

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 13

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 13

3rd Session
41st Parliament

Monday
16 April 2018

3^e session
41^e législature

Lundi
16 avril 2018

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



ISSN 1180-2987

Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
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Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 April 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 avril 2018

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great pleasure today to welcome my daughter Maren Audrey Coteau to the Legislature. Welcome.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome Brianna Cairns and Reagan Coles, down today from Durham region. Thank you for coming in the weather, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my privilege to introduce special guests that have come to Queen's Park from around the world. We have members of PROI Worldwide, which stands for Public Relations Organisation International. They represent 100 cities in 50 countries. With PROI are Darsha Jethava, who is account coordinator at Brown and Cohen; Nicola Nel from South Africa, who is the managing director of Atmosphere Communications; Elaine Chuah, who is the executive director of Priority Communications in Malaysia; Kim Cohen, who is the CEO of Brown and Cohen; and Howard Brown, who is here also from Brown and Cohen. I'd like to welcome all to Ontario and to Canada. Have a great conference.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to do an introduction on behalf of my colleague MPP Sylvia Jones from Dufferin–Caledon, introducing the mother, Tove Schmidt, and grandmother, Dolores Schmidt, of page captain Dwight Gross. They're in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park, and enjoy your day.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Ottawa Centre and page captain Rowan Watchmaker, I'd like to introduce Rowan's guests today: her father, Prashant Watchmaker, her mother, Lisa White, and her brother, Aidan Watchmaker. They will be in the members' gallery this morning.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I arrived a couple of minutes late. I'm not sure if my friend Howard Brown has been introduced yet—a strong New Democrat. Howard Brown is over in the other gallery.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank my friend from Mississauga–Streetsville for introducing and welcoming my guests. It's a great honour to welcome the parents of Rowan Watchmaker, our page from Ottawa Centre. Please welcome my good friend Prashant Watchmaker, Lisa White and their son, Aidan Watchmaker, to Queen's Park.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I too would like to welcome the family of page William MacDonald: William's mother, Samantha Baulch, and his father, Ian MacDonald. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Well, I have a couple of introductions myself.

In the Speaker's gallery today, by surprise, are some guests—some surprises, some not. My sister, Roseanne; her dear friend Kelly is with her, lifelong friends; braving the weather all the way from Ohio, my brother Dan; not-so-braving the weather from Brantford, my brother Pat and his wife, Ida; and, of course, she-who-must-be-obeyed, my dear wife, Rosemarie. That's only half of them. The other half didn't come because they were smart. They didn't travel.

Therefore, with no other introductions, it's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING
PRACTICES

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks, Speaker, and good morning. I'm glad to see you made it okay. My question is to the Minister of Energy.

After the Auditor General raised concerns about the government's hydro scheme, which will end up costing billions and then jack up electricity rates to record highs in a few years, the Minister of Energy said, "Our plan has been approved by her peers," speaking of the Auditor General, "at some of Canada's top accounting firms like KPMG," Ernst and Young "and Deloitte."

The Auditor General has said, as of March 19, that "Deloitte LLP and Ernst and Young LLP have confirmed to us that they provided no formal opinions approving the accounting" of the so-called "fair hydro plan that the government planned to use for its consolidated financial statements."

Who's telling the truth here?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As we've said all along, we know that families in this province asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills, and that's what we delivered. We made a policy choice—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We made a policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system for the ratepayers of today and the ratepayers of tomorrow. The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base, because that's the logical thing to do. Electricity financing should remain within the electricity system.

So, officials from the Treasury Board, finance, OPG, the IESO and the Ontario Financing Authority, along with external advisers—that included Ernst and Young, KPMG and Deloitte—have worked on accounting related to the fair hydro plan. They, along with the Office of the Provincial Controller, ensured that this plan was in accordance with the public sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: I know there's a lot of ice across Ontario this morning, but the minister sure skated around that question.

The auditor said, "KPMG told us that it has not provided an opinion on the accounting of the fair hydro plan in the government's consolidated financial statements."

On March 26, the minister said this: "KPMG and Deloitte worked on the accounting related to the fair hydro plan. They, along with the Office of the Provincial Controller, ensured that this plan was in accordance with public sector accounting." That was the quote from the Minister of Energy.

My question is: Is he telling the truth?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The truth is this population have seen a reduction of 25% on their hydro bills. The truth is that they voted against it, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to telling the truth, it's this government that makes sure that we're transparent and we make sure that we bring forward everything on behalf of the people.

1040

On that side of the House they vote against everything that we put forward to build Ontario up. Minimum wage: We make sure that we bring that forward to help the province of Ontario; they vote against it. A 25% reduction through the fair hydro plan? They vote against it. A 50% reduction on average for those families that are in Hydro One areas and six other jurisdictions? They voted against that as well.

When it comes to looking after the people of Ontario, we will take no lessons from that party, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, an independent officer of the Legislature, has said all of the accounting firms confirmed they didn't formally approve the Liberal accounting. But the minister says that they did. Deloitte, Ernst and Young and KPMG offered no formal opinion supporting the fair hydro plan—and remember this Liberal unfair hydro plan spends millions and billions of dollars over the next 30 years in interest payments to get them through the next election period before rates soar to record highs, highs that we've never seen in Ontario.

Speaker, what the minister has said in the House is a direct contradiction to many of the minister's statements. Why is he lying to the House?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm standing. Not only will the member withdraw, but if this becomes a trend, I will skip questions. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the fair hydro plan, it's this government that brought forward the plan to make sure that we reduce rates right across the province for all ratepayers. On that side of the House, they voted against it. But the interesting thing is that the People's Guarantee, which they once all signed and once all agreed with, actually kept the fair hydro plan in it. So talking about hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, that is something—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Wow, the nerve, the nerve. He tells a direct lie and he calls us hypocrites.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I will withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned and I'm skipping a question.

You may finish.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work to keep our system clean, reliable and affordable in this province. We will make sure that we work together with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to make sure we're meeting our Climate Change Action Plan goals and keep our system clean and affordable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We are now in warnings. The member from Nickel Belt.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre—ou celle qui pourrait la remplacer.

Does the Premier believe hospital overcrowding is a normal thing that should be happening in a First World health care system?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Education on behalf of the Minister of Health.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for this question. Our government knows that everyone in Ontario deserves high-quality care when and where they need it. That's why we are designing a system that absolutely puts patients first. I want you to know that we're doing this in a number of ways. We're doing this by increasing operational funding. We're doing this by

increasing capital funding. We're doing this by increasing the supports we are building into the system in terms of mental health, in terms of long-term care and in terms of across-the-board funding when it comes to ensuring that our people and our patients are getting the care they need.

So let me just tell you: We've made a historic investment in terms of an additional \$822 million in Ontario's publicly funded hospitals. This is a 4.6% increase in operational funding. We're also, of course, increasing what we're putting into capital funding: \$19 billion over the past two years. We've increased operational funding to hospitals by almost \$1 billion.

So, absolutely, we're building—

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

Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Has the minister seen a hospital where people are being treated in hallways? Does she believe that it is real?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I just want to point out a couple of things. First of all, I want to say that ensuring that we are doing the best we can when we deliver health care is a top priority—and it turns out that we're on track. In fact, just recently, just last week, once again a third party has validated our health care system as being one of the best in the country. In fact, recently, CIHI, the Fraser Institute and the Wait Time Alliance have all agreed that we are the best for wait times in Canada.

Here's what we're doing: We're constantly investing to improve and to make sure that we're putting patients first. Wait times for cancer surgery are better than the national average for lung, breast, colorectal and prostate cancers. Ontario has the best wait times in the country for lung cancer surgery. Our wait times are better than the national average for hip and knee replacement. And we outperform almost every other province for hip and knee replacement surgery. All of this is to say that we're on track—

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

Final supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Has the minister ever talked to any of the hundreds of people who have gone to a hospital, only to be admitted and treated in a shower room, a TV room, a broom closet or a bathroom?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Let me just talk a little bit about our capital investments. Just so you are aware, we're investing \$19 billion over the next 10 years to improve and expand hospitals. Just think about that. That is a massive investment in terms of hospitals and in terms of capital care. We are actually ensuring that we're building hospitals, renovating them and taking care of additions.

Let me just talk about where some of these capital investments are going. We're fortunate enough to have SickKids, one of the world's largest and most respected pediatric hospitals in the country and in the world—\$2.4 billion for design and construction as part of that massive redevelopment. The new patient care centre will bring vital services, including emergency and critical care.

There's a facility at Health Sciences North, in northern Ontario, and a new health campus for WAHA.

All of this is to say that we're investing across the province and we're building that infrastructure that is needed.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

When the Premier reads the newspaper, hears New Democrats and listens to people who are telling her there is a crisis in our hospitals, who does she think is responsible for that crisis?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier and this government are very much committed to investing in our public health care system. This is something that we've been doing from the beginning, making sure that we bring our wait times down in our hospitals and making sure that there are new capital investments to be made all across the province so that there are better facilities available in all communities.

In my hometown of Ottawa, I see that every single hospital in Ottawa has grown exponentially. We've got a state-of-the-art regional cancer care centre at the Ottawa Hospital on the General campus. We just built a new cardiac care unit at the Ottawa heart institute. We just announced \$1.8 billion to build a new Civic hospital in my community of Ottawa Centre.

These are all important investments to ensure that we provide quality care to Ontarians across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Global standards say that the safe level of occupancy for a hospital is 85%. But all across our province, hospitals are running at over 100% capacity.

Why does the minister think that hospitals are running at unsafe levels of capacity and are overcrowded? Why, Speaker?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Just in this year's budget, which I hope the NDP will support, we are investing more than five billion additional dollars over the next three years to provide more and better access to health care services. Our investments will also help reduce the time and stress associated with caring for our loved ones.

1050

This includes \$2.1 billion in new funding for better and faster access to mental health and addictions services for hundreds of thousands more children, young people and adults. That is the single largest investment in mental health care and addictions services ever in the history of our province and which is part of budget 2018.

We are also expanding OHIP+ to make prescriptions completely free for everyone up to the age of 25 and over 65. Once again, we are the first province in the country to actually provide universal pharmacare, something we hope the NDP will support—not to mention that we are introducing the new Ontario drug and dental program and reducing wait times—

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

Final supplementary.

M^{me} France G  linas: The Premier and the Liberals created this crisis in our hospitals, and now people want to know what's next. We know that with Doug Ford, he will cut and privatize. For health care, that means more hallway medicine.

But today my leader, Andrea Horwath, is announcing a plan to fix the crisis in our hospitals. There is going to be hope, Speaker. We won't just stop the damage; we will fix it.

We know that the Premier says she cares, but is she sorry she let things get so bad?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: One thing the NDP and we agree on is that Doug Ford will cut health care services. It's very clear from the \$10-billion cuts that they have as part of their platform that they are going to be firing teachers, nurses and personal support workers all across our province. That's something that we will not stand for.

But we have continued to make investments in our health care system all across the province. The NDP should come forward and support this very important budget that is investing over \$5 billion over the next three years to provide better access to health care services across the province, including services for mental health care and addictions services.

Just talking about reducing wait times, we are investing an additional \$822 million in our Ontario hospitals. It's the largest single government investment in hospitals in almost a decade—not to mention, as I mentioned earlier, that we are investing billions of dollars in new hospitals and expanding hospitals, so that Ontarians have state-of-the-art care available right in their community.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Minister of Finance.

Experts are predicting the price of gas will jump to more than \$1.40 per litre in Ontario this summer. This government has already said that their cap-and-trade carbon tax has pushed prices up by at least 4.3 cents per litre. It's just another example of how, every day, the Liberals are making it more expensive to live and work in this province.

There are millions of people in Ontario who can't get to work or run an errand without gas in their tank. Why is this Liberal government kicking these people when they're down?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, because the member opposite makes reference to a commodity price that is traded globally. Recognizing that prices have been going up in the commodity price all around the world, it affects us.

But, Mr. Speaker, he also references cap-and-trade, a market that has been created with the Western Climate Initiative with Quebec and California—and we have Jerry Brown here this week—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is my signal not strong enough?

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have the governor here in town talking about the merits, because the state of California has been increasing their GDP and they've been growing, as has Ontario.

Furthermore, there is an alternative. The alternative that the opposition is proposing is a carbon tax, ultimately, which is going to cost taxpayers and the residents of our province more money taken out of their pockets.

In this budget, we have provided measures for affordability. They should be supporting us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: When the price of gas jumps, it raises the price of almost everything that people buy. The terrible energy decisions made by this government have already forced too many families to face a choice to heat or eat. Now, new fears are rising about being able to afford fuel to get to work, groceries to put on the table and other basic necessities. The price of the Liberal cap-and-trade carbon tax is only making this situation worse.

What does this Liberal government have to say to the thousands of people worried that this government's policies will once again force them to make heartbreaking decisions for their families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you for that question. You know, Speaker, it appears that the member opposite and the members of the PC Party care about the regular folks of Ontario, but in fact, their opposition to fighting climate change, their opposition to our cap-and-trade clearly demonstrate they really don't care about folks here in Ontario. I can tell you, Speaker, their attack on climate change, their attack on our cap-and-trade process is an attack on the health of Ontarians. It is an attack—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk is warned. And the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook can put his hand in front of his face all he wants; I still recognize the voice.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been around; right?

Finish, please.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Let me continue that the PC attack on climate change, the PC attack on our cap-and-trade program is an attack on Ontario business, an attack on Ontario residents, and we won't stand for that.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, in 2013, you promised the people of this province that they would see a 15% reduction in their auto insurance rates. Here we are, in 2018, and not only have we not seen that reduction, but last Friday, we

found out our insurance rates were actually going to go up yet again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale is warned.

Finish, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That money comes out of people's ability to pay for their food, pay for the rising costs of gasoline and pay for these out-of-control hydro rates.

Premier, you admitted in this House that lowering auto insurance rates by 15% was a stretch goal. Will you now admit that it was never a goal at all and that you're unwilling to act as these rates continue to climb yet again?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite does make reference to the fact that auto insurance rates have been challenging, and we have taken many steps to try to maintain and reduce. When you rate it for inflation, rates have actually gone down, on average, by 11%. But more importantly, all across Canada, rates have been going up while in Ontario they have not.

What we must do, however, is continue to be diligent. That's why we've taken measures with the fraud office and measures to provide for additional programming to reduce those costs and claims, thereby reducing premiums over time.

More importantly, there is some fraud that needs to be eliminated. We're taking those steps, and we're working hard to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anything you've done to correct auto insurance has hurt victims.

Back to the Acting Premier: Last year, a report found that Ontario had the most expensive auto insurance premiums in Canada, and yet, compared to other provinces, Ontario has one of the lowest levels of collisions. We asked you to end postal code discrimination, and you won't do it. We asked you to lower auto insurance rates by 15%, and you won't do it. When is enough going to be enough, and when are you going to seriously look at actually lowering people's auto insurance rates instead of watching them skyrocket?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As noted, we did take steps, numerous steps, and that is why in Ontario the rates have not been going up.

More importantly, in our Ontario auto insurance plan, we have created independent medical examination centres. We've provided improvement for victims by creating a standard treatment plan for those minor injuries. We've established the Serious Fraud Office—which is currently costing the system up to \$1.6 billion in bogus claims. We're working with the law society for contingency on fee reforms.

We've given FSCO greater teeth to conduct a postal code review so that we can be certain that we're not penalizing rural communities and northern communities that don't have this instance. We have to be mindful of that as well.

FSRA, the new oversight body for auto insurance, and its regulatory power have provided for increasing innovation and consumer protection mechanisms. More importantly, we created that expert panel to provide proper guidance throughout this process.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, over the past number of years, I've spoken with countless families about how the nature of their work has changed. These families are working hard to put food on their tables and take care of their children, but they were finding that the money runs out before the month is over.

1100

While this opinion may not be shared by those across the aisle, I firmly believe that everyone who works 35 or 40 hours a week shouldn't have to struggle to get by. That is why I'm so pleased that our government has made substantial changes to our workplace laws. These include, of course, the increase to a \$14-an-hour minimum wage.

Minister, can you please inform this House about how these changes came about and what employees can expect as a result?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question. The conversations that the member outlines that he's had in his community echo what we've all heard across this province over the past three years. When we embarked on that very extensive and comprehensive review of our employment laws, we knew that things had changed in the province of Ontario since we'd looked at them last.

What we heard loud and clear from the people of Ontario was that it was time to make some changes. That's why we've moved forward with our plan to create the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. We made the following changes, Speaker:

- increased minimum wage;
- two paid personal emergency leave days;
- increased vacation;
- equal pay for work of equal value; and
- domestic and sexual violence leaves.

Speaker, we didn't have support from everybody in the House, which is disappointing but not surprising, but I'm very proud of the work we've done to increase the lot of ordinary people in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. We know our economy is doing well. It has led the G7 in economic growth for over three years now. Since the recession, we have created over 820,000 new jobs and our employment rate is at its lowest point since 2001. Our businesses are expanding and creating wealth, and I believe that everyone deserves to share in that prosperity.

Yet there are those who believe it is still not the time for these changes. They believe it's too soon. They believe \$15 an hour is too much. They believe the work-

ing people of this province should wait, although they won't say for how long.

I know the families in Northumberland–Quinte West simply cannot wait. Those who are earning minimum wage deserve a wage that helps them make ends meet and save to get ahead. Minister, in your plan, can Ontario expect a \$15 minimum wage? Is that subject to change?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again for the supplementary. Speaker, it's very, very simple. We're going to be increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour as of January 1, 2019. We know the party across the aisle plans to cancel the increase to \$15, to take money away from minimum wage earners. That's money they rely on for food, for rent, for transit, for living expenses. We on this side of the House don't think that's fair, Speaker. We don't think it's right. We don't think Ontarians should have to wait any longer.

We've phased the minimum wage in over 18 months. It's going to be tied back to inflation after the January 2019 increase. What that means is it ensures that more workers are benefiting from Ontario's economic growth. You add that to free tuition, to rent control, to OHIP+. It's just another step towards increasing fairness and creating more opportunities. Speaker, we're standing up for workers. We have their backs. The PCs should come along with us.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: This question is for the Acting Premier. The headline in this morning's Toronto Sun reads, "Biggest Fraud in Auto Insurance Is Liberal Promise to Lower Rates."

Acting Premier, under the Liberal government's watch, auto insurance rates have increased 29%, much higher than the inflation rate. Yet Ontarians already pay 55% higher than the Canadian average, and remain the highest car insurance rates in Canada while having one of the lowest claims. Despite your previous promise, why are the people of Ontario paying the highest insurance rates in Canada under your leadership?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record there. The member opposite makes reference to the inflation-adjusted term of auto insurance rates. He's absolutely wrong. If he takes that measure, rates have gone down, on average, by 11%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Acting Premier again: The provincial election is just around the corner. What kind of election promises are you going to make to fool the people of Ontario this time?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me see if I get this right: The member opposite has referenced the fact that auto insurance rates have gone up, but they actually have gone down, and then he says what action should we take—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last test. I won't fail.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And then he makes reference to the steps that are being taken, but then he says they're not—which, in fact, they are, like the fraud office, like the work we're doing with programs to reduce the overall cost of auto insurance, which is too high in Ontario. We acknowledge that. That's why we've taken the steps that we have to eliminate some of the fraud. Mr. Speaker, they voted against those very measures that are helping Ontarians.

We will continue to do what's necessary to establish that fraud office to ensure that minor claims are immediately attended to, and ensure that we get rid of the fat that's in the system that's taking abuse. We need to reduce that. They should support us on that issue.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Speaker, I'd like to refer the Acting Premier to a document from London Health Sciences Centre called the "hallway transfer protocol" that was approved on January 31. The protocol sets out the rules for the transfer of patients from the emergency department to the hallway, from critical care to the hallway, and from the post-anaesthetic care unit to the hallway. The rules include that stairwells are not to be used; stretchers are to be lined up on just one side of the hallway; and patients should be regularly assessed for sleep deprivation in order to prevent incidents of violence.

Speaker, will the Acting Premier accept responsibility for his government's chronic underfunding of our health care system that has allowed hallway medicine to become normalized at London Health Sciences Centre?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Minister of Education, on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the member opposite for that very important question.

We recognize that our growing and aging population is facing increasing pressures and that we need to ensure that we are building a solid health care system. And so I want to talk about some of the things that we are doing. In our budget, we are making deliberate choices to invest in care for the people of Ontario, by investing not just in one place and in one sector but across the board. We're investing in hospitals, we're investing in home care, we're investing in mental health and we're investing in long-term care. Why? Because we recognize that we are investing in the people of Ontario because it means a better quality of life.

But you know what, Speaker? I want to talk a little bit about what happened under the NDP's watch. Let's just talk a little bit about their track record. After all, the NDP's plan will cut 9,645 hospital beds, like they did in the past. Is that what's going to happen with your new plan?

Our plan—

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Acting Premier: Speaker, last Thursday, the London and District Academy of Medicine held a patient care forum for Londoners to share their experiences with our health care system. In 2014, David Cameron-Teixeira waited four days in a London Health Sciences Centre hallway. Earlier this month, Dawn Warren waited five days in a London Health Sciences Centre hallway.

Speaker, hallway medicine has been a reality in London for years and this Liberal government has done nothing to fix it. Does the Acting Premier think that a hallway transfer protocol at LHSC is an acceptable solution to the years of budget cuts that have led to people lining the hallways of London Health Sciences Centre on a regular, ongoing basis?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

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Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the investments that we are making. Absolutely, we are doing everything we can to ensure that we are building a solid health care system: \$822 million in operating funds. That's a 4.6% overall increase to increase capacity, decrease wait times and improve access to care for families. This funding is definitely going to benefit the people of Ontario, whether it translates into 26,000 additional MRI operating hours, 14,000 more surgical and medical procedures, or 3,000 more cardiac procedures.

In addition to all of this is \$19 billion in capital grants to ensure that our world-class hospitals will be there to support our province in the future, including \$2.4 billion, as I mentioned, for SickKids and \$1.9 billion over three years to make life more affordable for millions of Ontarians who use prescription drugs in OHIP+ and our Ontario drug and dental program.

POVERTY

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. On this side of the House, we recognize that empowering individuals and families to reach their full potential is the right thing to do. We know that a fair Ontario is one that builds every one of us up, no matter who you are or where you were born. That's why our government chooses care and progress instead of cuts.

We also know that there is more work to be done in this area. Last week, the minister released the Poverty Reduction Strategy annual report for 2017. This annual report details the province's progress on targets like the reduction of child poverty and the reduction of the depths of poverty in Ontario. Could the minister highlight the progress shown in this year's annual report?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member for Trinity–Spadina for the question. Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to say that Ontarians are really seeing the results of our poverty reduction initiatives.

The number of children living in poverty has decreased by 19,000; that's a decrease of 24.2% from 2012. We've made investments in full-day kindergarten for 260,000 four- and five-year-olds. The Ontario Child Benefit is being delivered directly to individuals and families with low and moderate incomes. The OHIP+ pharmacare program is providing free prescriptions to Ontarians 24 and under, and we're raising the minimum wage to \$15 to ensure that working Ontarians can make ends meet.

We know that our economy is strong. Not everyone is benefiting from that, but we're doing everything we can to lift Ontarians out of poverty and provide them with more opportunity, more care and more fairness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to thank the minister for the answer. I'm happy to say that my constituents are feeling the benefits of this government's investment in them.

Through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund, the province has funded the Scadding Court Community Centre in my riding of Trinity–Spadina. The Scadding Court Community Centre offers programming targeted to underserved and culturally diverse groups, bringing in 500 to 600 visitors daily.

We also know that there is more to be done. It has become clear to my constituents and all those living in Ontario that, come June 7, a stark choice is to be made. Speaker, how will my constituents know what stands to be lost, given the \$9.6-billion fiscal hole resulting from the PCs' decision to walk away from the cap-and-trade program?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, I spent four years on Toronto council with Doug Ford. While his brother had the common touch, Doug Ford is out of touch. Whether it's the \$9.6-billion fiscal hole—does he understand what that means? While he was spinning Ferris wheels and shopping malls on city council, he had no idea about the services that Torontonians depended on from government, and he has no idea what Ontarians depend on.

Just \$1 billion of the cuts that he would put in place would roll back all of our housing initiatives in this province. It means cutting our programs to help those who are homeless. It means taking away the basic income pilot. It means cutting real dollars away from our social housing retrofit. The person who claims that he cares about the little people and the ones in social housing: He's going to cut the money that's going to fix their homes. Doug Ford is out of touch.

Interjections.

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

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, we talked about this last week. But first I'd like to start off with the weather that we've had over the last couple of days. I want to thank all of the Hydro One workers and the utilities right across the province for making sure that they get us back and connected so we can have power right across the province.

As well, moving forward, we recognize that salaries are hard to imagine for many families right across the province, but we make sure that the board will continue to monitor this. They need to ensure that they are bringing forward savings for the ratepayers. Last year, the executive at Hydro One was able to find \$114 million in savings that led to lower bills for customers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Premier: It's actually shocking to see the Liberals defend the six-million-dollar man and the salary of the CEO at Hydro One when people across the province are struggling to pay their electricity bills. They're having to choose between heating and eating. Under the Liberals, we've seen the cost of electricity rise by 300%.

My question is for the Premier. Does she believe that a \$6-million salary is acceptable for the CEO at Hydro One?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Advanced Education is warned.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, do the people of Ontario find it acceptable that that party votes against giving them a 25% savings? Do the people of Ontario find it acceptable that that party votes against anything to do with climate change?

On this side of the House, we make sure that we continue to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario. The Conservatives will do nothing to lower electricity bills for Ontario families. By talking about firing the CEO of Hydro One—that doesn't take anything off of anybody's bills.

Let's see what the well-respected business journalists who are talking about Mr. Ford's reckless plan—he said the Ontario Progressive Conservatives “have been obsessed with” the broadening of ownership, “spreading misinformation about the company.” He also pointed out that the opposition parties—

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I do withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's all you have to say—just “withdraw.”

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: He also pointed out the opposition party seemed to forget, or leave out every single time, that “Hydro One doesn't set the rates.... It must get approval for any rate changes from the Ontario Energy Board, which factors in issues such as employee compensation when making its decisions.”

HYDRO ONE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. For almost two years, my constituent Norm Fowler and his 92-year-old wife, low-income seniors, have been fighting with Hydro One to get full compensation after hydro crews accidentally blew up their appliances at their rent-gear-to-income residence in Thorold. That's right, Speaker; 220 volts went through their building at 61 Ormond Street in Thorold instead of the intended 110 volts, destroying the appliances. Hydro One is refusing to pay the full compensation of \$1,100 to them.

Ontario New Democrats have been warning about the privatization of Hydro, and here we are cutting corners and seniors are left in our community to bear the brunt. Why is the Liberal government allowing vulnerable, low-income seniors in our communities to pay the expensive price for this government's short-sighted decisions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank the member for the question. I can say that there are other customers from this complex who are coming forward as well and submitting claims. Hydro One will be reviewing every single one of those claims and assessing them on their individual merits, and I understand that Hydro One is working hard to resolve this matter, Mr. Speaker.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, Speaker, it's been two years that these low-income seniors have been waiting for their restitution. This error was made at the hands of Hydro One at a residence in my riding that houses low-income tenants, most of them seniors. They now have been forced to pay \$1,100 to replace their own appliances. Meanwhile, under the Liberal government's watch, Hydro One executives received \$11 million in compensation last year.

Again, I ask the Premier: Why does the Liberal government continue to allow vulnerable seniors in my riding to bear the brunt for short-sighted and ill-informed decisions?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, as I said earlier, I understand that Hydro One is actively looking into this customer's concerns as we speak, Mr. Speaker. They're also working with the complex where there are other claims being submitted.

That said, since the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One, it has become a better-run company. Under new management, Hydro One is improving on a number of service metrics, Mr. Speaker. The first one Hydro One has indicated is that it has improved the quality of their call centre interactions through improved training for staff in performance management. Additionally, since the

broadening of ownership, management has found \$114 million in savings, which helps keep ratepayers' bills low, Mr. Speaker.

I know the biggest idea that the NDP has when it comes to energy—to buy back shares of Hydro One—will, again, do nothing to reduce bills. Hydro rates continue to be regulated by the Ontario Energy Board, who have the mandate to protect ratepayers.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is to the Attorney General. Access to justice is a key issue that many people across Ontario face daily. I know that our government has made record investments into improving access to justice, but there is always more that can be done, specifically for our most vulnerable. These people are often low-income and often marginalized and racialized. They need our support the most because, as we know, the justice system can often be a lengthy and costly process. I can guarantee that all of the members in this House have heard stories about how constituents, in going through their cases or trials, cannot afford a lawyer. They then turn to legal aid.

In my own riding of Davenport, the West Toronto legal clinic and Legal Aid Ontario overall have been instrumental in supporting those who most need the support. But they need more help. Can the Attorney General please detail how our government intends to bolster legal aid?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Davenport for the question. Speaker, we know how important access to justice in Ontario is. That is why Ontario is providing more people with affordable access to legal services by increasing the financial eligibility threshold for legal aid by another 6%. As of April 1 of this year, about 140,000 more people are now eligible to receive the legal services they need, regardless of their ability to pay. This is because of our province's investments in Legal Aid Ontario—also known as LAO—to increase access to legal aid services for low-income and vulnerable people province-wide.

This is part of Ontario's 2014 commitment to expand access to legal aid services provided by LAO to an additional one million Ontarians in 10 years. With more than 500,000 additional people who will be eligible for legal aid, Ontario is now more than halfway to this very important goal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to thank the Attorney General for his answer. That is excellent news and I'm sure that this funding will be a lot of help in not only my riding of Davenport, but across the province in every member's riding.

Despite this major investment, I have heard that there are certain communities or groups who have unique needs and whose services need to be tailored towards them. For instance, in my riding of Davenport, and in fact across Toronto, there is a large LGBTQ2 community, many of whom have very specific needs. This commun-

ity has a significantly higher rate of sexual and domestic or intimate partner violence and very low rates of reporting. As many of us have heard, they also have a strained relationship with the justice system.

Can the Attorney General please explain how we are going to invest in supporting the LGBTQ2 community?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member from Davenport asks a very important question. Speaker, as I have stated, supporting our most vulnerable is a major priority for our government. In our recently announced gender-based violence strategy, we announced a \$242 million investment that commits our province to providing further supports for survivors and those who are at risk of gender-based violence.

We also announced a new pilot, Speaker. Our government is piloting Canada's first-ever LGBTQ2 community legal clinic right here in Toronto. This clinic will be made to meet the need for specialized legal support within this community, work to address the high rate of sexual assault and, hopefully, encourage people to step forward and improve reporting of abuse. Because of our government's understanding, these sorts of investments are crucial to building an inclusive and supportive province.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. In the last two weeks, how much money have the Liberals spent campaigning on the taxpayer's dime?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand why the member opposite would not want us to talk about the budget plan that we brought in. I understand that they don't want to talk about child care, and they don't want to talk about investment in home care or long-term care. They don't want to acknowledge that, right now, people in this province—even though our economy is growing, even though our unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 20 years, not everybody is feeling the benefit of that.

We need to step up as a government and provide the care and the tools that people need to be able to care for themselves and care for their families. I understand why this party would not want to talk about that, because they have no idea and no plan for how they would meet those needs and how they would help people to care for themselves. So I get why they don't want us talking about our budget, as we do every year.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: The Liberals have held no fewer than 25 campaign-style events over the last two weeks. This comes at an incredible expense to the taxpayer. Will the Liberal Party pay back the taxpayer for their campaign-style events?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about what we have been saying as we have been talking to the people of Ontario since we brought the budget in.

As we do every year, we talk about what is in our budget so that people will know what it is we're debating in the Legislature and what they can expect as we implement the budget, should it pass in the Legislature.

We're talking about investing more in seniors' care and, in fact, giving caregivers some support when they're looking after an older, loved relative, giving them some money to actually be able to keep up the house.

We are talking about providing free preschool child care for two-and-a-half- to four-year-olds. One of the interesting things that the Leader of the Opposition talked about was that that was a ridiculous policy because it was for unborn children. Government exists to put in place the conditions for all children—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier: We just updated Ontario's employment standards, and then you and your government secretly threw in an exemption to limit the personal emergency leave and bereavement days of auto workers. You specifically set your sights on auto workers. This isn't right and it isn't fair.

The minister has said that this exemption will help to keep Ontario competitive in the global market. Ontario should not be competing in a race to the bottom; we should be setting the standard when it comes to workers' rights.

Why does the Premier think it is okay to give auto workers fewer leave days than everybody else?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question. On January 1, 2017, after we had had consultations with the industry, with stakeholders and with others involved in the auto industry, we put in place a personal emergency leave pilot project in the auto sector. What it required was that auto sector employers with more than 50 employees provide each employee the use of up to seven personal emergency leave days as well as up to three days for the unfortunate death of a family member, should that occur. It was a very specific recommendation of the special advisers of the Changing Workplaces Review.

As a result of the actions we took on Bill 148, as of January 1, 2018, the 50-employee threshold was removed and, for the first time ever, all employers in the auto sector are required to make personal emergency leave available to each employee.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Premier: You put a specific target on auto workers; however, in my community of Oshawa, cleaners in the GM plants are

finding they are being redesignated to "auto worker" so their leave days can be limited, too.

When this House was reviewing Ontario's employment standards, both the Liberals and the Conservatives voted against the NDP amendment that would have ensured that everybody had access to the same leave days guaranteed in the new Employment Standards Act. Now we can see why you voted against the fix. This government now can unfairly target any workers in the whole auto industry.

I know the minister has been meeting with Unifor on this issue, and I know auto workers in our communities want to know, will you commit today to amending the Employment Standards Act to ensure that all workers get the same access to leave days?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that supplementary. With the auto strategy we have in the province of Ontario, we're committed to the success of this province's auto sector. It's a very highly competitive global economy. We're going to make sure that that success is shared with the employees who work in the sector.

As the labour reforms work out, we continue to engage with stakeholders. This is a pilot project, Speaker, that was put in place. In some ways it has improved and in some ways it has had a neutralizing effect on personal emergency leave.

Last week I was able to sit down with Unifor, with a number of people who work in the domestic markets, with those who work at Toyota, at Honda. We're working towards a resolution of this issue. We said we would do an evaluation of the pilot project. We're keeping our word. That's exactly what we're doing.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Reconciliation with indigenous peoples is a top priority for our government. It's important to recognize that reconciliation is not just an event or an apology; it's a journey that we have committed to taking together with our indigenous partners.

In Beaches—East York, I am so proud to go to my local schools and during the morning announcements hear the acknowledgement we make to indigenous people, because I know the next generation is growing up better understanding their responsibilities to work together.

Speaker, I understand that last week the minister was joined by indigenous partners and former ministers to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the creation of his ministry. Will the minister please tell us more about this event, the work that the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation has been doing in his tenure, and what the ministry over the last 10 years has been doing together with our indigenous partners?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, the story of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation begins with the tragic Ipperwash Provincial Park actions. For eight years following that, the then-Harris government ignored calls from indigenous peoples for an inquiry into the Ipperwash crisis. But within a month of taking office in 2003, then-Attorney General Michael Bryant commissioned an inquiry. The inquiry report recommended, among other things, that the Ministry of Indigenous Relations be established.

Last week I was joined by indigenous partners, former ministers, civil servants and other stakeholders to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this ministry. The ministry closes gaps and removes barriers. It supports cultural revitalization. It's a meaningful source of resolutions to the historic grievances of indigenous peoples.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank the minister for not just his answer, but for the stalwart work that he puts into his ministry and building bridges with our indigenous partners.

In the story of the ministry's creation, I hear of a government that listens, that cares and that takes action, realizing positive social change can take a long time. We've seen a great deal of good come from the work that this ministry has done across government over the past 10 years. In fact, in just the past four years, I've seen our government officially apologize for Ontario's role in the residential school system and make a historic \$250-million commitment to reconciliation through The Journey Together. We've also committed \$108 million to take action to end violence against indigenous women, and we passed the Treaties Recognition Week Act, making Ontario the first province to officially celebrate this week in November. Finally, Speaker, we've made indigenous history and culture a mandatory part of Ontario's curriculum and Ontario's culture.

Can the minister tell us more about these incredible steps that we are taking together with our indigenous partners moving towards reconciliation?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, last week we heard from indigenous partners who joined us for this celebration just how significant the work of the ministry was. As we mark the first decade of this new ministry devoted to indigenous issues, it is important to look back and take stock and rededicate ourselves.

But, Speaker, I am worried. I am worried that this ministry is at risk if a Conservative government is elected next fall. We've seen time and time again that indigenous issues are at the bottom of the Progressive Conservatives' agenda. They voted against our \$250-million commitment to reconciliation twice, not to mention our \$1-billion commitment to the Ring of Fire infrastructure.

Reconciliation is more than words. It's action; it's commitments. This government has shown that. The official opposition has not, and will not.

Interjections.

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

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Premier, surgery wait times in Ontario have reached catastrophic levels. Last week, Ottawa resident Ruth Mackenzie witnessed first-hand your government's health care failures when her surgery was cancelled moments before going under the knife.

My question for the Premier is, does she think it's acceptable to cancel surgeries moments before a scheduled surgery is to take place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know the specifics of that situation, and I am sure that the member opposite will share it with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. But, again, I hope that this concern that the member opposite is expressing will encourage him to vote for the budget in which we have included a significant investment of \$822 million to hospitals, including more funding for home care and more funding for mental health care.

I hope that this member sees it is imperative that we continue to invest in our health care system. Every year, we have included an increased funding to our hospitals, to home care and to health care across the province, but we recognize that there is more we need to do. So I hope the member opposite will be supporting us as we bring forward our budgetary changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: It's interesting that the Premier answers that question as such, considering it was her government that froze hospital funding for five years, it's her government that attacked our doctors and it's her government that built the infrastructure bureaucracy reducing the funds reaching our patients in the front lines. Mr. Speaker, this government has been a failure in managing health care and is only promising the world as a last-minute game in order to gain votes.

This is the second time the surgery for Mrs. Mackenzie has been cancelled because of this government's failures. Last month it was cancelled because of overcrowding in the hospital, because the government failed in supporting the hospitals during the flu season. Two cancelled surgeries in one month. But it's becoming the norm in this province. Last month, a London patient had to have their bypass surgery cancelled at the last moment for the fourth time. It's unacceptable, the level of care this government is providing to the people of Ontario.

Will the minister call the Ottawa hospital and ask that that surgery be rescheduled ASAP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I don't know the specifics of the individual case that the member opposite is raising, but I know that he will share that information with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

But it's interesting what the member opposite said about the budgets from year to year. We have increased funding every year to hospitals and across the health care system. It's interesting that an organization like the Fraser Institute—which I think the member opposite can agree is not exactly an organization that is friendly to our

government—has joined with CIHI and the Wait Time Alliance: They have all agreed that Ontario is at the very top, the best for wait times in this country. So that is the reality. That's the truth of the situation, that we are leading the country in terms of wait times.

But even with that, we recognize that there is more we can do. Again, I call on the member opposite to support the budget because in that budget is a significant increase in funding specifically to hospitals, as well as to mental health and to home care.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the Speaker's gallery, we have some very special guests: the Honorable Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown Jr., the governor of California, who is also accompanied by Juan Alsace, the consul general of the United States, and the former MPP for the riding of Nipissing during the 38th and 39th Parliaments and currently Ontario's representative in Washington, Ms. Monique Smith.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And one more time: my wife, Rosemarie.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to add my welcome to yours to Governor Brown and to thank him. This morning, at MaRS, we had a terrific session on climate change and on the cap-and-trade system, because our markets are linked—California, Ontario, Quebec—and we are reducing pollution in our three jurisdictions and moving ahead and leading the world.

Interjections.

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

The member from Etobicoke Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I want to ask all of the members in the Legislature to help me welcome two leaders of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance who joined us partway through question period. We have with us Stephanie Bellotto, who is the VP of university affairs at Wilfrid Laurier University and a member of the OUSA steering committee, and Landon Tulk, who is OUSA's VP of finance. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES TRANSFORMATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSFORMATION DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

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

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Act, 2018 and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, to make related amendments to other Acts, to repeal an Act and to revoke a regulation / *Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2018 sur le ministère de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels et la Loi de 2018 sur les services correctionnels et la réinsertion sociale, apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois et abrogeant une loi et un règlement.*

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

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

On March 27, 2018, Madame Lalonde moved second reading of Bill 6, An Act to enact the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Act, 2018 and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, to make related amendments to other Acts, to repeal an Act and to revoke a regulation.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	French, Jennifer K.	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gates, Wayne	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Gélinas, France	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Gretzky, Lisa	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Hatfield, Percy	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Hoggarth, Ann	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Kiwala, Sophie	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Lalonde, Marie-France	Taylor, Monique
Del Duca, Steven	Leal, Jeff	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mantha, Michael	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Eleanor	

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

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Martow, Gila	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	McNaughton, Monte	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Miller, Norm	Thompson, Lisa M.
Coe, Lorne	Nicholls, Rick	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 18.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 12, 2018, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to introduce two good friends of mine: Ryan Deshpande, the current vice-president of the McMaster Students Union, and the incoming vice-president, Stephanie Bertolo. They're here in regard to a statement I'll be making about McMaster momentarily. Welcome.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARK BOTTINEAU

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I rise today to speak about a constituent of mine who passed away last year, Mark Bottineau. I first met Mark Bottineau, when I was in grade 3 going into grade 4, at a basketball camp run by John Lavereau. What Mark was to me at that time was what he was to all communities—the fact that he took me in and made me feel welcome as somebody new to the sport and who hadn't a clue what I was doing. Mark was there, always smiling—and quite an athlete, at that.

In his short life, he did make a positive impact on all who knew him. His zest for life and great love for family and friends were infectious and precious. Mark had a caring, warm nature and had a way of delivering knowledge and wisdom that sparked everyone's attention, and always with a laugh—a laugh that was never forgotten, a laugh of strength. It was the light that came upon his face, even though he had a devastating diagnosis.

In August 2016, Mark was diagnosed with stage 4 carcinoma, undefined. It was devastating news to his family and friends, but Mark handled that the same way he dealt with life: with courage, strength, love and puns. Puns were a way for him to deal with the day-to-day challenges of living with a terminal illness. He shared a pun a day, and soon all his family and friends joined in. In true Mark style, he provided, laughter, love and hope to his family and friends during the most difficult time in his life.

Mark was born and died on the same day. In his honour, his family would like to request that April 19 become national pun day. So we're asking everyone across the province to help share the joy and laughter on April 19 by posting your favourite pun on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook or whichever social media vehicle you use: #ubu, #nationalpunday, #botts33, #love, and #light.

If you'll just indulge me for a few more seconds, Mark's favourite puns—I thought I would read a few off:

I have a fear of speed bumps, but I'm slowly getting over it.

What's the best thing about living in Switzerland? Well, the flag's a big plus.

I might never get over this addiction of referencing the Beach Boys, but wouldn't it be nice?

Seven days without a pun makes one weak.

I wanted to watch the world origami championships on TV, but it was only pay-per-view.

Mr. Speaker, we miss Mark in our province, and I hope everyone joins in on national pun day on April 19.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Wayne Gates: I rise today to talk about an issue I've talked about many times in this House before: gas prices.

Liberals voted down an NDP bill to regulate the price of gas in Ontario and bring some transparency to that market. I want them to see the results of that: Gas prices in Niagara Falls on Sunday were \$1.30. We've seen the price go up, anywhere from eight to 12 cents, overnight. On long weekends or holidays, it's even worse.

We've said this from the beginning. When the price of oil crashed, we didn't see the same drop at the pumps. This meant that when oil started to rise again, we knew that gas prices were going up even higher. People are being gouged by the oil companies, and we have zero transparency in Ontario on how gas prices are being set. We are paying outrageous prices for gas, and that comes out of money that families need for a roof over their head or food on the table.

The government has refused to address gas price gouging in any substantial way. They should be ashamed that when they had the chance to act, they decided to do nothing.

When gas prices are this high, the hard-working people in communities right across the province of Ontario are reminded of how unaffordable this province has become every time they start their car.

I hope this Liberal government will address gas prices, and if they won't, then we'll do it on June 7, when we bring in an NDP government that actually puts people's needs first.

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

Mr. John Fraser: Today is National Advance Care Planning Day. It's a day to think about who will speak for you when you can't speak for yourself and who will make decisions for you when you are unable to.

Advance care planning is ensuring that your substitute decision-maker knows what is important to you. Thinking about the end of life is something that we don't generally want to do. My grandmother used to say she didn't want to die because she wanted to see how the story turned out in the end. But we all have to leave the party at some point, so talking about our wishes at the

end of life helps to remind us of what's most important in life.

So often the most important things are small and personal. They're not grand gestures or big interventions. Speaker, it's about living well until the end. Letting your substitute decision-maker know what is important to you will help you do that. Advance care planning is a way of supporting them when they're called on to support you. It's a vulnerable time for both of you.

Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank everyone in this province who works in palliative and end-of-life care in hospices and visiting home hospice, and all the work that they do, and for all the work that primary care practitioners do to try to advance advance care planning and help people at the end of their lives.

UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Gila Martow: L'Ontario va créer une nouvelle université autonome de langue française.

La semaine passée, les 12 membres du conseil d'administration de l'Université de l'Ontario français ont été nommés, et chacun d'entre eux est fortement engagé envers la communauté francophone de l'Ontario et envers le renforcement du système d'éducation postsecondaire en langue française. Ensemble, les membres apportent une riche expérience et une diversité de perspectives qu'ils mettront à contribution pour soutenir la création de l'université.

Voici la liste des membres distingués :

—Dyane Adam, présidente, comité technique de mise en oeuvre de l'université;

—Fété Kimpiobi, directrice générale, Solidarité des femmes et familles immigrantes francophones du Niagara;

—Frédéric Dimanche, professeur et directeur, Ted Rogers school of hospitality à Ryerson;

—Glenn O'Farrell, président et chef de la direction, Groupe Média TFO;

—Koubra Hagggar, élève de 12^e année, École secondaire Georges-P.-Vanier à Hamilton;

—Marième Lo, professeure;

—Florence Ngenzebuhoro, directrice générale, Centre francophone de Toronto;

—Marie-Andrée Vermette, avocate, associée;

—Rodrigue Gilbert, leader, transports et logistique à PricewaterhouseCoopers;

—Jean Michel Beck, fondateur, président et chef de la direction, Groupe Aecon Inc.;

—Jacques Naud, premier vice-président, ventes et distribution, Knowledge First Financial; et, finalement,

—Normand Côté, vice-président, leadership, évaluation et perfectionnement, Optimum Talent.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Cindy Forster: I visited the home this week of 70-year-old Norm Cloutier of Welland, Ontario, who lost his wife last September and now has an Enbridge gas bill

that will total nearly \$1,000 a month for equipment he was scammed into buying.

Enbridge is assisting Mr. Cloutier by disputing current charges for all equipment still on his property, and some of it is sitting outside in his yard after he was told by one of these door-to-door reps that his furnace, air conditioner and water filtration system would have to be replaced because the company went bankrupt. The equipment was only six years old. Why would anyone like Norm think that he would be deceived?

We have four finance companies involved who make it clear they're not responsible for how these contracts were obtained at the door. Two of them we've been in touch with, and of course, it's gone to their legal department—interesting how they have lawyers to represent their best interests and seniors have no one to protect them when these devious reps come to their door.

We know the highly acclaimed door-to-door legislation that has already passed is already being worked around as people are now posing as service technicians and, of course, making prior phone appointments using the same questionable tactics as at the door to get into someone's home.

All of these companies involved need to assist Mr. Cloutier with reasonable buyouts since he is on a government pension. These companies need to cancel contracts associated with them.

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I have never seen anything like this, and ask the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to help Mr. Cloutier through this nightmare.

The message out there for everyone is: There hasn't been an honest door-to-door salesman since the Fuller Brush days. Don't buy anything that comes to your door uninvited. In fact, don't answer the door.

PROPANE INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I rise today to bring to the attention of my colleagues the presence of representatives from the Canadian Propane Association, who are conducting their advocacy day here at Queen's Park. Don't forget their reception tonight in room 247 from 5 to 7. Some of them are here with us.

As I'm sure many of you know, the propane industry in Ontario is important both for our economy and the environment. The propane industry in Ontario provides good-paying jobs for over 3,000 Ontarians. It generates nearly \$2 billion in economic activity and \$253 million in tax revenues every year in Ontario. Approximately 100,000 households in Ontario rely on propane—including my own house—as their primary source of heating fuel, not to mention commercial, industrial and agriculture applications. In fact, 45% of Canada's overall propane use occurs in Ontario.

Propane is also good for the environment. It's a low-emission energy option that offers win-win solutions for both government and consumers. Propane is an especially important energy option for rural Ontarians, such as

my constituents, in many of our ridings. In my riding, many residents opt to use propane as it's an affordable and accessible method of fuel for furnaces, vehicles and, of course, barbecuing.

On behalf of my colleagues, I extend a warm welcome to members of Ontario's propane industry. Welcome.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Mr. Steve Clark: On Saturday, I was honoured to attend the Brockville conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Spring Fling. This wonderful event raised over \$19,000 so the society's dedicated volunteers can continue bringing hope to those in need.

Like so many other charitable groups, they work very quietly, and their good deeds go often unseen. Last year alone, their core programs assisted 364 adults and 314 children. That's over 600 lives made better because of their commitment to caring. The range of programs and services that they provide directly and with community partners is quite remarkable. Assistance includes food vouchers, help with rent and utility payments, transportation, and a Christmas program. They also operate a 24/7 helpline with volunteers taking turns monitoring a cell-phone to connect people in crisis and give them help. They even offer summer activity programs, allowing at-risk youth to participate in rowing, kayaking, swimming, gymnastics or dance.

They're justifiably proud of their amazing weekender program. It fills the gap for JK to grade 6 students who rely on school breakfast programs by sending them home with nutritious food on Fridays. In just a few years, it has grown tremendously from three schools and 15 students to now feeding 209 students in 14 schools.

These volunteers are truly putting the society's motto—"Helping Make a Difference"—into action.

On behalf of our community and the friends, families and neighbours whose lives you've brightened, I want to thank you.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to tell their great story here in the House.

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I've got a great story to tell about my alma mater, McMaster. A few years ago, a number of students there decided that they would intervene politically by writing letters to Minister Milloy and then-Premier McGuinty calling for the building of a new humanities building. There were some 400 letters that came in, all handwritten—no form letters. That money was provided, and the L.R. Wilson humanities building opened a couple of months ago. Ryan and Stephanie, who are here today, took the initiative to have postcards sent to the Premier, thanking her, the government and the Legislative Assembly for the investment. I'd like to read three quickly.

"Years ago, I was an undergrad student who wrote a letter to Minister John Milloy and Premier McGuinty.

Now I am a PhD student in the institute for globalization.... Your investment transformed my life. Thank you."

Second letter: "I've been on this campus for five years and seeing this building come to life has changed the fabric of campus and places a renewed passion for the arts right in the middle of campus."

Finally: "Hello," Premier. "Another student here to say thank you for our new amazing building! From the new social sciences lounge, to the new blackbox theatre, to the amazing space for indigenous students, we now have a building for us! We are eternally grateful for your" wonderful "contributions!"

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further members' statements?

VIETNAMESE HERITAGE AND FREEDOM FLAG

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further members' statements, I believe the member from Leeds–Grenville is going to stand on a point of order, because he told me he might be.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I am seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Vietnamese heritage and freedom flag.

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

The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that the Vietnamese heritage and freedom flag be flown on the courtesy flagpole on April 29, 2018.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is seeking unanimous consent to raise the flag. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PERSONS IN SUPPORTIVE LIVING ACCOMMODATION ACT, 2018 LOI DE 2018 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES DANS LES LOGEMENTS SUPERVISÉS

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to establish a framework for the licensing of supportive living accommodation / Projet de loi 48, Loi établissant un cadre pour la délivrance de permis d'exploitation de logements supervisés.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: The bill requires persons who operate a supportive living accommodation in specified circumstances to hold a licence issued by the minister. It provides for a framework, to be supplemented by regulations, governing applications for and the issuance of licences, the obligations of persons who operate a supportive living accommodation under the authority of a licence, inspections and complaints.

WSIB COVERAGE FOR WORKERS
IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES
AND GROUP HOMES ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 SUR LA PROTECTION
À ACCORDER AUX TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS DE SOINS
EN RÉSIDENCE ET LES FOYERS
DE GROUPE PAR LA COMMISSION
DE LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET DE L'ASSURANCE
CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to provide that all employees who work in a retirement home, a residential care facility or a group home receive mandatory WSIB coverage.

SUPPORTING WINE JOBS
AND GROWTH IN THE NIAGARA
REGION ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 VISANT À SOUTENIR
LES EMPLOIS DANS L'INDUSTRIE DU VIN
ET LA CROISSANCE DANS LA RÉGION
DE NIAGARA

Mr. Gates moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996 with respect to Ontario wineries / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la réglementation des alcools et des jeux et la protection du public en ce qui concerne les établissements vinicoles de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: The bill amends the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996, to provide an exemption for certain wines to the tax set out in subsection 27(1).

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in 2017 pay to employees for public holiday pay were based fairly and proportionately on the percentage that the employee worked within the week. The current public holiday pay calculation is unfair to both employers and employees. Based on \$14 per hour, someone who works two four-hour shifts per week for a total of eight hours per week would receive \$56 public holiday pay. However, an employee that also totals eight hours per week but only works one day a week would receive \$112 for public holiday pay. Further, the person that works one eight-hour day a week is now entitled to the same public holiday pay as a person who works five full days per week. The drastic increase to public holiday pay financially penalizes employers for hiring part-time employees and reduces hiring and scheduling flexibility. It has and will continue to reduce employment opportunities for those that are either only able to, or want to, work part-time.

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

“That the current 2018 Ontario holiday pay calculation be abolished, and that the prior Ontario holiday pay calculation, as follows, be reinstated: That the calculation for public holiday pay is to be calculated on the amount of an employee’s earnings for the four weeks prior to the public holiday and be divided by 20.”

It’s signed by a substantial number of my constituents.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES
FOR YOUTH

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

“Whereas:

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

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

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

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

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

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A,” which is up from 73% in 2011;

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature and give this to page Joseph.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to thank Tammy McAughey of Sprucedale, Marjory Goodwin, June Tebby, Karen Wright and Marcia Mackesy of Huntsville and others who collected these 384 names on this “save our hospitals” petition. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has been considering the future of the Huntsville District Memorial and South Muskoka Memorial hospitals since 2012; and

“Whereas accessible health care services are of critical importance to all Ontarians, including those living in rural areas; and

“Whereas patients currently travel significant distances to access acute in-patient care, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services available at these hospitals; and

“Whereas the funding for small and medium-sized hospitals has not kept up with increasing costs including hydro rates and collective bargaining agreements made by the province; and

“Whereas the residents of Muskoka and surrounding areas feel that MAHC has not been listening to them; and

“Whereas the board of MAHC has yet to take the single-site proposal from 2015 off its books;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requests that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care” commits to maintaining “core hospital services ... at both Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and South

Muskoka Memorial Hospital and ensures all small and medium-sized hospitals receive enough funding to maintain core services.”

Of course, I support this petition, Mr. Speaker, and give it to the page.

CASINOS

Mr. Wayne Gates: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current request for proposals (RFP) by the Minister of Finance regarding the gaming bundle for Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort is absent of the following original 1996 RFP criteria to ensure job creation is paramount:

“—to ensure job retention and creation;

“—economic development; and

“—encourage investment;

“Whereas an independent report from HLT Advisory indicated the current RFP could put 1,400 jobs in Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort at risk;

“Whereas the workers at these casinos have built and continue to build families as well as play an important role in the fabric of our communities;

“Whereas the removal of any jobs from either Casino Niagara or Fallsview Casino Resort would have long-term damaging effects on both the displaced workers and their communities;

“Whereas the people of Niagara deserve to know their government is committed to sustaining and creating good jobs in their communities;

“We, the undersigned, add our names to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and call on the government, the Premier and the Minister of Finance to:

“—immediately halt the current RFP process concerning Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort;

“—immediately consult local communities for input;

“—issue a new RFP covering Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort which includes a guarantee to keep existing good casino jobs in Niagara Falls and uses original 1996 RFP criteria.”

I’ll sign my name and give it to the page.

VOTING AGE

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition here to amend section 15 of the Election Act to lower the eligible voter age in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pursuant to section S. 15 ... of the Election Act, every person is entitled to vote who, on the general polling day, has attained 18 years of age; and

“Whereas youth in Ontario want to be politically engaged; and

“Whereas younger person(s) have a vested interest in the selection of their political representatives; and

“Whereas young person(s) should not have to pay taxes without representation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions including ... Austria and Brazil have extended the eligible voter age (1); and

“Whereas electoral polls indicate a higher rate of electoral turnout in these jurisdictions (2); and

“Whereas young person(s) have the knowledge and maturity to participate in the electoral process;

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

“That the province of Ontario lower the eligible voter age to 16 years old, pursuant to amendments made to section S. 15” of the “Election Act.”

Thank you very much. I’ll give it to page Hannah.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Toby Barrett: The people who signed this petition organized an additional 886 signatures on a postcard campaign with respect to better dental health.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas too many people in Haldimand–Norfolk live with pain and infections because they cannot afford dental care;

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“Whereas OHIP pays to treat pain and infection in every part of the body except the mouth;

“We, the undersigned, support extending provincial programs to include everyone who needs and cannot afford emergency and preventative dental treatment.”

I’ve worked closely with this group, and I’m very pleased to add my signature to the list.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and send it with page Sophie.

VOTING AGE

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition entitled “To Amend S. 15(1)(a) of the Election Act (1990) to Lower the Eligible Voter Age in Ontario.” It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

“Whereas pursuant to S. 15(1)(a) of the Election Act, every person is entitled to vote who, on the general polling day, has attained 18 years of age; and

“Whereas youth in Ontario want to be politically engaged; and

“Whereas younger person(s) have a vested interest in the selection of their political representatives;”

And as this petition has been read earlier, Speaker, I’ll abridge it a little bit:

“Whereas young person(s) have the knowledge and maturity to participate in the electoral process;

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

“That the province of Ontario lower the eligible voter age to 16 years old, pursuant to amendments made to S. 15(1)(a) Election Act.”

Speaker, I am pleased to sign this petition and to send it down with page Rowan.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regula-

tions of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

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

CASINOS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have a petition which is entitled “Don’t Gamble Good Jobs. Save Niagara Casinos.” You can see hundreds of people have signed this.

“Niagara’s casinos were built to bring good jobs to the community. They are now being treated as one more public service to sell off by the provincial government.

“A current request-for-proposal (RFP) process shows no regard for working people who rely on casino jobs. This RFP has no criteria to ensure job creation or provide long-term stability for existing jobs. Completing this process could cost the Niagara region 1,400 jobs directly through the possible closure of the Fallsview Casino.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current request for proposals (RFP) by the Minister of Finance regarding the gaming bundle for Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort is absent of the following original 1996 RFP criteria to ensure job creation is paramount:

“—to ensure job retention and creation;

“—economic development; and

“—encourage investment;

“Whereas an independent report from HLT Advisory indicated the current RFP could put 1,400 jobs in Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort at risk;

“Whereas the workers at these casinos have built and continue to build families as well as play an important role in the fabric of our communities;

“The removal of any jobs from either Casino Niagara or Fallsview Casino Resort would have long-term damaging effects on both the displaced workers and their communities;

“Whereas the people of Niagara deserve to know their government is committed to sustaining and creating good jobs in their communities;

“We, the undersigned, add our names to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and call on the government, the Premier and the Minister of Finance to:

“—immediately halt the current RFP process concerning Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort;

“—immediately consult local communities for input;

“—issue a new RFP covering Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino Resort which includes a guarantee to keep existing good casino jobs in Niagara Falls and uses original 1996 RFP criteria.”

I support this petition, sign it and will send it with page Will.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCESS TO CONSUMER CREDIT REPORTS AND ELEVATOR AVAILABILITY ACT, 2018

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

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

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I first of all seek unanimous consent to defer our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to defer the lead speech of the official opposition. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’m glad to stand today in discussion of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

This bill, of course, was resurrected from the prorogation that occurred a few weeks ago from this Liberal government during its final weeks in office. I guess the prorogation was an attempt to reprogram this government’s agenda, but in actuality, it was a chance, or an opportunity, for this government to try to change the movement of the people of Ontario with regard to how they see this government in its true light, which has been one of mismanagement, debt, deficits and erosion of our health care services. It’s quite unfortunate that the government resorted to this type of plan of action.

What has definitely been seen over the past few weeks is that the government’s attempt to confuse voters didn’t work. The people of Ontario still see this government for what it is: a government that has tripled our debt over the last 15 years to over \$300 billion, with interest payments now eclipsing \$12 billion a year. That is \$12 billion taken out of health, \$12 billion taken out of education, agriculture, natural resources and social services. In fact, this \$12 billion puts debt repayment up to about the third-highest payout this government has. We have health care, education and debt—payment on the interest charges on our debt.

I think it speaks volumes to what has occurred with regard to this government over the last 15 years. In my riding alone, over its tenure, this government has lost over 6,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. We’ve lost the Ford plant; we’ve lost the Timken plant; we’ve lost Lear seating; and we’ve lost Sterling and all the feeder plants associated with it.

Unfortunately, what has happened is we've had some jobs return to the area but not the jobs that people once had in our area. We now have lower-paying jobs without benefits, often part-time. The main reason is that our province has become uncompetitive. It's been uncompetitive in its tax structure. It has also become uncompetitive with its energy rates.

1340

You don't have to go much further than to look at how high our energy rates have gone over the 15 years with this government. In an attempt to woo voters, they borrowed billions of dollars that the pages will be paying for, and probably the pages' kids down the road, in order for this government to have the appearance of lowering energy rates prior to an election, only to see them skyrocket down the road. It's unfortunate that in doing so over the last 15 years the energy rates have been skyrocketing and businesses have left this province. Businesses have left southwestern Ontario. As I said before, those were well-paying jobs, with benefits and pensions, that kept smaller communities running. It kept local communities strong.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. While the member is welcome to have his opinion on other subjects, I would draw to the Speaker's attention that at the moment we're discussing Bill 8, which relates to elevators and credit reporting. I've been patient, and I know the Speaker has been, too, waiting to see if the member will actually address the topic of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We are, indeed, debating Bill 8 at second reading. I would ask the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London to continue.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker, and rightly so. I was building the groundwork into credit rating scores, which is dealt with in Bill 8. If you aren't able to have a well-paying job and your debt does increase, your credit rating scores are greatly affected.

Mr. Toby Barrett: That happens to governments, too.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: And rightly so. The government's credit ratings, with their record levels of debt—\$312 billion; some \$1 billion a month in interest payments—and potential deficits projected to 2025 under this Liberal plan—our credit rating in the province is starting to lower. That doesn't bode well for future interest rates and interest payments for this province to hit. I thought it was important to lay that groundwork out with regard to the consumer reporting with credit scores, and build that case.

I was making mention of the hydro rates, which caused the slow. You look no further than to the wind and solar subsidies that are being forced upon our municipalities. You look no further than Dutton Dunwich, which has become closer and closer to being forced to build these wind turbines, and 84% of the constituents in the municipality of Dutton Dunwich voted against the building of these structures. I know that the government

said that they would be listening to municipalities in the decisions for these wind turbines. It's unfortunate that Malahide, which is a municipality that is only about 25 or 30 minutes away from Dutton Dunwich—they wanted the wind turbines. I'm not sure why they wanted to go that route, but they did. But the government gave it to the municipality which voted 84% against these wind turbines.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville, once again, on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. We're now six minutes into the member's address and he has yet to mention the word "elevator" and has yet to actually talk about the topic of the bill. Again, he's welcome to talk about what it is that he is discussing when we're debating an energy bill, but we're debating a bill that deals with elevators and credit reporting, and I would ask the Speaker to request that the member stay on topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would say again: We are debating Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000. I would ask the member to make reference to the specifics of the bill.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sure. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about credit ratings, which is contained in Bill 8, but I guess we could also mention elevators. Elevators go up, much like the debt of this province has been going up over the 15 years of this government's tenure.

Mr. Arthur Potts: And they come back down.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Debt goes up; credit rating goes down.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: That's right. Elevators go down. So do the credit ratings, with their debt going up.

But with regard to the TSSA, which is also referenced in this bill, I thought I'd also have the opportunity to speak about some of the concerns raised from constituents of mine with regard to the TSSA that aren't addressed in Bill 8, which maybe should have had some opportunity regarding some accountability and transparency that are lacking in the TSSA.

When I was first elected in 2011, I was called to a summer camp area, Camp Barnabas, which is a Christian-run camp just on the outskirts of east Elgin. It's actually fairly close to the riding of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. This camp has been running for decades, and part of its fun for the students and the kids who go there in the summer—who have nowhere else to go, really. This is their opportunity to get away from their siblings who didn't go with them and/or their families and/or the rigours of having to do chores all day, and to go have some fun at camp.

They have this hill. It's not man-made; it's a natural hill. At the bottom is a little area where there's a bunch of water. I wouldn't say it's a pool because it's not a pool. It's just an area that holds water. And what they would do is put one of those slip-and-slide mats on the hill and get it wet, and the kids would slide down into the water.

I went over and checked it out. It's probably about 15 feet they have to slide. It's not a steep hill. TSSA had deemed that it needs to be enforced and that it needs, first, an engineer's technical report, and it's just in the same class as a roller coaster. First of all, this camp can't afford to hire an engineer to look at a Slip N Slide on a hill. Unfortunately, TSSA was very adamant that it's an amusement ride even though it's what we probably grew up doing every day in our neighbourhood—throw down a Slip N Slide and get it wet and slide down it. They wanted an engineer's technical drawings on it, and so the camp had to get rid of that fun activity. So there's one less activity for the kids.

We're talking about a summer camp in Elgin county. This isn't a summer camp up in Algonquin park; it's not a summer camp you see in other areas where they have the resources to develop a full program. This is a summer camp for kids in the area who can't get to Algonquin park etc. It's somewhere for them to get away in the summer and have some fun under Christian values. Unfortunately, part of the entertainment—it wasn't the whole thing. They have nature trails, nature walks, and they go fishing and there are other things they can do, but part of the fun the kids had was just, on hot days, to get the Slip N Slide going and go into the water. I guess it's the role of the TSSA to keep the safety in there, but sometimes common sense doesn't seem to exist in some government agencies.

My other concern that was raised—and this is where it gets interesting. This is the flip side of that argument. I had a constituent contact me that in one of the attractions in Port Stanley, they had those amusement rides that are maybe about this tall, so about five and a half feet tall, and the kids sit on them. It's like a—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Ferris wheel.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Ferris wheel; thank you very much. You're listening. This is great. So it's like a Ferris wheel. You strap the kid in and it goes around in circles really, really slowly. My daughter used to like to do this one. But unfortunately, there were no safety things on it. One of the warning lights was off and a child broke his leg on it, so they came to me and I contacted TSSA.

TSSA doesn't oversee those rides. So we have the TSSA worried about Wet 'N' Wild's piece of plastic on a hill, but an actual miniature amusement ride is not in their purview to worry about. The constituent wasn't asking for major regulations, but maybe a sign to say, "Watch out," and maybe if there are warning lights, that they're actually operational on the machine.

The third point I'll raise about the TSSA is really an interesting one, and I guess it speaks to the fact that they have to self-fund themselves to a certain extent, so they're free, without any repercussions, about what they charge. I have a convenience store gas station in my riding which has mentioned to me that he has to provide technical drawings on the safety of where the gas tanks are and the propane tanks etc. which he has to pay to get drawn up and pay a yearly fee on that. But they asked them for new drawings every single year, even if there

haven't been any changes or modifications made, so he's forking out close to \$700 or \$800 a year with regard to these drawings, which haven't changed year over year. It makes it tough on small business owners—small family business owners, at that; his family has owned that place for decades—and they cannot justify why they have to keep doing that.

1350

This is on top of the lack of the government dealing with contraband cigarettes in this province. They've been hit quite hard on the convenience side of the business. I'm not pro-smoking, but I'm very, very anti-contraband-cigarettes in this province, which has been left ignored for decades.

The high energy rates that he's spoken about, which are considerably going through the roof—he has to keep his lights on. He has had to cut back his staff. There are less employment opportunities because he's got these extra fees this government has been charging, without any accountability on these fees. And we have the hydro rates.

He has been hit really hard with the minimum wage increase. In fact, I think he has even cut down his staff. Sometimes he's the only one doing the full-day shift because he just can't afford to bring in that many folks. It's unfortunate, because that convenience store is a great starter position for a lot of the kids in the community, because they can walk there to work and are close enough to home. All the parents know the owner and know the business; a lot of the neighbours use it. So it's quite a good spot for a young person to start out and learn the basics about employment and how to work a job, without the distractions of a cellphone, and having to deal with customer service.

Those are a few of the issues we've had with the TSSA and its lack of accountability. I guess the concern with this bill is the fact that now we're going to give the TSSA the powers to impose the fines on whatever they wish and when, and to also most likely be the judge and jury to any appeals to this type of system.

You can always argue a stance for safety to make anything pass, but there is a balance to be made between safety, which we all want, and we also have to understand the costs associated with businesses. If they're doing something wrong that's not safe, that's fine, but don't sit there and try to make things up in order to justify your position or your job at the expense of small businesses and the freedoms of the people of this province. It's quite concerning.

Bill 8 also talks about elevators in this piece of legislation. We did mention about elevators and the debt going up, but in my riding—I guess you can compare it to downtown Toronto; there's probably more of a cry or a need to ensure that elevators are fixed and repaired in a timely fashion. This is one of the things this bill is trying to achieve. I do know it is such a pain when you want to utilize an elevator and it's out of order, especially when there are only two and one of them is out of order. In fact, if both go out of order, it's quite a problem. The

places that do have elevators in my riding are usually places that house seniors in our area. The need for an elevator to be used at their convenience is necessary

But if there is a medical emergency or a fire, our firemen have to get up. I know you're not supposed to use elevators in a fire, but I think that if you have poor mobility, that's the first place you're going to look to. But even in emergencies, getting the paramedics up to the eighth or ninth floor to deal with a medical emergency—it would be really unfortunate if an elevator was out of order for months on end, and we're hearing that that's happening.

This part of the legislation that is putting some time-lines and reporting in—I don't truly know the real reasons why it's taking so long to get elevator repairs done: whether or not there's not enough competition in the marketplace in order to drive service of those providers, or if there are parts that are missing, or maybe it's the error of the owners of the elevators; maybe it's a combination. Hopefully, this bill is able to deal with that situation.

Mr. Speaker, I've touched on a few of these issues here today. I have many, many more issues that I could add into this piece of legislation, that I could discuss. I look forward to seeing where this piece of legislation goes, and goes to committee. I know we have three weeks left of sitting in the Legislature before the fun and games begin—although I think they've already started in this province. So I don't know how far this bill is actually going to get, whether or not it will actually get to royal assent.

We may have to take a look at this piece of legislation. It may mean, when the new government forms and we possibly have to re-look at this legislation, we can look at some more accountability and transparency in TSSA, and maybe ensure that they maintain the safety and well-being of the province but justify what they're doing in the means of safety.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Exactly; we'll help. We're going to do our part, Mr. Speaker, when we form government on June 7. We're going to do the reverse of what this government has done with regard to the elevators of this province.

We're going to lower debt, we're going to balance the deficit and we're going to make sure the credit ratings rise. And we're going to do this while ensuring that the services that people deserve and receive in this province are there for them. Hallway medicine will end. The wait times are going to go down. People are going to see a physician when they want to see their doctor. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, rural Ontario is going to matter again, northern Ontario is going to matter again and agriculture is going to play a key role in our economy. Things are going to be on the bright side when the PC Party forms government on June 7 with Premier Ford at the helm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I normally don't get up and talk about the first six minutes of a guy's speech, but if you're going to stand up, at least try to be truthful with the residents of Ontario. He talked about losing 6,000 manufacturing jobs —

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Pardon?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Withdraw.

I'm going to talk about the 6,000 manufacturing jobs. It was their party that said very clearly, "Let the auto sector die." It was their party that did that. It was their party, not necessarily in Ontario, but certainly in Canada, that was very clear that we had a petrodollar, which meant that out west was doing quite well when our dollar was \$1.10, but it was killing the manufacturing sector in Ontario.

Laughter.

Mr. Wayne Gates: When these guys sit here and laugh—and I don't appreciate them laughing—the reality is, I lived it. I was the president of my local union. We saw our plant go from 10,000 workers down to 2,000. We saw Hayes-Dana close in Niagara. We saw the steel industry—these things all happened. It happened very clearly, and they said very clearly—and it wasn't just one guy. Tim Hudak said it as leader, but a lot of their colleagues have said it, too: "Let that sector die."

And we're finding out with advanced manufacturing, now that the dollar is back down to probably where it should be, you're seeing more investment in our plants. But if we would have let it die, nobody—nobody—would have a job today. Our retirees would have had their pensions go to 33%. They would have lost all their benefits.

So if they're going to stand up, at least sing—because you can't inhale and exhale at the same time; you just can't do that. It's one thing you can't do.

They don't talk about the 407. They don't want to hear about the 407.

If you're going to stand up and attack people in the House, let's talk about what really happened. I can tell you that if it wasn't for the unions standing up against the free trade agreements, the auto sector would have died a long time ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 8, Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I just want to express my disappointment that the member who was speaking on behalf of the official opposition did his very best to stay away from the relevance of this bill despite being reminded by yourself on a couple of occasions, because this is a very, very important piece of legislation. Elevator accessibility is very important, especially to our vulnerable populations: expecting mothers, seniors and those with disabilities. As the minister stated, a lot of our high-rise condominium buildings can be as much as 40 or

50 storeys. It is very unreasonable for people to have elevators out of service for a great length of time.

1400

One of the issues that we discovered was that we need to collect more data because there isn't enough data. I would like to state that this bill is one of the first worldwide to be introduced—and hopefully will be passed. We will be making an effort that would amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act in order to create regulation-making authority to collect elevator outage data, to ensure information about elevator performance is published so that perspective residents can make better-informed decisions before they rent or buy a home in a multi-storey building.

The other aspect of this bill deals with consumer credit reporting. I look forward to debating that further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to stand and provide comment to my colleague and seatmate from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He always brings good thoughts to the table. I know he is always working on behalf of people in his riding and making sure that the issues of his riding are brought to this House, and he voices them very well.

One of the things that all of us are looking at with this bill is that it talks about consumer protection. I think my colleague, again, brought up a number of good points.

I think one of the things that we need to always make sure that we're talking about to the people of Ontario is protecting them, because that's one of the responsibilities that we have when we come to the Legislature, having been democratically elected by them and chosen to be sent here.

I am not certain how this government—they are bringing in an elevator bill. Fair enough. That's something we need to look at. But, Mr. Speaker, I can honestly tell you there hasn't been one person in my riding, in six and a half years, come to me talking about elevators—especially when they tie it to consumer protection.

What they do come to me and talk about is where was the consumer protection to borrow \$25 billion for a two-year hydro rebate, which is going to cost them and these young pages in front of us up to \$93 billion. Where was the consumer protection for that?

The Green Energy Act, is going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario, again the consumers, \$133 billion over the life of that agreement, and it will only ever be 5% of our grid.

Where was the consumer protection for eHealth, Mr. Speaker? Some \$2 billion on that program; I'm not certain there's much consumer protection.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: They can continue to chirp over there. They don't bother me at all. I can talk right thorough it; it's not a problem. They don't want me bringing these facts up about consumer protection.

Gas plants: \$1.2 billion. The Ornge fiasco: \$700 million. Ontario Northland being cut out of the system: \$820 million. And the SAMS computer program: \$300 million.

Where was the consumer protection there? Are the people clamouring to your office, Mr. Speaker, about elevator protection, or are they talking about gas plants and billions of dollars that these young pages and the rest of Ontarians are going to pay back for the next 50 years?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to bring this back to my member's statement today because we're dealing with a bill that's talking about the Consumer Reporting Act and how we need to give consumers a right to disclose consumer scores and those things.

But what are we doing about these shady companies that are going door to door and scamming people in all of our communities? We've passed legislation. They already have loopholes through that legislation. They're still doing it.

I talked about Norm Cloutier in my riding, who now has a bill of close to \$1,000 a month. Norm had a furnace, an air conditioner, a drinking water system and a water softener system put in in 2012. He gets a call. He gets a visit. The guy says he's a technician. He goes to his house and he tells him, "That company that you bought all these from has gone bankrupt." This is on his Enbridge bill. So this guy has already bought the equipment that's probably worth \$10,000, and he's on the hook for the next 10 years for probably \$50,000 with the interest. They take the stuff out; they dump it in his yard. They say somebody is going to come and pick it up, and they reinstall the same things over again.

Not only are these companies that are doing the installation causing issues, but the finance companies are not doing anything about it either. So poor Norm now, over the next 10 years, will pay \$120,000 for two sets of furnaces and air conditioners and water softeners that he probably didn't even need to start with. What are we doing, government, about the Norms of the world to make sure that our seniors are protected as opposed to worrying about consumer scores?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London can now respond.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was a great opportunity to speak for 20 minutes on Bill 8 with regard to the Consumer Reporting Act and technical safety standards.

I would like to thank the members from Brampton West and Welland for their comments, and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who is always a champion of the people of this province as a whole in ensuring that the dollars that are spent by this government are fully accountable and transparent and not wasted. What he mentioned numerous times, over and over, are the billions upon billions of dollars this government has wasted, not only with their own experiments but also without thought to the dollars or where this money is coming from.

Of course, the member from Niagara Falls is always interesting to hear. He loves to live in the past and actually make a stretch, on some of the comments he has

made. But what they really should watch what they're speaking about is the real spectre of political history: That is, of course, Premier Bob Rae, who totally had a promise much like the new NDP platform here going into the election, but, once he formed government, was unable, like the NDP members or caucus, to manage dollars and cents. What happened? They barely sat while they were in Legislature. They closed tens of thousands of hospital beds, they shut down mental health facilities and then they created social Rae days which stole money from the public sector workers of this province. And that was an NDP-run government.

We want to stay far away from them because right now there is a competition going on of which party, between the Liberals and NDPs, can spend the most and tax the most. I think they're running neck and neck. This province needs an alternative. It needs a government that can manage this province. It needs a government that's going to be for the people, and that is the PC government under Premier Doug Ford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I'm going to remind the House that the writ has not yet been issued—unless I'm missing something. We are not into an election campaign; we're actually here debating second reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000. The bill opens up the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act. In order to be relevant, the debate must be talking about those kinds of issues. I would ask the members to keep that in mind as they make their comments this afternoon.

Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I do appreciate the warning, but all I'm going to start with by saying is "Mike Harris." That's all I'm going to say, and I guarantee that my colleagues on the Liberal side—

Interjection: Which Mike Harris?

Mr. Wayne Gates: We know which Mike Harris it is.

I will say to my colleague across the road—I will mention elevators in my next hour. So sit back, relax, grab some chips or play on your phones, whatever you are going to do. I get to talk for an hour on this bill.

I was kind of surprised that somebody said, "I haven't heard anybody discussing elevators in the province of Ontario." Well, today on my way here, I came out of my office in 361. For those who don't know where it is, it's on the third floor, room 361. So I go out, and I walk around to go in the elevators. Guess what?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's not working.

Mr. Wayne Gates: The elevator is not working. As we see around here, a lot of times, the elevators don't work. But when I look at the elevators here and the incredible history we have and the incredible skilled workers that we have—how have they been able to keep the elevators working all these years, because they are the 14th-oldest elevators in the province of Ontario? We should give a round of applause for our skilled workers right here working at Queen's Park.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's the first point where I'm going to start.

I'm going to talk on the bill, so I want to thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act, today. That's quite a long title. I think today that my remarks are going to focus mainly on the aspects of this that deal with ensuring that residents have access to safe elevators, and that the elevators are fixed on time. I think that's fair, I think that's reasonable and I think it's something that we should accomplish.

1410

This is interesting: When I first found out that I had a full hour to do on this bill, I wasn't sure what I was going to talk about, very similar to the PC member who had no idea what he was talking about for 20 minutes. But when I first found out I had a full hour to do on this bill, I thought, "Okay, I've got to figure this out." It seemed like common sense that anyone should have access to working elevators if they're in a building, so I wasn't sure how I was going to fill up this time. I think that's fair. An hour is a long time up here. I think most people can agree to that.

I believe that this bill is intended to be a reintroduction of the Reliable Elevators Act that a member introduced in the last session. I'm going to touch, a little bit later, on some of the major differences, but it is important to note that this issue has been brought up before.

When I found out I had an hour to speak on this bill, I took the time to start researching why a bill like this would even need to come before this Legislature on more than one occasion. Frankly, I was shocked by what I found out. I was shocked by how widespread the issue is, of broken elevators not being repaired, across the province. Not only did I quickly come to understand the seriousness of this issue, but the more that I read, the more I realized this was something that needed direct and quick action.

I noticed that one of the main differences between this bill and the previous bill is that the original bill had regulations that outlined how quickly an elevator needed to be fixed. This bill doesn't do that. Instead, it allows the minister to make those regulations. That's a big difference from the original bill.

If the minister imposes a deadline that's quicker than the original, I think that would be a good thing. My concern with this sort of change is what happens down the line if we get a minister who doesn't prioritize public safety. That may happen. What do we do if Ontario ends up with a minister who says it's okay if elevators are fixed within a month or two months? At that point, is there even a point in legislating it? I always like to see regulations in detail in a bill, but unfortunately, in this particular bill, that's missing.

I'd like to start off this speech with one fact I discovered when researching this bill. I know a lot of people aren't listening, but I would like my colleagues to listen to this. I know the Minister of Labour just came in. I know he'll listen to this, because he'll be concerned

about this as well: 4,461. You hear that number? It's 4,461. That is the amount of annual calls our firefighters across the province receive when they have to act and release people from broken elevators. To me, that sounds extremely high. It's an issue that, when I see my firefighters on Saturday night at their volunteer night, I will ask them about. Even worse than that, this is a number that has more than doubled since 2001. As you can see, not only is this something not being addressed; it's an issue that is actually getting worse.

Before I go on, I'd like to publicly thank the firefighters across the province for the work that they've done across our province.

Mr. Speaker, I know that some people like to criticize our firefighters—because we're managing to reduce the amount of house fires. But this is a perfect example of why they're wrong. There is no limit to the services that firefighters provide in our communities right across the province, in every one of our ridings. Everybody sitting here can always go and thank a firefighter. In fact, I would say the importance of their work has moved away from just fires and now involves far more community safety, including getting into the neighbourhoods. Make no mistake about it: these heroes keep us all safe. They make us feel like we live in good communities where it's safe to raise our children and our grandchildren. So if you're on an elevator and it breaks down—I'll ask my colleagues: How many of you have been on an elevator that broke down? Put your hand up—I'll see who's listening. Yes, there's a few. It's happened right here, and only a few people are here.

If one breaks down, you can rest assured that your local firefighters are coming, and you can remain calm until they arrive—as well, sometimes EMS comes, depending on what the call is. That sort of assurance is why these women and men deserve our respect and always deserve our support. I hope that firefighters in my riding know how much I support them. I know I have said it in this House many times, but it's worth saying again.

I would like to get back to the number and ask people to think about it. Imagine that you're going to work. We all do that; we come here. Or maybe you're going to pick up your child for daycare. You go to get into your elevator and it breaks down with you inside it. I can honestly say that it's never happened to me, but I certainly wouldn't want it to, that's for sure. No matter who you are, it's an uncomfortable experience. It becomes even worse if the elevator is crowded. Frankly, it becomes a health and safety issue, which I know the Minister of Labour understands. What happens if someone has a panic attack in that elevator or a medical emergency? Now they're stuck in the elevator and it's not working. I would like the people at home or the people in this House to think about that happening to them or, even worse, to their parents.

While I was researching my speaking notes for this speech, I came across a story that is a great example of how bad this could be. She has shared her story with the press, and I would like to share her story here because I

think it needs to be heard. This is from a woman named Nancy. I have her last name, but I am not sure if we okayed the last name, so I'm not going to say it without having known for sure.

She retold her experience with a failing elevator in a public building. It started making a lot of banging noises, and then the lights went out. A lot more banging went on, and then it dropped to the basement. I'm going to repeat that: It then dropped to the basement. It jolted her. When it came to a stop at the bottom—and this is her speaking: "It jolted me when we came to a stop at the bottom. I didn't know what was happening or when it was going to stop. Everything was black. I kept trying to press buttons to try to make it open the doors but nothing would happen."

Can you imagine that happening to any of us, how scared we probably would be? That's what happened to Nancy. Luckily, she was rescued. I want people here and at home to think about that happening to them. Nancy survived, but she suffered from whiplash and required medical attention.

Looking at the data, we can see that hundreds of people are getting injured in elevator-related accidents right across the country, not just in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like you to think about seniors in this situation. Many of them have to rely on the use of elevators in order to get in and out of their buildings. Before I continue with the seniors—again, I heard some of the comments earlier, but I do want to talk a little bit about seniors and what's going on in all our communities right across the province of Ontario.

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I've had the opportunity over the last little while to meet with churches, with Legions, with Rotary Clubs, with Lions Clubs. Do you know the one ask that's being asked everywhere I go? Does anybody know? They need an elevator. They need an elevator for their church; they need an elevator for the Legion. One of the highest expenses that they're going to have in running that volunteer organization or running their church is an elevator.

But do you know what's happening in a lot of our churches? I'm sure everybody goes to church on a regular basis. At our churches, the people who are going are getting a little older. They have no way to go to church anymore, because the church doesn't have an elevator. So I'm going to say to the government—I'll say it to our government when we become government in June—that we have to make sure that the grants are there to make sure that we get more elevators provided for our churches, our social clubs, our Legions.

I know the Legions are doing fish fries. I go to my Legion on Friday nights. Probably some of the best fish is at your local Legion, usually, at the end of the day. They're using that as fundraisers to keep the Legions going. They need lots of volunteers. The one thing they can use some help on from any government, whoever it is—we need to make sure that we have some help for them as we try to get them elevators that are safe, that

can work, so they can go to church, they can go to the Legion and they can go to their Rotary clubs and provide an incredible service for all our communities right across the province of Ontario.

I'll get back to where I am on my speech. I just wrote that down, because I thought it was important to get that out, as I meet churches right across my riding.

I also like to think about the seniors in this situation. Many of them have to rely on the use of elevators in order to get in and out of the building. What are they supposed to do if the elevator breaks down and they're stuck?

I would like to briefly discuss a story that came through our constituency office. A lady who suffers from mobility issues faced an elevator breakdown in her apartment complex. We don't have a lot of high-rises in Niagara Falls; we have some. We obviously have some high-rises in the tourist sector, with our hotels.

I know that down in my communities of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, there are not nearly as many people living in apartment buildings as, let's say, in Toronto and some of the bigger places—Ottawa, Montreal. But we definitely still suffer from this problem when elevators are out of service for an extended period of time.

She lived in a building in Niagara Falls; she lived on the third floor. This is where the story gets extremely interesting. I know that my colleagues are listening, because it could happen in their riding at any time.

This individual came to our constituency office and informed us that the landlord had posted a note on the front of the elevator door that said the elevator was going to be down for four weeks for repairs—four weeks.

Here you have a lady from Niagara Falls who has accessibility issues. She can't walk up the stairs, can't get to her apartment. She quickly got in contact with her landlord and asked how people who suffer from mobility issues would be accommodated for the four-week period that the elevator was going to be out of service. Unfortunately, the landlord had little answer for her. The landlord told her that there were no main-level apartments available for her to stay in during the time that the elevator was going down. The only option that the landlord would give her—listen to this—was to provide her with someone to get her groceries and bring them up the stairs while she'd be forced to stay in her apartment for four weeks. Think about that.

This unfortunate response from the landlord prompted her to visit our constituency office to discuss her current problem. She came into our office and spoke with one of our constituency assistants about the fact that she was going to be forced to stay inside her apartment for four weeks straight, simply because the landlord could not get the elevator fixed in her building. I ask anybody that's here this afternoon: Would you want that for yourself, your mom, your grandmother, your grandfather? I don't think anybody would. So when you hear, "I don't know if anybody is talking about the elevator bill," there are absolutely a lot more things that are probably more

important than an elevator bill, but don't underestimate what we're going through in the province of Ontario on these issues, particularly with seniors.

My staff were shocked when they heard this. How could an elevator take four weeks to be repaired, and how could there be no options from the landlord for residents who have mobility issues? Frankly, it was so shocking that my staff called me directly at Queen's Park to discuss the case and bring the issue to my attention. I could not believe what I was hearing.

The first step that our office took once I heard about this individual's situation was to contact the landlord directly so we could discuss the situation and make sure that there were no other options for the individual during this period of time. After speaking with the landlord, it was clear that they were frustrated with the timeline of the repair, but they said their hands were tied. The company that was there to fix the elevator set out the timeline, and four weeks was the quickest turnaround for this particular issue—four weeks. It was nearly a full replacement of the elevator, and some repairs needed to be made on the shaft.

We completely understand that this type of work can take time, but to leave residents in that building with mobility issues no option but to sit there in their apartment for four weeks is completely unacceptable to myself and, I believe, unacceptable to everybody that's here. It doesn't matter what party you're with—PC, NDP or Liberal—it's unacceptable.

Once our team in the constituency office realized that the information from the constituent was correct and there was no other solution from the landlord, we took action to find appropriate housing for the constituent. If you live in Niagara, probably like right across the province of Ontario, finding housing is extremely challenging, to say the least. Our team worked with caseworkers at a local social assistance office, and they were incredibly helpful in looking at possible solutions to cover the temporary housing while work was being completed in the apartment building. Unfortunately, while our office was working on securing the potential funding for temporary housing, the constituent went back to her apartment, and the elevator had been taken out of service already and the repairs had begun. She was completely unable to get up the stairs and had nowhere to sleep that night.

I'm going to read that again. I'm hoping everybody is listening to this, because this could be our moms; it could be our grandparents. Quite frankly, it could be us. She was completely unable to get up the stairs and had nowhere to sleep that night. Fortunately, she was able to find a friend who could temporarily house her, but what if she didn't get hold of a friend? She would have been completely stranded.

Fortunately, I'll say this for all constituency workers: They do incredible work, and my constituency office is no different. My team worked to find a solution. We were able to work with the local social assistance agency to find emergency housing funds to cover the costs of a

temporary housing situation for the constituent. She unfortunately had to live in a motel for a period of time, but at least it was accessible to her. They were able to reach out to the constituent to review her situation and determine if there were any laws the landlord was not following.

Once the funding was secure, she was able to ensure that she had accessible housing she could rely on, but it was not ideal and it was not home. The whole situation was really unfortunate, but we were happy that we could help. However, having her stay in a motel for a long period of time was not a solution to the problem. It was completely unacceptable that she had to endure this.

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No one in this province who has mobility issues should have to face such a situation, but unfortunately, a lot of people in this province do face this problem. We were happy that we could assist the individual who came to our office, but we know she wasn't the only one in the building with mobility issues. We know that when this happens to people right across the province, many of them don't reach out for support and most likely suffer during that period that the elevator is down.

I think it's important for us to sit back and reflect on what has happened to this particular individual who came into my office. She was torn away from her home for four weeks. She was left homeless for one evening. I'll repeat that. She did nothing wrong here. This is an individual who lived in an apartment, had accessibility issues, did nothing wrong; she paid her rent, lived in the apartment and was put in a position where she was homeless for one night. I don't know how many in this room have been homeless for one night. But she certainly didn't deserve that.

She had to live in a motel for four weeks and seek out assistance from friends, something that typically—we can all agree with this, I think—can sometimes be very embarrassing. Think about the secondary problems that one faces when they're out of their home for that period of time.

I didn't know this until I investigated this and looked into this further: At her motel, there was no kitchen to cook meals. That meant that this individual, who is already living on social assistance, had to pay for her pre-made food every day for four weeks. As we all know—I know a lot of us here probably eat out once in a while—that can be incredibly expensive.

Also, just think about the comfort of home that was stripped away from her while she was out of her home. I can't imagine that anyone in this House would want to live in a motel for four weeks, particularly one that doesn't have a fridge, a stove or a microwave.

Let's not forget why this happened. This happened only because she had mobility issues. There was nothing in place to protect her from the possibility that her elevator could go down for an extended period of time.

I was a little baffled that this could happen in our province. This isn't the first time that someone in our community faced such a problem. I know it's not the first

time that someone in this province has faced such a problem. I hope this legislation can help to prevent people from having to face such harsh realities.

I think that, sometimes, the people without mobility issues take for granted the ease of access we have in our society. If this was to happen to myself, I could just take the stairs. It might be slightly inconvenient, but I can do it. I will say that I'm still in good enough shape to walk the stairs, just in case anybody is wondering about that.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, I said I can. I can do it; I can still do it. I don't play hockey anymore—I don't do any of that—but I can still walk the steps. But we need to remember that not everyone has the same ability. Mr. Speaker, you can relate to that. We don't all have the same ability.

Even if you don't suffer from disability, it wouldn't be ideal for a senior to have to take the stairs for four weeks straight. Some seniors can't do that. It could be heart issues; it could be diabetes; it could be any number of things so that they might have a challenge to walk up steps.

I'm happy that I'm able to share that story with you. It was definitely very eye-opening to me when I learned about this situation. It's easy for us to get lost in the fine details of policy when we're in this House, so I think it's good to remember how the decisions we make here directly affect the people in our communities.

We can see what sorts of issues this creates, when we look at all the aspects of it. But what if you just refer to the fact that people can't use their own elevators? Imagine you're a senior, and maybe you have mobility issues, and now you're stuck on the ninth or 10th floor of your building. I can tell you that when I stay in Toronto, I'm on the 20th floor. It's quite a ways up. This could be a serious health and safety issue. How are you supposed to go up and down nine to 10 flights of stairs to get your groceries or get to a doctor's appointment?

I've talked about seniors in this House many, many times. They deserve to live in dignity and with respect. That means that they deserve the right to be able to live in their homes for as long as they want and as long as they're able. As a government, you should be doing everything you can to ensure they have that ability.

Obviously, you want to make sure that long-term care is available if they need it. That's an issue for another day: long-term care. I don't want to get off the elevators and the bill itself, but obviously, long-term care is a huge issue in my riding and, I think, right across the province. Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree with that. Even in your area, it's probably a big issue, long-term care.

We need to make sure that they have no barriers to living on their own if they wish. So when we look at an issue of accessibility, it absolutely needs to be addressed. What if a senior reads about these elevator issues and they decide they can't live in an apartment building because they're too worried about the elevator? That's another barrier they face, and it's a barrier that doesn't need to be there. Our seniors deserve everything we can

give them, and this is obviously an issue that affects them, so I support taking these actions.

Mr. Speaker, I can't overstate how important this issue is. I'd like to read some information that the Canadian Press released. This is a quote from Rob Isabelle, who is a mechanical engineer and someone who acts as a consultant to property managers. Here's what he had to say: "I don't think we're heading toward a crisis, I believe we're already there...."

"If we look at the reliability of a large number of pieces of equipment, it's really the worst it's ever been."

Why isn't that being addressed? And the question becomes—I ask all my colleagues—why is it getting worse? Because the reality is, it should be getting better. We're building more apartment buildings, more condos. All those things should certainly lead in a direction that they're going to get better.

Mr. Speaker, it turns out that there is more to this story. Here in Canada, most of our elevator services are owned and run by four major companies, which are engaging in a race to the bottom. I'm going to repeat that, because I think the Liberals should hear this one: Here in Canada, most of our elevator services are owned and run by four major companies, which are engaging in a race to the bottom. In this case, it seems clear to me that these companies are sacrificing public safety in order to make a few bucks.

Because they're the largest companies, they undersell any competition, and people have few other choices. Some 20 years ago, technicians would be hired and they would oversee somewhere around 35 to 45 elevators a month, for around \$1,000 per elevator. That was 20 years ago. Listen to this; this is really what the problem is. This is kind of where you've got to say, "Why?" Today, the same contract is worth about half of that, but the technicians are now responsible for over 100 elevators. Does that make sense to anybody? It certainly doesn't to me. They simply are being overworked, and the result is that our elevators are underserved.

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I'm going to read that again, because this is really what we should be concentrating on as we go through this bill. If we're actually looking for fixes, this is the part we should be really concentrating on: They simply are being overworked, and the result is that our elevators are underserved.

To make matters worse, these elevators are getting old, so they're working on old equipment and sometimes trying to replace parts that might not even exist anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try to include you. I know it's lonely up at the top there every afternoon, so this is for you: I'm sure you've ridden the elevator here at Queen's Park. If you read the inside, it says that our elevators include the 14th elevator built in this province. Our team here at Queen's Park does an incredible job. In fact, every employee who works here goes above and beyond to do a stellar job. So we don't see it here.

My point there is that we have the technicians; the problem is, we don't have enough of them, and they are asked to service too many elevators.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Like our hospitals.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It could be like hospitals and a lot of things. But if we're going to be serious about this bill, that is where we really should take a look.

We don't have that problem here because we have the staff here, right on-site, so if the elevator breaks down, they are right there for us. That's kind of where we should be in the province.

If you want to get rid of the problem of having somebody wait four weeks, like what happened in my riding, wouldn't it make sense that we have more technicians, not less? It's really a simple fix.

My point here is, these elevators are getting old, and as they get older, they're more likely to need servicing, and yet we see the contracts going in the opposite direction. I'm hoping everybody understands what I'm trying to say there. You know they're going to break down, so why do we have less service technicians taking care of more elevators, knowing full well that the repairs are going to be bigger and more complex? In the bill, we should be looking at that. The Liberal government that brought the bill forward should be looking at that.

And what you could do—and I have no problem with it—is check and make sure the facts are straight. Make sure that what I'm saying here is exactly what's going on in this industry, and why these four companies are getting away with it. Why are these four companies being able to get rid of the competition and then do whatever they want, and then if the elevator is down for four weeks, they say, "We don't care. It's not a big deal to us"? But we should care. Everybody here should care. Everybody should care and make sure that if the elevators are breaking down in our communities—and I'll tell you where you should probably care more than anywhere. Does anybody know? I hope some people are paying attention. Does anybody know where we should care about this more than anywhere? Right here in Toronto. Who has the most elevator use in the province of Ontario? It's not Niagara Falls. We have some, with our hotels. But go walk down around Yonge Street with all those condos that are there and the elevators up and down, where they have five and six elevators in some of these locations. So who should care to find out that they're not servicing those elevators properly? It should be the MPPs from Toronto. They should be saying it's unacceptable that these companies are not hiring enough technicians to take care of your elevators and are forcing people not to get service and having them sit there for hours, or having them break down, like the lady I talked about earlier, about 20 minutes ago, in my speech. I talked about when she was on the elevator.

I'm going to ask anybody—I want my colleagues in the PC Party to hear this too—how would you like it if you're on an elevator, all the lights go out and the elevator starts falling? Think about that. Put your hands up. Would you be scared?

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Absolutely, we'd be scared.

But why is it happening? It's happening because they're not utilizing technicians. We don't have enough

of them. The best way to service an elevator—does anybody know what it is, outside of making sure you have technicians? Does anybody know? Help me out. Does anybody know the best way to make sure your elevators are going to work right across the province of Ontario?

Preventive maintenance. Make sure they're being checked. Make sure the pulleys and everything are being checked and make sure it's not going to break down. That way, that elevator won't drop six or seven floors with one of us in it. I'm telling you, I've only seen it on TV. It does not look like it's fun. Pretty scary stuff. We can fix it. Collectively, we can fix it. We can fix it by going after these four companies and saying, "You hire the right number of technicians to do the job."

I got a little bit off my script there. I hope that's okay. I included you in my little speech. I hope you liked that. But that's what the issue is.

I'll continue. It's all to an issue about getting parts. I've seen a lot of elevator technicians say that the parts that they need for the old elevators just don't exist. Obviously, it's difficult and it requires skilled labour to fix it; I think we can all agree there. It's unfortunate that in many cases, landlords just don't want to bring in the right skilled trade labour to address the situation. This isn't always their fault. The major companies—again, the four companies that are controlling this industry—offer much cheaper products, and sometimes landlords just have no choice when it comes to the market. But the end result is the same.

As the need grows, the service goes down. The two things are going in the opposite direction and hurting people. I'm going to read that again, because I don't have a lot of pages left but I'm going to read this again.

As the need grows—

Mr. Bill Walker: Two minutes is a long time for one page.

Mr. Wayne Gates: If there is anybody who can do it—I can just start talking about the PCs and I can go for 20 minutes and not even look up. I'll be good; trust me.

As the need grows, the service goes down, right? So the need is going up, and we're cutting out services. We don't have the same number of technicians. Does that make sense to anybody? The two things are going in the opposite direction and it's hurting people, including the senior who had to live in a motel for a month.

At the very least, it's causing them an inconvenience, and at the worst, people's health and livelihoods are at risk.

Mr. Speaker, you might be wondering what these companies are doing to solve the problem. I think that's a fair question, quite frankly. Here's the shocking fact, okay? It seems that they don't care at all. That's why I'm saying to the Liberal government clearly, if you are serious about the bill, find out why those four companies don't care. Find out why they don't have enough technicians. That's what you should be doing for the bill.

Like I mentioned earlier, there are only really four or five major elevator companies that supply this industry. In fact, in 2007—and this is an interesting stat for the

Minister of Labour. Listen to this one; this is interesting. The fact is that, in 2007, these same companies were fined \$1 billion in their European markets for colluding. The same companies that quite frankly are hurting the elevator industry in making sure that they are up and running—our elevators—were already fined \$1 billion in European markets for colluding.

Interjection: Price-fixing.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Price-fixing, yes—price-fixing with each other to increase their profit margin, at the expense of who? Anybody know? They are making more money at whose expense? The people, and in this case it would be the people of the province of Ontario. It makes no sense to me.

In Ontario we need to take a stand against this. We need to make sure that this legislation has the teeth it needs to stand up to these big companies on behalf of working people and the residents right across the province of Ontario. People often have no idea what these companies are doing and how they are taking advantage of them. If you want to race to the bottom and play games with the health and safety of our residents—we need to take a stand. We need to take a stand and protect the people because ultimately that's who we're here to serve: We're here to serve the people of the province of Ontario.

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I know that parts of this bill involve being able to blacklist and publicly shame these companies. I agree with that, because what they are doing is shameful. The more we can make this known, the more pressure we can put on these companies to do their job properly.

Mr. Speaker, the issue goes beyond health and safety as well. It's also an issue of jobs. I know the members of the International Union of Elevator Constructors have spoken out about what these companies are doing. This isn't the first time this has been raised. It's been raised by their union. So I'm sure somebody in the government, probably the labour minister, has heard from the unions about this issue. They have spoken about what they are seeing in the elevator industry now. They keep cutting corners and they keep cutting service. Sound familiar to anybody? By the time the work ends up with someone on the ground here in Ontario, there is no way they can keep up. These are skilled workers who know what they're doing, and they do a good job, but they can only work so hard. They work as hard as they can, and they do work hard, but they can't keep up with all the issues and the workload.

This should be a good opportunity to create good jobs, but far too often their contracts don't do that. I guess what I'm saying in that paragraph is that here we have a union saying that they are understaffed, that they are overworked and they're doing the best they can. I've heard from the labour minister, I have heard from the economic minister, I've heard from the finance minister on how important it is to create good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario. Here's your opportunity with this bill. Put people to work, fix our elevators.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes. As my colleague just mentioned to me, give them some nice benefits and a pension plan.

I don't normally do this, but I'm going to do this because I know the labour minister is here. I do talk to him quite regularly, and to the PC Party. I know we're heading into an election. This is a little bit about the elevators, in case somebody jumps up and says I'm off-topic. I've been pretty good for 40 minutes or 45 minutes, I think. I think I've been pretty good on the bill.

If we really care about good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario, I'm suggesting—to the Liberals and to the Conservatives—unionize your staff the same way the NDP has their staff unionized. That would make a difference outside of these four walls, that we have unionized workers getting paid good benefits, pensions and vacation time. I wanted to say that. I've been wanting to say that for six months, and seeing we got onto that, it hit my head so I thought I'd get it out. So, labour minister, here is your opportunity: Get your staff unionized.

Now, I'll go back to the bill, so you don't have to jump up and tell me I am off the bill. It's a major missed opportunity to put people to work and to address this crisis, but instead these companies continue to focus on expanding their pockets, their bottom and padding their own pockets. That's the problem, and this bill has got to do more work on that.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we get upset that corporate taxes are lower than they have been in decades. This is why we get upset when major corporations don't pay their fair share like the rest of us in this province. Do these companies sound like they deserve a break? Let me know. I'm listening. Do they? When people get injured in their faulty elevators, we're the ones that have to pay for their medical bills, while these companies continue to rake in higher profits and pay less tax.

Why are people getting injured? I think it's been clear over my presentation, and I'm prepared to find out, if somebody looks it up, that I am not completely right—I have no problem. You can correct me. The issue is clear to me: We have the technicians, we have the skill, but we have companies that aren't providing the service. That's what's going on here. Hire more technicians, force these companies to do their jobs and make our elevators safe for me, for you, for our grandparents, for our kids and for our grandkids. We can do this.

When people get injured in faulty elevators, we're the ones—as I just said—who pay their medical bills, while these companies continue to rake in higher profits and pay less taxes. They need to fix their issues, and I believe they should be contributing more to our communities. The focus should not be on rewarding these companies, but holding them to account in favour of our residents and our constituents. Again, I can't stress enough that this should be a major, major focus across the province of Ontario, but certainly right here in Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, my riding doesn't have as many tall buildings as a Toronto riding, but we

absolutely still have them. We still have lots of seniors, like they do in Toronto, although I'll tell you, Toronto, a lot of your seniors are moving to Niagara. I'm sure you're aware of that. They're coming down to my riding, to Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, to Ridgeway, Crystal Beach and Chippawa. It's a beautiful place to come. I understand why they're coming down to Niagara; it's beautiful. But I'm hearing they're coming down because you guys won't fix their elevators. That's really one of the reasons why they're coming.

We still have lots of seniors and residents who live on top of numerous flights of stairs. The other thing we have lots of in Niagara is hotels. I haven't touched a lot on hotels, but we have some high-rise hotels. Some are 60, 65 or 70 floors. Hotels have dozens and dozens of storeys. As this bill goes through the process, I plan to reach out to these hotels and see where they are with this issue. I know the firefighters have been called to the hotels a number of times for people stuck in the elevators. Actually, there was a big case last summer, during the height of tourism season, where they were stuck there for quite a while.

I can guarantee you this: If it happens in an apartment building, then it's probably happening in hotels, especially some of the smaller hotels, because some of the smaller hotels are older. I'm worried to think about what would happen to someone's family vacation if they saved up enough money to come to Niagara Falls, maybe bringing their elderly parent or their young children. I will tell you that we're seeing some people from all over the world, and what I see with people from all over the world, maybe a little different than us, is that they do bring their parents. A lot of them do have their parents come with them and celebrate Niagara Falls.

I will say—I know it's a little off the bill—that I think that's why you're seeing more and more parents come with them to Niagara Falls. You can go anywhere in the world and say "Richmond Hill" or whatever and they would have no idea where it is, but if you say "Niagara Falls," everybody in the world has heard of Niagara Falls. I think that's why you see a lot of the elderly parents also coming to Niagara Falls.

Imagine that once they get there, they find out that the elevator is broken and they've got to walk up and down dozens of flights of stairs. I know that this seems smaller than the health and safety issue, but this is still a serious concern. In the world of tourism, bad reviews can be the difference-maker between successful businesses and the one that doesn't make it. I know the local operators strive to do everything they can to provide the best experience in the world for people, so I plan to speak with the local hotels and see if they run into this issue and how often.

The more I read about these elevator companies, I expect this will be a problem. They seem to care more about making money—I've said that before, earlier in this speech—than making sure that someone's business succeeds, so that's an issue that can be expected to be raised as well.

I'd like to touch on another aspect of this debate that's very important to me. It's an issue that I tried to raise

when we were talking about anti-scalping regulations, because it affects so many things. We just heard about the Blue Jays, and how they were actually working with the scalpers at StubHub. Imagine that. I don't have all the details there, but they were working with StubHub, which was surprising to me. I'm a big Blue Jays fan, and I was surprised that they would do that.

The issue of making sure that our buildings are accessible: Far too often in this place, the issue is that those with mobility issues are completely forgotten, including right here in Queen's Park. I felt that was the case with the anti-scalping legislation, which made no real effort to ensure the accessibility spots at concerts were also reserved so that residents could fairly get them. On this issue, I didn't want to leave it out.

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I'll ask anybody here, do you think it's fair and reasonable to have spots put away for people with mobility issues so they can go to concerts, a ballgame or a hockey game? I think that's being fair, I think it's being reasonable and I don't think anybody here should argue that issue.

As we see more and more seniors are living longer—I can tell you, when my father-in-law was alive, one of the best events we went to was a Blue Jays game once or twice a year. In later years in life, when he had some mobility issues, he didn't go to the games. Some of it was the fact that we couldn't get him a spot. So I think it's fair to ask that we fix that issue so everybody can enjoy sports in the province of Ontario.

What does a person with mobility issues do if the elevator in their apartment goes out? I would like to know someone's answer on that. Are you supposed to starve? I know it sounds harsh, but I'm asking. Some people don't have family. Quite frankly, as you're older, sometimes you don't have any friends. I'm not being mean on that; a lot of times, a lot of our friends pass before us, and you're like the last one standing, unfortunately. I saw one of my buddies yesterday, and we were talking about how many guys have passed away from the plant, as we all get older.

What if you're on fixed income? I think if you ask those questions, you'll see the importance of solving this issue and ensuring that when an elevator breaks, it's quickly repaired or that it's safe in the first place. I like that line. I'm going to read it again: that when an elevator breaks, it's quickly repaired—I think that's fair, I think that's reasonable and, quite frankly, I think it's a necessity—or that it's safe in the first place.

When you read that—and I ask my colleagues from the PC Party about that—what's the best way to keep the elevator working and not breaking down as much? Preventive maintenance and making sure they're regularly checked—just saying.

Far too often in the province of Ontario, those living with mobility issues and disabilities are left behind—left out and left behind. Yes, there are regulations in place, but we know how slow the enforcement of those regulations can be and how much harder we need to work to make sure those regulations are enforced.

Do those with disabilities not deserve the same dignity as everyone else in the province? Do they not have the right to access the same services as the rest of the us? I know this is an issue the minister is passionate about, and I know it's something the minister would agree with me on. Residents with disabilities are still residents of Ontario. They are still Canadians. They still pay taxes and, boy, do they contribute. So it breaks my heart to think that someone will be trapped in their apartment if their elevator broke.

When I look at this bill, I see it puts mandatory time-lines on fixing elevators. I can support that for the reasons I stated above. I can support that so that seniors and those with disabilities in this province can live the life they're entitled to. In fact, if those working in this industry felt the timeline could be moved up, I could support that as well.

As I've tried to explain during this speech, this is more than an issue of convenience. It's an issue of dignity, of living standards and of health and safety. So if we can do more, I hope that we do.

I appreciate the time that the minister has taken to bring this bill forward and to raise these issues in this chamber. I would also encourage the minister to speak directly with the Premier. I would encourage her to explain what these companies are doing and to act immediately to make sure these companies aren't cutting corners and are providing a service and support that residents and landlords can rely on. I would encourage them to do that, not just for the reason I stated but because it's the right thing to do.

I briefly touched on the penalties that are listed here. As much as I agree that these companies should be blacklisted and be held to account for these shortfalls, I hope it won't end there. I hope there's a plan for a proper regime to recognize and address these problems quickly. The last thing I want to see is for this bill to pass and then there's no real way to police these issues.

The last time the previous member introduced this bill, there were certainly discussions around timelines. Reading this bill, those timelines are gone now, but it provides the minister with the ability to set those timelines, which is good as long as they are good time-lines. It's important enough that it deserves to be taken seriously and respected.

I hope the member will continue to talk with our party and the opposition, as well as stakeholders, to make this bill as strong as possible. But, in the end, I do thank the member for making this issue public, and I'm happy to work with him to do what's right here and to ensure there is no longer a problem in the province of Ontario. I believe we owe it to everybody living in an apartment today to make sure that when they get on the elevator, they're going to be safe and they know they're going to get to the floor that they need to go to.

Having said that, my hour is just about up. I just want to say thank you very much for giving me an hour of your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to comment on the member from Windsor's comments on—sorry; St. Catharines.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Niagara Falls.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Niagara Falls; my apologies. I was supposed to go second in the rotation, but here I am first.

Speaker, I was very impressed with this whole notion—he reinforced it a few times in his remarks—of preventive maintenance and how important that the stitch in time saves nine. You get there ahead of time. And I know why he's going there, because a man like him—he has come out of the auto industry. He knows that when you buy a car, Speaker—and I know you get cars on a regular basis—when you get a car, a brand new car particularly, to service the warranty you need to get it serviced on a regular basis: change the oil and do the things that you need to do. It should be like that with elevators. Typically, when they first go in, you get that preventive maintenance schedule to make sure they're up and running. When they get older, we need to have mechanisms in place that will ensure that elevators in buildings do have that kind of repetitive and preventive maintenance in place.

What I did note in his comments to us today is that he talked about, in a sense, that this is an opportunity for hiring more skilled people. It reinforces the fact, Speaker, that these are good jobs. These are skilled trade positions. In Ontario right now, which is doing so well with our economic system clicking along, where we had the lowest unemployment rate that we've had in a couple of decades, at 5.5%, it's hard to find those people. But we are putting into place in our budget now, as the member would appreciate, opportunities for new apprenticeship training in a whole host of fields, including elevator maintenance, through the college programs in our province. That's really important.

He also commented about the fact that he is concerned that corporations aren't paying their fair share. But you can't have it both ways, Speaker. It was said in a previous member's comments about inhaling and exhaling at the same time. The fact we do have a low corporate tax rate allow us to have the vibrant economy and the jobs so that we're employing—5.5% are all the unemployed we have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Niagara Falls for his comments. I always find his take on different bills quite interesting. I listened to the majority of it, even when I was out in the lobby for a few minutes. He certainly raised a number of issues that are common to my riding as well, Sarnia–Lambton. We have a number of buildings—apartment buildings, condos, seniors' apartments etc.—where, from time to time, we've had elevators go out of service too, mainly in the older buildings because of the older equipment that's there. As he highlighted in his remarks, sometimes it's next to impossible to get the parts on time, to get them there and to get them in.

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We've worked through our office as well—I'm sure all the members have in the past, at some time or another, had constituents who live in those buildings approach them. We've arranged meetings between the owners—because lots of times the manager of the building isn't necessarily in town, in my riding anyway; it might be different in Toronto. But we're able to get those two parties together and come up with some kind of commitment.

I know a building in Petrolia. It's a three-floor building, not 20 or 30 floors. They were making major repairs to the elevator in that building. It was a capital project. The building board of directors—I know them all personally, a number of them—made arrangements. They hired people to actually come and carry groceries and things like that upstairs for the tenants. They were mobile enough they could go shopping, but carrying groceries upstairs would have been impossible. So a number of employers and entities like that can make those types of arrangements. I was proud to work through my office to help make those arrangements.

I look forward to the rest of the debate. I think it's something that's long called for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls. I think he did a good job. It's not easy to stand and speak for an hour on a pretty thin bill. But he raised some good points. We need some more technicians, but we need technicians who are not working in a precarious way, technicians who are full-time, who have benefits, have a pension plan and are respected by their employers.

He also talked about parts not being available for older elevators, and so some of these companies need to hire, perhaps, some skilled trades where they actually need to fabricate parts.

Preventive maintenance is the key, but I can tell you, it can happen in new buildings and old buildings. In my condo building where I lived for a number of years in Welland, we had preventive maintenance a couple of times a year. The elevator guy was there and doing what he needed to do, and we were really never stuck without an elevator. But in my condo here in Toronto, on Balmuto, a 40-storey building, the elevator was out the entire summer a couple of years ago. As you know, some of the elevators go to certain floors and other floors, and there were many people who had to run up and down as many as 40 floors because of the wait times.

He also raised the issue of seniors being stuck in apartment buildings, and it brought back to me a couple who lived in a building in Welland. The husband was very, very ill, and there was an apartment available on the ground floor. It was a rent-controlled building, so this kind of goes to the housing piece. The landlord would not let this couple move into that ground-floor apartment without increasing the rent by a couple of hundred dollars a month because of the whole vacancy decontrol issue so

they could actually get big rent there, and if the people moved out, they could get bigger rent in their place. At the end of the day, they too went into a hotel for a number of days, perhaps weeks, because of his illness so that they would have ready access to ambulances and to health care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I want to, first of all, compliment the member for Niagara Falls. It's not an easy task to talk for an hour on just about anything, and I want to mention that he talked on the bill pretty much non-stop the whole time, so congratulations to him. I enjoyed his description of the ups and downs of the elevator business.

I'd just like to chat a little bit about something that's in the bill, but was conspicuous by its absence, which is the part of the bill about credit reporting. Just for the sake of completion, I think, presuming that this bill is passed by the Legislature, it provides something much needed today, which is stronger consumer protection tools, by giving consumers easier access to their own credit information.

In our online world, one of the axioms to remember is that if a service is free, you have to ask yourself, how does a company stay in business if it's giving away its product for free? Well, it stays in business because you're putting in information, and that means that you become the product.

Among the things that the bill does is to ensure that credit reporting agencies give consumers greater electronic access—by the way, free of charge; they must provide this free at least twice a year—that allows consumers to see their own credit history, which would include any credit history reports, any scores and anything that was shared with potential creditors over the last 12 months. This should be an act of due diligence for people at least once or twice a year, to have a look and see: “What does the rest of the world know about what this agency perceives as my creditworthiness?”

Again, it gives the consumer some option of putting in place a security freeze that would prevent agencies from disclosing credit information to a third party, perhaps information that they would like to dispute.

With that, I thank the member for his time and hope I've added something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Niagara Falls for his response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their warm comments. I will address just one. Somebody mentioned about corporations paying taxes. We're talking about four huge multinational corporations and asking them to be fair and to help us make sure that we have health care and we have a good education system and everything that goes with doing business in the province of Ontario. I don't think that's out of the question.

What I did miss in my presentation—I will admit that I didn't do the credit reporting, but maybe next time I get to speak to the bill, I'll do that. I really concentrated on

the elevators, to try to make up for what the PCs didn't do on the elevator bill.

I want to say something here on a CBC article that I didn't get a chance to talk about: “Broken Elevators Reaching ‘Crisis’ Proportions Across Canada.

“Ontario alone logged 4,461 calls from people trapped in elevators last year.” What I found was, that means more than a dozen per day, double the number that it was in 2001.

The last comment that I'll make—I was addressing my MPP colleagues from Toronto in some of those comments, so I found one that kind of addressed the Toronto issue. It says here, “Among cities, Toronto led the way last year with about 2,862 elevator-rescue calls to 911....” And then it talked about the fact that Montreal had 1,500, Vancouver had 428 and Ottawa had 314.

So I say to my colleagues from Toronto that this is a big crisis right here in Toronto. Do everything with the bill to get it fixed. Thank you.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Speaker, I'd like to call a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there a quorum in the House?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Speaker, a quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Speaker, a quorum is now present.

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

I will ask for further debate on Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm honoured to rise in the House and speak to second reading of Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act. If passed, this legislation will impact Ontarians on a daily basis. It consists of two components: elevator availability, and consumer credit reporting.

Our government is committed to consumer protection and giving every Ontarian access to their credit information, as well as to elevators, particularly for those with mobility issues. My remarks will touch on both of these pieces.

The proposed amendments to the Technical Standards and Safety Act would establish a legislative and regulatory framework for elevator availability. Out-of-service elevators are a frustration for residents, particularly vulnerable populations, expecting mothers and those with disabilities.

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As part of the action plan, we intend to develop an elevator repair timeline standard, making Ontario the first jurisdiction worldwide to do so. In order to develop the standard, we need to collect more data and fully assess potential costs and impacts. There is a lack of published data on elevator availability not just here in Ontario, but in every jurisdiction.

If the bill is passed, it would amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, in order to create regulation-making authority to:

- collect elevator outage data;
- ensure information about elevator performance is published so that prospective residents can make better-informed decisions before they rent or buy a home in a multi-storey building;
- implement administrative monetary penalties in order to strengthen TSSA's enforcement of elevator safety and maintenance requirements;
- create future standards for elevator repair timelines;
- and
- designate an appropriate regulator to enforce those standards.

This is an unprecedented step that will enable our government to make evidence-based decisions when dealing with the issue of elevator availability. This will also allow those living with mobility challenges, elderly people, expecting mothers, those with young children and other vulnerable populations to make better-informed decisions about where they choose to live.

For those populations, the loss of elevator service can be devastating. We often hear stories of those with disabilities and those with mobility challenges becoming prisoners in their own homes due to elevator breakdowns and slow repair times. Many are forced to incur unforeseen costs associated with locating and paying for alternative accommodation in the event of elevators ceasing to function. For many with health issues, the lack of elevator availability can represent a significant health and safety risk.

With the growing number of multi-level residential buildings being built in the province, this is a problem that needs to be addressed. As the minister mentioned the other day, so many of our high-rise residences have 40 and sometimes 50-plus floors. Climbing 50 flights of stairs is not an accessible or a reasonable ask for Ontarians to do. People should not have to worry about how to get to their homes from their lobby. This should be a quick and easy process.

In March 2017, MPP Dong introduced private member's Bill 109, the Reliable Elevators Act. MPP Dong's bill received second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. It is for this reason that our government requested the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, or TSSA, to study the state of elevator availability in Ontario and come up with solutions.

The TSSA, in turn, commissioned an independent study, which was led by the Honourable John Douglas Cunningham, to develop a report identifying key challenges and proposing solutions. Justice Cunningham's report outlined 19 recommendations aimed at improving elevator availability. We are planning to take action on all 19 recommendations outlined in the report.

Many of the main points of MPP Dong's bill, Bill 109, are addressed in this bill. I would like to thank MPP Dong for his work in making elevator availability an issue on Ontarians' radar.

This bill is also targeted at improving availability of elevators in multi-storey residential buildings and long-term-care and retirement homes across Ontario. This would subsequently improve the lives of those living in multi-storey residential buildings, particularly those with mobility issues.

In addition to this proposed bill, our elevator availability action plan would help elevator owners to negotiate better maintenance contracts through an education and outreach campaign, improve elevator access for our first responders in case of emergencies, create new standards for new buildings to ensure they have enough elevators to serve residents, and address the labour supply of elevator mechanics through consultations to determine options to meet labour market demands.

We've heard loud and clear that elevator availability is an important and complex issue, with no single solution. We are committed to collect the data and fully assess the costs required to develop an elevator timeline repair standard. We need to make sure we do this right.

We're also working to reduce elevator breakdowns by developing new preventive maintenance requirements and expanding enforcement tools. This is significant when you consider that in Ontario, there are almost 20,000 passenger elevators across more than 10,000 residential buildings, long-term-care and retirement homes. We intend for TSSA to begin collecting elevator outage data in early 2019, should legislative amendments pass and associated regulations be made. The TSSA would also have the authority to issue administrative monetary penalties, starting that same year.

On that note, I'd like to take a minute to acknowledge MPP Potts and MPP Dong, who had private members' bills on consumer reporting and elevator availability, respectively. These two champions of consumer rights are joined by MPP Yvan Baker in continuously challenging this government to never wane in terms of consumer protections. This bill is drafted in response to their private members' bills, and their work on these files should be commended.

I would also like to note this government's willingness to listen to its caucus and to the concerns that we have collectively raised on behalf of our constituents. The government and this Premier are clearly willing to listen and are listening to concerns from across the province, and I want to thank them for that.

I would like now to touch on the consumer credit reporting history.

Our government is focused on building a fair, safe and informed marketplace for Ontario consumers. If passed, this legislation would be added to an already impressive list of actions taken by this government to ensure that Ontario's consumers are being protected. Last year, we passed Bill 59, the Putting Consumers First Act, which introduced vital consumer protections in the areas of home inspections, door-to-door sales and payday lenders. We also passed Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, which protects consumers when they travel, when they purchase tickets to a concert or a

sporting event, and when they purchase a home or have a new home constructed.

Unfortunately, the opposition decided that protecting Ontario's consumers was not a priority for them, and chose to vote against these measures.

Right now, there isn't a level playing field when it comes to consumer reporting agencies' handling of personal data. Ontarians were not being given adequate access to their information, or the ability to ensure that their information was being protected.

If passed by the Legislature, this legislation will provide stronger consumer protection tools by giving consumers easier access to their own credit information. This bill will, if passed, give consumers greater electronic access, free of charge, twice a year, to their own credit history, including any credit history reports and scores that were shared with potential creditors over the past 12 months. The bill would also give consumers the option of putting in place a security freeze that would prevent agencies from disclosing their credit information to a third party. The changes would give consumers more access and control over their own information and may help reduce the harm of identity theft.

Mr. Speaker, times are changing. More and more services are accessible online, and it is increasingly the means by which most Ontarians prefer to receive their services. That is why, if passed, this legislation would enable those who choose to view their credit report online to do so. Again, they can view their report online for free.

If passed, we will consult with consumer reporting agencies as well as businesses that use the services of these agencies, to inform the development of regulations needed to implement the legislative changes to develop without incurring unintended consequences.

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Our proposed amendments would create three major changes.

When requested by a consumer, a credit reporting agency would have to provide consumers with their credit history and credit score electronically at least twice a year. They would not be allowed to charge a fee for this.

The agencies would have to provide, as part of a consumer's report, any scores given to third parties within the past 12 months. This will help a consumer to understand the information an agency has provided to a creditor.

Agencies would also have to give consumers the option to put in place, suspend or cancel a security freeze that would prevent agencies from disclosing information.

I should also note that my colleague the MPP from Beaches–East York, Arthur Potts, proposed many of these changes in his private member's bill last fall.

If passed, Ontario would have the strongest and most transparent rules in Canada over how consumer reporting agencies share your credit information.

We understand that this bill would mean changes to the way consumer reporting agencies operate. They are

not decisions we've made lightly. We know that the information shared by these agencies trickles down to all sectors of the economy.

In particular, we know that many of the registered reporting agencies are small businesses. We want to make sure that consumers are protected without creating an undue burden on businesses, especially small enterprises. This would be a key factor in specifying the agencies that would be required to comply with the new rules. This is why our government has committed to consulting broadly with stakeholders and the public to ensure that we get this right.

Currently, the Consumer Reporting Act gives consumers free access to their consumer report but does not specify a timeline for the agencies to provide it, or electronic access. It does not require scores to be provided to consumers. It does not provide consumers the right to put a security freeze on their information. This government believes that consumers deserve greater access to information held by agencies and more control over how that information is shared.

The changes, if passed by the Legislature, would give consumers greater electronic access, free of charge, to their own consumer credit report; a consumer score to be provided upon their request up to twice a year, including any consumer scores that were shared with third parties, such as potential creditors, over the past 12 months; and the option of putting in place a security freeze that would prevent agencies from disclosing their credit information, subject to some exceptions which could be set out in regulations.

The proposed changes offer significant benefits to consumers. Consumers would have greater access to their credit information and be more able to identify their credit standing and any fraudulent activity on their accounts.

Consumers would also be able to place a security freeze on their information. A security freeze prevents third parties—for example, a potential creditor—from accessing a consumer's credit information unless the freeze is suspended or cancelled by the consumer. Security freezes are currently a consumer option across the United States but not here in Ontario.

A freeze may help victims or potential victims of identity theft protect their information. This is why the ministry is proposing to require certain consumer reporting agencies to place a security freeze on an account at the request of the consumer. A security freeze can help diminish the harm caused by identity theft. If you believe your identity has been stolen, a freeze could help prevent someone from opening accounts, like credit cards or lines of credit, in your name.

The proposal includes regulation-making authority to determine fees for security freezes, which could set out requirements to provide freezes for free, following a breach.

A freeze could go further than alerts, which are already part of the act. A security alert is an optional service that consumers can use that requires agencies to

warn potential creditors to verify an applicant's identity. It can be a useful tool if you believe that your identity has been compromised, but it does not necessarily prevent a potential creditor from getting information. This is another area where we would want to get detailed feedback from stakeholders so we can be sure to avoid unintended consequences.

In the past, consumers have highlighted concerns that they have with credit reporting agencies. As stated by the minister the other day, over the past three years there were over 2,000 complaints, incidents and inquiries made to the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services regarding the Consumer Reporting Act. Complaints about consumer reporting are among the top 10 common complaints that the ministry receives. The most frequent issues about consumer reporting agencies are incorrect information, wrong individual, and a prohibited practice or a missing requirement. This is part of why this legislation, if passed, will shift the burden from the individual to the credit reporting agency to prove the information is correct. This will protect consumers by ensuring their records are accurate and make it easier for them to correct the record.

The government's intent is to capture only the largest agencies, as they deal with the most consumer files and have the broadest reach. We want to ensure that the amendments would balance consumer protection and red tape for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. Speaker, I think consumers deserve to have more control over their credit information and that agencies should be more transparent with all of us. Therefore, I conclude by reiterating Minister MacCharles: Our government's record when it comes to protecting the consumer rights of Ontarians is unparalleled. In the last year alone we have moved to enhance protections in terms of home inspections, door-to-door sales, payday lending, new home construction, purchasing a new home, living in a condo, travelling and ticket sales.

This bill, if passed, would join this impressive list and set Ontario apart from all others in terms of our record on consumer protections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure listening to this debate this afternoon. It's quite interesting how the Liberals always forget to talk about certain elements of their legislation. On this one, I want to zero in on the administrative monetary penalties that are included in Bill 8 for the TSSA.

Just for everybody's information, the TSSA is a body created by this Legislature. It's a separate corporation. It is not owned by the government, but it has the exclusive authority to create its own customers and to generate bills and expenses for those customers. They have the weight of law behind that authority.

If you go to section 32.1, they have a new administrative penalty for the TSSA against their customers. The assessor, if satisfied the person has contravened or is

contravening the law, may impose an administrative penalty. The administrative penalty is payable to that same corporation that launches the penalty. That penalty cannot be more than \$10,000.

However, there really is no defence against administrative monetary penalties. If you go to subsection (7) on that:

"An order made under subsection (1) imposing an administrative penalty against a person applies even if,

"(a) the person took all reasonable steps to prevent the contravention on which the order is based; or

"(b) at the time of the contravention, the person had an honest and reasonable belief in a mistaken set of facts that, if true, would have rendered the contravention innocent."

So regardless, the person is guilty and must pay to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: You can be forgiven if you have lost track of this very stimulating debate on the bill that's entitled—the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards Safety Act, 2000, which was amended under Bill 8, having to do with consumer reports. The interesting thing about this piece of legislation is that the general public is generally hungry to have transparency around consumer reporting and the disclosure of those products. One would, of course, understand how important it is to know about the safety records and safety patterns having to do with elevators.

1540

I remember when this bill first came to the floor of the Legislature. Given the height and the density of the way we are growing in the province of Ontario, one has genuine concerns about the integrity of the disclosure process from a consumer perspective and a safety perspective. I think that we are somewhere in the middle on this act. There is no doubt that there was a need to update and modify the existing rules respecting disclosure of consumer reports, and also from the assessor, who is appointed by the corporation, being allowed to impose an administrative penalty on a person if the assessor is satisfied that the person has contravened or is contravening a prescribed provision of the act. There are parts of this that, quite honestly, could have been handled quite well during regulations.

That said, the public at large is hungry for greater transparency and accountability with regard to the safety of our elevator systems, in the city of Toronto especially but also in areas like Kitchener-Waterloo, which is established as a good place to grow, and that means we're going up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It is such a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to add my voice to Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I represent perhaps the greatest riding—if not the greatest riding—in

this province, which is Davenport. Many people are choosing to live in Davenport because it's such a vibrant community.

With a lack of space to develop, what we're seeing is vertical development; so a lot of people living with elevators. One of the things that I often hear about is the frustration that residents feel, especially the elderly or those with disabilities, when the elevator is out of service. You'll often enter condos that have multiple, multiple storeys. They have three or four elevators. One of them is out of service, one of them is being used because someone is moving in—because people are moving into Davenport—and it becomes very difficult and very much a challenge.

I want to address the elevator piece here in this bill. I just want to remind people in Ontario that elevators are very safe, and this legislation does not, in any way, seek to address a safety issue in terms of elevator usage. What we are concerned with is the inconvenience and potential harm that residents experience when their elevators are out of service. Specifically, improved elevator availability would benefit people with health and mobility issues, as I just referred to, who can't use the stairs or have bad knees and are stranded when an elevator breaks down.

The goal of the action plan that is identified in this piece of legislation is to improve the availability of elevator service in multi-storey residences in Ontario. These improvements would also help residents of the multi-storey buildings to receive faster emergency services, such as paramedics, fire or police services, should there be an emergency in the building.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act, 2018. Certainly, from the perspective of the elevators—I think we have to find balance. We know that a lot of these elevators are old—it's harder to get parts—so imposing penalties that you can't really make practical are very challenging, Mr. Speaker. That's one thing we're going to make sure we speak about when we bring those amendments to the bill, to make sure that it's fair for all.

Obviously, safety has to be the most important component, but we also have to make sure that there's the reality of being able to do that rather than imposing fines that aren't practical.

Again, they've given a lot more power to the TSSA so that licensees have no idea on what standard they're even being inspected to. We've certainly heard that across the long-term-care sector, where they keep adding more. It's already the most highly regulated industry and ministry across our province. So whenever I hear that they're going to give someone unfettered access but they won't define what the standard is—we hear that over and over.

One of the things that I learned when I first got here is that we're supposed to be creating legislation that's very non-ambiguous. We want to make it as clear and concise to everyone as possible. When I read things like this

briefing and see that they have not even defined it, then it starts to make me nervous, especially when they start saying that they are going to give the TSSA the power to impose stiff monetary penalties on licensees and take away the right to appeal or even defend.

Mr. Speaker, I think you always want to be working with an industry. You want to be working with the stakeholders at the front, understand their world and then try to find a middle ground that we can actually all abide by. In this case, it seems to me that the TSSA becomes policeman and jury, and this is simply not acceptable. We need to go back to industry. We need to make sure—certainly you can read the headlines and say, “Who wouldn't want to make this safer?” All of us, of course, want to make that safer, but we want legislation that is actually practical and is going to be of benefit to both the consumer and the companies and the technicians providing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Brampton West to respond.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to begin by thanking the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Kitchener–Waterloo, Davenport, and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments. Elevator availability and the subject of elevators are becoming an increasingly important topic, especially in light of the surge in condominium developments. I think Ontarians deserve consumer protection in terms of when the subject arises about elevator availability. They need to know how reliable the elevator service is in a building where they might be thinking of renting or buying.

But since this subject is sort of a new study, we need to do some data collection to make a plan in terms of determining what the right course of action would be if elevator ability is not good, or if it's taking an excessive length of time for an elevator to be repaired, because it's obviously very, very challenging for the people who are most vulnerable—our seniors, people with disabilities, expectant mothers, mothers with small children—to go up and down the stairs. It can often have a devastating effect on someone's life if they don't have the accessibility to be mobile from their home, or to go to work or do whatever needs to be done.

As well, just a bit on credit reporting: The focus has shifted universally to online or email access for not only credit reports, but other information that we rely on—more on this in future debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 8?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today and to speak on the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act. Basically our focus is on elevators and credit reporting—people's credit scores and that sort of thing.

First of all, we'll touch a little bit on elevators, because we're hearing that there's basically a shortage of elevator technicians, certainly in the GTA and possibly across the province. I think elevators are actually getting

more complicated, sort of like cars. We're now seeing computerized elevators. I've seen some pretty fancy-looking glass screens where it's projected onto it, and I can just imagine that while these elevators are very nice—some of them downtown, we know, go very quickly when they jump over a whole bunch of floors, with different elevators for different parts of the building.

But the more complicated you make something, just like a car, it's more things that can break and more things that need fixing, and then a higher level of expertise, obviously, to fix them. We might have handy people in our family to fix something—maybe sometimes they fix things that we should be calling in an expert for—but we all try to do our part to fix little things on our own and to learn as we fix small things. But obviously an elevator is such a dangerous piece of equipment, and complicated, and I'm sure that it's dangerous for the people who are working on it, as well.

We are hearing that people who have accessibility issues—a woman who is pregnant or a family with young children. I'm just thinking, Mr. Speaker, about if you show up at your building and you're on the 15th floor and you have groceries to bring up. It's hard enough to walk on the steps, but it's impossible—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's the worst. Brutal.

1550

Mrs. Gila Martow: The member opposite, from the government, is agreeing with me. It's absolutely impossible if you have to bring anything to make it up the steps. In this building, we have only about four floors and the elevators go down fairly often. We manage on the four floors. Mr. Speaker, you've been through it more times than I have, I'm sure. But we see those skyscrapers, I think we can call them, downtown, all the condo construction, and we cannot continue to build condos in the great city of Toronto if we don't have enough elevator technicians to do the repairs.

I'm going to switch over a little bit to talk about credit scores because I think that a lot of times people aren't really aware of their credit rating until maybe it's time to get a mortgage or things like that. They're not quite aware of what it all means until they have a problem, unfortunately. People might sometimes start a business with somebody, or marry or move in with somebody, and not be aware of that person's credit history, and it can be problematic. They wished they would have known, of course, afterwards.

We see that if this bill becomes law, people will be able to get a credit file disclosure for credit reporting agencies just by giving a request in writing and providing a photocopy of their ID. I think we can all agree that consumers should have the right to access their own information and be able to inquire if they're worried about fraud. I think that identity theft is a big concern. I think security in general is a big concern. We're in government and we should have a better understanding and be able to convey to our constituents how important—with passwords and online banking, how careful they have to be. Maybe people have to be a little more proactive.

I want to give a shout-out to my colleague from Nipissing who put forward a private member's bill that the government actually adopted, through the Ministry of Education, to create a better program in our high schools to teach financial literacy so that our students should have a better understanding of what it means to pay a credit card, credit card debt, and their credit scores.

You know, from a woman's perspective, I just want to mention that it used to be a challenge when oftentimes the men would be taking care of financial matters—I'm sure that sometimes it's still the case in many of our constituencies, especially with older seniors—and the husband would die, and the wife would have no idea of the financial health of the household. She might not have her name even listed on bank accounts or credit cards, and it could be a real struggle if she has to move and change a mortgage, or renew a mortgage, if she wasn't listed in the first place. What can we do to warn people to start building their financial profile and ensure that they have that credit rating when they need it?

We've all heard of students who go to university and they're offered—there's a booth there encouraging them to get a credit card. On the one hand, I don't mind students getting credit cards, because it's good they're developing their credit history, but on the other hand, I'm concerned about them getting a credit card if they're not really understanding the problems and the repercussions if the debt gets away from them.

Relevant data and taking a reasonable look at people's individual credit—banks have to use this data when they consider an application for a house or a loan, but what this bill does is it establishes the minister's power to exclude certain data from the credit score calculation. I'm just left wondering if Ontario is going to have different rules than other provinces or other jurisdictions in North America or the world. Well, that could be problematic because then banks, especially now that it's a global economy—international banking and international businesses—it might put some of our business people at a bit of a disadvantage if international banks or other provinces can't get the same credit information that they can in other jurisdictions. It's a question of standardization and what are the unintended consequences when we pass legislation here. Are we possibly making things easier in one aspect but creating difficulties and uncertainty as well?

We saw there was a recent breach—many recent breaches, actually, but I wanted to highlight the Equifax one and just how sensitive this issue can be when there's a breach of consumer data, and the absolute need for better security.

I think that, too often, when you can't see things, you assume that it's not a problem and not an issue. But we all know that behind the scenes—we see a fancy website, and it looks like it's done very professionally, but it doesn't mean that there is the security behind the scenes that is supporting that website. If we're giving credit card information or any kind of personal information, how is that information being processed? Who is able to see that information? Is that information being stored?

Mr. Speaker, since you're with my caucus, I'm sure you remember that we just recently had a leadership race, and it was a concern for many people who had to upload their driver's licence or personal information—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The Speaker is non-partisan.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Oh, the Speaker is independent, of course.

But it's an issue that I think that everybody in the House, from all parties, became aware of, that when we were trying to verify people's memberships—which I think was a fair thing to do—some people were very reluctant to give their driver's licence or to give their personal information in order to verify their membership. It was done during the winter, so of course it was challenging to not make people drive, and they didn't want to show—we couldn't do it by having people drive and actually show their driver's licence. We did it online, and that became a challenge in itself. People were concerned: "Is this information going to be stored or saved? What is going to be done with the information?" We did our best to reassure our members in each of our ridings.

I'm the critic for the PC caucus for children, youth and families. We went through Bill 89 about a year ago. During committee hearings on Bill 89, we heard from many people who were concerned about financial disclosure and personal information for personal histories in our social welfare system, and what's being done with that information. Especially, children's aid societies were concerned about going onto the CPIN, which is the Child Protection Information Network, and putting personal information into a government database. Many people were very concerned about how this was going to be inputted, and who was going to have access to that information.

Then we heard from the youth who had aged out of care. They were very concerned that their personal information, once they've aged out of care, was going to be available to too many people and too many agencies in the province of Ontario.

There were people who were more from the security, and the financial security experts, who came and spoke to the committee and said that they were very worried about privacy. Specifically they were referring to the security not just between agencies, but the public—people being able to log into the system who shouldn't have access to this information. The government kind of said, "Well, we're doing our thorough due diligence, and we are going to make sure that CPIN is secure."

The problem came when these agencies had to upload their data to CPIN. The government may have created security for CPIN itself, but once the data was being uploaded to CPIN, there was this no man's land of no security. You might have data that is secure, and other data that is secure, but the system of uploading the data from one system to another was not at all secure.

The government basically seemed to take the position, when I questioned the minister many months ago, that it's not their responsibility. It was their responsibility to make sure that CPIN itself was secure, and I guess that

they felt they didn't have to take the responsibility for the data being uploaded to CPIN. I beg to differ. I think we were all warned.

It became a problem because, just this past February, two children's aid societies, the CAS of Oxford county, and Family and Child Services of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, were both victims of ransomware. When? When they were transferring their data up to CPIN.

Again, it's a little bit of everything. It's a little bit of people working in information technology who may have limited expertise in what they are achieving. They are perfectly qualified for the work they're doing, but again, do we have that expertise of security, to ensure that they are understanding all of the dangers of what they are about to do, and how to help them protect themselves from any data breaches?

1600

Just last week, the former chief of staff to the former Premier had difficulties because he got involved in data and IT and security and deleting emails, and the question partly becomes, who knew what and who really had the strong understanding of how to retrieve data and how important data is? And whose responsibility is it that we safeguard government documents—that's part of it—but again the taxpayers of Ontario, the residents of Ontario, to safeguard their valuable information in terms of health information, in terms of employment, in terms of any dealings that they've had with the government? It's a big responsibility that we undertake when we represent the people of Ontario, and I think we need to take that responsibility a little more seriously, Mr. Speaker, because we're in an age of technology now. I think that we've all become attached to our devices and we all have our passwords.

I just had a discussion this morning with one of my staff about how he automatically changes passwords every three months, as you're supposed to do. I hope people are being very careful. It's for our Google documents that we change our passwords. He's always changing the alarm code on the constituency office. This is to be secure, and I understand why he's doing it, and I understand that some of the things aren't things that I normally log into, so it doesn't seem so important for me to be aware. But every now and then I get sort of caught with all these passwords and coming up with codes to save them, because it just becomes impossible. We're told not to use the same passwords for different things. All these things are supposed to make our lives easier, including credit cards and debit cards, all these kinds of things, but then they make our lives more complicated. So I'm just suggesting that we really do need to maybe have a better understanding and to prioritize people's valuable information.

I just wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, that my office—as did, I'm sure, many offices here—got a communication from TransUnion, which is a credit agency. They're a major player in the industry, and they complained about not being consulted on this piece of legislation. After all this time in government, and now as

another term is ending, it's kind of surprising when you hear from stakeholders who tell us that they weren't consulted on pieces of legislation. I'm just going to quote from that letter a little bit. It says, "Bill 8 does not reflect an accurate understanding of either the credit industry or how credit scores are utilized by the financial services industry." So there was almost no interaction, I guess, with the ministry on much of the bill. The bill doesn't even address how credit freezes are going to be implemented. I know that this organization wrote to the minister outlining these concerns but has yet to see the concerns addressed.

That's problematic. I think we all know that when we are working in the political world, if you say one thing that is factually incorrect, even though the other 20 or 30 or 40 things that you say were absolutely bang on, factually correct, it puts the idea in the public's mind that you really don't know what you're talking about because that one thing is not factually correct.

So when I hear that somebody who should be consulted isn't consulted, when that person said they raised concerns and the concerns weren't addressed, then it just leaves you to have that sort of bad feeling about other aspects as well. It's a question of, is the bill flawed, and should consumers—and can consumers—be able to pick and choose which of their data is going to be released to creditors? I think we all want to do what we can here in government to ensure that people can have proper credit scores and protect themselves. We don't want to hear that somebody isn't able to get a mortgage or a business loan because of problems with their credit scores that aren't fair.

We've heard a little bit already about the power of TSSA, which is the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. There are some people who have spoken and said that they are concerned about the TSSA becoming judge and jury when handling appeals, that there aren't very clear criteria right now for penalties and that the TSSA has expanded power to levy fines. What we've seen is bureaucracy that's growing out of control.

Here we have a world where everything is online and people can do so much, and the fact is, we think there should be less bureaucracy. I just renewed, for the first time with ServiceOntario yesterday, my car registration permits. This is the first time that I haven't actually had to go into ServiceOntario to get my sticker. Supposedly, they're going to mail it. I can get back to you and let you know if I get it in a week, as they say. It was such a great website, I actually tweeted about it. It was so well done and so easy. I want to compliment whoever designed the website, because the font was big. A lot of times you have a big, white screen and the font is quite tiny. It was very easy to use and really a pleasure. They already had the information from Drive Clean that I did at Canadian Tire. That was already uploaded on the system.

So we know that with all of this new technology and apps and things like that, there should be less bureaucracy in government, because the people can do so much themselves. They don't have to call somebody; they

don't have to pick up a pen and paper and write somebody. They can get the information themselves. It's up to us to reduce the costs, to reduce the bureaucracy and to make things technically easier to access for people. We're seeing an older and older demographic on computers able to access information on their own.

I just wanted to mention, again, people not taking care of bills and credit cards on their own, and then having their partner or their spouse pass away—or leave them, or they leave them—and finding themselves sort of floundering. I would really urge everybody to check into whether or not they are part of the account, or they just have a credit card but it's somebody else's account, in which case, are they really building up their own credit score? A lot of people might think they have a credit card, but do you have a credit card account? If you have a bank account in your name that's not a joint account, do you have a beneficiary for that account? A lot of people don't bother to put a beneficiary for their RRSP or their tax-free savings account or their bank accounts.

These are all very important things. It really is important for us to share that information somehow with our constituents, and to do that PR work that we all do. I know we do public awareness campaigns on so many things, but I think that this is sometimes a tough topic when people come into our constituency offices to meet with us. You don't want to ask people, "Are you trying to pay down your credit card debt?" Or, if they have too much credit card debt, "Have you considered going into your bank to speak about a personal loan, which is a much lower interest rate and will make it that much easier for you to get out of debt?"

I really appreciate the time that I had to say a few words on this topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I do not know if it's true or not, but somebody told me recently that the first elevators in Ontario were actually installed in this building. I think that's within the realm of possibility, but I have yet to confirm that. I do know that sometimes when you get in the elevator in this building, it doesn't always go where you want it to go, and sometimes it takes several minutes longer than you would expect. I remember a year or so ago I got an email from the member from Welland that said, "I'm on my way to question period. I've got question two, but I may not make it because I'm stuck in an elevator, so somebody may have to ask my question at question period." Those are scary things, Speaker.

I also remember—what was it, 14 years and eight months ago, something like that—the blackout in 2003, where people were stuck on elevators for a long time. Many lasting friendships came out of that. I remember, as a reporter at the CBC in Windsor at the time, I was watching the lights in Detroit. As darkness descended, there were a few lights left on by a generator, but otherwise, the skyline of Detroit was very dark that night. I have heard since then that, actually, some people that met on the elevators 14 years ago now have teenagers. Those

relationships were forged by meeting and spending time in an elevator together before they could be rescued.

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I think the importance of having elevators that work is essential. The more we can do to make that happen, the better. We all read the headlines last summer, where too many seniors were caught in elevators and just couldn't get down and had to be helped.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, it's good to see you.

It's of course, as usual, my pleasure to spend a couple of minutes to comment on the member from Thornhill.

The bill is about credit reporting and, of course, elevators, and I'm going to talk about elevators a bit.

Where I come from—yes, we do have elevators. We do have some buildings that are more than one or two storeys—not very tall skyscrapers like we have here in Toronto. I would say probably the tallest building is maybe 10 or 12 storeys, in Cobourg and Port Hope. I know that in my hometown of Brighton, where I live, we have a bylaw that because the fire department is not equipped, they cannot be any more than three storeys high, and normally they don't have an elevator.

Talking about elevators: Some of these buildings that I have—they're mostly occupied by seniors. We find that out during election time, Speaker, as you know, as we go knocking on doors.

I have no idea, if the elevator is not working, even from the third, fourth or fifth storey, how these seniors could ever get out to go to the store, to go to the doctor or to go and visit a friend. They would become almost like shut-ins. That's the worst thing, I think, that we can do.

To put a regime in place to try to prevent some of these circumstances, even in small communities like mine, where we don't have big elevators—I think that's important.

I know I'm running out of time, but briefly, on consumer credit reporting: We talk about credit identity. Anything we can do in the credit reporting business to protect the consumer is always a plus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to stand up and talk about this bill. I think I'm going to talk mostly about the TSSA in my two minutes.

There's one line in here that says that the inspector's discretion is so far-reaching that licensees have no idea what standard they are being inspected to and which additional requirements an unqualified inspector could impose on a licensee.

I speak to the member from Thornhill different times. She's certainly raised in an urban environment, and I'm raised in a rural environment. It's interesting to compare the two. I do know that we've had issues with the TSSA in the rural environment, with our people doing things that they believe are right and then finding out, when an

inspector comes along, because they have these discretionary powers, that they have to do things over again.

A perfect example was my propane furnace that I installed a couple of years ago, put in by a licensed technician. It worked properly. We had a few issues with it a year ago. I couldn't reach this guy, so I got another fellow in. He said it was hooked up improperly, although TSSA had come in and done an inspection on the installation of it. Yet this fellow said that there were some improper things done. It leaves me thinking: Just exactly who knows what in this business?

Fortunately, nothing happened. It was just a matter of a fitting not being put in the proper place.

I think we have to be aware of these types of things. Certainly people who are in these businesses do have issues with one inspector having one opinion and one inspector having another.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and today to comment on An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

What strikes me as odd is that we're still actually debating the budget, and I wonder who decides what gets put in what bill, because you would think that some of these things could have been put in the budget bill. I would like to see the process. But there are some very important issues in this bill. Even the two things in the bill itself: consumer reporting for credit scores and the safety of elevators—something doesn't fit, Speaker.

You wonder why the public loses interest in the political process? Because even when the government puts forward legislation—if we can't even really figure out why these two things are bundled together, how is the public supposed to understand it? I think the public could fully understand that elevators need to be safe, but how that works in with credit scores is a bit beyond me.

It's interesting. I've heard quite a few members on the Conservative side talk about the problems with the TSSA. If memory serves me correctly, they were the government who implemented the TSSA, a body that is given powers equal to the government's, yet isn't controlled by the government and is kind of semi-privatized. They're the ones who created this monster, and yet they stand here and complain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thornhill has two minutes.

Mrs. Gila Martow: The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane just made a couple of good points—that the government could have just added this bill as part of the budget. But then it would deny us the opportunity to stand up and speak on some of these interesting topics with a focus on them, of course.

What I wanted to mention was that part of what keeps coming up in researching this bill, in discussions and in newspaper articles is that we have a shortage of elevator technicians. What we're left to wonder is: Why aren't we doing more as a government to ensure that our youth are

getting trained for the jobs of the future—and the jobs that we need in the present, in fact—and what more can we do to encourage them? I'm wondering if we need to have more trades, the way I did when I was in high school. I still remember doing electrical work and drilling through glass to make a lamp and running the wires and learning—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: This was in high school?

Mrs. Gila Martow: This was in my high school. We learned how to change electrical outlets and put—I don't know what the little caps are that you put on the wires, but learning to do that and twist the wires. I remember doing that. Some people were actually quite talented at the woodworking part of it, and maybe it encouraged people to go into a trade like that.

We know the salaries are quite good these days for people who work with their hands. We don't have enough desk jobs for everybody. I think a lot of people are sorry when they set their sights on some kind of desk job and realize, as they get older, how good they were with their hands. Maybe it's something that we need to have a discussion about on another day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to stand in the House and bring some of the concerns and thoughts of the people of Kitchener–Waterloo to the Ontario Legislature.

Today, of course, we're debating Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000. I will say that, when this bill first came to the Legislature, I went through a bit of a history of how one of my first jobs was actually at Otis Elevators, just down over here on McCaul Street. It was the late 1980s, early 1990s. It was a little bit of a Mad Men sort of scene, for the most part. I got a sense of the sector and of the industry and how it operated—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The ups and downs.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, the ups and downs of the elevator—thank you very much. As always, a little humour from the back row.

I have to say, though, this was in an era when Toronto—the downtown core—was really shooting up. Now we've seen that pattern of growth throughout the province because of the good-places-to-grow legislation and because of the greenbelt. You find jurisdictions across this province who are really planning their cities, their townships—and their villages, even—very differently.

1620

That's very true of Waterloo region. We were designated as a good place to grow. We have a hard line around the region, which I believe the regional government has done a very good job of protecting, and that has changed the way we plan for the citizens of Waterloo region.

That hard line is actually a very political line. I know you'll know that the home builders were here last week, and they feel that perhaps it's just an arbitrary line. But I do think that there's a good, strong rationale for

developing responsibly in a very sustainable way. When we sprawl out, there is a cost to that kind of growth, and it's not one that I am particularly supportive of.

As we intensify, and as the communities and the neighbourhoods that we develop through permissions and policies—the role of the elevator becomes very important within the context of those planning goals.

I do also want to address—I haven't heard it yet today—that the importance of elevators around accessibility is incredibly important. I think one of the first lessons for me came when I was a new mother here in Toronto, and how inaccessible places were—like subways, even, at that time. This was 1998, so it's quite some time ago—20 years ago.

But I will never forget that in the city of Toronto election, John Tory, when he first ran, actually visited one of the low-income housing projects, and their elevator in that complex had been out for two months. There were people within that building who had accessibility issues, who were disabled. He went and he met with those folks, with this particular family, and he did a press conference shortly after that and was very emotional. He was crying and said that if he became mayor, he would deal with these issues.

You have to sometimes, as a politician, see it firsthand, to see, when accessibility is denied, how that impacts the quality of people's lives.

We do have, of course, the AODA in the province of Ontario—I'm always doing this circle back to the elevator conversation—but the AODA has had some limited success, only in the fact that there are businesses and organizations who don't have the funds to go that extra distance and to put in quality accessibility measures.

Elevators are very expensive to put in, I must tell you. They're huge capital costs, especially for the not-for-profit sector. So I do find it interesting that elevator accessibility and availability is now—there are only 11 more days of this session left, of this Parliament, and here we are, talking about elevators and the TSSA.

Just to be clear, the bill amends the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, and there's an explanatory note which, in some regards, isn't that well explained.

But it was interesting, because as you read through this piece of legislation—the credit scores really struck me as very topical. You will see commercials on a regular basis now. There's a whole new generation who have recognized that building up your credit is actually very important, especially when you, as a first-time homebuyer, seek that first-time mortgage. If you've missed bills, if you haven't made payments, there is this scoring system, which should be accessible to you as a consumer. I think that this is obviously a measure that we fully support as part of Bill 8. Consumers should be able to access their own credit information. This is not a stretch; it's quite real.

Also, the threat of those who steal your identity and steal your personal financial information—the protection

of that information has never been more topical, I think. We've seen several breaches around personal information, if you've been following the Facebook and privacy strategies that they have not upheld, those guidelines that they have not upheld. It's very worrisome to people in the province of Ontario. There's a whole new generation who have grown up in this culture of sharing everything: when they go on vacation and how much money they spent at this store, and the fact that there is an Internet of things and organizations and things like Facebook and Twitter and some of the other social media platforms that track your whereabouts, track your patterns as a consumer, so that that information can be bought and sold to other jurisdictions is really, truly alarming. I think we're going to have to spend some time in the education system educating a whole new generation that you shouldn't share every single thing about your life. I want to say that I'm also including politicians in this.

I was discussing this piece of legislation with some students in Waterloo—University of Waterloo students—and they were talking about their credit rating and how hard it is, one, to build up credit, especially with the state of the loans that they have and with the state of the work that they're able to access in the province of Ontario. It should not be a surprise to anyone in this House that the trend around employment is part-time, precarious, contract work. That actually is a barrier to saving money and to building up a strong sort of level of savings that you can actually leverage into future investments.

I was actually mentioning to them how this trend has become more and more prevalent across the province of Ontario and this made me think of the CodeRed report that came out last year. I think you'll remember it, Speaker. It said Ontario is the second-worst economy in Canada for younger generations. They specifically mention the home ownership piece. Home ownership is much harder. In 1976-80, it took five years of full-time work to save up for a 20% down payment on a home. In 2003 it took eight years. But today, after 15 years of a Liberal government, it takes 15-plus years, on average, to build up enough income, enough savings, enough credit scores to actually warrant securing a very large mortgage. In the city of Toronto or the greater GTA, it's almost impossible, Mr. Speaker, for this generation to save up \$200,000 for a down payment.

The integrity of these credit scores is important. We support having full access to those credit scores for young people across the province. But this is the connection piece to housing. Housing, of course, is one of the great stabilizers for our economy. When shelter becomes so expensive, when you spend over 50% of your take-home pay and your income on shelter, it leaves very little for you to actually build up your credit rating, build up some security for when your part-time, precarious, contract work becomes very unstable—which actually is something that we are tracking in the province of Ontario and is quite worrisome.

The other piece is about protecting your own financial information and credit information. The other end of the

spectrum would be the seniors across the province of Ontario. We did learn in another report, which I have somewhere, that there are now more seniors in the city of Toronto than there are children. So the demographics change the way we as legislators should implement legislation. I think that we have a responsibility, as those who are elected within our communities across the province, to watch for the trends, the demographic trends, the financial trends and the economic trends and then tailor legislation to that. It's very clear that, from a consumer protection perspective, seniors are becoming more vulnerable as banking systems become more technical, as social media becomes one of those ways that businesses, corporations and, yes, banks communicate with their customers. I think there's a responsibility that we have to ensure that credit information is readily available for those who own it, but that it's also protected from those who want access to it. When I look at seniors across this province, we could do more to protect their interests and certainly adapt to that demographic.

1630

The other issue around credit scores and, of course, building credit has to do with women across the province of Ontario. The previous speaker mentioned that there was a time and a place when many women across the province weren't working. In fact, 28% of the women in this province identify that they only work part-time because they can only find access to quality, affordable child care for part-time care. And so there's a direct correlation to women's economic success and prosperity and therefore their ability to save and build credit based on the policies that are currently in play.

Supporting women to have access to education or economic potential through job creation opportunities is really underpinned by those two things, housing and child care. We may have come a long way, baby, in this regard, but we've still got a long way to go to ensure that women reach their economic potential. That economic potential, I would argue, is very much connected to equality and closing that gender pay gap.

The issue around the TSSA and the expanded power that the TSSA has within Bill 8 has been mentioned by previous speakers. I guess I would compare it—because I've heard the same concerns around the transparency and the accountability of the TSSA—to Tarion. Tarion was another agency that was arm's length, that was meant to administer the new home warranty plan across the province, and also registered new home builders across the province. I can tell you that this has been one of those issues that I have consistently heard of across Kitchener-Waterloo and Waterloo region. But when I was finance critic, almost without fail, every budget cycle, every finance committee, whether it was in the northeast or south or west, the consumer advocacy groups took great issue and great exception at the powers that Tarion had and then the lack of follow-through for that agency to actually protect the consumers. These concerns were loud. I believe they are real. And even when the government had an opportunity to modernize

Tarion as a stand-alone agency, I think that those efforts were seriously watered down.

I think that we've heard the same concerns as some of the opposition members who have raised long-standing issues with the TSSA and who have raised a red flag, if you will, about expanded powers for the TSSA.

Now, one of the final issues that I want to address is elevator technicians, because 20 years ago—actually, now it's much longer; 25, 26 years ago—when I was at Otis elevators for that first job, I described that sort of—this was when people still smoked at their desks. There were still lots of cocktails at lunchtime. When I say that it was like the *Mad Men* show, the advertising show, I'm not exaggerating. I really thought that this was the world of business. I got a quick lesson as soon as I moved into the public sector, I can tell you—very much.

The lack of elevator technicians is directly connected to the lack of progress that we've made with regard to apprenticeships in the province of Ontario. There are a couple of contributing factors to why we find ourselves with a shortage, or very close to being a complete drop-off, because our skilled workers who are building Ontario up when those projects do come along are aging out. First of all, it's very physical work, many of these jobs, and so working until you are 70 is really a challenge.

The education system: This was an issue when I first became a trustee in 2003 and then was president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association up until 2012. We seem to have forgotten that we still need people to do the work. We're not going to be able to build a whole new economy by building a new app, for instance. Somewhere along the line, the value of the skilled trades has been lost, and we really need to have a concerted effort of fostering those positions.

We're making some progress on STEM, or STEAM now: science, technology, engineering, arts and math. Now we call it STEAM. We're making some progress in that regard to have more women come into those fields. The skilled trades are well-paid jobs, and we need everyone to be part of those new jobs, which are essentially, in some regards, very traditional but very technical.

The elevator technicians: Given the way that we are growing as a province, given some of the legislation and that we are going up, we need to have the technicians (1) to install and (2) to maintain, because the other side of the conversation and the equation is that once elevators become part of the culture of a building and you have 39 floors, walking up and down those stairs becomes a real challenge. And as mentioned, it's also an accessibility issue and a safety issue, Mr. Speaker. I'm incorporating that into availability, because if you don't have the workforce to install and to maintain elevators across this city and across this province, then it's very hard to improve accessibility and to address the safety of our institutions and our buildings.

I think that I will leave it there because I think I did a pretty good job of talking about a piece of legislation for 20 minutes, if I do say so myself. I look forward to the comments from the other members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: It's really a pleasure to be rising to discuss this legislation and the two aspects that it's speaking to. I will follow a little bit the same format in discussing first the fairness in dealing with consumer reporting agencies.

In a way, I think this piece of legislation is part of a larger trend in legislation around the world that seeks to empower consumers and to empower people to have better tools to deal with big data, the way in which large corporations are keeping data about people and distributing it and making money on it. The big trend is to ensure that people actually have access to the information that is collected about them and then are able to control it and to correct it if necessary. That's an important aspect of this legislation: to empower people to control the information that is kept about them and that is then sold or given to others.

Monsieur le Président, je pense qu'il est crucial de voir dans cette législation un reflet de notre société moderne qui doit donner les instruments nécessaires à tous les gens pour qu'ils puissent contrôler l'information que les compagnies obtiennent et gardent sur différents aspects de leurs vies.

Fair access to credit is certainly essential, but also it's the only way to fully participate in society. My colleague has mentioned getting housing, getting transportation, buying a car and investing in business. A credit rating will always be important for that. So I think the way in which we want to give the tools to consumers to protect the information about them, ensure that they protect themselves against identity theft by maybe using a security freeze—all of these, I think, are really important tools that we're going to give to people to deal with themselves and protect themselves in the current economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 8. Some comments on the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: She did a good job of going through and talking about the credit issues in the bill. It's something that affects each and every one of us in our ridings—credit disclosure.

1640

I always watch those commercials on TV, and it says, "Is your credit score stuck at 586 or 681?" I never heard anybody in Ontario talk about credit scores. I watch American TV. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh probably knows—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "What's in your wallet?"

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, "What's in your wallet?" I know what's usually in our wallet: It's the government. That's what's in our wallet, I always say when I see that TV show. It's Kathleen Wynne, the Premier, who is in my wallet.

To go back to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I do want to commend her. These credit file disclosures are

something that affects each and every one of us, especially if you're going to buy a home or even a car. I think it's important that people do know what their credit score is.

I never actually thought about credit scores. I didn't know until I heard these commercials about this: "Is your credit score stuck at 586?" I don't know what a good score is. Maybe the member from Windsor–Tecumseh can tell me. Is it 700 or 800?

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay. I don't know. The member from St. Catharines, he's probably got a perfect score, I'm sure.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He's been around long enough that I'm sure he's got a perfect score, like the Speaker himself, as well. I'm sure that our Speaker is probably in that same category. I'm sure there are a number of you in here. I'm always a day late and a dollar short when it comes to doing anything, usually, in my life. Anyway, that's another issue.

It certainly is well deserved and a long time coming. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to follow my good friend from Kitchener–Waterloo and the journey she took us on through discussion on this bill and intertwined it all and brought it all back together. We started out talking about data security, and then she took us to the Code Red housing report, which should really send some shivers down our spines when we think about the future for our sons and daughters and grandchildren, where they, in this day and age, would have to be working full-time and work about 15 years in order to secure enough money for a down payment in the housing market that we're in in Ontario right now.

She talked about the dangers of part-time, precarious contracts. It's not a rosy forecast, Speaker. She compared the TSSA to Tarion and all of the problems that we know have been at Tarion for many years.

I was especially pleased that she talked about the issues with the apprenticeship programs in Ontario, the lack of skilled tradespeople and the need for more women to think about enrolling in skilled trades.

We also talked about the faith that we put into our elevators, that we don't have enough parts for our elevators, that we don't have enough technicians for our elevators—enough trained technicians—to keep them operating. We do put a lot of faith in every elevator we step into, Speaker. It's a steel cage, held by steel cables intertwined on a pulley system to take us up and down. It's like going to the ATM and taking out \$200 and getting 10 twenties but not counting them. You just take for granted that you're going to get 10 twenties when you ask for \$200. When we step on an elevator, we take for granted that it's going to take us safely up or down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She did a great job in her 20 minutes. I would like to say that her speech was uplifting, but I might be accused of taking the opportunity to make a terrible pun. But I digress.

In all seriousness, we do depend and rely on elevators, and elevator availability is critical. About two years ago in my riding, we had an elevator in a building that had a large number of people who had disabilities. It wasn't a big building; it was about six storeys. About three or four times in that summer, it went out of service. And that's what they had. You can imagine, in a hot summer, what had to happen. People had to get out to appointments or people needed some urgent medical care. It was more than a real concern; it was, "We have to send over the fire department."

So I think the work of the member from Trinity–Spadina and the work inside this bill with regard to elevator availability and the TSSA—I don't think it's fair to make an analogy between Tarion and the TSSA. Their mandates are different. I've had some experience working with them on some things. With all outside agencies, we always get concerned about governance, but the mandate of the TSSA is specifically safety and ensuring that the standards that we expect for safety are met by those people who either do the repairs or deliver the services, and the engineers. They do things from boilers to amusement rides. It's a wide variety of things, so I don't think it's fair to make that analogy. I wanted to put that out there.

I also want to say that I believe that the credit measures in this bill are really important to protect people's information with regard to big data, and to give them information as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo can now respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources and the members from Sarnia–Lambton, Windsor–Tecumseh, and Ottawa South for their commentary on the 20 minutes on Bill 8.

I'm just going to go back to the credit rating and how important it is with regard to how women still struggle to establish credit ratings in the province of Ontario. My mom, Sheila, was telling me the story about how she got her credit in the 1960s. This was in the time period when salespeople would sell vacuum cleaners door to door. Do you remember the Electrolux? I guess this salesman once came into the apartment in Kingston, and he dumped a bunch of dirt on the floor, took out the vacuum cleaner and cleaned it up. She was really impressed. She had two small kids in the house, so she was probably really happy to have the company as well. Because she did the monthly payments through Electrolux, that's how her credit rating was established. So there was a time and a place—because they were not part of the workforce, that's how women generated their credit rating: making very small monthly payments.

The member from Ottawa South said it's not fair to compare the TSSA to Tarion. I was coming at it from a

consumer protection perspective. I think that I've heard consumer concerns with regard to both of those agencies. I don't in any way say that they do the same work, but those long-standing Tarion complaints are real, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to say to the Minister of Natural Resources that I totally believe there is a need around fairness of reporting of consumer and credit data. We should all have fair access to that information to protect ourselves, as consumers, to ensure that that data is real, but also to ensure that people aren't using it against us. The sale of that kind of data is a new emerging issue which we should be responding to, as legislators.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 8?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, the member for Barrie, and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: And member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes.

I am very pleased to have a few minutes to speak about Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act. I thought I would focus on some of the language around the credit reporting agency.

The member for Thornhill mentioned in her remarks that often we will see people in our constituency offices who come in with one problem, but as they speak for a while and describe to you the situation that they're in, you begin to realize that the real problem isn't what they asked you about. The real problem is that they've got themselves in an awful lot of debt. In Guelph, we would often refer somebody like that to Family Counselling and Support Services; they have a great debt counselling service there that we often refer our constituents to.

But what this bill would do is let people get at the information quickly about their actual credit report, because a lot of people really aren't aware of what credit reporting agencies are saying about them and what information is being released.

1650

This bill proposes amendments to the legislation such that, when requested by a consumer, a credit reporting agency would have to provide consumers with their credit history and credit score electronically—so you can email it back—at least twice a year. They would not be allowed to charge a fee for this. This is important, because if you're somebody who is already in trouble, the last thing in the world you need is for somebody to charge you money to figure out what the problem is and exactly what your status is.

Agencies would have to provide, as part of a consumer's report, any scores given to third parties within the past 12 months. That is, you can figure out who has been asking about you for the past 12 months. That's another thing of which we are all delightfully oblivious. People are looking at our credit history, and we have no idea who's asking questions and who's finding out information about us.

When you put this all together, it will help the consumer understand the information that the agency has and that they are providing to others about you.

Then there's the other aspect of this which allows a consumer to freeze the information, which means nobody can give it out; your credit is just frozen. That's really, really important, because another thing of which we are perhaps somewhat unaware is the frequency with which people's identities are stolen.

I know I had one employee in Guelph who, while using her credit card at a gas station, not once but twice had her credit card information stolen. Of course, when that happens, you suddenly find yourself presented with bills.

I know that when my son was going to university for a while down in the States, he had his identity stolen. While he certainly sorted that out almost literally a decade ago, every so often something slightly weird will happen, and he'll realize that it's some electronic footprint going back to that incident many, many years ago when his identity was stolen.

I was speaking to a constituent this week, and she had just discovered that somebody had rung up at least \$5,000 against her credit. Again, it was this issue of somebody having managed to steal her credit card identity, and she was unaware of it until she got a bill for \$5,000 in transactions that, of course, she knew nothing about.

The ability to freeze your credit rating, and to freeze that information which could be further used to compromise you until you sort the whole mess out is actually really, really important.

I think there are some items in this bill which are going to help consumers—and we're all consumers—tremendously as we navigate the world of what is electronically being passed on about us and we're not even aware.

I'm now going to turn it over to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: First of all, I want to start off by putting on the record some credit where credit is due. Where did this bill come from? The bill came from two private members' bills.

One was from the member for Trinity–Spadina, in whose constituency a lot of high-rises have been constructed over the last decade. He came in and was talking in caucus about this particular problem. He said, "We've got a real problem with the behaviour of elevator companies."

The other, from my good friend and colleague from Beaches–East York, is another private member's bill that came out of some of the problems that he had confronted with some of the people going into his constituency office.

Both of these were put together into this one particular bill, Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act.

Now, in continuing, when I lived out on the west coast and worked for a public relations firm there, one of the guys I played hockey with on the weekend, the other goaltender, was a guy who worked at a law firm just across the street from us on West Hastings Street. He had this jersey that some of their litigation guys had. It had a pair of law scales, and the motto of their law team was underneath it. The motto was, "Dull Is Profitable."

I remembered that because in looking at these two industries—consumer credit reporting and elevator maintenance—these are quintessentially dull industries that not too many people pay attention to. In so doing, not only are they both very profitable industries, but because nobody pays attention to them, you'll find that the business model is heavily skewed toward that small number of firms that completely dominate the marketplace.

When that happens, one of the things that you can do as a government, where what you're looking at is what we call an oligopoly—a small number of firms with a disproportionate share of the market—is to say, "We can restore some degree of order, fairness and equity to this particular market that may not exist because of the de facto behaviour of the participants in it, through legislation." That's what this does.

My colleague from Guelph explained some of the points with regard to both elevator availability and credit score reporting very eloquently, and earlier I was talking about credit score reporting as well.

What this bill does is to put in place a number of measures that prevent the vendors in those two marketplaces from making money coming and going. So, for example, what it says is, if as a consumer what you really want to have is your credit score, then the very people who aggregate your data—collect your data and turn around and make money by selling it to people from whom you would otherwise like to get a loan or gain credit—if you want to ask, "What data do you have on me?" and "Show me what you're showing them"—first of all, prior to this it wasn't very easy to get. Secondly, they would often charge you money for showing you what amounts to your own intellectual property. That's completely wrong. And that's one of the things that this bill does, and does very elegantly: to say that the information about you actually belongs to you. And, as it actually belongs to you, then whoever is the custodian of it—in this case, the credit reporting agency—that custodian has to share it with you.

So, in those senses, two dull but profitable businesses are, through this legislation, being called to account, and some degree of equity, transparency and fairness is being restored to a marketplace where the playing field had been tilted seriously against the people from whom the data comes, or the apartment dwellers who make up the marketplace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Next we have the member for Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm pleased to stand and speak today on Bill 8, Access to Consumer Credit Reports and

Elevator Availability Act. This bill, if passed, would amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, in order to create regulation-making authority to collect elevator outage data. I think it's very important that before we change things, we have the data to make sure that we're doing it properly.

We also wanted to ensure that information about elevator performance is published so that prospective residents can make better-informed decisions before they rent or buy a home in a multi-storey building. Even Barrie has a fair amount of multi-storey buildings now, and more are being built, particularly around the GO stations.

We are also implementing administrative monetary penalties in order to strengthen the TSSA's enforcement of elevator safety and maintenance requirements. This also will create future standards for elevator repair timelines and designate an appropriate regulator to enforce those standards.

In addition to this proposed bill, our elevator availability action plan would help elevator owners negotiate better maintenance contracts through an education and outreach campaign.

1700

It would improve the elevator access for first responders in the case of emergency. That's something that's very, very important. If it's a matter of life and death, you need that elevator to be available immediately.

It also would create new standards for new buildings to ensure that they have enough elevators to serve the residents and to address the labour supply of elevator mechanics through consultation to determine options to meet labour market demands. I know that colleges are looking into these kinds of courses to get the amount of people that we would need for this.

I also would like to thank my colleague and seatmate, the MPP for Trinity-Spadina, who proposed similar changes in his private member's bill, Bill 109, last spring. Many of the main points of Bill 109 are addressed in Bill 8, which is currently before the House, and part of the government's commitment to the elevator action plan.

We intend for the Technical Standards and Safety Authority to begin collecting elevator outage data, should legislative amendments pass and associated regulations be made. We also intend for the TSSA to have the authority to issue administrative monetary penalties for contraventions of prescribed provisions of the act and regulations starting in 2019. Once the important data and evidence is collected in 2019, we would provide more details on a proposed repair timeline standard and consult with stakeholders on those details. I anticipate that the changes, if passed, would allow for the creation of a repair timeline standard to start happening in late 2019, once enabling regulations, developed in consultation with all stakeholders, have been made.

The overall goal of this action plan is to improve the availability of elevator service in multi-storey residences in Ontario.

I myself live in a condo on University, and I'm on the 22nd floor. We had a fire alarm, and going down is a lot easier than hiking up those stairs. A couple of times, we've had to go down when the fire alarm rang. It's a long way down, and I'm not exactly a spring chicken.

Elevators in Ontario are very safe, and this legislation does not seek to address safety issues in terms of elevator usage. What we are concerned with is the inconvenience and potential harm that residents experience when their elevators are out of service.

That sometimes happens in our building. There are four elevators. As someone said earlier, one of them usually is locked because there are people moving in and out. The other one is for the club that built the condos on top of their club. So there are two for all 40-some floors. That is very difficult at high-usage times of the day or if there is any other problem.

Specifically, improved elevator availability would benefit people with health and mobility issues who can't use the stairs and are stranded when elevators break down.

I heard one of our colleagues talk about a person who basically could not go back to their home for four days. That should not happen. Hopefully, this bill will help to curtail that kind of problem.

Improvements in the availability of elevators would also help residents of multi-storey buildings to receive faster emergency service. This should be a high priority. There are a lot of people in my riding who have moved into condos and who are seniors. They have sold their homes, moved into condos and quite often have health issues and would need the availability for paramedics, fire and police services.

Proposed improvements in the action plan include better access for first responders through a proposed amendment to the Ontario Fire Code. The amendments would require elevator owners to notify local fire services when a firefighters' elevator is out of service for more than 24 hours. That seems reasonable and fair.

New reporting requirements on elevator services and availability, and an obligation on TSSA to make that information available to the public, would result in better transparency for the public regarding elevator availability and would ultimately inform a repair timeline standard.

Education and awareness for elevator owners and operators, involving the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, would support compliance with existing requirements for notice of service disruptions, encourage faster response and repairs by elevator owners, and improve access for users.

Administrative monetary penalties to motivate compliance with elevator maintenance requirements would enhance safety for residents of multi-storey buildings. This seems fair. If you can't get to it in a timely manner, then you should have some kind of penalty.

Public safety would also be enhanced through new protocols and procedures to deal with elevator entrapments. I know there are people in this Legislature who have great problems with getting in elevators; I don't

know whether it's from past experiences. I myself do not feel that way about being in an elevator, but I know some people have had bad experiences, and it affects them for the rest of their lives.

With each step taken, the government plans to ensure that its commitment to ensure public safety remains the priority.

We understand that out-of-service elevators can be a source of frustration for residents, especially for elderly people or people with disabilities. We also recognize that prospective buyers and residents in new and existing housing units in multi-storey buildings may be concerned about affordability and availability of housing.

To fulfill our action plan and determine the appropriate balance between costs and benefits, we need to collect and analyze all the data to fully assess the options.

We intend to develop education and awareness materials to inform owners about the importance of planning and funding the replacement of elevators when they can no longer be repaired in a timely manner.

We will also help owners understand the importance of effective preventive maintenance, maintenance contract terms and regulations pertaining to elevators.

I think that this bill will make it very obvious to the people who are in charge of maintaining the elevators that it is important to everyone in Ontario that the elevators be maintained and, if they are not suitable, that they be replaced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: This legislation has generated an unusual debate this afternoon. It has required us to bounce back and forth between elevators and credit ratings. Such is the nature of throwing legislation together like this. I feel the legislation is good legislation; we'll find out in committee.

As far as people's credit files, it's so important that the information is true and accurate. That goes for elevators as well. I know that up until a few years ago, the minister responsible—I assume he went in every elevator—I'm thinking of Norm Sterling, a number of years ago—and would sign his name up high on the elevator. Norm probably used a stool to do that. But I notice that now the minister doesn't sign that form in an elevator.

But how do we square these two issues, elevators and credit ratings? I'm not aware of much in the way of fraud with respect to elevators; that would be downright dangerous. We certainly hear about fraud and identity theft with respect to the credit rating industry and the vulnerabilities as our economies are changing. We can blame that partly on globalization.

1710

I would like to point out—I should have realized this a month ago—that March was fraud awareness month. As MPPs, I find in our local media we are regularly hearing about the scams, the fraud that occurs. Much of this—

Mr. Randy Hillier: By this Liberal government.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —lies with the federal government—it's just been suggested that much of this lies with

the provincial government. Certainly, in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission, I feel, does an admirable job in this area. I will mention, as well, that in Britain, there is the Office of Fair Trading.

There is a lot of data that could be mined—and I guess I have run out of time. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I know there is an election coming, and some of us are going to win and some of us are going to lose. Just in case anybody does lose, I just checked on the World Wide Web and you can get a job as an elevating devices mechanic apprentice in Kitchener. There's an opening for an elevator mechanic in Toronto and an opening for an elevator mechanic in Erin. Elevator installation technician—there's an opening in Toronto. And elevator mechanic apprentice—there's a job in Halton that's open at the moment.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: You can start at the bottom and work your way up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You could start at the bottom and work your way up, I just heard from my friend.

My friend from Sarnia-Lambton asked a couple of minutes ago about what makes a good credit rating. Again, thanks to the World Wide Web—a credit score of 700 or above is generally considered good; 800 or above is considered excellent; and most of us fall between 600 or 750. I would think that for those of us that may lose an election, their credit score may be downgraded at some point. So if we are thinking of doing anything on credit, perhaps now is a good time to do that, rather than wait until after early June—

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm just saying, just in case.

I do want to compliment Mr. Dong, because last summer all those stories in Toronto about broken elevators and about disabled people trying to get up and down, and all the tenants in all of the downtown apartment buildings with poor elevators—it was a very good PMB that he introduced, and I compliment him for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Once again, it's a great pleasure to have a chance to stand in the House and speak to Bill 8 and to comment, actually, more on the comments that were made by my three colleagues on this side of the House: the member from Guelph, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville and the member from Barrie.

It's extremely satisfying when you're talking about a bill like this, as the members all know, that has been compiled from private members' bills that come from various parts of the House—particularly on this side, the two of us. I received so many compliments from members on both sides of the House, but particularly gratifying on this side was the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who shouted me out to say that he was—and spoke a lot about the elements in the bill that relate to my private member's bill. In fact, when I did it, we wanted five copies of free credit reports and

we've only got two in it now. But that's okay. I think that's manageable.

What's really interesting about the debates that we have—we sometimes think we're just speaking to each other. Sometimes we don't even think we're doing that, right? But I think it's really important that we all recognize that other people are watching. They're watching both on their cameras and they're following Hansard, and they're coming back to talk to us.

Interruption.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I had an interesting letter just recently from the legal counsel and privacy officer—

Interjection: Your phone.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, isn't that lovely—Johanna FitzPatrick. She is with TransUnion; she's the legal counsel and privacy officer. Johanna pointed out that there are some unintended consequences with some of the things that are in this phone—they're in my phone. There are some unintended consequences which need to be looked at, particularly in the whole credit freeze section. I know that we're listening on this side of the House, and it may be that we're too restrictive in the credit freezes. It says that you can give information to anybody, whereas it's part of following—when you do have credit relationships, the banks and the credit agencies have to still talk about existing credit. So maybe the prohibition is against freezing any new credit applications.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's interesting that the Liberals are so focused on elevators and having elevators fixed and operating in a timely fashion. It's too bad, and unfortunate, that they wouldn't have the same interest in our health care system and people who are dying, trying to get health care in this province.

But I would say to you—I did hear it through the debate, Speaker, and I wanted to put some comments forward. I heard it from many of the Liberals. They often use the term of elevators and fire alarms at the same time—the impression I got from their discussions was that, somehow, the elevators were broken. I just wanted to put this forward: It is mandatory in Ontario, under our fire code, that in a multi-storey building, on a fire alarm, the elevators have to come down. That is the fire code. The elevators have to come down to the ground floor during a fire alarm situation. It's the fire code that mandates that. That is for safety reasons, Speaker. There are good, safe reasons why that is part of the fire code.

It just seemed that many of the Liberals were being confused. I wanted to add that clarification to them that during a fire alarm, it is not that the elevators are broken. They are being recalled to the ground floor for safety reasons, ensuring that the occupants egress out the building through the fire-rated stairwells.

Maybe you want to take a look at the fire code. I know there are a lot of laws in this province, and a lot of laws that the Liberals don't really know are there and why they are there. But before you keep coming up with more

and more laws, maybe you should refresh your memory a little bit and look at the laws that you've already passed, and you'd do a far finer job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville can respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I acknowledge the comments and remarks of my colleagues from Haldimand–Norfolk, Windsor–Tecumseh, Beaches–East York, and Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, the latter of whom didn't discuss the bill or the remarks of the speakers.

To my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk: I do hope we can actually all come together and get this particular bill passed. This is not controversial and, more appropriately, it's a bill that actually originated from the very people that we serve. Both my colleagues in Beaches–East York—who is one of the originators of this bill—and in Trinity–Spadina learned this from their constituents.

To my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh: He noted the great opportunity in the skilled trades with regard to elevator repair. I would say, with regard to a career as an elevator technician, there is certainly plenty of room for upward mobility, and this is a topic I'm sure that we can dwell upon.

I'm especially proud of the remarks of my colleague from Beaches–East York. This is his first term here, and this is one of two bills that he has put together.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have five.

Mr. Bob Delaney: He has pointed out that it's five, but there are two, especially, that I can remember. He should take some real pride in being one of the originators of this bill.

It's one of the benefits of being elected. You actually do, when you're elected, get a chance to make this kind of change in the world. In ways great and small, there are means for all of us who sit in this House to do something such that people in our constituency can look at us and say, "Yes, that's not something that governments are elected or defeated on, but it is something that's important. I know you and I like you and I support you because you actually took something that I talked to you about and you did something about it."

So to my colleagues from Beaches–East York and Trinity–Spadina: Well done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 8? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 8, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act, 2018. I'm generally supportive of this access-to-consumer-reports and elevator act.

It's always a pleasure to provide comment on behalf of my constituents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and ensure there is a balance in the debate, to make sure that all the thoughts from a well-rounded perspective are brought.

Understandably, consumer protection is very critical to us, and we want to pass legislation that will truly ensure there is protection, rather than just more regulations

and administration, especially because we know this Liberal government's lacklustre record on red tape and a lack of protection for hydro ratepayers specifically, in Ontario. Our party, the PCs, remains dedicated to ensuring Ontario is the best place in North America to do business. Also, as the PC critic on accessibility, I look forward to providing feedback on the elevator availability act.

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I'm going to speak first about credit disclosure as part of Bill 8. The purpose of this section is to allow consumers access to their personal credit information, including which credit files are open in their name, by whom, and what inquiries are being made, all in an effort to detect and prevent fraud and identity theft. I think that's something that everybody in the province would support, and, again, we want to encourage that. We certainly support these measures that are being brought to the table.

Consumer protection has been lacking in Ontario. As I mentioned moments ago, with all of the hydro challenges—the Liberal government borrowing \$25 billion that could end up costing \$93 billion after tripling rates—there is very little, if any, protection at all for Hydro One ratepayers in Ontario.

There is also the Green Energy Act that, again, is lacking in any consumer protection. As a result, Ontario taxpayers are going to be paying \$133 billion for this very small piece of our energy sector. Where is the consumer protection from shoddy government contracts like the Green Energy Act? If that was something that they had brought in, I think we would have a lot more robust debate than just on something as specific as a consumer or elevator act. The Green Energy Act has cost \$37 billion more than the market price and will be overpaid by \$133 billion by 2032.

Let's not forget there was no protection of the taxpayers from the eHealth scandal that cost almost \$2 billion, the gas plant scandal that cost over \$1 billion, the Ornge scandal that cost about \$700 million, the Ontario Northland Railway scandal that cost \$820 million, the SAMS—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. I would just ask you to monitor the debate. I've been trying to listen attentively. I have a lot of respect for my colleague on the other side, but I think it's really going off track. I hope you can bring him back in line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Yes, indeed, this bill is about the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act. I would ask the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to talk about those acts.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to draw a parallel between consumer protection and credit, because you can talk about small things, but there are also the big things: Why aren't we taking a look at the consumer protection of those types of

measures as well? I think it's only fair to the taxpayers of Ontario to make sure that they understand, particularly as we head toward the election, that we debate bills in the House about consumer protection, but there's a lot of consumer protection that has been missed over the last 15 years. I'll just finish on the SAMS computer scandal that cost at least \$300 million and move on.

When we talk about consumer protection, I would have liked to have seen something like that put in for taxpayers because, after all, this is about giving people relief. It's about protecting consumers' pocketbooks and enhancing their rights as ratepayers and consumers. That's why I was trying to draw the parallel to those other situations. I know my colleagues across the aisle appreciate that I bring the facts to the table when I'm debating these bills, and I just wanted to offer a reminder for their supporters as well as ours.

While Bill 8 won't protect Ontarians from government mismanagement, it will provide them easier access to their own credit information free of charge, twice a year, including any credit history reports and scores that were shared and used by potential creditors over the past year. Consumers will also now have the ability to put a security freeze on their file, which means agencies won't be able to give their credit information to another party. I certainly support that. We have to have the ability to protect our information and know what's being used or what's being given to people out there.

Mr. Jeff Yurek:—their medical information.

Mr. Bill Walker: They definitely could use some improvement in medical information at times.

Again, I think I noted back there that one item that I brought up in regard to the eHealth scandal that was \$2 billion. If there had been consumer protection in there, maybe people would have been much more comfortable that they spent \$2 billion without getting virtually anything in return for that.

I will move now to elevators. I seem to have got the government a little concerned about my consumer protection, so I'll move on to elevators and make your job a little easier, Mr. Speaker.

The proposed amendments to the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, would establish a legislative and regulatory framework for elevator availability. It addresses elevator availability and establishing a repair-time protocol.

I supported the previous version of this bill, the elevator act known as Bill 109, and spoke in support of it last spring after it was introduced by the member from Trinity-Spadina. We support, of course, safe and reliable elevators, especially as they concern accessibility in seniors' homes and housing for residents with mobility challenges, including expectant mothers, those with young children and, of course, people with disabilities.

As with all bills, I think it's important for us to seek consensus, to go out to the industry and make sure we understand it before drafting legislation, by way of meaningful consultation with all impacted parties.

In this case, we don't want unintended consequences, which we hear about all too often with this government—

the unintended consequences which people suffer from because they rush it through, because they don't take the time or they don't, frankly, give us an opportunity as opposition, and the third party, to truly have some impact on their bills.

I understand the government involved the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the TSSA, who studied this issue and then offered some suggestions through a report by the Honourable John Douglas Cunningham. Mr. Cunningham's report offered 19 recommendations aimed at improving elevator availability.

Interestingly, I have heard a question raised with regard to the TSSA having the authority to revoke contractor licences if they are failing to meet their obligations under the TSSA act. The question that comes up is, why wasn't this authority being exercised, especially as statistics show a rapid rise in elevator breakdowns? I believe this question should be answered by the government—as well as the concern over the lack of accountability of the TSSA.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow the inspectors discretion so far-reaching that licensees have no idea what standard they're being inspected to and which additional requirements an unqualified inspector will impose on the licensee. They can actually impose stiff monetary penalties on licensees and take away their right to appeal or even defend themselves. As I mentioned earlier in one of my remarks, the TSSA becomes policeman and jury. I don't think that ever normally works, and is not acceptable in this case either.

The concern we would have, again, is that they actually have the ability to come in—although they don't define it clearly. One of the things I hear across many industries is that they do not define, they don't really know what's coming at them, and yet someone can come in and unilaterally impose sanctions on them; they can impose fines.

This is one that, again, because of my track record here in the House of seven years—we've heard this over and over. We don't want that. We don't want unintended consequences. We don't want to create situations where we're punitively impacting people just because we haven't gone out and really understood the front lines.

I've heard a lot of people today in the debate talk about, obviously, the safety and the timelines. Well, a lot of our older elevators in particular are at the age where they don't have parts available very quickly. It's great to say, "You will have this done in two weeks," but there is also the practicality—and then imposing a fine immediately because you can't make that, even though there are realities of not having that part. We've heard about the technicians and not enough supply of technicians, which again goes back to the skilled trades and all of the changes that the government has made in 15 years that actually have limited a lot of those skilled trades and the ability for people, particularly our young people, to come through some of the apprenticeship programs and make sure that we have a robust supply of those people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to talk a little bit about feedback on this issue from David Lepofsky, the chair of the

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, or the AODA Alliance, and independent elevator contractors.

Mr. Lepofsky—and I've had the pleasure of meeting with him a number of times on various issues, in my capacity as critic for accessibility—is a well-regarded, well-researched gentleman who brings concerns on behalf of Ontarians at large. I always respect the time and effort that he puts into it. He's a great champion for the accessibility sector, and he did echo the need for real action in this area.

As well, the AODA has said that there should be a clear requirement in the law for having Braille, large print and voice output of floor announcements in all new elevators in buildings that serve the public.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in the current world that we're in, I think that would be an absolute expectation of any building that you're walking in, that we've been able to do that to allow people with other challenges to be able to have the same accessibility as we do, and to be able, obviously, to have Braille so that they can read, to understand. For those who might be visually impaired, certainly it makes sense that you would have the voice output of floor announcements. I think there are some great things that we can do as long as we work collaboratively.

It is a bit of a surprise that the Liberal government had an opportunity to make some of these changes back in 2013 but did not, and passed on the opportunity to include accessibility amendments in the Ontario building code.

Again, when I come to the door and I read this draft legislation, you start to say, "If it was in there in 2013 and you didn't, give me at least the rationale. Explain to me very clearly, so that we understand why that didn't happen."

At the end of the day, if there are good ideas—I've been in committee here many, many times where there were many, many amendments to legislation, and the government just said, "No, we don't have to listen. We're going to go forward."

In this case, again, when you're talking about accessibility and standards for people who need to know that we actually care and have the compassion to include them in our legislation, I can't understand why that would not have happened. It's a surprise, but it is also a concern, considering the government's repeated promise to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025.

I think accessibility for 1.9 million Ontarians with disabilities is, sadly, far off the government's radar and certainly not a priority for this government.

We heard the words "disability" and "accessibility" mentioned zero times in their pre-election budget and throne speech, which included big promises to many sections of our voters, but again nothing tangible for the accessibility community. That saddens me, Mr. Speaker, because that community of 1.9 million Ontarians definitely deserves for us to be making sure that they are a priority in all sectors of our legislation.

1730

Remember, Mr. Speaker, it took this government five years just to set up a committee on education accessibility—five years just to set up a committee. I'm not certain how anybody could defend that at any time, that it took you five years to set up a committee, especially on something as important as accessibility.

How ironic that this government was quick to waste billions of dollars on scandals like eHealth, \$8 billion; smart meters, \$2 billion; cancelling gas plants, \$1.1 billion; and paying an exorbitant \$6.2-million salary to the CEO of Hydro One, but they have offered nothing beyond minimal to Ontarians with disabilities, who continue to face very high unemployment rates that former Lieutenant Governor, David Onley, the government's accessibility adviser, called "a national shame."

What's worse, Mr. Speaker? That the Liberal government had 15 years to get on schedule for full accessibility by 2025 but didn't do it, or that their binge-spending budget designed to buy votes and keep Kathleen Wynne in power at Queen's Park forgot so much as to mention accessibility? Either way, Mr. Speaker, how can the accessibility community possibly trust this government when it continues to leave behind 1.9 million Ontarians with disabilities?

In this sense, Bill 8 is an important bill. I want to thank the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for paying attention and recognizing that elevator downtime can mean a resident being unable to go to work, to go to the grocery store or to a doctor's appointment and being confined to their apartment.

As I said right off the start, Mr. Speaker, safety has to be the most important concern, absolutely, and we have to do that in a manageable way and a respectful way, and we have to actually work with industry to make sure that we provide the ability for them to service and make sure they maintain standards as they're set. Setting them up for failure is not good for anyone, the residents—it certainly isn't good for the industry and it certainly isn't good to encourage when we already know we have a shortage. We need more people to enter as technicians in those types of accessory programs that are going to support things like elevator safety and maintenance, going forward.

We're building, as you know—I mean, a couple of years ago here in Toronto, we had 225 cranes in the air building skyscrapers. We're going to need more and more. All of those are huge, multi-unit developments. We're going to need more technicians. We're going to need that industry to be there to ensure that we actually have the ability to serve our customers and to serve our constituents.

Millions of residents rely on elevators every day, from long-term-care homes in rural Ontario to skyscrapers in Toronto. We know that, Mr. Speaker. In 2015, there were just over 28 calls from people being trapped in elevators—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Twenty-eight hundred.

Mr. Bill Walker: There were 2,800; sorry. Thank you very much. And reports show this has doubled in the last

15 years. If it has doubled, we, again, should be addressing that. We should be saying, “Why is that?” We should be working proactively with the community. I think if you engage your stakeholders, if you bring in industry and actually work with them, then that’s the way we can resolve this.

We need a clear signal that we need an action plan to address elevator availability and establish a repair time protocol.

Mr. Speaker, I’m going to delve a little bit into the TSSA admin penalties. As per my earlier comment, we remain concerned with the lack of accountability from the TSSA. Last week we were debating a bill and they wanted to bring in compliance inspectors. Compliance inspectors: That to me says you’re going in to find fault. You’re going in as an inspector trying to find—as opposed to more of what I was told, certainly in the long-term care, of which I am, again, proud to be the critic for, the culture used to be, “We want to come in and coach you. We want to find a way to get us all to a better place.” Now they come in and they’re punitive. They find the fault and they fine you, which puts added duress because many of the years of funding levels were stopped or flatlined for that whole industry. To change that culture back to one of actually working with you and coaching to allow you to find compliance, to be in compliance, as opposed to, “We’re going to come in and we’re going to set penalties.”

As I shared earlier, they have no idea what standard they are being inspected to. Would you not think, when you bring out a bill, that you should at least have the basics of definitions? You should be able to define the terms within that piece of legislation. Clear and unambiguous is what every piece of legislation should be in this House, Mr. Speaker. So I find it strange that again they brought out yet another bill that’s actually going to bring in standards that they don’t even define. That leaves additional requirements for an unqualified inspector to impose on the licensee. The bill gives the TSSA the power to impose stiff monetary penalties on licensees and takes away their right to appeal or even defend themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I think that in Ontario and in Canada we always expect as a culture that we are very open people, that we are very amenable people to actually having rational discussions to be able to find a way—and if we’re in fault, then we should have at least the ability to defend and challenge and find a middle ground that we, again, can find that works for everyone. When you take away the ability to even appeal, I’m not certain what that means in this legislation. Again, you would hope that this would have been brought forward with those things defined.

The TSSA, as I said earlier, becomes policeman and jury. I’m not certain how that works, Mr. Speaker, particularly if you’re in the industry and they want to be punitive. You have an inspector who really goes extreme and you can’t even defend yourself. You’re coming in front of the same people who are bound and determined

to take you out of the equation. I’m not certain how I could support that piece, so I’m hoping that the government will be open to some amendments and actually providing more detail—again, back to a clear, unambiguous definition of the terms of this piece of legislation would have been very helpful and certainly would have made it much easier for us.

I’ve talked very briefly about one of the concerns that has come out and is a part of this bill. Again, I give the member credit for bringing this. It has been an issue. Certainly, in this building, at times, we’ve have some challenges. In my early couple of years in the building where I live when I’m in Toronto for part of the week, we had major challenges with our elevators. But again, it came back to technicians in many cases—an under-supply.

I’m not certain why this government was so intent on cancelling a lot of the high-skills major trades programs out in our rural communities. That’s like—for the minister without portfolio; I know he’s a big sports fan—you always want to have a good feeder system to feed the big leagues. In skilled trades, I’m not certain why that would be any different.

I see the Minister of Labour. He’s a good guy. I’m not certain why, at times, he does some legislation that restricts the ability for us to actually have our skilled trades.

The nuclear industry is certainly in a growth stage. I worked at Bruce Power; I’ll be very open and forthright on that. Walking on the floor, I saw how many people were at the end of their career tenure. I didn’t see where those skilled trades were that were going to be able to feed that. We’re going to refurbish all of the reactors across Ontario over the next 35 years. We need that skilled trades component.

It’s very similar with the elevators. We have a lot of holdbacks because we don’t have enough people to fix them. As I shared earlier, some of those pieces of equipment in this building—I believe some of the elevators here are original construction, if not all of them. If you think back 100 years to try to have that component, that piece, and the skilled trades to be able to machine that part, you can’t impose a strict two-week “You have to do this,” because it may not be reality.

How do you be punitive? Work with the groups. And it has to be some manageable time frame that the sector, the technicians, the actual licensees and the owner of the building—I don’t think any owner out there is not willing to come to the table and say, “I’m trying to be respectful of the people who are actually living in my building.” If there are bad culprits out there who aren’t doing that, and it’s continually found, then go after them, but don’t whitewash. I say this with all due reverence to the government across the floor: A lot of what I’ve seen here in my seven years is that they whitewash everybody instead of going after the people who are the culprits.

In long-term care, it’s very similar. They’re adding more regulation. Everybody has to add more bureaucracy and red tape as opposed to going after the people who are

truly not diligent in doing what needs to be done for the benefit of other people.

I will just summarize, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the credit history. I want to just bring up that I think consumer protection is absolutely critical and very important. Taxpayers, the people who we are given the privilege and the opportunity to represent—I think they would certainly suggest that they expect the government to always have, at the forefront of their thoughts, consumer protection, but I'm not truly convinced.

I'm going to give a couple of examples just to finalize, for those people at home watching. I'm not certain that people at home would suggest that the Liberals are truly in the mindset of consumer protection when they will borrow \$25 billion for some hydro relief for two years knowing full well that the rates are going to go up and it's going to cost \$93 billion to pay it back. And that's when we're already spending \$1 billion a month on our debt payments. I'm not certain that they could say they had consumer protection when the Green Energy Act was imposed on our municipalities in our province, which is going to cost \$133 billion over the lifetime of that guarantee. The eHealth scandal—I'm giving examples, Mr. Speaker. I just want to show that consumer protection is a big thing for people. I think they expect it; I think they deserve it from government. But when you see things like that and you bring in a bill like this—you have to be able to talk on both of them. You can't just, in isolation, talk about consumer protection when it comes to a credit rating when you're actually destroying our credit rating as a province.

When I think of consumer protection, I think of the taxpayer. Everything we do in this House should protect them from more debt going down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is now time for questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to follow my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; I never know how to do it.

But I say to the members opposite, the members of the crown:

You all know the polls, like an elevator, go up and down.

1740

You can have, like the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, upward mobility,

But only if you have the proven ability.

Now, there's no need to do that cross-aisle hostility.

Let's have tranquility

Or a stretch goal.

There's no need for that kind of cross-aisle baiting;

Let's talk more about Ontario's proven credit ratings.

Let's worry about Standard and Poor's.

A lower Ontario score would close some borrowing doors,

Cost us a heck of a lot more,

Be it an A or a AA or an AA-

Ministers, be bold—show no shyness.

And remember, no rhyme before its time.

This has been an interesting debate led by my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He did remind us of some of the reasons why we have financial problems in the province at the moment, if we go back a number of years on a lot of the failings of the government that led to payouts and costs that went to certain scandals as opposed to going into government programs and lowering the cost and having money for issues such as health care, education and so on. That's something that at some point the government members will have to answer to, that over these past few years a lot of money has gone out the door for reasons that we didn't necessarily have to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I was very pleased to hear members speaking about this particular bill because it's yet another example of the government moving forward on matters related to consumers. I always thought that members of a Legislature, particularly provincially—although federally they have some matters that are related to consumer protection as well, certainly. But these were ones that were favourites of individual members. My friend from Sarnia–Lambton, for instance, has come forward with a number of bills that relate generally to consumer protection, and others in the House. I do that only because I look across the floor and see him there, and I know that he has done that.

This bill is very good for the people of the province, but it builds on a number of other bills the government has brought forward. I was delighted on March 1 because—all of us have encountered this—a new bill came into effect that dealt with door-to-door scams, as I want to call them. You and I, Speaker, and others in the House have felt that some of our constituents were duped by people coming to the door with a proposition that sounded very good and was actually too good to be true.

As a result of various ideas coming forward, letters being sent to ministers, speeches in this House and work in committee, we found that bills were evolving into something substantive in terms of a legislative initiative to protect the consumer. This bill builds on that particular initiative, and I think it's deserving of the support of all members.

I did hear once in a while the member, when he was actually on the bill, making some positive reference to the provisions of this bill, and I want to congratulate him on the one or two minutes he took to deal with the bill itself and the positive aspects of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to commend the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on delivering another excellent speech on behalf of the constituents of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. The member has consistently over the last seven years brought forth his concerns to this Legislature and has fought valiantly for his constituents and has brought change and made a difference in the lives of those in his riding.

I think, after listening to his debate—20 minutes—my take-away message that I received from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is the fact that the best way to deliver consumer protection to the people of Ontario is, on June 7, to ensure that those members who are canvassing door to door do not return to this Legislature. The mismanagement that this government has had over the last 15 years and tripling the debt to \$300 billion, with \$1 billion a month in interest payments—this government could have done better, but they haven't.

We have heard all day, every day for the last four years at this Legislature, this government heckle us every time we had the opportunity to speak. This government has not listened to us at committee. Personally, in the committees that I have sat on, they have accepted two amendments over four years on each bill.

This government has so mismanaged this province. It's time for a change.

I appreciate the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound stepping forward and bringing the concerns forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and his 20 minutes on Bill 8. He is renowned in this place for squeezing the most amount of words into a compressed amount of time. Thus, I think that for several years now, he has won for talking the most in this place. So congratulations to the member.

I will say, though, on the issue of skilled trades—because that was the last part where I did tune in—that we do not in this province have enough workers to do the work that we need to build the needed infrastructure, maintain the infrastructure and, yes, ensure that the elevator maintenance actually happens—not just the maintenance, but the installation.

This has been a long-standing issue that I think the opposition parties have brought to the floor of this Legislature, and it has been a missed opportunity on the part of this government to not just address the College of Trades, but address the learning continuum within the public education system. These are good jobs that should have been promoted all through a student's experience in the public education system. As I mentioned, for young women, certainly these are career paths that pay well, the training is valuable and the jobs exist. So I think that there is some commonality that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and I have on this issue.

It did take a long time for this piece of legislation to come to the floor of the Legislature.

I would like to leave you with a Tragically Hip quote. This is from the consultation. It says:

I feel I've stepped out of the wilderness
All squint eyed and confused
But even babies raised by wolves
They know exactly when they've been used

There you go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to commend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He talked about credit ratings and consumer protection in this bill and the financial problems that this government is under.

Again, they promised a balanced budget, but they're coming out and saying, "We're going to run six years of deficits." So where was the consumer protection there of something that you said you would do? All of the scandals that we have had to endure, and no consumer protection there.

I would like to turn to the government and say that it would just be really good if the fundamental tenet of your consumer protection would be "promise made, promise kept."

The member from St. Catharines spoke of moving forward. He talked about my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: He has; a great guy. He's done the one-call bill, food tax credit for farmers and the PANDAS/PANS—just the three of the five that I know he has got through this House that I can think of off the top of my head.

He talked about being duped at the door. Again, I think when you tell people when you're knocking on the door that you are going to balance the budget and stop all of that debt and scandal and then you don't do it the very next year and you move \$4 billion off your books on to OPG books, that's duping people at the door.

When your Premier says, "We will not raise taxes," and then the next biggest tax that has ever been brought in—the health care tax—is actually imposed by that government, that is duping people at the door.

Then the other thing that they duped at the door is that they never came out and said to the people, "Do you want us to sell Hydro One? That's what we're going to campaign on." They didn't do that. So they duped people at the door, and that is not consumer protection.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London talked again about the mismanagement and the \$3-billion debt. I appreciate his kind thoughts of how I try to represent my people from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about me getting a lot of words in, and I do appreciate that. Again, I'm proud to speak and get a lot of words in on behalf of the people I have been given the pleasure of representing from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

She talked about preventive maintenance. If we had more money that wasn't wasted on scandals, we would have a lot more preventive maintenance across all of our infrastructure across Ontario.

She talked about skilled trades. If we had more skilled trades for men and women, we would have a much more vibrant province.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and on behalf of my NDP colleagues.

Today, for me personally—I'm just going to veer off a bit—it has been a very great day, for two issues. The first is that, of course, we released the NDP platform today, but I won't dwell on that. It's a very important day for me today because I just found out that my daughter passed the bar exam. I am very proud of all our kids, but I'm very proud of our daughter Dana. Hopefully, if I win the election, she will come live with me in August when she does her articling here in Toronto. So it's a great day for our family.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I passed by the bar yesterday too.

Mr. John Vanthof: I have also passed a different bar exam than my daughter.

Mr. Brad Duguid: She obviously takes after her mother, right?

Mr. John Vanthof: Definitely. She definitely takes after her mom.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is she your lawyer? She'll see a lot of work.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, I'm being heckled.

Getting back to the bill: First, I would like to speak about an elevator issue in my riding. I have got the Villa Aubin in the great municipality of West Nipissing. It's a two-storey seniors' housing, and the seniors' group is led by Claudette Desjardins. They have been fighting for an elevator, because if you have a two-storey building with no elevator—this is throughout Ontario, but this is an issue in my riding.

These people have been lobbying and organizing. They've done petitions. They asked for a meeting with me. I was expecting a meeting with two people, and it was more like 35 people. My constituency office in Sturgeon Falls is on the second floor, above the post office, but there is an elevator, so they took note of that. Actually, what's holding that elevator up is a lack of funding in a federal program; it's not even a provincial program. But there are elevator issues.

One of the members—I believe it was the member from Grey-Bruce, Mr. Walker—spent a while talking about accessibility. That is going to become a huge issue, because it's one thing to talk about accessibility; it's another thing to actually guarantee it. In a lot of these public buildings, if you have a two-storey building with only stairs, that's not accessibility.

In the case of Villa Aubin, everyone wants to move downstairs, and I don't blame them, because as you get older, it gets harder and harder. I've noticed it myself: It's harder and harder to get up stairs. And so, for the people of Villa Aubin, we are going to continue to lobby on their behalf. I'm sure everyone in this House will agree with me that we all have to lobby for people in cases like this, because they all need elevators.

I don't think it would be a shock to people in the rest of Ontario that there are not a lot of high-rise elevators in my riding. I think the highest building in my riding is the

Holiday Inn in Temiskaming Shores; I think it's four storeys. That's the limit of my elevators. But there are a lot of two-storey elevators, and if you think you have troubles getting an elevator technician here at Queen's Park, try getting an elevator technician at the Northdale Manor in Temiskaming Shores. Again, it's a retirement home with an elevator, but I know that the board, the administration, has had so much trouble trying to get that elevator to work. Again, there's not a local elevator technician in the district of Timiskaming, and I doubt if there's one in Cochrane.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Sudbury, probably.

Mr. John Vanthof: Probably Sudbury. But to get them—because there is a shortage across the province, and whenever there is a shortage across the province, that ratio is always doubled or tripled in the farther-flung regions. If they have to come up for a one-off, the cost is exorbitant, and if you have to wait till they get a couple of problems, you're waiting for a long time. We have troubles with the elevators here, and this is the government. You would think we'd be on the priority list. Well, if we're on the priority list, imagine the places around the province that aren't on the priority list.

But that is a huge issue. I'm really trying to push for Villa Aubin and all of the other two-storey residences—and there are probably three- and four-storey, but certainly in my riding they're all two-storey. As our population gets older, these people are severely disadvantaged. It's something we're going to have to come to grips with, because I believe there's accessibility legislation on the books now.

We in this place are great at coming up with regulations, much of it very well needed. But in the case where those regulations affect public buildings, we are also going to have to be responsible to ensure that those regulations are not just enforced, but that we help fund them, because it's often the case that we are good with the stick but not so great with the mortar. That's something that we have to deal with.

This is actually a bill that's a bit confusing, because it has three things in it that don't really—the two do, the TSSA and the elevators kind of mesh; but the Consumer Reporting Act does not mesh with the TSSA and the elevators. It's a bit confusing.

The consumer reporting part is very important. People sometimes comment that I talk about my family a lot, but one of my daughters had her identity stolen, and until you go through that process, you don't know how that can put a damper on your life, short-term, certainly. Losing your identity, although it might not directly have to do with the Consumer Reporting Act—it does, because we're talking about protecting people's credit rating and knowing who can view your credit rating. Those are all really important issues.

That, to me, could have been an issue on its own for a fulsome discussion. Especially now that we've become, with technology and social media—I know for sure, personally, that I don't know how to fully protect my identity, and I don't know what information is out there

about me. I'm a public person; I fully expect that people would know a lot about me. But I think a lot of people are unaware of what's really going on. So that should be a fulsome discussion, and we support what's in this bill regarding that.

The second issue—and whenever you're ready, Speaker, you can just tell me.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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