voices, not just those who pay to play; and makes both bold and plain decisions depending on what the circumstances call for. Good government doesn't wait for a crisis. Good government doesn't lead from behind.

Speaker, I know it is a difficult time to govern. There haven't been so many simultaneous disruptions to society for generations. To the Premier: If you want to be the captain of this ship called Ontario, look ahead, not backwards. This ship doesn't steer like a canoe. You must steer early to avoid the icebergs. Don't wait until you have a crisis on your hands.

Let me give some constructive criticism of this government's plans. Health care is in a crisis. I'm glad the health minister has become very visible in the last few days. In the Kingston area, up to 30,000 people are without a family doctor—30,000 people, three times the provincial average. Province-wide, the shortage of nurses and other workers is causing hospitals to ration care. Stories like double shifts for several days in a row are common, so it's not surprising that workers are still contemplating quitting or retiring. My forward-looking advice to the Premier is this: Don't think it can't get worse. As the captain of the ship, it's not too late to tack hard. Repeal Bill 124 and don't try anything like that again.

Meanwhile, long-term care, on its current path, is unsustainable. That's what the math says. To the Premier: Look ahead to when more baby boomers will be needing elder care. Don't rely on your current plan of just building more of the same institutional, for-profit, long-term-care facilities. Have a plan for home supports. Have a plan for community-based care. Have a plan for supporting cost-effective ways to increase physical activity and socialization.

When it comes to housing, everyone knows we are neck deep in a crisis, especially in Kingston. House prices may have stalled in their dramatic rise, but rent continues to rise by double digits. The government's plan to rely on suburban sprawl to satisfy housing demand isn't sustainable. I welcome and acknowledge that this government has continued to develop the skilled labour force we so sorely need to build housing, but it should also be investing in innovation to bring down costs and speed up delivery. An example connected to this very body: Former Kingston and the Islands MPP Ian Arthur has a new business using 3D printing to build houses. Technology like this could provide more housing, while bringing down the cost of living. This government has tried to deal with the cost of living in the short term by taking from the treasury and giving it preferentially to people with cars. But I urge the Premier to understand that, in the long run, it's productivity gains which raise income and push down the cost of living.

There's hardly a family or a person out there who isn't doing a double or triple take at their grocery bill. Overall inflation has abated slightly, but rent and food inflation are still high. Inflation is at about 9% for groceries. It's hurting those with the least means first and worst. It's time to raise ODSP and OW to a decent amount. It's time to bargain in good faith with those who work on the front lines.

When it comes to affordable child care, I think the Conservatives should apologize to families with young children. With an average cost of child care at \$20,000 a year in Toronto, it's shocking that this government made us the last province to sign on to the federal child care deal. It was slow to give municipalities and operators clear instructions and complete information. And now, because of that delay, the Conservative government has had to push back the opt-in deadline to November. Premier, to not fall behind on making life more affordable for struggling young families, I would say: You've got to look ahead, not lead from behind.

And finally, to the Premier: I cannot stress enough, look ahead on energy and the climate crisis. The province was stunned to watch the Conservatives cancel renewable energy projects and allow electric vehicle infrastructure to be dismantled, and then proceed to not invest in storage, conservation or demand management. These were not the forward-looking actions of a leader. They put Ontario two steps behind on the energy and climate crisis, and we're trying to catch up now.

I know this government has made a partial turn recently, taking advantage of the federal government's leadership on electric vehicles and low greenhouse gas

steel production. But this ship needs to complete the 180 degree turn to address the climate crisis. Ontarians should look out for electricity shortages in the years to come if nothing is done, as well as a potential propane price squeeze this winter.

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I remember tangling at the House of Commons with the then federal natural resources minister Joe Oliver, back in the winter of 2013-14. He was caught off guard and could only propose that a study be done. I say to the Premier: Don't wait until winter to unveil another crisis. Don't let Ontarians go without a plan for affordable propane this winter. Don't leave them behind.

Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge that I did not get here on my own. The people of Kingston and the Islands have given me their trust and faith, two things more precious than gold in today's world. It's volunteers and supporters like the ones I would like to mention now who show the world what it means to believe in democracy.

I'd like to especially thank Ann and Nicole, who co-managed my campaign and held full-time jobs. Thanks as well to their families: Josh and Lydia; Curtis, Lucas and Hayden.

I want to thank my family: Tara, my wife, who helped to lay the keel of the political ship I sail today. And thanks to my daughters, Ella and Vera-Claire; my parents, James and Marjorie; and aunt Linda and uncle Ta-Fang.

At the risk of leaving somebody out, I want to mention some names of people, some of whom put in hundreds of hours of volunteer time:

—Dianne and Gary; Ben, Teresa and Larry;

—Andy, Leonore and Dianne;

—Bert, who started recycling wood for signs a year before the election with Kevin and David;

—Alastair, Gabriela and Melinda;

—Jill, Nicole and the phone canvassers, especially Gayle and Elizabeth;

—Mike, Brian and the door-knockers, especially those who came out day after day after day in the cold and the rain, like Peter, Josette, Ryan, Kelly, Shivanand, Becky, Ayden, another Aiden, Ibrahim and Queen's University students;

—Jane and the other volunteers who cooked hundreds of meals;

—Bruce and the 150 volunteers who came out for advance polls and election day;

—Bittu and other members of my riding association; and

—hundreds of donors who put their faith and trust in me.

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers for all parties in Kingston and the Islands, as well as the rest of Ontario. Tens of thousands worked together to volunteer millions of hours because of their faith and trust in their candidates and their parties. They believed in the importance and legitimacy of elections, and in today's world this simply can't be overlooked.

Mr. Speaker, today we face an array of challenges that simply haven't flared up simultaneously in a long time. It will take us all working together, treating each other with

respect, to achieve solutions. It will take strong and thoughtful leadership in Ontario to carefully assess the facts and make tough calls. Let's get to work. Let's get

ahead of these challenges. There's no time to leave them behind.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutika (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakubuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	