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of Ontario



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Mardi  
26 novembre 2024

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 November 2024

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 novembre 2024

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system, and Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts;

That when Bill 223 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That when the order for third reading of Bill 223 is called, one hour shall be allotted to debate, with 25 minutes for members of His Majesty's government, 25 minutes for members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, and 10 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That, at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of Bill 223 without further debate or amendment; and

That when Bill 227 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That when the order for third reading of Bill 227 is called, one hour shall be allotted to debate, with 25 minutes for members of His Majesty's Government, 25 minutes for members of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and 10 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That, at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of Bill 227 without further debate or amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The associate minister has moved government notice of motion number 27.

Going to back to the minister to start debate.

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** Good morning, and thank you, Speaker. Lovely to see you in the chair this morning.

There are a few words, a few guiding principles I've lived by. From an early age, I was called to serve in service above self. The hallmarks and the guiding principles I'm talking about are simple words: safe communities in a secure Ontario. Safe communities in a secure Ontario are the building block, the foundation for communities to build businesses, to attract investment, industry, farming, agribusiness—all the things that drive our economy, all the things that guide this government to do good and advance the lives of communities across Ontario.

My friends from across the aisle will know that I've shared some stories in this place many times, that I've served in communities, small and remote, in the northwest like Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, all the way south to my riding of Pelee Island. And everywhere I've been, I'm inspired by people because communities are built on that same guiding principle: safe communities in a secure Ontario.

That's some of the hallmarks found in the legislation that has been brought forward by this government for this House: to secure our communities, for safe communities, a secure Ontario for all, in every part of this province, so we can build businesses, we can build our families up, we can attract investment and do the great things that this government aspires to do.

With that, Speaker, I'll return the podium to you and to the opposition.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Wow, that was a short speech.

This is a pretty significant bill. It affects my riding. It affects a lot of downtown ridings. It affects Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie—many, many areas that have pretty significant opioid addiction issues. And now we hear that the government wants to fast-track this piece of legislation—not have it go to committee, not have people speak to it—and then truncate debate to, what is it, an hour? An hour for third reading?

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Two hours, okay. Two hours for a bill that affects so many people. Wow. Yes, it's hard to stand up.

I want to talk a little bit about the bill. I was recently sent a photo of a man called Jonah. It was sent to me by his mother, Katherine McCloskey. Jonah is holding his two-year-old son, Hendrix, on a TTC train; Hendrix loves trains. The reason why I was sent this photo is because Jonah died of an overdose on June 2, 2024. Hendrix lost

his dad, at a time in his life when he will probably never hold memories of him, and Katherine McCloskey lost her son.

We hosted a press conference at Queen's Park shortly after this government introduced this bill to close 10 consumption sites. Katherine spoke and she said, "I could not protect my adult son Jonah from being killed by Toronto's toxic drug supply, but the Conservative government can choose to protect some of this province's most vulnerable sons and daughters." This government has the power to do that.

Fast-tracking this bill, Bill 223, sends a very clear message that the government is not serious about taking a harm reduction approach to addressing the opioid crisis that we have. This bill—I mean, it's a big bill, but what I'm going to focus on is the consumption sites piece. This bill will close 10 consumption and treatment sites by March 2025 and ban new sites from opening anywhere in Ontario. The government likes to say, "Oh, well, we're just going to close these sites because they're near schools and daycare centres." Well, that argument doesn't ring true, because if it was serious, then the government would allow new consumption sites to be opened up that weren't near daycares and schools, but the government isn't allowing that. They're not allowing that.

We have a consumption and treatment site in Kensington; it's on Augusta Avenue. It's one of the 10 sites that is slated to close. Consumption and treatment sites are rooms; this is what they are. They're rooms where individuals can inject their own drugs under the watchful eye of a nurse or a health care worker who can revive them if they overdose. That's what consumption and treatment sites are. These sites can also help people get access to health care and care, such as a doctor's appointment to helping someone get on a wait list for affordable housing. They offer a lifeline to people who are struggling to survive. Many people who access consumption and treatment sites don't trust the health care system, don't have a lot of trust for public institutions. This is a place where people can reach out to them and say, "Look, if you're ready for help, we're here."

**0910**

The statistics are horrific. According to Public Health Ontario, in 2022, 2,531 people died of an overdose in communities all across Ontario—not just downtown Toronto, all across Ontario. It's particularly acute in the north. There were 2,044 hospitalizations and over 12,000 emergency room visits as well. What that means is that our emergency rooms, which are overcrowded, hallway medicine, are seeing people who don't necessarily need to go there. And, unfortunately, many people who go to an emergency room if they're experiencing an overdose don't come out of it okay. They come out of it sometimes with brain damage, with extensive health issues.

What I find very frustrating, and I've heard many government members say this, is that they say, "Well, if we close the consumption and treatment sites, then all the problems of addiction are just going to go away. All the needles are going to go away." That's simply not true.

When consumption and treatment sites close, the problem of addiction goes elsewhere in the neighbourhood. It means that people are using in washrooms, in front of businesses, in schoolyards. The entire neighbourhood becomes a consumption site. Many of you might have seen those ads that have popped at bus stops saying, "Consumption and treatment site coming here soon." Because that's where people will use.

What is also frustrating is that it will mean that more people will die. The Minister of Health, Sylvia Jones, was asked by a reporter, Jack Hauen from The Trillium, if research had been done about how many people will die as a result of this decision. The Minister of Health said, "Jack, people are not going to die; they're going to get access to service." That is an absurd statement from a Minister of Health. It flies in the face of all the evidence that has been presented to this government: what nurses are saying, what CAMH is saying, what health care workers are saying, what the OMA and the medical establishment is saying. The Minister of Health is like, "No, people are not going to die." That is just simply not true. This is a very dangerous approach to addressing addiction because it's not going to work, and it means loved ones like Jonah are going to die.

What I find very frustrating is that I fear that this government is using the issue of consumption and treatment sites to take attention away from themselves and their failure to show leadership on these issue around addiction and mental health. They're identifying wedge issues and targeting vulnerable people and poor people instead of saying, "What can we do as a government to address the issues that they face and that we face?" It's called showing leadership.

What we know is that municipalities, hospitals, nurses, public health experts and even two of your own government-commissioned reports have recommended keeping consumption sites open. The truth is that the Ontario government can and must meet people where they're at by keeping them alive and protecting them from dying from an overdose, while also providing comprehensive support to help people who are wanting to recover and need to recover from addiction. It's not one or the other; it's both.

I find it hard to believe that this government thinks that their HART treatment hubs that they're looking at starting up sometime in the future are going to meet the moment and address the addiction crisis to the extent of how serious it is, and I have a lot of concerns about that.

I'm also urging this government to get serious about addressing some of the root, core reasons why people become addicted in the first place. Let's talk about addressing poverty. Let's talk about increasing the number of affordable housing options available to people. Let's invest more in mental health. I wish that we were debating these issues today instead of taking a very divisive approach that will result in too many people who don't need to die dying.

That's all the time that I have to speak to this bill today. I wish this bill went to committee. I wish people could

speak to this bill and share their expertise and their testimony, but they won't be able to, and I think that's a shame.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It's always an honour to rise in this House, but I've got to say that it feels kind of futile, because this House is not functioning the way it's supposed to happen. This parliamentary democracy's democratic system was developed over hundreds of years. It's been spread across the Commonwealth and into other countries as well. It's used as a model of how democracy is supposed to function. Part of the way that this is supposed to function is that the government is supposed to listen to the opposition, and we are supposed to watch you guys like hawks, because there's actually a statue of a hawk to remind us of our role.

This bill here is a time allocation bill. Almost every bill that this government introduces in this House, they use time allocation, so they limit the amount of time that you can speak. People ask me, "When the government is bringing in some egregious bill, why don't you filibuster?" The reason we don't filibuster is because the government has found a way to prevent filibusters, so that we cannot stand up here and cause a debate to go on to draw attention to some of the more egregious attacks on our democratic rights that this government is making.

The question is: Are we a democracy? Six years ago, I would have said, of course, we're a democracy. But I don't know that we are a democracy anymore. I fear for the future of our democracy, and I fear for the future of our children and our grandchildren. I see the government is not even listening, and that's fine. I'm not speaking to you anyway, because you're not listening and you're not willing to listen. But the actions that you have taken, the bills that you have voted on, are attacks on our democratic rights in this province.

Right now, we are debating in this House a bill that would strip Ontarians of the rights to sue the government in the case of injury or death of a cyclist who dies because of the removal of the bike lanes. The government also stripped Ontarians of the right to sue the government for any abuse of government power that a minister or government agent made in this horrific deal with Ontario Place.

This government has used three different bills in this House that use the "notwithstanding" clause to strip us of our fundamental rights and freedoms under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The hallmark of a democracy is that we have the right to free speech. In Ontario, do we have the right to free speech? Well, we only do at the whim of the government, because when they use the "notwithstanding" clause, they are stripping us of our right to free speech, as well as our rights to life, liberty and security of the person.

The Premier has just said, recently, that he wants to use the "notwithstanding" clause to strip people in encampments of their charter rights. There are 234,000 people that are homeless in this province. There are 1,400 encampments in this province. That's the legacy of this govern-

ment's policies on housing. They've removed rent control. They're not building affordable housing. They're giving billions of dollars to developers who are not building any housing, so the supply crisis keeps growing. So now there are 234,000 people who are homeless, and the government's only response is to say, "Oh, we're going to strip them of their charter rights."

It's really difficult to express to people just how dangerous this is, because we are in a moment globally where democracies are under attack. We look to the south of us, and we've got a president who has said that this will be the last presidential election. That's frightening, because the United States is the oldest modern democracy. And in Canada, we've got the "notwithstanding" clause, which is an escape valve, so any provincial or federal government can override our fundamental rights and freedoms under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by invoking the "notwithstanding" clause. This government has done it several different times.

They even gave themselves, with Bill 28, the right to discriminate against education workers, who are disproportionately women and people of colour. In that bill, it actually states, and I'll read the quote from it—this is Bill 28, that this government passed and that every Conservative member stood up and applauded as they were voting for it: "The act is declared to operate notwithstanding sections 2, 7 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the act will apply despite the Human Rights Code."

The Ontario Human Rights Code makes it illegal to discriminate against people based on their gender, their race, their religion, their cultural background, their disability. They stripped Ontarians—education workers—of those rights.

#### 0920

The other hallmark of a democracy is that we have democratic elections. But in Ontario, one of the things this government did is that when they got into power in 2018, they changed the rules of the municipal election in the middle of the campaign period, and they cancelled four regional chair elections. This was fought all the way to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court ruled that, in Canada, we do not have the right to democratic municipal elections. The charter only guarantees us the right to federal and provincial democratic elections, not municipal.

So the next thing this government did—they didn't think of this as a cautionary tale, that, "No, we should respect the right of the people of Ontario to democratic municipal elections." They brought in strong mayor bills. And these strong mayor bills—it's a euphemism, because what those bills did is they stripped us of the right to majority-vote democracy. In the regions of Peel, York, Niagara—there's one other—this government now appoints the regional council chair. That chair can govern with the votes of one third of the elected council members. So two thirds of elected council members can be overridden by an appointed regional chair and one third of council members. That's not democracy. In fact, under this government and their strong mayor bills, most of us who live





sensitive, culturally safe Indigenous-led medical care available to them now and in the future. These are the issues this government should be working on. Meegwetich.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I want to thank those who have spoken before me, because I think they have set out the case very strongly, but I want to add to their voices.

This is a pretty extraordinary motion that we have before us. We are dealing with a very substantial bill that deals with a variety of issues. But I will probably spend most of my time talking about consumption and treatment sites, because I think that more than anything else this bill is here because the government doesn't actually want a window on the impact of this bill on the people of Ontario. Shutting down committee, shutting down the ability of people to come and actually speak about the problems they're going to face and the problems that the larger communities are going to face is a draconian act.

You should be well aware, Speaker, that just because you don't have a consumption and treatment site, you don't eliminate the whole problem of drug use and drug abuse. The reality is that we have a drug problem across Ontario, and it is not consumption and treatment sites that have caused it. It is not consumption and treatment sites that have exacerbated it. But this government is using problems that have arisen around those sites as a way of shutting down treatment that actually saves lives.

I should point out to the government that in February of this year, in Belleville, they had an emergency. They had their emergency rooms overflowing, they had their ambulance service overwhelmed by the number of people who were overdosing and found on the street. There was no consumption and treatment site in the area where these problems were occurring. This was not caused by an attempt to actually solve the problem, to actually avoid death; this was caused because we have a toxic drug supply, and we have the conditions of societal trauma that drive people to addiction. I think my colleague from Kiiwetinoong has spoken to that very clearly.

In my riding, when I talk to people at the consumption and treatment site, about 30% of their clients are First Nations. I'll tell you right now, 30% of the population in my riding is not First Nations, more like—possibly—1%. But through intergenerational trauma, we have a situation where people find it extraordinarily difficult to deal with life and seek some sort of comfort in using these drugs. It's bad for them; it's bad for all of us. But the reality is, actually providing them with some health care support increases the chances that they will live and, at some point, be able to seek and make use of therapeutic treatment. When you shut down that opportunity, then in many ways you're saying that these people's lives will mean nothing, that they will be gone and that all of the neglect and abuse that led to their being consumed with drug use, something that we never address, is something that they're going to pay for.

I have to say to you, Speaker, that for many people who do not consume drugs, who do not have relatives who

consume drugs, they think that this problem is someone else's problem; it will not touch them if it goes forward. I just want to point out a few things, noting the case in Belleville: If you have a population of people who are using these drugs—fentanyl and others—and they are not provided with any health care support, they will fall through all our systems until they wind up in the last safety net, which is the emergency department. In Belleville, the ambulances could not keep up. The emergency department could not keep up. Belleville declared an emergency. I have to say, when I talk to health care providers in my riding, they are well aware that the local hospital, Michael Garron Hospital, is going to have an awful lot more people in that emergency room. I can tell you today that people who go to that emergency room can't get treatment on a timely basis. They are profoundly frustrated that they're in there for eight, 10, 12 hours. Well, this decision is going to mean that that wait is going to be a lot longer. It's going to mean that when they call for an ambulance it's going to be hard to get one because, in fact, those ambulances are full or those ambulances are at the hospital waiting to discharge people that they can't discharge because the emergency room is full. That alone should be a concern for those who think that this is not a problem for them.

Prior to the set-up of the consumption and treatment site on Queen Street in my riding, back before 2017, there was a problem of people dying or being found unconscious in the washrooms of local restaurants, which is why at the time the small businesses supported having a consumption and treatment site: because they didn't like carrying out the bodies.

The summer of the horrible, horrible tragedy, the shooting of one of my constituents on Queen Street—a few months later, a man's body was found in a laneway near Leslie Street and Queen. He had been living in a stairwell of an abandoned factory and had overdosed.

Now, there are not that many people who are found dead on the streets in my riding in that area, but I have to say to you the chances of that being a far more common occurrence is going to go up dramatically. That's the kind of information that should have been put before committee so that when you make life-and-death decisions, you're considering both sides of the balance sheet.

Speaker, I can't predict with any certainty that there will be more bodies on the street. But when I've been asked how was it that that area was chosen for a consumption and treatment site, and I've been told it's because of the very high number of drug users, people say to me, "Well, where do you get the statistics?" What you need to know—and what everyone needs to know—is that statistics come from two places. They come from emergency services: how many ambulances were directed to pick people up. You can get those services and you can see what they were picking them up for. This was a hot spot. The coroner's office also reporting on deaths could say, "This is where those deaths were occurring."

**0940**

In the time the consumption treatment site was set up, the number of deaths from overdose was cut in half in that

community—cut in half. My expectation is that with the closure and with the failure of this government to give people the opportunity to speak about the issue, that we will again see coroners' reports and paramedic reports about the number of deaths and emergency cases that they have to deal with.

I know that I'm running out of time and I'll just speak very quickly. Having a system to reduce exposure to needle-borne diseases makes a real difference in people's lives and whether they get to live them or not. I chaired the public health board in Toronto in the 1990s when the HIV epidemic was running high and I had to deal with people in their twenties and thirties—some in their forties and fifties—who came to me as the chair and said, "I got HIV through tainted blood. I got hep C through tainted blood." I had to deal with people and their families in their last few years. To bring forward an approach that will guarantee more infectious diseases is far worse than irresponsibility, it is something I can't say in this Legislature because it will be seen as unparliamentary. But, Speaker, I'll say that, at the very least, it's reckless and irresponsible. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Unfortunately, I have to add my voice to this subject once again in this Legislature. I had a very fulsome 20 minutes the other day for second reading of this bill and I was hopeful that the government would have heard our pleas to do better when it comes to safe consumption sites in our communities. But unfortunately, they decided to do worse by completely prohibiting our communities, our advocates, our people who work day-to-day on the ground in our communities trying to save lives and make life better for people with addictions—they've completely excluded their voices from this legislation. They've put forward a time allocation motion—which is what we're debating right now—that stifles the voices of Ontarians.

I'm just going to read a little bit because I think the viewers at home need to know and understand how this government behaves when it comes to vulnerable people in our communities who are desperate for our help and yet this legislation is going to harm them even further. It says, "when Bill 223 is next called ... the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

"That, upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading"—that means no committee process. People in our communities who need to ensure that the government hears them, that they understand what happens in our communities, that they understand how these consumption sites work in our community, that are open to change of safe consumption sites, no doubt—if it's location, change the location. That's fine. But the legislation that we see before us completely cancels safe consumption in our communities. In communities where it's not cancelled, it just takes away the funding so it will just starve them out anyways.

Then, it will give us 25 minutes to debate in third reading.

Taking away the committee process is so anti-democratic. It goes against everything that we should be doing as legislators. The process of a bill should be that a bill comes before the House, of course—it's a majority government, it's a government bill—we go through second reading, we debate. And I know there was some really fantastic comments brought through debate, on both Bill 223 and Bill 227, that we would have hoped that the government would hear those voices. New Democrats don't just come here making stuff up. We listen to our communities. We listen to our stakeholders. We listen to nurses. We listen to health professionals. This is where I get my information from, and the government just completely excluded it all. So now there is no opportunity for our community members to be able to come here, to talk to the government, to explain how safe consumption sites really save lives. Obviously, the minister and the Premier didn't care to listen to those voices before they allowed this legislation to come before us.

Safe consumption sites save lives. It's fact. It's proven. It saves lives inside the consumption site and around the consumption site. What this bill is going to do is take away that safe space for someone to use and is going to put them on the sidewalk. It's going to put them in the alleyway. I'm reading articles that talk about how many people who have died on top of malls in my community. They're hiding in doorways. We have families who are hiding in their bathroom, so that their children don't see them. These safe consumption sites gave them the ability to go somewhere else. It gave them the ability to take it out of their home, to take it out of their car so they could go home to their kids at the end of the day. That's gone. You are taking it away without even listening to the community and the people who provide these services. It is so absent-minded, so neglectful of the need of our communities, of the desperation of our families who are burying their kids, their brothers, their sisters, their siblings. On a regular basis, people are dying of overdose in our community. We need detox. We need rehabs. Instead of giving us more for our communities, you're taking away the only safe spot that somebody possibly could have had the opportunity to use.

If you think that this is right, you shouldn't even be here. Because our jobs, when we get elected, is to represent our communities and that means all members of our communities. It even means the ones who have fallen through the cracks and have found their way to drug addiction. And nobody, nobody ever in life grows up saying, "I'm going to be drug addict." I mean, that's not what happens. They fall into addiction through prescription medication. They fall into addiction through a party. That could happen. They fall into addiction because they found themselves homeless and they're desperate, because they can't function. They found themselves in addiction because they have PTSD, because they have mental health issues. For whatever reason, they have found themselves into the darkest place of their lives and they have addictions. We should be doing everything we can to help our community, not wiping them out and making sure that the very people who are so wonderful and do that hard work on the street don't even have the opportunity to explain to

you the job they do, why they do it and how we can do it better. You've ripped it up. Shame on you. Shame on the government. Unfortunately, I'm out of time—and probably so will be many people in our communities due to the loss of this legislation. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** It is an honour to rise, but it is also a tremendous responsibility to speak in this House. What we do here matters. Decisions have profound effects on people's lives. I've been an MPP for two and a half years now and have learned quite a bit about how a government can play procedural games to protect themselves from scrutiny, like the moving of Lydia's Law directly to committee instead of going through with the planned public debate. If they don't want a lot of scrutiny, limit the time available for debate and public commentary—tricks that reinforce the hold on power of the government and are a reminder that their interests are not to serve the public but to serve their partisan supporters.

**0950**

It's certainly been striking that this government decided that the Legislature would not sit for 19 weeks, a full five weeks more than originally scheduled. Now of course the government side is boasting about all the meetings that took place over the five-month break from the Legislature, but that is undoubtedly true of every single MPP in this House.

How many meetings were held is not the point. It's irrelevant. The reason this matters that we've been away from the Legislature for so long is because it is time calculated to be away from scrutiny: from the media, from the public and of course from the opposition. Unfortunately, what I have learned is that most strategies deployed by this particular government have nothing to do with public service or making laws that might make life better for Ontarians. Rather, it's like the ads promoting the Conservative government—partisan ads that the public is paying for. These long breaks from doing the work of the Legislature are a move to control their own narrative, much of which is built on fantasies, without having to face any scrutiny.

I have to say I was a bit naive when I was elected as an MPP on June 2, 2022, because I actually thought the government was about maintaining standards of democracy and taking the time for serious consideration of any legislation brought before the House. However, that's not happening. We've got time allocation. The government has complete control over how much time we have, and they are choosing to limit debate. As we have heard from other speakers on this side of the House about what is going through in this bill, what I see is that this is a government that doesn't want facts to get in the way of political opportunism.

The consumption treatment sites are being shut down without any consideration of the realities on the ground. As we heard already, 465 lives were saved in Thunder Bay alone. Those are overdoses that were reversed. So where would those people be if those overdoses had not been

reversed? On the streets somewhere, in a playground, in a back alley—but dead. Those people would not be alive today.

People who have gone through that safe consumption site are able to access treatment when it's available. They're able to find out what is available; they're able to access supports and the information that they need. Some of those people have recovered and become community leaders, actually, and are advocating with all of their hearts to keep those sites open because they know they save lives. But unfortunately, facts, research, knowledge, studies are irrelevant to this government because there's a political goal, and it's a partisan goal. It's about political opportunism of the moment.

We also know that in terms of when there is public consultation, as there was with the removing-the-bike-lanes bill—and not a single deputation supports the bill—we know the bill's not about serving the public interest; it's not about respecting democracy. It's clearly not about protecting lives or even moving Ontario into the 20th century like European countries. It's about having a hate on for Toronto and promoting a narrative—a false narrative in the GTA—that somehow removing these bike lanes in Toronto is going to make life better for people in the GTA when in fact the evidence is so much to the contrary. And I just want to mention University Avenue; apparently nobody has driven down University Avenue from the government side since the construction is over. It's fantastic. I'm in a cab there every time I have to go back to Thunder Bay. There is no traffic; there is no hold-up. We drive straight down right from top to bottom. Bikes are on the side, there's a place for people to pull off to off-load into hospitals. It's brilliant, it's fantastic, but apparently that's irrelevant to the government because facts are irrelevant.

So we are moving closure, we're shutting down all opportunities to actually hear from our communities, and there is no rationale. There are no arguments, there are no facts from the government side, just a lot of opinion. There is a lot of grandstanding—no opportunity for the communities to speak.

I'm appalled by the shutting down of debate in this House. It is not what we were elected to do; we were elected to be here to listen—to listen to our constituents—to be making life better, not just for the specific people who paid for our elections, but to represent everyone, every aspect of our society, and frankly, this government has failed again and again and again. We've never seen homeless like we are seeing now. We've never seen people using food banks like we are seeing now. Now, this government wants to take away one of the core services this is helping to keep people alive in our communities.

As other members have said, people who fall into addiction come from so many different walks of life: some are dealing with intergenerational trauma; some may have gone to a party and wound up with something that has actually really turned their lives upside down; some are dealing with trauma of the moment; some are trafficked women who have been forced into addictions and kept addicted by their traffickers—those women, by the way, have no safe place to go. I've met with many of those

women as well. When they get free of their addictions, there's no safe housing—there's nowhere to go other than where they were living before where they were trafficked.

Then you've got workers. We've got workers coming in—trades workers, workers coming in from the mine—regularly using that safe space, Path 525, because they are living in camps at these work sites. Why did they become addicted at the camps? It could be because of boredom: two weeks on, two weeks off—it's no way to live a life, you're away from your family. It could also be masking injuries. Why would workers want to mask their injuries? Because they can't afford not to be working, they can't afford to give up their salaries and they certainly can't afford to go through the process of dealing with the WSIB and being turned down and certainly not having the income that they have been relying on.

There are many, many reasons that people fall into addiction. I think this government will see a rude awakening—certainly, our communities will—as emergency services are overwhelmed, as paramedics are overwhelmed.

I'm going to stop there. As I've said: I'm appalled by the bill, I'm appalled by the use of closure. This is not what we were elected to do. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's my honour to rise here today to add the voices of the wonderful people of London North Centre. Today, we're talking about time allocation of Bill 223. We are talking about peoples' lives, and we're talking about this government playing with peoples' lives.

If this government were truly serious about tackling the addiction crisis that is all across our province, then we would be talking about enhancing harm reduction, we would talk about enhancing treatment and we would talk about building truly affordable non-market housing—those three things: harm reduction, treatment, affordable housing. Without those three things, we will not tackle the opioid crisis which is destroying our communities, which is destroying families and which is destroying peoples' lives.

This Premier had the audacity to say that supervised consumption sites were the worst things to happen to communities, and he says that he doesn't believe in the sites; he betrayed his partisan, ridiculous ideology with this point.

He said, "This was supposed to be the greatest thing since sliced bread." What a reduction, what an oversimplification of the fact that people are on our streets and losing their lives as a result of poisoned drug supply, and he's talking about this as if someone was trying to sell it. This is a necessary step in the vital health care continuum.

He also stated, "We need to put money into treatment. Detox beds. That's what we need to do." So why isn't he? Why isn't the Premier putting money where it will save lives? Harm reduction, treatment, housing—those three things. We see stigma, we see ignorance and we see ideology guiding this government and their decisions. If these sites in their proximity are so objectionable, Speaker, why did the government approve them in the first place? Now

that this government is removing them, it's a refusal to admit their first mistake, because if they admitted their mistake then they would be paying for them to move; they wouldn't be closing them outright. But it just merely shows that this government wants to penalize those suffering with addiction.

**1000**

What's missing here is accountability from this government. What I find with this government though is that they're not focusing on helping people. They're not focusing on ensuring people have a safe place to call home and that they can rebuild their lives. Instead, this government is solidly focused on monetizing and profitizing our health care system. They're trying to carve up the greenbelt for their wealthy donor friends. They're trying to get ministers of the crown to go and enrich the PC Party coffers by having people who are dependant upon them and their decisions donate at private fundraisers.

I would imagine, Speaker, that if there was a way to squeeze a few dollars out of people who are losing their lives as a result of addiction, this government would finally have some more attention for people suffering opioid addiction. And yet this government, with this decision, will be yet again in front of the courts with another loser legal battle—but this government has never seen a loser legal battle that it didn't love and wanted to shove thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars at.

I want to shout-out while I have a moment here the wonderful people who are working on the front lines in my community of London, the folks at Carepoint and the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, because they're doing wonderful, tremendous work for people in our community. They're meeting people where they are. They're building relationships. They're treating them like human beings. These are not statistics. These are our neighbours, these are family members, these are valued people in our community who, for whatever reason, have found themselves struggling. It should be within us as human beings, in our ethical responsibility to our neighbours, to help them when they are struggling instead of marginalizing them yet further.

Right now, with supervised consumption, people are behind closed doors. So I have to ask the question, what will happen when these places close? All of those people inside of that facility will be further out onto the streets. You are taking a situation where, yes, there are problems within our communities because there is not enough housing, there are not enough supportive housing units, there are not enough mental health supports. But you're taking people within a facility and you're going to spread them out yet further.

The RAO, the people who are on the front line, the experts on this, have panned this government's decision to close these sites. They state it's "misguided and represents failed policy." They call for a "comprehensive response to substance use and the overdose crisis." They have pointed out peer-reviewed research whereby it has been shown that there is no evidence linking safe consumption sites to increased crime.

Another peer-reviewed scientific study—I know the government's ears probably closed when they heard that because they're not fond of evidence or facts—documented criminal activity decreased in the area around a safe consumption site in the five years following it opening. So they followed this for five years and they found that crime went down. Supervised consumption sites actually reduce public drug use and related litter, and they do not contribute to increases in crime. So at a basic, physical level—just think of this for a moment—people who are going to these health care access points, these safe consumption sites, are disposing of trash and needles and litter there. When these close, where will all of that physical trash go? You are pushing it out into the community, and it is on this government.

What is core to this issue is housing. This government would like to insult and further marginalize people who are struggling as a result of being unhoused, but they're unhoused because of this government. Our housing starts are the same as 1955. Let's get that through our heads: 1955. And with the increased revenue that we have, this government has an ideological opposition to actually supporting people, to actually provide people the care that they deserve and that they require.

Speaker, this time allocation motion is playing politics with people's lives. More people will die as a result of this government's failure in policy.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Mr. Kernaghan has moved adjournment of the debate.

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

*Interruption.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I'll go back to the question at hand.

I heard a no.

I will ask all those in favour of the motion to adjourn to say aye.

All those opposed to the motion to adjourn will say nay.

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1006 to 1015.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett):** Pursuant to standing order 49(a), I deem the debate to be adjourned.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### CAMBRIDGE FOOD BANK

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** On Sunday, the CKPC Holiday Train rolled into Cambridge with KT Tunstall playing, and we also had Jessie T, a local artist, playing earlier. The food bank was collecting donations, as is common with the holiday train, a long-standing tradition. Myself and my best friend, Cambridge city councillor Corey Kimpson, actually visited and ended up helping the food bank collect donations that day.

I have to say, I was really impressed with how well the community turned out to bring food to the food bank van,

but I also remain so incredibly impressed by the work of the Cambridge Food Bank. The director, Dianne, was there as well as Sarah and their very energetic van driver, Steve, who has more energy, I think, than three people combined.

The food bank in Cambridge isn't just about food security; they also offer an incredibly impressive array of wellness and community programs as well—particularly impressed by the ones on heart health and diabetes.

It was a great Christmas event. Corey and I did our best to entertain from the back of the food van, and we had a lovely time.

Thank you so much to the community for being so generous and, again, to the Cambridge Food Bank for their continually wonderful and much-needed service to Cambridge.

### WELLAND CANAL

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** My riding of Niagara Centre runs almost the entire length of the Welland Canal. This Saturday, November 30, I will be attending the turning-of-the-sod ceremony in my hometown of Thorold near the Allanburg lift bridge to mark the 200th anniversary of the canal. During the event, a commemorative plaque will be unveiled acknowledging the economic impact, hard work and sacrifice of hundreds of immigrants who worked on the canal until its completion in 1829 and contribute to Niagara's rich cultural history to this day.

On November 30, 1824, nearly 200 people came out to witness the first shovels being turned to break ground. For the past 200 years, the canal has shaped the region, driving economic development and opening the heart of North America to trade and commerce. Thorold and the Niagara region are once again seeing a resurgence of industrial growth with new industries establishing themselves along the canal, as its proximity to shipping routes and multi-modal transportation hubs remains a valuable asset.

I want to give a special thanks to the city of Thorold, the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. and the Thorold heritage committee, including chair Anna O'Hare, vice-chair Winsome Stec and city councillor Tim O'Hare for their tireless work celebrating and nurturing the history of the Welland Canal, Thorold and the entire Niagara region.

I'm looking forward to attending this historic event.

### MELLY'S WORKPLACE

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** This past Friday, I was joined by the Honourable David Piccini, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and we announced approximately \$600,000 for Melly's. The funding will enable Melly's market and café to empower adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham by providing comprehensive training, work experience, mentorship and advocacy. This will be accomplished through three main phases: practical learning, development and

coaching; paid work experience and job advocacy; and sustainable employment in the community.

What's clear is that through this money that has been allocated, Melly's café will be able empower individuals of all abilities to build confidence, gain valuable skills and reach their aspirations.

#### JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** CBC reported that most criminal cases in Ontario are now ending before charges are tested at trial. In 2022-23, 56% of criminal cases ended that way, without closure. Ontario's courtrooms are severely understaffed and chronically underfunded by this government, and I've stood in this House and repeated that in 2022 alone, 1,326 sexual assault cases were disposed of before their trial date; 1,326 sexual assault survivors did not get their day in court. Still, this government chooses to do nothing.

When I introduced Lydia's Law, which would increase transparency in the handling of sexual assault cases so we could ensure funding is going to the right places, this government chose to silence the debate on the bill. It now languishes at justice committee, even though the House leader said that they would expedite this bill. Survivors like Cait Alexander and Emily Quint were denied justice in this province.

1020

But, Speaker, if that's not enough for this supposedly tough-on-crime government to take action, maybe this next story will help. Last week, former MPP Randy Hillier had his charges stayed due to court delays. His charges included assaulting a peace officer. Hillier had been waiting 31 months and 13 days for his day in court, but now walks free because his right to be tried within a reasonable time had been violated.

This is the Conservative government's justice system, which is failing the people of this province. Ontarians deserve so much better, as do survivors of sexual assault.

#### KORAH COLLEGIATE AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOL COLTS SPORTS TEAMS

**Mr. Ross Romano:** Today I rise with great pride to recognize the outstanding achievements of the Korah Colts from my hometown of Sault Ste. Marie. The Korah Colts have long been a pillar of our community, representing not just athletic excellence but also teamwork, resilience and school spirit. Whether it's on the football field, the basketball court or in any other competition, these young athletes exemplify the values that make Sault Ste. Marie so special: resilience, dedication and a sense of community.

This year, the Colts football team has once again made us extremely proud, locking in the Northern Ontario Secondary Schools Athletics championship in their belts with a flawless 10-0 record while heading straight into the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations Na-

tional Capital Bowl. Their victories are not just about the scores on the board but about the lessons they've learned along the way: lessons in leadership, sportsmanship and, of course, overcoming challenges.

To the players: Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. Congratulations on your accomplishments. You have set an example and a standard of excellence for many years to come not only within your school but throughout all of our city.

The Korah Colts are a huge part of the Sault Ste. Marie family, and I'm so proud to celebrate their success. I want to thank them for being great ambassadors for our community. Go, Colts, go!

#### VICTIM SERVICES OF DURHAM REGION

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Victim Services of Durham Region is a charitable organization that provides crisis intervention services to victims of crime and sudden tragedy and delivers extensive violence prevention programming. This small but mighty team of only 14 staff are working miracles and changing lives every day.

On November 19, the international Anthem Awards announced Victim Services of Durham Region as the first inaugural winner of the Small Nonprofit of the Year award. They were chosen from more than 2,300 entries across 34 countries and were recognized for their social impact and commitment to accessibility, diversity, and equity and inclusion. Victims Services collected seven Anthem Award wins, two community voice awards and Small Nonprofit of the Year.

The groundbreaking virtual reality game In Your Shoes took seven of the awards and is part of a larger TeenIRL program aimed at educating youth on the dangers of human trafficking, gang recruitment, exploitation, dating violence and cyber security.

Executive director Krista MacNeil expressed that "while awards provide humbling recognition for our hard work, the real reward for us is knowing that our efforts are saving lives. We are seeing alarming rates of online exploitation and increased victimization of our youth."

As a charity, they rely on donations. I wish that more government money would go where it is needed to support victims of crime and to prevent violence and victimization.

I want to thank Krista and all of the team at Victim Services of Durham Region. I see them doing unbelievable heavy lifting across our community. Congratulations on these awards and thank you so much for everything you do.

#### CANCER WARRIOR CANADA FOUNDATION

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** I rise today to recognize the Cancer Warrior Canada Foundation and their remarkable efforts in hosting the Seventh Annual Cancer Awareness and Fundraiser Gala. This event brought together com-

munity members in support of cancer patients and their families, raising funds to assist those most in need.

Cancer is a battle that affects us all, directly or indirectly. It knows no boundaries, touching families and individuals from all walks of life. But events like this remind us that we are not alone in this fight. The gala served as a beacon of hope, celebrating resilience and the strength of those fighting this disease. The foundation has consistently gone above and beyond, not only raising awareness but also providing critical support to vulnerable individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the organizer, Navneet Sharma, volunteers and everyone who contributed to making this evening a success. Your dedication and compassion are truly making a difference in the lives of so many across our community.

Let us continue to stand united in the fight against cancer and support organizations like the Cancer Warrior Canada Foundation, whose commitment inspires us all.

#### RIDING OF SCARBOROUGH– GUILDWOOD

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** As I stand here today, I reflect on the 16 months since I became the elected representative for Scarborough–Guildwood. During my campaign, I knocked on thousands of doors where I heard deep concerns about health care, education and affordability.

Fast-forward to this summer, my experience while knocking on hundreds of doors has taken a more sombre turn. The fear in their eyes is evident. What began as a concern 12 months ago has now transformed into anxiety about their future and basic quality of life. Seniors want to age in their homes, yet many don't have a family doctor. Those on fixed incomes are forced to choose between medication and food, often ending up at food banks. Young families are struggling with 70% of their income going towards rent, while graduates find themselves living with their parents due to a lack of job opportunities. Many are just one paycheque away from homelessness.

With 19,000 people in Scarborough–Guildwood without a family doctor, an average salary of just \$48,000 and a child poverty rate of 34.1%, it's clear that my constituents deserve better. This is why I am here, fighting for their basic human rights and advocating for a better quality of life for all who call Scarborough–Guildwood their home.

#### GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to rise in the House to share updates about the newest investments and business development in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Last week, I welcomed our Minister of Rural Affairs to the city of Kawartha Lakes to showcase how the Rural Economic Development Program, known as RED, has made such a difference in my communities. We visited the Coboconk Norland and Area Chamber of Commerce, who received up to \$250,000 through the RED Program to renovate the historic Coboconk train station into a community hub and business incubator.

We travelled to Fenelon Falls to see how the Fenelon Falls and District Chamber of Commerce has been working with the RED investments to enhance their downtown revitalization action plan. These investments generate new partnerships and develop enhanced training for employees. These announcements build on the \$833,000 in previous funds from the RED Program. Since 2018, there have been 17 RED projects in towns and communities all across Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Thank you to the Minister of Rural Affairs and our government for prioritizing economic development in rural Ontario. I also want to thank our local chambers of commerce, BIAs and municipalities for their strong vision in facilitating innovation and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that small businesses are the backbone of our economies in rural Ontario.

#### ROB FLOSMAN

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** It's my pleasure to rise this morning to recognize the dedication of a wonderful teacher in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook. Rob Flosman, a history teacher at Waterdown District High School, will be retiring at the end of this school year after a very, very impactful career.

Ten years ago, Mr. Flosman encouraged students to connect with history as well as their community. What began as a high school history project—creating projects, curating artifacts and acting as museum guides—has now turned into a year-round museum on the First and Second World Wars.

The museum had always been housed at the high school. However, due to the increasing number of artifacts, Mr. Flosman and his students began looking for a permanent location for the collection. Well, as of November 11, 2023, the Waterdown Museum of Hope is now open year-round at the Waterdown Legion for all of our community to enjoy.

#### 1030

I'd like to thank Mr. Flosman and the faculty and students at Waterdown District High School for all their hard work on this project. Mr. Flosman and the students of Waterdown District High School invite everyone in the Legislature to come to the next opening, May 5 to 11, 2025. That is where they will honour the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands as well as the end of World War II.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** I would like to welcome Greg Bostajian, the honorary consul of Lebanon in Toronto. He is here today to celebrate the 81st anniversary of the national day of Lebanon. Around 12 o'clock, there will be a flag-raising outside, and everyone is welcome to join.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I had a wonderful meeting this morning with president and chief executive officer of St. Joseph's health care, Roy Butler; director of forensic

mental health care program at St. Joseph's health centre, Kent Lewis; and Gary Chaimowitz, head of forensic psychiatry program, professor, department of psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences, faculty of health sciences, McMaster University. I want to thank them so much for coming to Queen's Park and talking about the importance of forensic mental health care in our province.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** I have a few guests to introduced today. I want to thank the Retired Teachers of Ontario, who I met with this morning, and their board members John Cappelletti, who's the chair; Claudia Mang; and Muriel Howden.

I would also like to introduce Karim Mamdani, the president and CEO of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and chair of Mental Health Partners; Sarah Downey, the president and CEO of CAMH and vice-chair of Mental Health Partners; Dr. Nadiya Sunderji, the president and CEO of Waypoint; Rob Desroches, the chair of Forensic Directors Group of Ontario; Dr. Sumeeta Chatterjee, vice-chair, Forensic Directors Group of Ontario; and Dr. Gary Chaimowitz, member of the Forensic Directors Group of Ontario.

Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park today.

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** I'd like to warmly welcome the members of the RTOERO retired teachers' organization, and specifically Lorraine Knowles, Stephen Harvey, David Kendall and Alyssa Buttarazzi, who I will be meeting with later today. Welcome to your House. It's good to see you again.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** I'd like to offer a warm welcome to the University of Toronto Young Liberals here today: Reza Rashidi, Soobin Sung, Xavier Baldwin, George Thordarson, Siyar Habibi, Richelle Furtado and Shaun Ganzeveld. Welcome to your House.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** It's my pleasure to welcome students from the Orangeville District Secondary School and their teachers, Mr. Kirk-Elleker and Mr. Barber. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'd like to thank the members from Mental Health Partners group today for their meeting this morning. I'd like to welcome Karim Mamdani, president and CEO of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and chair of Mental Health Partners; Sarah Downey, president and CEO, CAMH, and vice-chair, Mental Health Partners; Mike Heenan, president of St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton; John Chen, vice-president of clinical services and chief operating officer of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences; Cathy—sorry for the pronunciation before I say it—Duivesteyn, Forensic Directors Group of Ontario; and Dr. Treena Wilkie, Forensic Directors Group of Ontario as well.

Thank you for putting a spotlight on people who are in the forensic mental health system and the unique population. I want to thank you for your meeting this morning. It was a lovely meeting.

**Hon. Sam Oosterhoff:** I have a number of lovely folks who are here today from Niagara Falls. We have Jake Sinke, Michael Alexander, Beverly Alexander, Stephen

Magnacca, Sonia Craig, David Eke, Jamie Jones, Michael Paralovos, Mark Taylor, Patrick Harris, Carole Jamestee, Victor Packard, Barbara Cole, Barbara Demney, Gwayne Johnston, Jyoti Desai and Permod Goyal. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I see Sam beat me to introducing a lot of people, but I would like to welcome the Retired Teachers of Ontario here. My wife is a retired teacher, and I know she enjoys her meetings at Betty's Restaurant in Chippawa once a month. That ad was paid for by the government of Ontario.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'd really like to warmly welcome Melissa Kwiatkowski, the head of the Guelph Community Health Centre, who's here today as part of the Alliance for Healthier Communities, which I know are having a reception over the noon hour. Welcome, Melissa.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Speaker, I'd like to welcome Wieslawa Stepkowska and Mr. Jozef Bednarczyk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** If there's agreement in the House, I'd like to continue with the introduction of visitors.

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I'm very happy to welcome to Queen's Park my close friend Mr. Liben Gebremikael, who is an excellent CEO of TAIBU Afro-Canadian health care centre in Scarborough, and Racquel Hamlet, director of wellness and crisis support of the same organization.

Also, I'd like to welcome all the retired teachers to your House.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It gives me great pleasure to welcome retired educators from RTOERO. Welcome to Ontario's most poorly behaved classroom.

**Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam:** I would like to welcome Graham Brown, managing director of Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre, who is sitting in the members' gallery today. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Straight from the centre of the universe, today's page captain is Kamila Mofrad. I want to welcome her mother, Alina, who is visiting today at Queen's Park. I'm looking forward to lunch today.

#### MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Speaker, a point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There's a member who has a point of order? The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I just wanted to rise on a point of order to wish a very happy birthday to the Minister of Energy and Electrification.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### HIGHWAY TOLLS

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is for the Premier. Highway 407 has some of the highest tolls in North Amer-



ica. This week, we learned that those tolls are going up. It's going to cost drivers even more and it's going to further pad the profits of the private corporation that runs it.

My question to the Premier is: He said he would take tolls off all the highways, so why are these tolls going up?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Here are the facts: Highway 412 and 418 tolls were removed. That's a fact. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The NDP opposed removing those tolls. They actually supported the previous Liberal government, who put those tolls against the residents of Durham.

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We've removed \$125 sticker fees off vehicles and trucks as well, because we know that that money is better with the people of this province and not with the government. It's about putting more money back into your pocket.

When we talked about reducing the gas tax by almost 10 cents, guess what? The members opposite have voted against it. In fact, there was a piece of legislation in this House that we put forward saying, "No new tolls, ever again, in this province," and guess what? The NDP and Liberals voted against that.

*Interruption.*

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Waterloo will come to order. The government House leader will come to order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I will.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Yes, you will.

You can start the clock. Supplementary question?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, here's a fact for you: The tolls on the 407 are going up. And we gave this government real and, frankly, immediate solutions: Let's clear the congestion on the 401 and move trucks onto the 407 for free. But what did the Premier and this Conservative government say to that? They said no. The Premier then said that his government had seriously considered taking the tolls off the 407, so we looked into it. Our research shows no record of this government ever exploring removing the tolls.

My question to the Premier is: He said he would remove tolls from all the highways, so why won't he remove them on the one highway that still has them?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

The Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** We have a plan to keep putting money back into the pockets of hard-working families. Like I said, tolls on 412, 418—the members of that caucus over there, who represent those ridings, voted against removing those tolls for residents in Durham region. That's a shame. Putting \$125 back into the pockets of people when we removed the validation sticker fees; those members over there voted against that. When we put forward measures to decrease the gas tax by over 10 cents,

those members, the NDP and Liberals, opposed that every step of the way.

We have a plan to build. We have a plan to relieve congestion across this province, building the tunnel, building 413, the Bradford Bypass and investing in public transit—\$70 billion over the next 10 years.

And guess what? One Fare: \$1,600 saved for each resident in this province. It's a shame that the NDP and Liberals voted against that, because we're increasing accessibility for transit across this province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Final supplementary?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Every day, life under this government gets more and more expensive. That's the truth. People are stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic and when they need to get home to their loved ones safely and faster, they need it now, not decades from now. My goodness, think of the mom trying to get home to her toddler at daycare; she needs to get there now, not in 30 years, not when her kid is 30. My goodness.

Instead of real, immediate solutions, the Premier and his government are so distracted by his fantasy tunnel—while the 407 is sitting empty. They're looking to dig a tunnel under the 401 when the 407 is sitting empty.

Why won't the government stand up to this private company and save Ontarians time and money on our roads right now?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will take their seats. The government side will come to order. The member for Spadina–Fort York will come to order. The Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries will come to order.

Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Why are we in record gridlock today? It's because the Liberals did absolutely nothing to build for 15 years. And guess what? The NDP have opposed every single one of our actions that we have put forward. They refer to public transit projects as "fantasy." Check their record, Mr. Speaker.

Ontario Line, they doubted every step of the way—which is going to move 400,000 people every single day, take 28,000 cars off the road.

The Liberals lack the vision; the NDP don't want anything built.

The Scarborough subway extension: The people of Scarborough for decades have been talking about and calling for relief. And guess what? The NDP voted against that, and the Liberals did absolutely nothing—just talk.

Our government is about having a bold vision for this province to build: to build transit, to build highways and to build for the future generations. They've opposed the Highway 413. They've opposed the Bradford Bypass. They have no vision. They want people stuck in gridlock. They want people stuck—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The Associate Minister of Small Business will come to order.

The next question.

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'm going to go back to the Premier. The only thing this government is building up are their election coffers, off the backs of the people.

The Attorney General insisted this week that the email from the Conservative Party's bagman, their fundraising chair, Tony Miele, assigning fundraising quotas to ministers was just a simple "mistake," I think is what he called it. But a number of Conservative Party fundraisers featuring prominent ministers were planned, curiously, just after that infamous email.

This government has already established a reputation for backroom deals and preferential treatment. So I want to know: Is it standard practice for Conservative ministers of the crown to take donations from lobbyists and individuals with business before their own ministry?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** As I've said before, there are regulations, there are rules, Mr. Speaker. All the parties follow them. We have an open and transparent system. We all raise money. That's what political parties do. It's not a surprise—for those that want to be in the House, those that are in the House. It's part of our democratic system. There are rules in place that are overseen and transparent, they're accountable.

I'm watching the clock, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the member of the opposition, but I will ask it through you when I get the chance in a moment.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That's not how question period works.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Waterloo will come to order.

The supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, you know what? He's welcome to come to the other side in just a few months, and then he can ask us the questions.

Speaker, they changed the rules, right? We know they did. They changed the rules so they could open up their coffers to those donations.

This week, the Conservative Party is hosting fundraisers with the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Health. In each of these ministries, we've seen major policy decisions that seem to benefit a few private interests, whether it's the Therme luxury spa company or the private health care corporations.

Are lobbyists with business before these ministries attending fundraisers for those same cabinet ministers? I'm going back to the Premier on this: What are they getting in return?

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Good government—you don't understand that.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I, in fact, have news for the Leader of the Opposition: We will be sending more members over to sit on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, with a bigger majority next time.

Now, here's a press release headline: "Marit Stiles' Ontario NDP Smashed Yet Another Fundraising Record"—\$1,214,589, with 26,000 contributors. Now, in the September 3 issue of that, they said that there were 1,246 new donors. Well, that means that there are over 20,000 repeat donors, but they don't report most of them, because it's under the \$200 limit. So I would challenge the Leader of the Opposition to release the names of all donors, regardless of amount, if she's so intent on transparency.

*Interjections.*

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

For what I think is the umpteenth time, I'm going to ask the members to refer to each other by their riding name or their ministerial title, as applicable, not by their personal names.

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Start the clock. Final supplementary?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'll tell you what we're not doing: We're not making insider deals with brown envelopes, and we're not being investigated by the RCMP.

The thing is, Speaker, Ontarians have lost trust in their government. The Premier makes deals, insiders cash in, and it is Ontarians who are left paying the price every single time. The 407 tolls are up. People can't get a family doctor. Moms who can't get support for their kids. Families who are trying desperately to find a home they can afford. They can't afford \$1,500 tickets to the Minister of Housing's fundraisers; that's the thing.

Will the Premier finally put an end to the cash-for-access culture and close the loophole so ministers don't take donations from folks who have business before their ministry?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order. The Minister of Energy and Electrification will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** If I have to continue to remind members to come to order—if they ignore the Speaker's request to come to order—I'll warn them and then, eventually, name them if necessary. We're going to have order this morning.

Start the clock. The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** You know, it's instructive: I know we speak through you, Speaker, and that's the way that it should be, but you'll notice I'm looking at you and not the camera, because this is not performative. There are rules and regulations in place. We all follow them. Whether you're in the House, whether you're wanting to be in the House, there's accountability; there's transparency.

The opposition knows this full well: They say there are different rules for cabinet ministers than there are for themselves, but that is simply an admission they will never

be cabinet ministers. I would hope that they would stand with us and uphold the very strong system that we have, instead of giving the impression that somehow the rules and regulations aren't being followed.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** ᑦᑦᑦ, Speaker.

ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ. Good morning. Last week, the chief and council from Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg were here to meet with the government about their public safety state of emergency. They are in a public safety crisis and the government failed to make time to listen to them. If the First Nation had donated to a fundraiser hosted by the Solicitor General, could they have had that meeting they needed?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will take their seats.

Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** In fact, last week—and the member from Kiiwetinoong knows—I immediately called Chief Jeff Skye to speak to him about what was going on in the community that the Nishnawbe Aski police protect. This member knows that I have regular discussions with all First Nations police chiefs on a regular basis.

The member also knows how hard our government, under Premier Ford, has been working to secure extra spaces at the Ontario Police College that are allocated to First Nations police services, and that we will do everything that we can to accommodate their needs. When they have recruits, those spaces must be available. We're going to continue to make sure public safety across our province and in First Nations communities is of the highest priority.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** We're not talking about the police chief, Jeff Skye. We're talking about the leadership of Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg. When we talk about the integrity of government ministers and the integrity of the crown, the only way people can have guaranteed access to ministers is to make a donation. I'm talking about donations of thousands of dollars to attend events that most people can't afford.

Can the government confirm that they are fundraising from groups who have business in their ministries?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

The Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, and with all due respect to the member for Kiiwetinoong: You know, I know and I've been told from the grand chief that there's never been closer contact, more accessibility with our government, with this Premier than any other Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I take 400 calls a day on my personal cellphone for messages that people need help. They know what they need to do. They need to dial my phone number. It's never happened in the history of Canada; it's never

happened in North America. I talk to my friends in the US. They say, "I've never seen someone so accessible."

As I'm having meetings, Jane and Joe and Mr. Smith and Mrs. Smith are calling my cellphone that may need help. But they aren't concerned about it, because never have they ever returned calls when they get a phone call. I take the personal calls, and there's no one in the history of this country that has taken more calls from constituents than I have—simple.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats. The member for Sudbury will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Start the clock.

#### JOB CREATION

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

When the Liberals were in office, Ontario's economy was getting crushed. The Liberals hiked taxes at every opportunity and put up red tape that was designed to prevent businesses from getting ahead. As a result, businesses fled our province in droves, taking good-paying jobs with them.

Our government knew that we had to reverse course immediately if we wanted to rebuild Ontario's economy after more than a decade of Liberal mismanagement. We have cut over 550 pieces of unnecessary red tape that the Liberals put in, and we are ensuring that the conditions are there for businesses to succeed. Companies across the world know that Ontario is open for businesses.

Can the minister please share details on any job-creating investments that have landed in Ontario recently?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll once again remind the members to make their comments through the chair.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Yes, I can, as a matter of fact. Yesterday, we welcomed a \$100-million investment from Hitachi Rail into North York. Hitachi Rail is a leading partner to the world's best transportation companies. Their investment will allow them to advance the engineering and design of their own Ontario-created train control system. This is using cutting-edge technology: AI, 5G. This creates a hundred new jobs at Hitachi. Those 100 new people will join the existing 1,000 employees at Hitachi. This is yet another vote of confidence in Ontario's thriving business ecosystem.

Speaker, our government has created the conditions for businesses to succeed and, as a result, we are seeing businesses invest, expand and create good-paying jobs at an unprecedented rate.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you for the minister's hard work in his portfolio. Our government understands that the competition needs to land important investments, and they're ramping up from countries across the world. That's why we're working to lower the cost of doing business in the province: to ensure that the conditions are there for businesses to invest, expand and create good-paying jobs.

As a result, companies from across the world are investing in our province at record levels. I know this personally, because Thornhill has several expanding companies and they're also investing in Ontario. These companies could go anywhere in the world, but they chose Ontario. They know they have everything they need here to succeed, from clean and reliable energy to world-class talent. In every region of the province, we see companies scaling up and creating good-paying jobs.

Speaker, can the minister please provide us with details on any other investments that have landed in the province recently?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Last week, we welcomed a \$130-million investment from Roche Canada. Roche is expanding their global informatics division at their existing Mississauga headquarters, and this will create 250 brand new, good-paying jobs in fields such as AI and research and development. This builds on Roche's \$500-million investment they announced recently, which set up a new operations hub in Mississauga, adding 500 engineers.

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Roche's investment is yet another testament to Ontario's growing reputation as a global leader in the life sciences sector, with over \$5 billion in new life science businesses that we've landed here in Ontario. Ontario has become the prime location for global biomanufacturers looking to invest and expand.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**MPP Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier. We've learned that the government has failed to meet its own targets of providing four hours of hands-on care per day for every resident in long-term care in Ontario. We know the cause of the issue: the staffing crisis that the Premier has created in long-term care. According to government documents, we need over 13,000 additional nurses and 38,000 PSWs to provide the proper care for long-term-care residents. Seniors in long-term care deserve better.

When will this government stop breaking its own promises and deliver the care seniors need and, quite frankly, deserve?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** I welcome the question from the member for Niagara Falls because it gives me the opportunity to celebrate the incredible progress we have made on the direct hours of care delivered by our exceptional and committed staff.

Since 2021, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have increased our direct hours of care by 33%. That is over one extra hour of care for every single calendar day for every single one of our 80,000 residents. In total, this results in 15 extra days of care—15 extra days—due to our government's policies and investments: \$1.8 billion into staffing this year alone.

But that's not all. We have also increased the level-of-care envelope by 6.6%, and these investments are being felt by both our staff and residents.

My question back to the member: Was he listening during our estimates?

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

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Back to the Premier: This government spent \$1 billion in 2022-23 on private staffing agencies in health care and long-term care. Private temp staffing agencies cost more than paying permanent staff, which means homes must spend more to achieve the same level of care. Staff turnover in long-term-care homes is high and it won't be fixed until this government commits to paying nurses and PSWs good wages with full-time hours, benefits and pensions.

Will the Premier commit today to stop spending \$1 billion of taxpayers' money on private staffing agency profits, and instead pay nurses, PSWs and front-line staff, who deserve it?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** I do find it strange that the member for Niagara Falls admits to being unaware of our government's achievements when it comes to direct hours of care. I say this because in our estimates just a few months ago, I told him and all the members of the committee the exact same thing that I'm telling you now.

But to refresh his memory, I will quote directly from the estimates meeting: "In terms of our year-three targets, I'm happy to report that we have hit them by the first quarter of year four, so that's significant progress. We've added many minutes into the system of direct care per resident, per day, and we'll continue building on that success. I'm very, very proud of the progress we've made."

When I visited his riding and I visited the Lawson Eventide Home and Oakwood Park Lodge, I spoke to the residents and the staff, and they told me that our investments are working. The PSWs are seeing a reduction in the amount of residents that they have to take care of each and every day, which allows them to spend more time with each resident.

So we'll continue investing in our residents, we'll continue investing in our staff. Our long-term-care sector is in good shape.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Steve Pinsonneault:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Ontario is home to industries

that make things we need. For example, steel is used in schools and hospitals, and cement is used for subways and bridges. These products are called hard to abate because it's tough to cut their emissions, but they're essential for building our province. The truth is the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is making it more expensive to produce these vital materials. Cement, for example, is already expensive enough; this regressive tax is only making the situation worse. This hurts Ontario workers, hurts Ontario jobs and hurts Ontario's economy.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House what actions our government is taking to reduce emissions while supporting businesses and workers?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Thanks to the great member for the question. There are many hard-to-abate industries that produce essential products right here in Ontario: the steel that we need to build our hospitals and schools, the cement to build subways, bridges, roads. Our natural resource sector is being pummeled by the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. It raises the price of all these essential building blocks that we need to use to build Ontario.

That's why yesterday I tabled legislation to enable carbon capture and storage right here in Ontario—right here—technology that captures emissions which can be stored away safely. Ontario is on the cutting edge of innovation and technology that will increase investment, attract jobs and support existing industries, communities and families.

The Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax has got to go. It's driving away innovation and driving away jobs. It's time to cut the carbon tax, get out of the way and let—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Kitchener Centre will come to order.

Supplementary question?

**Mr. Steve Pinsonneault:** Thank you for the minister's response. Ontario's industries are leaders in making products which we depend on, like cement, steel and glass. These industries are the backbone of our economy, but they are also energy-intensive, and cutting their emissions is a big challenge. The Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax isn't helping. It punishes these industries by raising costs, making it harder for them to compete and grow. Families feel these costs, especially when prices go up on everyday goods. Carbon capture technology could be the solution to this problem. It's a smart way to cut emissions without hurting jobs or raising costs.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government's plan for carbon capture could help our industries to reduce emissions and create jobs?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Again, thanks to the member for that question. Moving forward with carbon capture technology here in Ontario is essential to support growth in our province, creating highly skilled, good-paying jobs in communities. It's advanced technology that will, again, capture carbon at the site, at the source, and store it and reduce emissions. Everyone supports this technology. It is in use globally, and it will help energy-intensive industries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by roughly five

million to seven million tonnes per year—that's the equivalent of taking up to two million cars off the road—while creating 4,000 jobs and reducing the price that industry pays: close to \$1 billion a year on carbon.

Carbon storage will revolutionize how we manage emissions in this province and around the world, and, once again, Ontario is leading the way; once again, we are bringing technology to bear that will help our communities, help our environment, help Ontario continue to grow—

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

The next question.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Smart Prosperity Institute reported that this province is falling behind on building affordable housing, and because of the affordability crisis, Ontario is bleeding young, talented people—100,000 young people are fleeing every single year, mostly to Alberta—while Liberal and Conservative governments have ruled this province for over 29 years and they have waited for the market to solve the housing crisis.

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Speaker, all we know is that their failed housing policies have shown us these results. We now have unfathomably expensive home prices, skyrocketing rents, growing encampments and an Airbnb takeover. Ontarians need this government to get back into the business of building affordable housing. It's the only way forward.

Will the Premier reverse the brain drain by admitting that his housing plan is the slowest do-it-yourself project in Ontario history? Or does he think that a policy that's failed for decade after decade will magically start working now?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I don't know where the member has been, because when we started eliminating red tape and making it easier to get shovels in the ground, when we continued on the process of reducing costs, our housing starts were increasing to the highest level ever. Our purpose-built rentals: highest level ever.

It wasn't until interest rates started to increase—thanks to the policies of the federal government, Mr. Speaker, supported by a federal NDP, that caused high inflation and the highest interest rate increase in the shortest amount of time in the history of this country—that we started to see housing starts declining across the province of Ontario.

We're going to double down on what we've been doing, Mr. Speaker. We're going to double down on reducing red tape and making it easier and faster to get shovels in the ground. We've told our municipalities the exact same thing and they are coming on board.

When it comes to affordable housing, we have a National Housing Strategy that is going to be building thousands of homes across the province of Ontario. We're getting the job done, despite the obstacles—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary question? The member for London North Centre.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Speaker, back to the Premier: Ontario's experiencing a brain drain because the Ford government is utterly incapable of building housing. Housing starts are the lowest since 1955 and are only going to decrease further, according to the fall economic statement. Economists point out that Ontario's ideological opposition to building housing has led to record low vacancy rates, soaring rents, record food bank use and an estimated 234,000 people experiencing homelessness.

When people can't find housing, like young graduates, they move. Over the last four years, 100,000 more people have moved out of Ontario than from other provinces into Ontario.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier: When will this Conservative government finally build housing so that our province doesn't face brain drain?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member for Ottawa Centre, come to order.

The Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, let me respond to the member from London North Centre, as he votes against every housing bill we have, against building houses. The NIMBYism in their ridings is unprecedented. Mr. Speaker, if we put out a bill to support housing, they vote against it.

We saw the largest influx of immigration in the history of this country, with over 800,000 people showing up to our province. Let me remind the member, as they voted with the Liberals to chase 300,000 jobs out of our province, there's 850,000 people working today that weren't working last year.

When we talk about the threat that we just received from the Americans—they voted against our nuclear fleet, our clean, green energy. They voted against the critical minerals that we're selling to the US. They voted against the infrastructure, building highways, and they voted against building more homes. That—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa Centre is warned.

The next question.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** For the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker: Everyone in Ontario should have their own family doctor. What does it mean to have your own family doctor? What is it that millions of people in Ontario have been deprived of by the inaction of this government? It's that special relationship that's created when one patient is rostered to one family doctor.

In sports, if you're on the team, you're on the roster. Coaches, staff and management will support you and take care of you. In family medicine, if you're on a family doctor's roster, you're their patient, through and through. You can call and get an appointment any time you like.

You can remain their patient for years, decades or until they retire. They know your file, meaning you don't have to explain your medical history over and over again. They can refer you to specialists the moment that you need one.

Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Health: How many people in Ontario are not rostered to a family doctor and how many more are at risk of being de-rostered in the next five years?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Right back at you: How many doctors did not get the opportunity to train and practise in the province of Ontario because the Liberal government actually cut the number of physician seats in the province of Ontario?

In 2015, we saw the then Liberal government of the day cut by 50 every single year the number of physicians who had the opportunity to train in the province of Ontario. What does that mean? Today, that means over 350 young people did not get the opportunity to train in the province of Ontario and, ultimately, to serve in the province of Ontario. They chose different professions. They went out of our country.

What are we doing, in contrast? We are making investments in our education system, in our primary care practices, multidisciplinary teams. We are getting it done when you walked away.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock for a second.

I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House. Secondly, I'm going to warn the member for Ottawa South. Thirdly, I'm going to warn the Minister for Red Tape Reduction.

Are we keeping track of all the warnings? Good. I hope there aren't anymore but, if necessary, they'll be issued.

Start the clock. Supplementary question?

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** Mr. Speaker, I asked a basic question that should have a factual answer. The Minister of Health won't answer it because she knows it's a big number that she's embarrassed to admit.

Now, there's no doubt this government has failed to secure family doctors for patients in Toronto, Mississauga, Etobicoke, Scarborough and Brampton. But let's look at how this problem affects the northern and rural ridings that the Premier is so quick to neglect: 39,000 people in Bay of Quinte without a family doctor, 31,000 in Chatham-Kent-Leamington, 29,000 in Kenora-Rainy River and on and on and on.

It's no coincidence that in these northern and rural ridings, with so many people not having a family doctor, people are forced to rely more and more on emergency rooms, which are becoming harder to staff and harder to keep open. Ontario suffered 1,300 ER closures in the last year alone, most of them in northern and rural ridings. And so, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Health, another simple factual question: How many municipalities in Ontario don't have even a single family doctor?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** You know, it is interesting that the member opposite conveniently forgets the fact that, earlier

this year—in February, in fact—we expanded the number of primary care practitioner teams in the province of Ontario to 78, the largest expansion we have seen in primary care in the province of Ontario. Those are multidisciplinary teams. Those are nurse practitioners working with family physicians, working with mental health workers, with dietitians, to make sure that those patients are served.

We have the Periwinkle model in Kingston that has, because of that investment this year, meant 10,000 additional patients are being seen. I was in Innisfil two weeks ago, opening a nurse practitioner-led clinic where 10 nurse practitioners are now taking on and rostering patients. Those are the investments that we are making, whether it is working with our colleges and university partners—

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

#### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Gridlock is a problem that every Ontarian knows all too well. At this time, it adds stress and it hurts our economy. Families are stuck in traffic instead of spending time together. Workers face long, frustrating commutes every single day.

For years, nothing was done to fix this. The previous Liberal government talked, but they didn't act. The promises were made, but the projects never happened. Now everyone is paying the price for their inaction. Ontarians deserve better. They deserve roads and transit that work. They deserve solutions that will cut commute times and help businesses thrive.

Speaker, can the minister tell us what our government is doing to end gridlock and build the infrastructure Ontarians need?

1120

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington and the parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** My thanks to the member from Brampton West for the question.

Unlike the Liberals and the NDP, we know that doing nothing is not an option. Ontario is one of the best places in the world to live, to work and to raise a family, but to maintain that position we need a strong transportation network. That's why we're building historic projects such as Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass.

My colleague is completely correct: We need to keep building our future. We need to cut red tape to get the shovels in the ground sooner. That's why we've brought forward the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act. This legislation will speed the construction of Highway 413, of the Bradford Bypass, the Garden City Skyway bridge and other future priority highway projects.

Speaker, these projects should have been built years ago. We're in this gridlock crisis because of the previous government. We are the only party with a—

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

Supplementary question?

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** The people of Ontario are tired of sitting in traffic. They're tired of losing hours of their day just trying to get where they need to go. Workers are losing time at home with their families. Businesses are losing money because deliveries are delayed. For too long under the previous Liberal government nothing was done to fix these problems. Gridlock isn't just an inconvenience, it's a major drag on our economy and quality of life.

The costs keep piling up and the delays hurt everyone. Ontarians deserve better. Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please share more about what measures our government is taking to help get these critical projects built faster and to reduce gridlock for all Ontarians?

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** Thank you again to the member from Brampton West.

Unlike the previous Liberals and the NDP, our government is taking steps to address and tackle gridlock. Gridlock costs our economy \$11 billion every year. We simply can't afford to do nothing and let the problems get worse, like they had done. We're taking action to build new highways in our growing communities, such as Peel and York region.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act will allow around-the-clock 24/7 construction on priority highway projects. Speaker, we're already seeing the results, the benefits of 24-hour construction on the Gardiner Expressway, where construction is four months ahead of schedule.

We won't stick to the status quo. We won't do nothing. We are focused on building for our future.

#### JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is for the Premier. Last year in Ontario, every six days, on average, a woman or child lost their lives due to men's violence. Last year, 62 women were murdered in Ontario. This is an epidemic.

Preventing intimate partner violence is also about holding those responsible accountable and ensuring justice is served. We cannot do that when 56% of criminal cases are being withdrawn, stayed or dismissed simply because our courtrooms are understaffed and underfunded. In fact, in 2023, 1,171 sexual assault cases were dismissed because of delays.

The government needs to be tracking how many of these cases are being dismissed, but the government refuses to do so. They are scared for the public to learn how badly you are failing on the justice system. Survivor Emily Quint describes her court experience as "horrific." Her rapist walks free today.

When will this government live up to your tough-on-crime rhetoric?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Again, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Our prosecutors are actively engaged in case management and getting resolutions as quickly as possible. This is a very important area. The

opposition—I'd have to check the record to be 100% positive, but I'm pretty sure that they voted against even Keira's Law.

They talk a good game, but we're in the trenches doing the work, Mr. Speaker. We're adding capacity, whether it's the 25 net new judges, the largest increase in the history of the province. We're adding logistics, we're adding prosecutors, we're adding victim support services. We're adding across the board to make sure the capacity is there. And we are tracking cases. We track anything that's in danger of an 11(b) challenge, and supervisors, the crown managers, can access that data.

So we are, in fact, making sure that we're holding people to account. It would be great to have the NDP support us at any point in time.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Well, I'm quoting the stats, Speaker, and someone with a King's Counsel designation surely should know what's actually going on in the justice system in Ontario.

Why is this government so afraid of transparency in justice funding? We need transparency and accountability into where the money is going. This hits close to home for many of us. Just last week, your former member Randy Hillier had his charges stayed due to court delays. His charges included assaulting a peace officer, police officer. Why are you okay with this? This is not okay. Mr. Hillier waited 31 months and 13 days for his day in court but now walks free because his right to be tried within a reasonable time had been violated. This is your court system, as the Attorney General in Ontario. We must—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll remind the member to make the comments through the Chair.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you.

We must adequately fund and staff our courts. My Bill 189, Lydia's Law, would hold the Attorney General and this entire Legislature accountable for failing survivors of sexual assault.

So I have one question: When will this Premier hold the Attorney General accountable for a failing justice system?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Mr. Speaker, we are fixing a system that was left in disrepair. For the first time in over a decade, we are clearing more cases than we are bringing in.

This is what the Liberals were up to, supported by the NDP: They were letting cases stack up; we have reduced the backlog through COVID by 48%. So we'll take no lessons from the performative NDP, who are doing nothing to support the investments we are making in the tens and hundreds of millions of dollars.

The \$166-million case management filing system that is cutting edge: They voted against it. The 25 net new judges: They voted against it. The 190 new crown attorneys and victim support workers: They voted against it. I'll take no lessons from them.

## NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** My question is to the Minister of Health. Almost seven months ago, the minister announced that the government would be enhancing the Northern Health Travel Grant after years of advocacy by residents in northern Ontario.

My question is simple: Why are northerners still waiting?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I'm happy to follow up with individual examples, but in fact, we had made the changes, as were announced in the budget. I'm proud of the investments that we're making to enhance the Northern Ontario Travel Grant. But I'm also proud that we are making investments so that people don't have to travel as far to get service. When we make announcements that have MRIs in communities and in hospitals that didn't have them previously, when we make announcements in places like Thunder Bay, where we're ensuring that there is access in their community, we're actually working to ensure that fewer people have to access the Northern Ontario Travel Grant.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Again to the Minister of Health: All the funding promises in the world don't matter if the money isn't getting to the people who need it.

Over a year ago, I introduced legislation to improve the Northern Health Travel Grant under Bill 13. We heard from hundreds of northerners who want equal access to health care and who were pushing this government to address the shortfalls in the program. Finally, this government made a funding announcement in April. But now that it has come time to deliver, they are nowhere to be seen. My office has sent multiple requests to the ministry on behalf of constituents who need to know when they can access the funding that they were promised. The ministry has yet to even acknowledge those requests from myself and other MPPs in the Legislature. People in northern Ontario deserve equitable access to health care. They shouldn't be deciding between getting the treatment they need or the bills they are paying.

Minister, will you answer my constituents' questions and tell them when the \$45 million you promised will be delivered?

1130

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Again, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Health to reply.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** It's actually \$48 million, if you want to be specific, which I do, because they are investments that we are making in northern Ontario.

Not only have we made it easier through the work of red tape reduction to make sure that people can easily process online applications, but, in fact, we've also enhanced it. Starting on December 1, we have an additional enhancement that says 200 kilometres is going to 100 kilometres, \$75 per night for accommodation and expanding eligibility to include medical travel companions accompanying a patient. This, of course, is separate and apart from an enhanced investment that we have made jointly with the Ministry of Finance to actually ensure IVF is also



covered through a tax credit and additional access, including in northern Ontario.

#### NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Ross Romano:** My question is for the Minister of Northern Development.

Northern Ontario is home to hard-working people and strong communities, but we all know that the north faces unique challenges. Small businesses often need help to grow and to stay open, municipalities need help keeping local facilities in good shape and Indigenous communities deserve better access to opportunities and to support. Individuals and families want to know that our government is listening and that we are making real investments that will improve their lives.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has a proven track record in strengthening the north. It creates jobs, fosters economic growth and supports vital community infrastructure. Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how the NOHFC fund is supporting northern and Indigenous communities and businesses throughout all of northern Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the parliamentary assistant and member for Brantford—Brant.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you to the member from Sault Ste. Marie for the question, and I appreciate his tireless advocacy for the north. Last week, the minister had the opportunity to travel to northeastern Ontario to announce dozens of investments our government is making to increase economic opportunity in the north.

In Iroquois Falls, we announced that our government is providing more than \$580,000 through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. to four economic development projects in the region. This investment will improve municipal infrastructure and support physical activity for locals and visitors in northeastern Ontario. This investment will provide \$429,000 for the town of Iroquois Falls to install a new roof membrane on the Jus Jordan Arena and sports complex to ensure the facility is safe and structurally sound, and it includes \$67,000 for the Abitibi Golf Club to renovate the clubhouse, purchase equipment to improve and extend the life of the clubhouse and course, and make the facility more suitable for hosting events for club members and for the broader community. We're getting it done for northern Ontario.

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

**Mr. Ross Romano:** We all know how vital northern Ontario is to our province. Its communities are absolutely filled with potential, but they do need support in order to be able to thrive. Small businesses have to be able to grow. They have to be able to expand. Municipalities need strong infrastructure to serve their residents. Indigenous communities need investments that are going to create lasting opportunities.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., the NOHFC, is one way that our government is helping. The NOHFC funds projects that make life better for people in the north.

But northerners want to know that our government is serious about its commitment to the region. We've heard about support for Iroquois Falls, but the needs of the north go beyond one single community.

Can the minister please explain how our government is working with the NOHFC to support other northern Ontario communities in order to create good jobs?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you to the member for the question. Our support for northern Ontario didn't stop at Iroquois Falls. Last week, the minister had the pleasure of announcing that our government is investing more than \$2.5 million through the NOHFC to 12 economic development projects in the Hearst region. This investment will expand company operations, improve municipal infrastructure and create good jobs in northeastern Ontario.

For example, there is \$500,000 for Moose Cree First Nation to upgrade the community heating infrastructure by replacing its fossil fuel-based heating system with a renewable biomass-powered heating system, which will lower heating costs for that First Nation. Also, Speaker, \$435,000 for the town of Smooth Rock Falls to repair the Reg Lamy Cultural Centre, helping maintain a vital facility to support local sports such as curling, golf and hockey, and also \$271,000 for diversified forestry products.

These investments in Hearst and Ontario's northeast will pay dividends in communities and key industries, and we will continue to work with partners to bring jobs, infrastructure and services to the north.

#### NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

##### SUBVENTION AUX RÉSIDENTS DU NORD POUR FRAIS DE TRANSPORT À DES FINS MÉDICALES

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** My constituents are still waiting for a long-overdue update to the Northern Health Travel Grant. It is unacceptable that northerners are forced to pay out-of-pockets for health care that every Ontarian is entitled to.

My question is to the minister. Minister, do you find it is okay that people pay \$300, \$400, \$500 for rooms? And when can they expect that? We've sent letters. We've sent you communications. We tried to get answers for these people, for our constituents. No answers. When can they expect this travel grant to come into effect?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** It fascinates me that we talk about specifics, and they don't actually highlight that we are enhancing the northern Ontario travel grant. So, as we said in the budget, we are announcing and we are expanding access in the fall. We are doing that as of December 1. But even prior to December 1, we have already improved access to ensure that people can do much more of their filing online so it's more convenient. We are not relying on the mail to make sure that people submit their information.

I have to say that it was actually the Minister of Red Tape Reduction that brought forward that suggestion. We were able to act very quickly on it. So that is an example of when we hear and learn about good ideas, we are happy to enhance and present them. The other enhancements, as I've said, December 1.

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

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** J'apprécie la réponse de M<sup>me</sup> la ministre, mais le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre—on a du monde qui attend depuis belle lurette pour être capable de recevoir leur argent. Il y a des commettants qui sont obligés de payer du monde pour les conduire pour aller à Sudbury, aller à Timmins. Puis on attend toujours le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre, la date que vous venez d'annoncer, mais il y a du monde qui a de vrais besoins dans le Nord. On n'a pas de spécialistes, on n'a pas les soins que le Sud a.

Le « travel grant » est une solution pour nous, madame la Ministre, puis d'attendre et de garder ce monde-là sous tutelle ou sous pression—on apprécie les changements qui étaient de belle lurette. Ça fait longtemps qu'on attend, qu'on avait besoin de ces changements-là.

Même encore, le monde demande si c'est assez, parce que je peux vous dire que les chambres d'hôtel à 175 piastres, on s'entend, ce n'est pas cher. Puis on le sait, c'est dur à trouver. Même, on ne les trouve pas. Mais on a une situation qui se passe, comme c'est là, dans le Nord qui est inacceptable.

Le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre va-t-elle être la date finale ou allez-vous encore faire attendre ce monde-là que vous continuez de faire attendre? Parce que c'était dans le « fall economic statement », on l'avait dans le budget de l'automne, et le monde attend encore. Pourtant, c'était supposé de venir à l'automne. Il y a du monde qui a besoin du « travel grant ». C'est un grand besoin pour le Nord. Madame la Ministre, respectez vos engagements et donnez le « travel grant »—

**Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott):** Merci.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** As I said, Speaker, December 1 is when the enhancement will happen. But I also want to highlight some of the things that we've been able to do to ensure that people don't have to continuously rely on the northern Ontario travel grant, and that is, of course, 49 new MRI machines in the province of Ontario in our publicly funded hospitals, where people will not have to travel great distances. We have seen enhancements in the number of MRIs, in the number of CTs, in the number of accesses to programs that are happening in our northern communities.

Why are we doing that? Because we understand that it can be very stressful for a patient and their family to travel great distances to access these services. That is why our government will continue to enhance access for diabetes care, for cancer care, for diagnostic services, so that people don't solely and exclusively have to rely on the northern

Ontario travel grant. December is when you will see those enhancements come into play.

## SENIORS' SERVICES

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** My question is to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. We all know how important it is for seniors to stay healthy and connected. When seniors feel isolated, it impacts not just their mental health but also their physical well-being. We've heard from families and communities who are concerned about loved ones feeling alone. In many cases, simple solutions like staying active or having a place to meet could make a big difference. We need to make sure that seniors in Ontario have the resources they need to live healthy, happy lives.

Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to help seniors stay active, healthy and connected to their communities?

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I'd like to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for that very important question. It has been my number one mission to help seniors avoid social isolation so they can have the best quality of life. That is why, thanks to Minister of Finance Bethlenfalvy, we increased funding for senior active living centres from \$42,000 last year to \$50,000 this year and \$55,000 next year. This includes over \$51,000 for the Tecumseh Senior Active Living Centre so seniors in the member's riding can stay fit, healthy and socially connected.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. That concludes our question period for this morning.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I'd like to welcome Flemingdon Health Centre, here for the allied health luncheon today, including their CEO, Jen Quinlan, and her team.

## MOTIONS

### POET LAUREATE OF ONTARIO

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order. The government House leader.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the new Poet Laureate.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Clark is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the new Poet Laureate. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize, again, the government House leader.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I move that, in accordance with subsection 1(2) and section 2 of the Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In Memory of Gord Downie), 2019, S.O. 2019, c. 16, Matthew-Ray Jones be appointed Poet Laureate of Ontario for a term of two years, commencing on November 26, 2024.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Clark has moved that, in accordance with subsection 1(2) and section 2 of the Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In Memory of Gord Downie), 2019, S.O. 2019, c. 16, Matthew-Ray Jones be appointed Poet Laureate of Ontario for a term of two years, commencing on November 26, 2024.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?  
Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** This is a petition from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. It expresses their considerable concern about the government's plan to close supervised consumption sites.

They are asking the government to reverse its decision to close safe consumption sites, to ensure that they are adequately funded, and to take a harm reduction approach to addressing the addictions crisis in Ontario.

### ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I have another stack of petitions from people in my riding who are wanting to save the Ontario Science Centre. They believe that the current building is an iconic structure, and they want it to stay there. They don't want a smaller facility at Ontario Place. They don't want the public funds of \$500 million to be spent on a parking lot. They don't think that there was sufficient consultation, environmental impact or a sound business case, so they would like it to remain where it is. They want it to remain a pioneering science museum, where it was designed to be, in the Don Valley, by the late architect Raymond Moriyama, because moving it risks the livelihoods of local residents from priority neighbourhoods. That location has been a vital access and resource to people in my community of Thorncliffe Park, including children who walk to school visits there.

I had a school visit last week who said it's the first time in their 70-year history that they've not been able to visit the science centre.

These people are petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reconsider the decision to undermine the science centre and relocate it, to prioritize renewing it at its current location and to conduct comprehensive public consultations and environmental impact assessments for any proposed changes.

I support this petition. I'll affix my signature and deliver it to page William.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** To summarize to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario about the federal carbon tax that has led to significant increases in the cost of living—it really has been a tipping point for poverty. I have petitions signed here, but I hear it daily from my constituents—the hardships that they're enduring, and the fact that the carbon tax is the leading cause of their impoverished state, can I say, and that we already know many Ontarians are facing struggling times. I can go on to my farmers, leading to the cost of groceries, to the cost of just doing everything in daily life.

This petition is signed by many people.

I want to make sure to emphasize that the carbon tax is actually just cruel punishment for the people of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll remind the members to summarize their petition briefly and not make additional political commentary relating to the contents of the petition.

Petitions?

## AIR QUALITY

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm pleased to rise today to table a petition on air quality for our children in schools and child care centres.

We know that good-quality air has an important impact on our children's health, both reducing the spread of infectious diseases and reducing the incidence of chronic infections, like asthma. It reduces absenteeism and boosts worker morale. Also, it boosts test scores in math and reading.

So the quality of air in our schools and child care centres is very important, but, currently, we don't know what the air quality is. Other jurisdictions, like Quebec, actually monitor the air quality and regularly report on it. This petition signed by people from across Ontario is saying that children and workers in Ontario deserve no less, and they are calling on the Legislative Assembly to support and adopt the Improving Air Quality for Our Children Act, 2023.

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition. I will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Maadhav.

### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** For the petition that I have to read today, I'd like to thank the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. This petition is entitled "Petition for Continued Operation of Supervised Consumption Services and Associated Harm Reduction Programs." This petition is about listening to the front line.

They indicate in this petition that every 2.5 hours, someone dies in Ontario, and that's with the current amount of supervised consumption services open in Ontario.

This petition calls upon the government to not only ensure that people have a right to health care—which is what these sites provide. They also help alleviate injuries,

hospitalizations, HIV and hepatitis infections. This petition calls upon the government to reverse its decision to arbitrarily close these places, make sure that they're adequately funded, and recognize and respect the importance of harm reduction as part of the continuum of care for treating opioid addiction.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it with page Jack to the Clerks.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I have a petition here that is about the federal carbon tax. It is speaking about the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicating that the federal carbon tax is a net financial loss to households in Ontario. It talks about inflation, and it talks about rising costs on households. It talks about the carbon tax having a disproportionately negative affect on low-income households. It also talks about the fact that the carbon tax reduces the purchasing power of low-income households and worsens economic inequality.

In summary, it calls upon the Legislature to oppose the federal carbon tax because of its negative effects on Ontario farmers—families. I might as well add farmers, as well.

I will endorse this petition because I support it. I'll give it to this excellent page, Laura, and ask her to bring it to the centre table, where the Clerks sit.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Again, I'll remind members to briefly summarize the petition but not add additional political commentary to the petition summary.

1510

Petitions?

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I'm very honoured to rise in the House and table this petition entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates," given to me by the redoubtable Professor Sally Palmer at McMaster University—I think, emeritus professor—who I want to thank for her friendship over the last number of years. She has raised with me, as have other advocates, the important cost-of-living issues and difficulties that people on social assistance go through every single day.

The petition signees are asking for a doubling of social assistance incomes, which is the standard we had for the CERB when we were in the middle of the pandemic and people were unemployed because of the worst viral infectious disease we had ever seen. Dr. Palmer and the advocates behind this petition are asking us to apply that same standard to people who, because of their chronic health conditions, are unemployed.

I salute the folks—Teresa Lovato, Charlene Smith, Jeff Cass, and others—who have given this to me. I'm going to sign this and send it with page Juliet to the Clerks' table.

#### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I, along with Jim and Pat, agree that supervised consumption services and associated harm reduction programs should continue. It's noted, through them, that a person dies every two and a half hours from the toxic drug supply here in Ontario, which is really a shame. Supervised consumption sites, also known as consumption and treatment services, have been instrumental in preventing thousands and thousands of deaths across Ontario from toxic drug supply.

Speaker, closures of the SCS sites will increase the number of preventable deaths, injuries, hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and HIV and hepatitis.

The provincially commissioned review of South Riverdale CHC found it desirable to maintain and enhance funding for the SCS sites.

Closing of SCS sites will lead to increased drug use in public places.

Lo and behold, it's noted in this House that they are making up, I feel, their own opinions—and it will increase drug use in public spaces, if you close these sites.

Jim and Pat are with us. They want to let the government know that we have to reverse the decision to close SCS sites and ensure all established SCS sites remain operational and adequately funded. That's the key. It definitely has to be adequately funded—and increasing funding for the SCS sites.

I fully support this. I think it's common sense. I'll affix my name to it and send it down with Alina to the Clerks' table.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer. I'm here to present a petition that calls for the doubling of ODSP and OW and a basic income related to CERB. We know that the amounts that people receive from the government aren't enough for a roof and food, so we ask that the government take this into consideration and lift people out of legislated poverty.

I support this petition. I'll pass it to Aida and affix my signature.

#### SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** This petition is entitled "Stop the Cuts to Student Transportation!" I would like to thank all the parent councils living and working in Thunder Bay who organized getting this petition circulated and signed.

The issue is about the cuts to student transportation services and the risk that this is putting students at, particularly in the north, where we don't have the infrastructure. Lots of places have no sidewalks. Kids have to walk along the highway. It can be extremely cold.

The petition requests that the Ontario government and Ministry of Education grant a northern and rural exemption to the busing eligibility requirements so that students can get to school safely.

I full endorse this, and I will give it to Mahee to present.

#### EHLERS-DANLOS SYNDROME

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it is on behalf of people in Ontario, including local community members like Liza, who are suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome.

I'm not a pro on EDS, but EDS victims suffer severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, heart problems, mobility issues, digestive disorders. Frankly, many people with EDS have considered not continuing to live because of how painful and how destabilizing EDS is.

Apparently, people with EDS have been advocating for quite a while to the Ontario Ministry of Health—even former Conservative MPPs who are parents of people with EDS.

The community is urging the Minister of Health to provide funding to hire at least one neurosurgeon in Canada who specializes in EDS, so that EDS sufferers and survivors don't have to travel to the States and pay thousands of dollars out of pocket.

I support this petition. I'm signing it on behalf of Liza and many others across this province who are trying to live and get by with EDS. We need to help them.

#### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'm here to present a petition to save our safe consumption sites. Every two and a half hours, somebody dies because of toxic drugs. We know, in my community especially, that they prevent deaths, they protect people from infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis, and they reduce hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

We're worried. I share RNAO's worries that there will be lives lost, there will be more public drug use, there will be more spread of infectious disease because of the closure of these sites, which protect our overall well-being in our communities and are fiscally responsible. Preventing disease is better and cheaper and more humane.

I support this petition. I will put on my signature and pass it to page Elyse.

#### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** This is a petition entitled "Protect Public Health Care." It draws attention to the fact that there has been an increase in the number of for-profit medical clinics that are providing primary care operating in Ontario, even though that's a violation of Ontario law and federal law.

There has also been a situation where a lot of people do not have access to a family doctor. Speaker, 500,000 people in Toronto do not have a family doctor.

This petition is calling for an investigation and a ban on clinics that charge exorbitant annual fees for medically

necessary services, as is the law, and also to call on the government to invest in primary care.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have with us in the lower gallery, the Speaker's gallery, this afternoon a very special guest who is the new Poet Laureate for the province of Ontario: Matthew-Ray Jones.

Welcome, and congratulations on your appointment.

Joining Matthew in the gallery are family members Lorna Patrick, Elijah Linton-Jones, Shiloh-Zion Marincic-Jones, Anaiah Marincic-Jones and Sariah Marincic-Jones.

Once again, welcome to the Legislative Assembly. We're delighted to have you here.

1520

#### OPPOSITION DAY

##### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I move that, whereas cabinet ministers are responsible for billions of taxpayer dollars and make important decisions that impact people's everyday lives; and

Whereas Ontarians have watched this government consistently make policy and funding decisions that benefit their donors at the public's expense; and

Whereas the fundraising activities of this government's ministers, and their apparent coordination with their party, is a continuation of the cash-for-access culture from the former Liberal government; and

Whereas this has led Ontarians to believe that they must make political donations to ministers in order to be heard and to get things done; and

Whereas it is not acceptable for ministers of the crown to raise large sums of money from stakeholders with active files within their ministries;

Therefore, in the opinion of the House, the government must close loopholes and strengthen the rules in the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, to prohibit ministers from accepting personal benefits connected directly or indirectly to their duties and to end cash-for-access in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Ms. Stiles has moved opposition day number 4.

Would the Leader of the Opposition care to lead off the debate?

I recognize the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good afternoon. I want to start by saying that everywhere I go in this beautiful province of Ontario, whether it's Thunder Bay or London or Peterborough or Windsor or Tweed, I hear the same thing from people. They feel like they're falling further and further behind, no matter how hard they work. They're struggling with skyrocketing housing costs that make saving for a home feel absolutely impossible. Grocery bills keep climbing. Families wait hours, days or even weeks to see

a doctor or a nurse, if they can find one at all. Imagine saving for a holiday. That just seems completely impossible for most Ontarians right now.

Ontarians are working harder to build better lives for their families—but this government? It's clear their priorities lie elsewhere. Instead of tackling the real issues that people are facing, like the housing crisis, the family doctor shortage, the crumbling schools and the rising cost of living, this government is focused again and again on helping their friends, their donors, their insiders get ahead.

Today we are here to talk about one of the clearest examples we've had of this: the Conservative government's cash-for-access culture.

I want to start with the facts. Under this government, pay-to-play politics has become the norm. Cabinet ministers are being handed fundraising quotas, explicit targets that they're expected to meet. Stakeholders, many of whom are actively lobbying the government for changes on all kinds of files, are told to buy tickets to exclusive fundraisers. Some organizations even keep detailed donation tallies, like a score card, to present to the ministers. The thing about this is that it's not just unethical; it's why life keeps getting harder for Ontarians. The Premier cuts deals, insiders cash in, and Ontarians are left footing the bill every single time.

I want to take for a moment the greenbelt scandal. The Conservative government tried to carve up one of Ontario's most cherished public assets, the greenbelt, and they tried to hand it over to a small group of developers. Those weren't just any developers; they were party donors, they were insiders, and in some cases, they were guests at the Premier's daughter's wedding. What was the result of all that? A windfall for those folks: \$8.3 billion in land value, to help a handful of the Premier's friends. That wasn't just a betrayal of the public trust. It is now the subject of an RCMP criminal investigation, with a trail of evidence that has been uncovered by the Auditor General. The Auditor General's report showed very clearly that developers with direct access to the Premier's office saw their lands added to the greenbelt carve-out while others who didn't have the same connections were left out. This wasn't ever about planning or about the public interest. It certainly wasn't about housing.

**Interjections:** No.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** No. It was about power, and it was about profit.

Speaker, it doesn't stop there. Last week, we learned about a shocking memo that the Ontario Trucking Association sent to their members. The message was clear: If you want to be heard by this government, you're going to have to pay up. The memo urged their members to buy at least 50 tickets to a fundraiser with the Premier and the Minister of Transportation, and it was called "the only way to win this battle." They even promised to tally up the donations and then present that total to the Minister of Transportation. It is absolutely terrible—I just want to be very clear—that this association that just wants to talk about making our roads safer feels that this is the only way to get the attention of the minister responsible for that file. That is

shameful. But it is no accident. It's not an accident—because the Conservative Party's own bagman, their fundraising head, sent an email directly to cabinet ministers, ministers of the crown, laying out what was expected of them. It doesn't get more blatant than this, and it sends a very dangerous message that democracy is up for sale in Ontario.

No one in this province should feel like they need to pay thousands of dollars just to have their voices heard, but under this government that is exactly what is happening.

I want to talk about some other examples of this.

Let's talk about the private colleges scandal. The former Minister of Colleges and Universities, who's now the Minister of Education, hosted a fundraiser where a third of the attendees were executives from private career colleges—what many people have called "diploma mills." That event raised \$24,000 in donations for that minister's re-election. And what happened next? The Ford government, the Conservative government, changed the rules, making it easier for those very colleges that had just donated all that money to that minister to exploit international students, treating them as total cash cows. These students were promised an education and a future in Ontario. Many of their families gave up everything to send them here. And when we asked this government whether those donations influenced their decisions, what did we get? No answers.

I want to point out as well that many of those students—as I am travelling around the province, and particularly when I'm in Brampton. Let me tell you what happens to those students. They are being trafficked because of decisions that this government made.

What about the Ontario Science Centre? This summer, the government announced out of the blue that the science centre would be closing. They cited the aging roof panels—the same ones, by the way, which are in one in 12 Ontario schools. But while schools were not given a budget to fix their roofs, the Ontario Science Centre was just closed.

Speaker, this government closed the science centre to pad the at least \$650-million Therme spa deal in downtown Toronto that nobody asked for. Everyone knows that's what this was about. It was confirmed when we were able to obtain internal government emails that showed that the Premier's office and the Infrastructure Ontario offices were shaping the narrative around this closure long before the engineering report was even completed. The decision wasn't based on facts. It wasn't based on public need. It wasn't even about the safety of those kids. It was about pushing through yet another vanity project that benefits insiders, the friends of this Premier, not Ontarians.

**1530**

Speaker, this is not governing. This is a grift, and it's Ontarians who are paying the price every single day. While this government is busy helping their friends, it's the families across Ontario who are struggling. We're in the midst of a housing crisis. Young people can't afford to move out of their parents' homes. Families are stuck in

apartments that are too small because they can't save for a down payment. Seniors are wondering how they're going to make it through the month.

I meet seniors all the time who have lost their homes. I met a senior just the other day, 64 years old—Lynn in Ottawa, in Nepean—who lived out of her car for seven weeks before she could finally get into an emergency shelter. That's what it means to be a senior in Ontario right now—just a little bit of bad luck, you're out of there.

While people are dealing with those kinds of challenges, this government is prioritizing the wealthiest and the most well-connected.

Speaker, democracy should not have a price tag.

I want to talk for another moment here about another shocking example of this: the misuse of MZO. This government issued as many MZOs benefiting guests at the Premier's daughter's wedding as the Liberals issued during their entire 15 years in office.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Overachievers.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** You could call that overachievers, yes.

Let me repeat that: More MZOs were handed out at one wedding than the Liberals issued in over a decade.

This is a pattern that has plagued Ontario for decades, though. Both Liberal and Conservative governments have allowed this culture of cash for access, this kind of pay-to-play politics, to just fester in our province.

When the Liberals were in power, we saw that same playbook. Companies seeking lucrative government contracts paid thousands of dollars to attend exclusive fundraisers with key ministers. The Integrity Commissioner at the time warned that those events undermined the public trust. They called for stronger rules to prevent the appearance of conflict of interest.

In fact, the now Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, actually introduced a bill asking the government to specifically outlaw things that were—the appearance of conflict of interest; I'm going to get to that again in a minute.

In fact, when this government was elected back in 2018—my gosh, six and a half long, painful years ago—their government promised to end that culture. They said they'd be different. But what did they do instead? They doubled down.

That's why New Democrats are putting forward a motion today. We're calling on this government to close the loopholes that allow ministers to accept benefits tied to their roles, and we're also asking to strengthen the Members' Integrity Act to end cash-for-access politics once and for all.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve a government that works for them—not donors, not insiders, and certainly not the highest bidder.

While this government has been busy out there helping their friends, New Democrats have been fighting for the people of the province of Ontario. We have tabled bills to clean up corruption, to strengthen accountability. We stood up to the backroom deals, and we've called out the government's failures at every single turn, and we will

continue to do that. We will keep fighting because Ontarians deserve better than this.

I want to say very clearly: Today, this government has a choice. They can support our motion and they can show that they're willing to clean up their act, or they can triple down on the culture of cash for access that has brought us to this very point. I want to be clear here too: If they won't act, New Democrats will. We will do it. I am not going to let government be run anymore by the grifters. I want a government that works for the regular people, for the folks who work so hard to make our province such a wonderful place.

Folks like the Premier take advantage of their position and their power and that privilege to make people's lives better.

I want to say to the people of Ontario, let's be really clear: This money we're talking about is your money. This is money you invested in this province. This is your investment. Public health care—you built that. Public education—that's yours. Don't let them sell it off to the highest bidder.

I'm going to end by saying the people of Ontario are watching. They're watching you, and they're counting on all of us to do the right thing. It's time to end this kind of cash-for-access culture. It's time to change things. It's time to put people first.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad to be able to stand here as a member of the official opposition on an opposition day motion day. For the folks at home, that's an opportunity that the opposition has to share a priority with the people of Ontario, that when we're government—something that we are going to prioritize. Here we are saying that we want to end cash for access in this province.

Speaker, we're debating a motion, and the gist of it is that the government must close loopholes and strengthen the rules in the Members' Integrity Act to prohibit ministers from accepting personal benefits connected directly or indirectly to their duties and to end cash for access in Ontario. Well, that seems like that a goal that I think everyone across the province would expect the government to fulfill, right? People put their trust, they put their dollars in the government of the day, I will add, and this government is taking full advantage.

Here we are wanting them to improve integrity in the province, but we're standing here the day after the Minister of Transportation had a fundraiser with the Premier. His fundraiser and the others that ministers of the crown are hosting are examples of the ministers cashing in on their connections while the people of Ontario have to fight to be heard, to have their issues be understood and be prioritized by this government. We're in a pay-to-play scenario, and that is shocking and problematic.

Global reported, "The Ford government has been on the defensive after it was revealed that cabinet ministers were given fundraising targets for the remainder of 2024—a request that came directly from the PC Party's chief fundraiser."

The Ontario Trucking Association recently posted an online appeal to all of its members to purchase tickets to an upcoming fundraiser featuring the Premier and transportation minister. Why this matters: This is an organization that I would expect and Ontarians would expect would already have the ear of the minister, would already have that relationship, because they're bringing forward issues of safety and transportation and everything to do with the trucking industry.

The trucking association, from their website—I'm pulling their words here. They said, "We face stiff headwinds in these politically charged times: and it is clear staff and the OTA executive can't bring an end to this growing problem" that they've identified.

They said, "Our adversaries and those who seek to gain an illicit advantage ... are emboldened and extremely politically and financially active."

So they've identified that they're in a fight against the almighty dollar to meet with the minister.

They said, "I am calling on every board member and every member to also get involved politically. Please join me on November 25 when" the Premier and transportation minister "will be hosting a small, relatively exclusive fundraiser. I am imploring all of you to attend and raise our concerns with the minister directly.

"Our goal is to sell at least 50-60 tickets to our industry for this upcoming event."

They went on to say that members should see this as "an investment in our industry and for our own businesses."

They went on to say, "We can tally up what our association has raised and present" it "to the minister.

"This is the only way to win this battle—and that's exactly what it is. Everyone must engage," says the president of the Ontario Trucking Association.

#### 1540

This is what Ontarians understand to be the path to access, to accessing decision-makers. Here's the thing: One day, Speaker, I look forward to being a cabinet minister in a government that is going to put the people first, but here we have ministers of the crown who are held to a higher standard and should behave as such. They are ministers of the crown, not ministers of the clown, and they absolutely need to be held accountable. So, if people have to pay to talk to them to bring their issues forward, that is not acceptable; nor is it appropriate, and for the people who don't have that kind of coin, does that mean they don't get their ear?

If I had more time, Speaker, I'd tell you a story about the 413, but for the folks at home, you can read the article: "Friends with Benefits? An inside Look at the Money, Power and Influence behind the Ford Government's Push to Build Highway 413." There are a lot of folks. The developers in that group "are also prolific PC donors, contributing at least \$813,000 to support the party since 2014."

Speaker, this is their story, this is their legacy, and this is our fight. We're in it to win it and remove this cash-for-access government.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** What an honour it is to rise particularly for this debate because, unbeknownst to most people in the province of Ontario, there's a secret gravy train making rounds.

I'm going to miss this place, Speaker. People probably know I'm on my way out. I love this place. I've loved serving this caucus and this leader, but I must admit it has been disturbing for me to learn, as the critic for public transit, that there is a gravy train making its rounds around the province of Ontario, stopping at fundraisers: "Next stop, Minister of Transportation. Next stop, Minister of Finance."

Look, it would be funny if it weren't true. What makes it not funny, Speaker, is that when the cameras are off and ministers are out in the community, they are literally taking max donations from people who work in the same sector that they're overseeing to regulate—the Minister of Transportation; the revelations about the trucking association; brown bags at developer conferences. I mean, I had a resident call me up once, Speaker, and say to me, "Joel, do you ever feel like you woke up on a Canadian episode of the Sopranos?" That is what it feels like around here sometimes.

Do you know what I find disappointing for the Conservatives in particular, Speaker? They used to work with us around this. Before I got here, they were helping us hold the Liberal government to account on cash-for-access scandals.

I will point to evidence from August 24, 2016, when then-Premier Wynne said publicly she would not bring in a ban for cash-for-access fundraisers on cabinet ministers. I will quote her House leader, someone I know very well, Yasir Naqvi, who was then the House leader, who said this would be overly restrictive and it would inhibit cabinet ministers from being able to meet fundraising targets for their local riding associations, asking cabinet ministers to avoid being in rooms with people they're in charge to regulate. That is what Mr. Naqvi said. The voters of Ottawa Centre didn't forget about that. They sent him a clear message in June 2018, and we intend to send another clear message to him at the next federal election.

It was interesting that, August 24, Premier Wynne said, "No, I can't go there, too restrictive; try a code of conduct," but five days later, thanks to intense NDP and Conservative pressure, they turned around and said, "Actually, we've now changed our minds. We're going to ban cash-for-access fundraising."

That was the Conservative-NDP victory when we were in opposition and you were over here. But something happened. There was a metamorphosis that happened—like, reverse metamorphosis, from a butterfly to a slug—where one moment you were a shining light of integrity and you said, "Darn it, you can't do that with the people's money, and that smells wrong," and now, all of a sudden, the joke we say in Ottawa Centre—and I'll end on this, Speaker. The Premier is no longer overseeing cash for access; the Premier is looking at the public services of this



province as an ATM to give to his friends. That's what's happening in the province of Ontario. And there's a lineup to cash out at that ATM, but we are going to stop it. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for her clear message today. We are going to stop him cashing out on hard-working Ontarians who want to get ahead, who want their services, who don't want special deals for the Premier's friends.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the people of Ottawa West–Nepean to speak on the motion put forward by the leader of the official opposition to end cash for access in Ontario.

People in Ontario are struggling. They don't have a family doctor. They're waiting too long at the hospital. They can't pay rent or buy a house. They can't afford groceries and pay the bills. Their kids are in schools that need repairs, in overcrowded classrooms, without a permanent teacher. But instead of focusing on making people's lives better, this government is focused on their own self-interest. You shouldn't need to pay money to a government in order to get a hearing, let alone policy change. But this Conservative government has doubled down on the Liberal policy of cash for access, charging people big bucks to get a hearing with a cabinet minister.

Just last night, the Minister of Transportation held a fundraiser with tickets costing \$1,000. This government's attention to donors and contempt for everyone else is so transparent that the Ontario Trucking Association felt like they needed to donate \$60,000 through the event just in order to get the ear of the government. They asked their members to buy tickets, telling them that they were going to "tally up what our association has raised and present that to the Minister. This is the only way to win this battle."

When the leader of the official opposition raised this situation in the House, the Attorney General kept saying, "It's a level playing field. Anyone can participate." It makes me think of the quote by Anatole France: "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal their bread." Only, in this case, it's the Conservative government in all its majestic equality, offering equal cash-for-access opportunity to rich and poor alike, all for the price of \$1,000 a person.

I want to share a story about someone that I met on the weekend at the Cornerstone shelter on Carling Avenue in Ottawa West–Nepean. The leader of the official opposition was there with me and we sat down with a woman named Lyn. Lyn is 64 years old. She was employed all her life—two kids, a home. And then, as happens in life, Lyn had some bad luck. She had some mental health challenges. Lyn ended up losing her housing. She lived in her car for seven weeks, sleeping in Ottawa parking lots, using gas station bathrooms, trying to find free meal programs during the day. Lyn already had mental health struggles. What do you think living in her car did for her mental health?

After seven weeks, the Salvation Army outreach team connected with Lyn and brought her into a temporary shelter. Now she had a bed to sleep in at night and a place to shower, but no daytime services. So every day, Lyn took the bus downtown to find free meal programs for breakfast and lunch. Supper was crackers, as she travelled back to the temporary shelter to have a bed for the night.

Finally, Cornerstone's emergency shelter for women was able to offer Lyn a space, a space where she is able to stay during the day, where she has access to three meals and where there are services on site. But Lyn still has no idea when she will be able to move on to more permanent housing. Lyn wants supportive housing, but there is no space available in Ottawa right now. In our conversation, Lyn told us repeatedly, "I could never have imagined ending up here. I would never have thought that I would be homeless." Lyn says she hears the same thing from other residents all the time, each one of whom has a similar story of bad luck with no safety net.

Lyn and those residents do not have \$1,000 to donate to the Premier or a Conservative cabinet minister to get their ear. They shouldn't have to have \$1,000 to donate to the Conservative government in order to get their ear. Lyn and those women deserve housing. They deserve social supports. They deserve a compassionate government that understands the importance of a strong safety net. They deserve—we all deserve—a government that is willing to tackle the immense challenges that people are facing day after day without demanding donations in return.

**1550**

It is time to end the cash-for-access culture and to have a government that is focused on making life better for you, instead of government insiders.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's an honour for me to rise today and to add my remarks to the official opposition's motion to bring integrity back to this government, because it's clearly something that they've lost along the way. Despite being shown in the media that their actions are eerily similar to the Liberals' cash-for-access scandal, they can't even admit that they've done something wrong. It's shocking that they won't even recognize this gift.

Now, if we can't fix the members themselves, the very least we can do is put guardrails in place. This motion would strengthen the Members' Integrity Act, and it would end this cash-for-access culture that was started with the last Liberal government. It's awfully ironic that this Conservative government was so vehemently opposed to the Liberals' cash-for-access culture, and yet, here we are. The bar was set so incredibly low under Kathleen Wynne, and yet this government has found a way to slither underneath that low bar—Liberal, Tory, same old story.

Recently, an email from the chair of the Ontario PC Party fund was sent to ministers of the crown. It was even addressed to the ministers. It set minimum fundraising targets and directed them to organize two to five fundraisers, each by the end of the year. What's particularly concerning is that these fundraisers are being held by

ministers of the crown—the ministers of the crown who are responsible for making decisions in a multi-billion-dollar budget with folks who are actively lobbying them, people who have files with them, who are seeking support and recognition from this government.

Now, Tom Parkin of Data Shows indicates that the Liberals actually aren't even all that concerned about today's motion. Like the Conservatives, Liberals love cash for access. I'd like to quote Tom: "Marit Stiles pushes Doug Ford to end his cash-for-access fundraising program, but Liberals say NDP's focus on corruption of public policy by lobby group money isn't a real issue." That should say it all. It's like the Liberals and Conservatives have not learned a thing about cash for access.

Last week's story about the Ontario Trucking Association telling its members to buy tickets for a fundraiser with Premier Ford and Transportation Minister Sarkaria—to say that they are trying to buy as many tickets as possible, to be able to show that to the government, speaks volumes. The association believes that the only way they can possibly advocate for their members is to pony up cash, because that is the culture that has been created by this government.

Last week during question period, I asked the Premier the exact same question that the Conservatives asked the Liberals during their cash-for-access scandal: "Does the Premier acknowledge that setting fundraising targets for cabinet ministers forces them to fundraise from stakeholders with active files within their respective ministries?" The response I got from the Attorney General was incredibly contradictory. I mean, it was all over the place. First, he stated that there were no targets; that the email doesn't exist. Then he admitted that there was an email—oh, "an alleged email"—but the alleged email was mistakenly sent out, but it was only sent out to some people.

I mean, how many sides of this issue could you possibly be on? Which is it? I mean, "The targets don't exist. The email doesn't exist." Oh no, "The email was a mistake," or—wait a minute; let's just go with the simplest answer: The email shouldn't have been seen by the public.

The Conservatives in 2016 asked the Liberals if they "believe that it is appropriate for a minister of the crown to raise large sums of money from stakeholders bidding on projects that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars, where he has the power to give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down?" Well, that's exactly what this Conservative government is doing right now. The Ford government is constantly making policy decisions that benefit their donors and insiders, and hurt Ontarians.

I think about the people who don't have cash and who therefore won't get access with this government. I think about students in the education system who are struggling right now. I think about children who are living with disabilities. I think about seniors who are looking after their adult children who have disabilities, who have no housing, whose health is failing, and they don't know what they're going to do with their adult children because there's no place for them to go. I think about people living

with autism who are constantly ignored by this government.

To this government: Stop filling your pockets and fattening your wallets. Stop cash for access. Focus on the things that Ontarians need. Build affordable housing, fix the health care crisis and make life truly affordable for Ontarians. Stop filling your pockets.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I want to talk about something that might be a little different than what we've already talked about with this cash for access. I want to talk about the advertising that's going on in the province of Ontario. If you go to a radio, every 10 minutes there's an ad on there from the Conservative government telling how great they are. You watch a sporting event—I love my sports. It didn't matter whether it was the Super Bowl. It didn't matter if it was the all-star game. It didn't matter if it was the Oscars. That buy ad cost the government \$8 million.

Do you know who paid for that? Was it out of the Conservatives' fundraising funds? No. Speaker, who paid for it? Help me out.

**Interjections:** Taxpayers.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Taxpayers.

I'm struggling with my throat here, but I've got to get this out.

I go and watch on normal television. What's on there? How wonderful the province is. They show housing that must be in Markham where it's a four-car garage. How many people have a four-car garage? I can tell you I don't, and I'm an MPP. So it's probably the donors that are putting thousands of dollars into their pockets.

Did they talk about Ontario in those ads? Did they talk about the crisis that we're having in health care? Did they talk about education in those ads? Help me out, colleagues. I want to make sure they're listening. They're all on their computers, looking away. Do you know why they're doing that? They're ashamed. They're ashamed that they're using taxpayers' dollars when Premier Ford said, when the Liberals were doing it, that he would never do it, and yet they're doing it every single day.

*Interjections.*

**MPP Wayne Gates:** The good news is, because my colleagues have joined in on this, we woke them up on that side.

**Interjection:** You must have touched a nerve.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I must have touched a nerve.

But do you know what we should be talking about, about those ads? We should be talking about people that are homeless, people that are living in encampments. This is your Ontario, not my Ontario, because I've been here for a lot longer than most of the people who have been here. When I got here, do you know how many encampments we had in the province of Ontario? Anybody know? Zero.

Do you know when I got here 11 years ago, were people using food banks? Not like today. There are record levels of food banks right here in the province of Ontario. And

what's the important part? What's the most important thing today? Bike lanes. Not people for housing.

You know my daughter; I love my daughter. I have three daughters. My daughter is living with me right now. Do you know what she wants to do? She wants to live in a house, wants to own her house. But do you know what? She can't afford it. Young people can't afford housing in the province of Ontario. It wasn't like that 11 years ago. It wasn't like that 30 years ago. It's only been under this government.

And what have you guys done? You go on the radio, you go on TV, you go on the Super Bowl and you're paying with taxpayers' dollars. To me, that's disgraceful that you're using taxpayers' dollars instead of putting it into health care, instead of putting it into education, instead of putting it into our kids and our grandkids, putting it in long-term-care facilities. You sit over there, and you do it every time.

**1600**

Put your hands up, colleagues: How many have seen those ads? Put your hand up. How many hear them on the radio? Steady. You see it on Facebook. You see it everywhere. Most people in the province of Ontario, you know what they think? That Conservatives are paying for it, so it's okay. It's the taxpayers that are paying for those ads. It should stop.

Do you know how much you spend on those ads now? Yell it out, Conservatives, you guys are doing it—\$48 million of taxpayer dollars is spent on those ads. It's disgraceful.

Take that money, put it into health care, put it into education, put it into our seniors. That's what we should be doing. Thank you very much, I'm done—I can't talk any more.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**MPP Jill Andrew:** It's my honour to rise as well and to talk about the NDP official opposition motion put forward by the leader. Essentially what we're calling for is a return of integrity to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. What we're calling for is an end for the cash-for-access, pay-to-play system that, as I understand, began with the Liberals and has only gotten worse under the Conservative government. My colleagues have spoken about the \$1,000 tickets for stakeholders to speak with Conservative ministers, the ministers who are literally creating the policies that can make it or break it for said stakeholder. I don't have to speak too much on that.

Really, what this cash-for-access, pay-to-play system is about is about the haves and the have-nots. The haves get a chance; they get a seat at the table; they get the ear of a minister. The have-nots, the folks who are struggling in homes that are under disrepair, that have landlords who won't answer their emails or their phone calls, they don't have cash for access. They can't speak to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, for instance. The folks who are homeless—I understand we have about 234,000 homeless people in Ontario; 59,000 of those are receiving Ontario Works and ODSP, or ODS-poverty, as I've said

in this building. I can assure you that those 234,000 Ontarians who are homeless and the million Ontarians, and growing, that are touching down in our food banks—I assure you, they can't afford the luxury spa, they weren't called up to see if they wanted to get in on the greenbelt scandal, they probably didn't get to see Taylor Swift when she was in town, and I can assure you that they do not have the ear of the ministers.

If they had the ear of the ministers, we would have a food insecurity strategy in Ontario. We would have an affordable housing strategy, like Homes Ontario, which the Ontario NDP put forth—and this government said no to supportive and transitional homes, essentially saying yes to increasing homelessness, essentially saying yes to increasing people's property tax.

Right now, we're at a crossroads. There very well may be an early election, and people at home need to know that their voice does matter. You might not be able to afford the \$1,000 ticket, you might never get an invite to the backroom reception, but your voice still matters.

I want to read out a poem that one of my constituents, Richard, wrote. It's called *Where Has All the Money Gone?* He refers to the Premier as Doug, but I understand that's unparliamentary, so I will just slip it in—Richard, I'm going to have to call him "Premier." Sorry about that.

Why can't we help our sick and dying?  
Please tell us Premier  
Why can't we help our sick and dying?  
Please tell us now  
Coz the Bradford Bypass bill is really flying.  
Oh, when will we ever learn?  
When will we ever learn?  
Why can't we house our working poor?  
Please tell us Premier  
Why can't we help our working poor?  
Please tell us now  
Coz a luxury spa will cost a whole lot more.  
Oh, when will we ever learn?  
When will we ever learn?  
Where has all the money gone?  
Please tell us Premier  
Where has all the money gone?  
Please tell us now  
Your friends have got it....  
Oh, when will we ever learn?  
When will we ever learn?

Brendan, another community member, wrote:

How will we be remembered,  
When our term here has passed?  
Perhaps the truth differs from what we think,  
When we return through the looking glass.  
Did we let the wicked problems best us,  
Because our parties are so diverse?  
We agreed on the moral compass,  
Just disagreed on how it works.

Did we advance each other's perspectives,  
 In order to right the ship?  
 A ship that has slipped its moorings,  
 Unsettlingly adrift.  
 Did we make Ontario better,  
 With all we left undone?  
 Perhaps too much time was spent posturing,  
 And lest time acting as one.  
 Did we make Ontario better,  
 With all we left undone?  
 Perhaps too much time was spent posturing,  
 And lest time acting as one.

To everyone who's watching, I just want to say: It has been an honour to serve as the MPP for Toronto–St. Paul's.

To every MPP in this House: I'd like to think that we come here to make things better. And by making things better, we must put people over profit. This government has consistently failed on it. And dear goodness, we need a government that's going to get it right.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** It's always an honour for me to get up each day and speak—especially today, to speak on this opposition day motion on behalf of the people in Kiiwetinoong. This motion is important because it seeks to close loopholes but also strengthen the rules of the Members' Integrity Act to prohibit ministers from accepting personal benefits connected directly or indirectly to their duties and to end cash for access in Ontario.

Speaker, when the previous government changed the riding boundaries in the north, they did so to improve representation for the people in the north. The ridings of Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk–James Bay were created to improve representation and to ensure that the voices of people living in Ontario's north would be heard in this Legislature. That is how the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay and I find ourselves here, representing our ridings, but also francophones and First Nations people. We are here because the communities we represent have unique concerns that aren't always met by governments—by this government.

No people in Canada interact with as many complex layers of government and politics as First Nations people. Furthermore, no other people have their relationship with the state defined as much as we do. Historically, we have not seen ourselves in these places where decisions are made about our lives, so it is extra troubling when we see how the government treats not just First Nations people, but regular Ontarians. People who aren't big donors and government insiders.

**1610**

This motion seeks to close the loopholes that are allowing cabinet ministers to raise money and accept benefits from those with business before their ministries. Speaker, in a democracy, no one should feel that they must donate to a cabinet minister in order for that cabinet minister to

be willing to hear their concerns. Real leaders listen to everyone, but I don't see this happening.

Kiiwetinoong is so full of real life, but also real death issues are happening every day. The health care system is in crisis. In northern communities, there are currently 350 unfilled physician vacancies that include over 200 family doctors. The health care crisis in Kiiwetinoong has been getting worse under this government. In 2020, the small town of Sioux Lookout where I live, where I was born, which had a total population of 5,994 in 2022, had 2,844 patients without a family doctor. By 2022, the number had risen to 3,100.

Today when I asked a question to the government about integrity, the Premier said that he would take a call from anyone. He said that again this morning in question period. But words are not enough. He actually said "grand chief," which means he meant Ontario regional chief. He just demoted the regional chief to grand chief.

So today I'm supporting this motion for these people of Kiiwetinoong who aren't able to access the health care that they need. Meegwetch.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** I am rising to support our opposition day motion really to end the practice of cash for access.

Often, I think the goings-on in the Legislature would make great Saturday Night Live sketches—except that the absurdities are real and the consequences to people's lives are real. I think about what we heard about the original email that went to ministers, telling them they had to do so many fundraisers. First, "No, no, there was no email." Then it was, "Oh, the email was sent by mistake," and then after that it was, "Oh, it's okay, we're allowed to do it anyway." So it's very, very entertaining, but disturbing.

Vote buying and the lack of integrity in fundraising: Partisan ads paid for by the public—\$48 million worth of ads. And what did the Conservatives say when the Liberals did it? They said, "No, no, no; that's not right. You shouldn't be using public money to advertise in a partisan way for your own party." But once they were in power—well, we've seen what's happened: \$48 million to promote themselves in a way that people actually think is being paid for by the Conservative Party, but it is not. It's being paid for by the public.

And then fundraising with clients of ministers—is it a problem maybe that everybody over there is already a minister? So everybody has to do the fundraising, right? But in 2017, the Liberals had a very, very bad reputation for cash for access, and so the NDP and the Conservatives worked together to end that. And I remember that, because when I was first running, we had to really puzzle over if I was allowed to go to the spaghetti fundraising dinner or not, because there were rules about when a person could attend a fundraising session.

Well, once the Conservatives were in power, that went out the window, and now there seems to be no limitations whatsoever. So I really ask myself then—I'm thinking a lot about this fundraising event with the transportation

minister, and I'm also thinking about who gets to influence what's going on in that ministry. Because four people died this weekend on the highways in northwestern Ontario. Three of them were driving transport trucks; the other one was driving an SUV. Many, many trucks were in the ditches this weekend. It is happening every week, and people are dying.

Where is the minister supporting those drivers to make sure they get the training they need, that the trucks are inspected and they're driving safe trucks? He's nowhere. Where is the minister in terms of the staffing for the inspection stations? They'll spend \$31 million to build it, so contractors get lots of money. But the workers? They won't pay the workers. They won't provide them with adequate wages and benefits, so they can't staff the stations, so nobody's there. Guess what? The trucks aren't being inspected.

So on we go. We all know how serious it is, and we know that this minister has no intention of doing anything about it, because, frankly, it's not where his money is coming from. The young workers, the new immigrants don't have the money to buy access to a meeting with the minister.

And then I think about what it means when the government undoes something intended to protect the integrity of government. It promotes the exact opposite, changes the rules so that integrity is not part of the game. The game is all about quid pro quo, just like the billions the government wants to give back to employers from the so-called WSIB surplus. Guess what? They did exactly the same thing before the last election: \$1.2 billion of WSIB money back to employers. Why throw injured workers under the bus again? Because they're doing the same thing right now, because there's so much room for quid pro quo. The employers will fund you guys; you give the money back to them later—quid pro quo.

In the meantime, what we see, actually, is that politics is a numbers game. Injured workers could never donate the kind of money that corporations can donate, so where's the money going to go? They're going to give the money back to employers, and in the meantime—

**Interjection:** And who's there for the injured workers?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Yes. And in the meantime, injured workers: What's happened to them? So many—thousands—are living in poverty, are having to get ODSP just to survive. In 1998, the Conservative Harris government cut benefit rates from 90% of net to 85% of net and cut the contributions for loss of retirement income from 10% to 5% because they claimed that WSIB was in a financial crisis. The workers are in a financial crisis. Enough is enough. We need integrity in government. We don't have it. Let's get it.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I'm proud to stand with our leader and with this caucus, with these MPPs who stand up every single day for transparency and integrity for the people of the province of Ontario. We're all here as MPPs because we earned that trust, the trust of our constituents, and we

in the official opposition NDP work every single day to continue to earn that trust. It's not given; we earn it.

The real mark of any government is how they conduct themselves once they are given power, and sadly, what Ontarians see is a government that's only in it for themselves and their insiders, a government that's all about power and profit, a government that consistently makes policy and funding decisions which benefit their donors. Nowhere is this more blatant than with the \$8.5-billion greenbelt scandal, a scandal that will long be remembered not just because of the government's blatant disregard for our farmland and for our wetlands, but because it made crystal clear that these dealings were a thank-you gift to wealthy donors and friends of the Premier—preferential treatment.

In fact, your government continues to be under a cloud of suspicion and RCMP investigation. The branch of the RCMP that is investigating this is the sensitive and international investigations unit, which looks into cases involving corruption and politics. Need I say more? This is a reputation that no government, no elected member, should want to be part of.

Now Ontarians believe, because of these \$1,000-a-plate fundraisers, that they must make political donations to cabinet ministers to be heard. Cabinet ministers, it must be underscored, are responsible for spending billions of taxpayer dollars, and they make important decisions on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario.

**1620**

I'm confident that government members on this side will vote to support this motion, because when you were in opposition, you had strong words for the Liberals and their cash-for-access culture. From Hansard: Your former leader Patrick Brown said, "There are big loopholes in this cash-for-access reform. Ministers can fundraise off stakeholders," and "news broke last" week "that ministers had fundraising targets to raise off their stakeholders." Sound familiar?

To be blunt, from the greenbelt to Ontario Place, your government is earning the exact same reputation as the Liberals. The Liberals' cash-for-access scandal? It seems to me that when the Premier said that, he just said, "Hold my beer, Ontario. Let's see what I can do." Imagine a place where the Premier cuts deals, friends and insiders get rich, and the public pays. It's all happening here, folks. That place is Ontario. The grift is real.

Do you know what else is happening in Ontario? Children are going to school hungry, and food banks can't keep up. In Ontario, 7.6 million times, people visited food banks in Ontario, and that number is growing in staggering amounts. It's terrible.

In Hamilton, Ancaster Community Services said that almost 50% of people they serve are children, and they have seen an increase of 200% since 2019. Hamilton Jewish Family Services said that the list of families who need our help continues to grow. Salvation Army Dundas community and family services said that they had the highest number of clients they've ever served since they've been open. This continues to be happening in a

province where—this is the only government, the only place in Ontario where the government refuses to provide funding to food banks.

And make no mistake, this government is spending big; they're just not spending it on you. They're spending \$50 million on ads to convince us how great they're doing, while the reality is, kids are going to school hungry.

That \$50 million that you're spending to pat yourself on the back and to brag—that would fill a lot of hungry bellies in this province. These are families, these are people who can't afford \$1,000 a plate—\$1,000 for a plate of food. Think about what that would mean to these working-poor families. That has got to be close to a year's worth of food for these families, and you are spending it raising money, which is, essentially—you are currying favour. You're looking—to this government to do your bidding. You have the money. The people of the province of Ontario are struggling.

So I say to the big money in Ontario that is now fully in the backrooms of this province, that is fully setting policy trends in this province: If you can afford \$1,000 a plate, you can afford to donate to the food banks in your community. They need the money more than the cabinet ministers need it in this province. They're going hungry while these people are having a complete feast on behalf of the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Madam Speaker, what if I told you I know a place where you can invest money and get a 2,667% return on that? Wow, wouldn't that be a great investment? Wouldn't you think, "Man, I would do a lot to—that would be worth the investment. I might even attend a dinner or maybe go to a wedding or something."

Do you know what? In the United States, they actually have a return on investment for lobbyists. They do the calculation. Yes, they do. According to Forbes, the top 10 Fortune 100 companies that spent the most on lobbying had a return on investment of 1,000 to 1. That means for every dollar they spent on lobbying, the companies received \$1,000 in federal contracts and grants. This is, of course, the United States.

The American Jobs Creation Act: They did a calculation that companies that invested in lobbyists for that had their tax rate reduced from 35% to 5%. The research showed that the return on lobbying for these multinational corporations was 22,000%. That is a heck of a good return on investment. That means for every dollar spent on lobbying, the company got \$220 in tax benefits.

I hate to say it, but we had a similar scandal here in Ontario. Under the former Liberal government, we had a cash-for-access scandal where you were also talking about return on investment. They were hiring lobbyists—if you wanted to meet with a minister, you just had to cough up \$1,000 a plate and attend dinner, and you could rub elbows with the minister, and you could talk about land that you might be buying or an investment that you might want or maybe a tax cut that you might need. At the time, on August 24, when this broke, the Liberals were defensive.

The minister at the time, one of the Liberal ministers, said, "You don't want to craft rules by way of legislation ... that will prohibit every MPP who is also a minister to engage in even local ... fundraising."

Then, the Conservatives and the Liberals—we were all on this side of the House at the time, all in opposition. We said, "This is a scandal. This is abuse of the minister's power, and it's a waste of our tax dollars, because it means that we're not getting the best investment for our tax dollars. It's actually going to somebody who's paying \$1,000 a plate to rub shoulders with the minister."

The Conservative leader at the time was adamant—he said, "I will end the Wynne Liberal practice of cash for access." In order to restore public confidence and end cash-for-access loopholes, the Conservative leader announced that a PC government would introduce new measures to ban political parties from setting fundraising targets for ministers and ban ministers from fundraising off of those they do business with. Thank goodness.

Then, the Conservatives were elected, and they're now on that side of the House.

And, what do you know, last week, Global News reported that Ontario—this is the headline: "Ontario Cabinet Ministers"—these are Conservative Ontario cabinet ministers—"Given Fundraising Targets Ahead of Potential Early Election." Isn't that shocking? But do you know what? When our leader, the NDP leader, asked about this, the Attorney General got up and said, "There was an email that was sent by mistake." We thought, "Oh, well, that's good. So they're going to retract that email, and they're going to cancel all those cash-for-access scandals"—I mean, cash-for-access dinners, not scandals. They're scandalous dinners is what they are. Anyway, that didn't quite happen, because over the last five days—in fact, in coming days—so, on November 25, you want to meet with the Solicitor General? That's a \$1,500 plate. On November 26, an evening to support the Ontario PC Party—Trillium news says, usually, if there's not a minister mentioned, then that means that the Premier will show up. That's \$1,000. You want to meet with the Minister of Economic Development? That's \$1,000. You want to meet with the Minister of Health? That's a \$1,000 breakfast. You want to meet with the Premier? That's a \$1,000 lunch, on November 29. This is just four days of fundraising where you can rub shoulders.

So what happened to the Conservatives' concern about cash for access?

I've got to say, it's really, really shameful that the Conservatives, when they were on this side of the House, said, "Oh, cash for access is really bad," but now they're on that side of the House, and they are selling off our public assets, our public services, the government contracts, tax cuts, and all for the benefit of their friends and to the detriment of the taxpayers and the people of this province. And they're talking about an election coming up. With all these cash-for-access dinners and lunches and breakfasts, it's not an election; it's an auction. It's an auction of our public assets and services.

So I am asking the Conservative government to please do what you said and cancel all these cash-for-access scandals, because if you do not, hopefully the people of Ontario will do the same thing to you, to this party, that they did to the Liberals with their cash-for-access scandal, and you will be decimated in this next election, and you will end up sitting back over here. And then the NDP will get a chance, and we'll actually bring in a government with integrity that serves the people of this province, first and foremost.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to stand in the House.

Today we're talking about cash for access, and I'd like to quote three experts on cash for access. The first is The Wizard of Id, a political comic strip from 1972. The king in that comic strip was promising the peasants that he was going to change election fundraising rules, but he turned to the wizard and said, "Right after the next election." And one of the peasants said, "And by then, it will be too late."

1630

It must be an interesting discussion in the cabinet on the other side—because the next expert in cash for access I'd like to quote is the minister of economic trade and development. In 2016, during the Liberals' cash for access, he asked a question to the government. He said—and this is a direct quote from Hansard—"Thank you. I'll try again, Speaker. I can appreciate why, because they know what we're going to talk about here. They know they got caught yet again. They know I'm going to talk about the Liberal cash-for-access fundraisers that they have. They know that. They know that's coming, so why don't we just spend the time right now talking about the fact that the government has held, over the last two years, 90 of these cash-for-access fundraisers. That's why they've scrambled this bill together, to have us debating this bill, as a distraction from the fact of why we're doing this: the fact that they got caught yet again with these cash-for-access fundraisers. We'll talk about a couple of them, because they really do affect the economies in Ontario, and the burden that this has placed on families...."

"There were 90 pay-to-access fundraisers over two years. It only increases the perception that the Wynne Liberals have turned the government into a money-making machine for the Liberal Party, and that is just beyond the pale. That tells you where their focus is...."

"If we have this government write the rules, there's none of the restrictions for the cash for access to these ministers. That doesn't get fixed. So the real problem that started all of this is allowed to continue. Instead, they've glossed over and papered over, with big announcements—written on a napkin at the kitchen table—all the stories and how wonderful it is."

And do you know what, Speaker? Nothing has changed. That was the member from Nipissing.

**Interjection:** The member changed.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes.

The other one I would like to quote is the government House leader. From November 30, 2017: "My question is for the Deputy Premier. For 14 years this government has played fast and loose with the rules, bending and breaking many of them. The fact of the matter is that this Liberal government is untrustworthy. The Wynne Liberals gave access to cabinet ministers and strong-armed companies that do business with Ontario for the benefit of the Liberal Party. They reward those donors by granting them expensive contracts and corporate handouts."

The Liberals changed the rules and left loopholes. The current government won, and they made the loopholes bigger. They are doing exactly the same thing. They're angry because they got caught doing exactly the same thing that the previous Liberal government did.

I hope that the two cabinet ministers who made the case so strongly vote with this motion.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I want to, first of all, thank my colleagues, all of them here who spoke so eloquently.

I was disappointed that the government members couldn't bring themselves to speak about issues like integrity and accountability.

As our House leader here just mentioned, I want to remind people that when this government was in opposition on this side of the House, they called out the previous Liberals for their cash-for-access scandals. They said they were going to do things differently, and when they were given an opportunity, not only did they loosen up the rules further, but they actually raised the maximum donation so they can rake in more cash.

Speaker, we're not talking about \$25-a-head spaghetti dinners here, right? We—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition.

I was just notified that I broke a rule, and I need to fix that mistake. I needed to call three times further debate to make sure that the other side got their chance, and I didn't do that.

I do apologize, and I will call: Further debate? Further debate?

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I think the Leader of the Opposition thought that she was in her closing two minutes when there were still two minutes in their main part, so I don't think it was your mistake, Speaker.

I was going to start off by saying that I sat here and I listened to everybody, notwithstanding the member from Niagara saying that we weren't listening. I listened to every single word. I took notes. It was really a master class in the breach of the rules of procedure.

Madam Speaker, you must be so patient to listen to them use unparliamentary language and have us not call them on it. It was really a diatribe of allegations and false, unavowed motives, as per 25(h) and (i). It was littered with unparliamentary language.

Nonetheless, as they self-congratulate each other about their cleverness, I just want to be clear that fundraising is a part of a healthy democracy—it's where all the parties

can ensure the resources to run and participate in successful campaigns. We're keeping our system open. We're keeping it transparent. We're keeping it fair. It's a level playing field for all parties. It's not only legal; it's transparent, and people can follow who donates to what. Political fundraising ensures that all the parties, from the major ones to the smaller ones, the ones in here and the ones that want to be in here, all have a chance to thrive in our democratic system.

I'm proud of our democratic institutions that have been part of our history. We have laws in Canada dating back to 1974 that encourage transparency across all political parties. We have laws that govern how parties and candidates are funded. These laws require disclosure of donor identities and, in some cases, even pose limits on how much they can donate.

Like all political parties across Ontario and the country, we fundraise. It's an important part of the job. We need to acknowledge that it isn't free or cheap to do politics. Whether it's renting a campaign office, getting signs, polling, food for volunteers, and so much more, the funds need to be obtained to keep the campaigns going. Ontario's regulations level that playing field. All political parties, whether in power or opposition, or whether they aspire to be in power, or whether they stay in opposition and don't aspire to be in power, must adhere to the same rules. This ensures that the fundraising process is open and fair. Every donation is recorded, every donation is publicly available—above \$200, but I'll get back to that—so voters can scrutinize the money behind political campaigns.

We are committed to upholding the democratic principles that govern Ontario, and that extends to election finances. After receiving unanimous support from all parties just recently, the per-vote subsidy introduced 10 years ago will remain in place. This measure will continue to ensure fairness and a level playing field for all participants. With the support of all parties in the Legislature, the Ontario government extended the payment of quarterly allowances to registered political parties and their constituency associations for another two years. This bill was a recommendation by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, which was made after the 2022 provincial election. We'll continue the current per-vote subsidy program through to 2026 to ensure a balance of public and private financing in the province's elections. The amount of the allowance is set for the next two years, as it was in 2024. The amendments reassert the role of individual voters.

With the bill, our government is ensuring that Ontarians' voices continue to be heard with every vote they cast and that individuals remain at the centre of the electoral process. Again, we want to make sure that Ontarians' voices are heard.

We congratulate the NDP and the Liberals on their fundraising efforts recently and to come, because it's a part of what keeps the spirit of democracy alive in Ontario. It's important for us to have a healthy and strong opposition for our democratic institutions to function on a high level.

The NDP, as I've said earlier in the House, had a successful fundraiser this past summer, bringing together supporters to raise \$1.2 million in the third quarter—their highest ever in a non-election year. The Liberals have a \$1,500 fundraiser tonight and another \$3,300 fundraiser in December. Fundraisers like this are crucial for any political party to operate and make it possible to achieve their goals.

I want to correct the image being painted by the NDP here that fundraising, by definition, is a bad act. Donating to political parties is a way for people to choose to contribute to our democracy, and fundraisers are a way to bring politics outside of Queen's Park into our communities.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate? Further debate?

I'm going to go back to the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** As I was saying earlier, the Conservatives talked a good game, when they were in opposition, about the cash-for-access culture of the previous Liberal government. When given the opportunity, though, they loosened up the rules even further. Not only that, they raised the maximum donation so they could cash in even further.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** That's right.

What Conservatives are doing is saying to organizations, to municipalities, to anyone who wants anything done by this government, "If you want to get that done, you need to pay up." That's what's happening here in the province of Ontario. Ministers of the crown are charging people big bucks to sit down with a cabinet minister. My members here today spoke very eloquently about some examples of that, of what that means for real people—for folks like families with children of autism; families with kids who need additional supports in schools; or First Nations leaders who come here, fighting for their communities, and can't get the minister's ear. We talked about students. We talked about seniors. We talked about injured workers. We talked about people who are struggling every single day. They deserve so much better than this, but they can't get this government to work for them because they can't afford to pony up \$1,500 for a muffin and a glass of orange juice. My goodness.

None of this is going to change unless we make real change here in the province of Ontario and elect a government with real integrity, with real accountability. That's what we're going to do. That's our offer to Ontarians.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1643 to 1653.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Members will please take their seats.



MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 4. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gates, Wayne	Shamji, Adil
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Clancy, Aislinn	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Harris, Mike	Quinn, Nolan
Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Trevor	Riddell, Brian
Bailey, Robert	Jordan, John	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Brese, Ric	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Leardi, Anthony	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Lumsden, Neil	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulrone, Caroline	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Piccini, David	Tibollo, Michael A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Hamid, Zee	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy
Hardeman, Ernie	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 29; the nays are 63.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I declare the motion lost.

*Motion negatived.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I recognize the member of Essex on a point of order.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### RETIREE EXPERIENCE AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2024

### LOI DE 2024 SUR LE JOUR DE SENSIBILISATION AUX EXPÉRIENCES DES RETRAITÉS

Mrs. Wai moved second reading of the following bill:  
Bill 217, An Act to proclaim Retiree Experience Awareness Day / Projet de loi 217, Loi proclamant le Jour de sensibilisation aux expériences des retraités.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you to my colleagues for the opportunity to speak on an issue that is deeply important to me: recognizing the invaluable experiences of retirees and how they can support our future by passing their experience on to the next generation.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues the esteemed Minister Raymond Cho, MPP Lorne Coe and MPP Anthony Leardi for speaking on this bill today and for their support on this important initiative.

Today, we stand together to acknowledge that retirees are not just individuals who have stopped working, but are in many ways the backbone of the communities, our economy and our future. Their life experiences, skills and knowledge remain crucial assets that help shape the present and will continue to shape the future of Ontario.

Retiree Experience Awareness Day will be held annually on June 15, the midpoint of Seniors' Month. This day is not merely about reflection on the past; it is about celebrating retirees for who they are today. They are active, engaged and deeply committed to making Ontario a better place for everyone.

#### 1700

Through this day, we hope to foster a culture of respect, engagement and collaboration across generations, but most importantly passing their valuable experiences, skills, insights—the shortcuts and the lessons that they have learned—on to the next generation. After a lifetime of hard work, dedication and service, retirees deserve our respect, recognition and support.

This bill, the Retiree Experience Awareness Day Act, is one that I am incredibly proud to present. I would like to achieve three things through this bill:

(1) Give our retirees the recognition and appreciation they deserve.

(2) Draw awareness on challenges of labour shortages as our retiree population grows.

(3) Strategic planning and careful handling will create a healthy and vibrant retiree community, one that will save expenses on health care and bring forth economic growth.

It goes without saying that our seniors deserve our respect and recognition for what they have done in building our

province and their family. We should show our love and appreciation to them.

It is only now that people start to realize the challenge of the labour shortage. This will be more serious as the years go by. Ontario, like many provinces across Canada, is facing a demographic shift. Our population is aging and the workforce is shrinking. This presents serious challenges, particularly in key sectors like health care, education and skilled trades.

Based on 65 as the age of retirement, there were over 800,000 retirements in the last five years. The record wave of retirements created challenges of labour shortages for companies and businesses. More than one in five people, which is 21.8%, are close to retirement age; they are between 55 and 64 years. This is an all-time high. It created challenges of knowledge transfer, retaining experienced employees and workforce renewal. The wave of retirements is hastening a mass exodus of skilled workers, leaving businesses scrambling and making wages higher.

Recognizing the experience that our seniors accumulated over the years not only gives them a sense of pride and satisfaction on what they have accomplished in their life, it is most important for the future development of our next generation. Now is the time to direct them to continue being active in the labour market and to help mentor the younger generation. When digital technology from the next generation meets with experience from the retirees, it will build an even stronger economy for Ontario.

We have a wealth of experienced, knowledgeable and skilled individuals in our retirees who have already given so much to our province. They represent an untapped resource that can help us address the labour shortages that we are seeing now.

During my visit with a group called Probus in Richmond Hill and some other senior groups meeting at various community activities and churches, they shared with me that they want to be valued, they want to be respected, and they are proud of their professions and contributions. They want to continue to contribute, not just for money but rather for the recognition that they can have. They want to use their time wisely in a meaningful way. At the same time, they still want to treasure the freedom that they can enjoy using their retirement years in a good way.

I've given it a lot of thought with this, and that motivates me to create this bill, the Retiree Experience Awareness Day Act. I would therefore encourage corporations to employ retirees to work for maybe two half days a week. This can deliver the best of both worlds. Through the establishment of the Retiree Experience Awareness Day Act, we are encouraging corporations to support seniors to share their knowledge and experience with the younger generation. This day serves as an opportunity to not only recognize retirees but to learn from them. By encouraging them to share their experiences, we bridge the generation gap and foster a greater understanding and mutual respect between our seniors and younger Ontarians.

Retirees bring unmatched experience to the workforce. They have the skills, the wisdom and the understanding that comes from decades of hard work. Many are highly

trained professionals with a wealth of knowledge and insights to share. By allowing retirees to continue working even in a limited capacity, we not only benefit from their expertise but also help strengthen the local economy. When retirees remain engaged in the workforce, they help stimulate local economies by spending in their communities, supporting small businesses, and then they can use the extra revenue that they receive through this special time that they dedicate to, and they can use that and enjoy their life in a free way. Often, these are the ones that are most important clients for cruises, I suppose.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, I'm deeply committed to ensure that seniors remain active in society. Our government recognizes that seniors are not only just recipients of care but active contributors to their communities. We have made great strides in creating programs that allow seniors to remain engaged. Through mentorship programs, volunteer opportunities and partnerships with local businesses, retirees continue to encourage lives of Ontarians.

One of the most compelling reasons to encourage retirees to remain engaged is the direct impact it can have on their health. Numerous studies have shown that seniors who stay active—whether through part-time work, volunteerism or simply staying connected with others—tend to have better physical and mental health outcomes. Seniors who are engaged in their communities experience lower rates of depression and anxiety. They are less likely to suffer from chronic diseases and more likely to maintain a positive outlook in life. In fact, staying active in retirement has been shown to increase life expectancy and improve overall quality of life. By creating opportunities for retirees to remain involved in the workforce or volunteer roles, we help them stay healthier and more connected to their communities. This not only benefits the retirees but also the communities they serve. Healthy, engaged seniors are better able to contribute to society in meaningful ways, enriching the lives of everyone around them.

Additionally, staying active can help retirees feel a sense of purpose. After years of working, raising families, retirement can sometimes leave individuals feeling disconnected. By providing opportunities to continue involvement, we give retirees the chance to continue making a difference and to live a fulfilling and purposeful life.

In closing, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this important initiative, Retiree Experience Awareness Day. This bill is about more than just recognizing the past contributions of retirees; it is about celebrating their continued role in building a stronger and more vibrant Ontario. Help our seniors turn a new page in their life.

By honouring our retirees, we send a message that we value their hard work and ongoing involvement in our communities. Let us use this day to recognize the past, celebrate the present and encourage their future contributions. Together, we can build a province that not only cares for its seniors, but actively seeks to involve them in every aspect of our society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I welcome any questions.

1710

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** I think it's grand to declare a day to honour seniors, but I really have a lot of concerns about what we are not doing for seniors. Many, many seniors are working well past the age of 65, carrying two jobs, having trouble putting food on the table, having trouble finding an affordable place to live.

The retired teachers' organization were here today, and they were telling me that 12% of seniors' families and 28% of single seniors are living in poverty. So they're not going to be suddenly getting to the age of 65 and saying "Gee, I hope I can volunteer somewhere." At best, they're saying "Oh, I can't work at my one job anymore, I don't have the capacity. Maybe I'm going to have to be a greeter at Walmart for minimum wage." And 60% of the workforce do not have pension plans. So that's what I learned from the retired teachers' organization this morning.

That's very serious. There's a certain class of people who reach the age of 65 who have retirement pensions available, and actually, most of them are from the unionized workforce. We have, for example, Unifor 222. They are able to be retired and they have a comfortable living, so they're actually using their time to fight against this government and try and support other workers who can't afford to retire because they didn't have that union protection. Another group of retirees, the Ontario Health Coalition, is also spending their time volunteering and fighting the health care decisions of this government because they see that money keeps being poured into for-profit health care and removed from public health care.

So those are very, very active seniors, but there are some pretty awful things that happened this year to seniors, and one of those things is the renoviction of 200 seniors from Heritage Glen in Mississauga. And the government was nowhere—nowhere—to help them. What was particularly upsetting was that two or three months after they'd been forcibly evicted—some had been there for 25 years and were under rent control, so how on earth were they going to find another place to live for \$1,500 a month? It's extremely traumatic for those seniors. But several months later, they got a letter from the Minister of Housing saying, "You're protected by the Landlord and Tenant Board. You don't actually have to move until you've had a hearing," definitely long after the train had left the station on that one.

In the meantime, there's another group of seniors who've been evicted from a place in Norwich. This is in Minister Rickford's riding, Trillium Care Norwich, a small retirement home. There were corruption charges. There was something going on in the home. Apparently, as much as \$50,000 was lost in fraud. Now, that's ongoing, but for whatever reason the home decided that—and, by the way, they were trying to increase rent. Maybe I can't find that bit, but they were basically—oh, yes: from \$1,500 to \$3,920 a month.

Can you imagine, having planned for your retirement on whatever resources you had and suddenly being told

that your rent is more than doubled, two and a half times your rent? And to top it off, they got two weeks' notice to move out. Now, that's not legal, but again, who was there to help them?

Both of these places were privately owned, and that is part of the problem, is that seniors' residences are for-profit operations. They're land trusts. Basically, they can do whatever they want, and they are harming seniors either by overcharging or by renovicting people out of their homes. A very, very serious thing that took place is continuing to take place. People are very, very worried about it.

Then there's Bill 7 and what has happened with people being forced out of hospitals into long-term care not of their choosing. I have a story from somebody from Kenora. His family wrote and said, "You promised that seniors would not be harmed by Bill 7, but they are." This 95-year-old man from Fort Frances is being sent 90 kilometres away from his friends and his only relative, his disabled son. He can't hear the phone, and his son, who has a disability, has been told to take a taxi to visit him. Who's got the money for that? His disabled son certainly doesn't.

We know that there are over 400—in fact, 424 people have been moved into nursing homes that they didn't choose, and many have been forced into locations so far from their families that social isolation is, in fact, being forced onto those seniors and onto those families who aren't able to visit them—again, a very, very serious issue.

I want to take a minute to talk about Voula's Law, motion 129, that was unanimously supported by the House. The idea was to really affirm to anybody living in long-term care or a seniors' residence that management could not use the Trespass to Property Act to prevent people from coming to visit.

So what's happening is that somebody may be going to visit their parent in a home, and they might be making a fuss. They might not be happy about the care that their parent is given, and what happens in too many cases is that the home calls the police and says, "We're going to use the Trespass to Property Act to prevent you from visiting your parent in the home."

Now, it's actually not legal to do that. The Residents' Bill of Rights, which is supposedly—the Minister of Housing has said repeatedly, "Problem solved. We've fixed the problem. It says in the Residents' Bill of Rights that nobody has the right to determine who can come and visit you." But until police are trained to actually know how that law works—so, the only person with the right to say, "No, you can't come and visit," is the resident themselves in their unit. Their unit is their castle. It's their home; it's meant to be their home. They have the right to say, "Yes, you can come and visit," or "No, I don't want you to come."

But management staff do not have that right. It's not legal. So why is this happening? I can tell you, apart from the highways, I have more mail and cases on this than anything since I became elected: dozens, unfortunately. Why does it keep happening? Because there are no conse-

quences to the homes. Nothing happens. All the burden falls on the family members. If they want to get rid of that illegal trespass, they've got to hire a lawyer and go to court. So that's why it's still going on.

I have written to every single ministry about this. I've written to the Solicitor General about this, and we've made the case again, and again and again. In fact, that's what was supposed to be resolved in 2021, but it's still going on. I desperately would like to work together with members on the other side of the House to figure out how to stop that practice so that families are able to see people in care and they are able to choose.

If somebody is causing a problem, there are other legal remedies. If I'm abusing my parent, for example, there are ways of dealing with that, but the Trespass to Property Act is not appropriate. It's not legal, and we need to work together to end that.

I'd like to talk a little bit, in the couple of minutes I have left, about the problems with home care, nursing home care and the difference in wages in those settings.

1720

We know that there's an enormous gap in the number of PSWs available to help people, to provide care. We know that they get paid about \$18 an hour for home care. They're not paid for their travel time. They're not paid for their parking. They lose money, actually, every time they go to look after somebody. So it's no surprise that it's a revolving door and that you never see the same person twice. In long-term care, wages are slightly better, and people stay a little longer. But the best pay is in hospitals. What we need is a pay scale that is equitable—that you get paid the same amount for the same work.

The problem is the same with nurses. It's the same with nurse practitioners.

There's a profound inequality in how people are paid, and that is the reason we cannot retain people as PSWs, as nurses, as physios, as occupational therapists—people the elderly, our parents and ourselves, need as we age.

I think it's wonderful that we can honour retirees and respect what they've contributed and respect the knowledge that they still have, which I think is really behind the motion. The bill that you have presented today is to remind people that because you've reached the age of 65, 75, 85, whatever—you may still be very able to make a contribution.

Many want to make those contributions, but we need to recognize that those who are in a position to volunteer their time have the money to do it, and they probably had union jobs. There are many, many people who are not in that position, who are really struggling to keep food on the table.

I can tell you, because my mom is turning 97 in a week—she's also a super senior, but she has needed care, and it has been very, very hard to get it. She needed PSW support after an injury. It just didn't work—because you've got a rotation, and people don't stay in those positions because they're not paid respectfully.

I hope that we can work together on solving Voula's Law, that problem.

I hope that we can also recognize that not all seniors are in a position—they're not living easily, they're—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you.

I'll just remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not across the floor. Thank you very much.

Further debate?

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I stand today in support of one of the very best MPPs and her private member's bill. Daisy Wai, MPP for Richmond Hill, is bringing forth an incredible bill that I call on the entire Legislature and all of our members to unanimously support. Her Retiree Experience Awareness Day Act captures all the great things about being a senior and celebrating our stage in life. As a super senior myself, I know first-hand that this private member's bill will give seniors and those who choose to retire an extra way of showcasing their talents, passion and skills.

That is why June 15 is the right day and the right time of year to celebrate MPP Wai's great gift to retirees. It is truly a great gift to retirees. It is in the middle of Seniors' Month. What better day than one right in the middle of celebrating an entire month devoted to seniors?

Just because you are retired does not mean that you go away; in fact, it means the exact opposite.

Look at me. I retired as a social worker from the city of Toronto and am now in my 34th year representing the people of Scarborough—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** Thank you—as a city councillor and MPP and Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, and I'm only an 88-years-young man. I'm just getting started. Is this what retirement looks like? I don't know.

What I do know is that this private member's bill will give communities and organizations across the province the opportunity to recognize those who are making contributions to our society. It will acknowledge and celebrate the experience that they have and bring to whatever they're going to do in the next chapter in their lives.

That is why I applaud MPP Daisy Wai for not only being a great MPP for Richmond Hill, not only being the best parliamentary assistant in our government, but for being so thoughtful and considerate with her private member's bill.

I will support June 15 next year, and every year hereafter, as Retiree Experience Awareness Day.

I hope that MPP Daisy Wai will get unanimous support from every member in this Legislature.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** It's my pleasure to stand and support the bill that's before us tonight, An Act to proclaim Retiree Experience Awareness Day. It's put forward by my colleague the member from Richmond Hill, who is an inspiration to all of us and a super senior. Maybe if I work hard enough and I have the proper attitude, I might be a super senior—with her proper attitude—one day myself.

I often say that we don't spend enough time in this House praising the accomplishments of our colleagues. So as I speak to the bill proclaiming Retiree Experience Awareness Day, I'd like to take this opportunity to spend a little time praising my colleague from Richmond Hill for her accomplishments.

She has been in service to the community for over 25 years now, and she is a former business owner herself. She has sat on various boards, including the York Regional Police Service Board, the Mackenzie Health board, Central Community Care Access Centre, the Easter Seals society, and the Self-Employment Development Initiative.

That, in and of itself, would be a fine record of achievement and of giving back to the community, but she has actually done even more than that. She was also the chair of the board of the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce, the vice-chair of the Markham Board of Trade, and past president of the Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan Chinese Business Association.

That's a remarkable record of community involvement and giving back to a community.

As I said, this is an act which is supposed to recognize the experience of our retirees. So I wanted to take that opportunity to praise the member from Richmond Hill, because she's a fine example of what we're trying to accomplish with this bill.

Let me tell you a little bit more about her. She served on the board of the Light House and the Character Council of York Region. She is actively involved in her church community. She's a recipient of the civic leadership award from York Regional Police, a Women of Distinction Award from the city of Markham, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Memorial Medal, as well as the Diamond Jubilee Medal.

You don't have to be all of those things in order to be respectable and to give back to your community. But what a remarkable series of accomplishments from the member from Richmond Hill. I wanted to take that opportunity to give her praise for all of the stuff that she has done.

Let's look at this act as an opportunity for us to draw on the experiences of our retirees and apply them to everyday life. June 15 is the day selected for this particular recognition. I think June 15 is a wonderful day. It's a very special day for me, and now I have a second special reason to celebrate that day. June 15 is probably one of the best days of the year in my life, and now I have a second special reason to celebrate it, because my wonderful colleague has given us another opportunity to celebrate.

1730

I want to congratulate her as a super senior and encourage everyone to vote for this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Tonight I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 217.

I believe that the proposed Retiree Experience Awareness Day provides us with an opportunity to prospect, in collaboration with local municipalities, senior-youth mentorship programs to help build relationships and encourage shared knowledge between generations. Any adult can be

a mentor, but seniors are particularly positioned to make unique contributions. Not only do they have plenty of wisdom and experience to share, but their potential is often undervalued and underutilized. Mentorship puts these untapped resources to good use. Factor in that seniors are living longer, are healthier than ever before and growing in number, and they've become the perfect candidates for filling key mentorship roles within their own communities, like Whitby. And it works. The attention, guidance, and support of seniors has been proven to help young men and women become more aware, self-confident and, yes, capable people. The benefits hardly go one way, though. Older adults can also derive fulfillment as well as a sense of value and purpose. Not only do young men and women gain access to the support they need, but seniors also thrive when given a chance to make a difference.

Community involvement through mentoring and the transfer of retiree experience is a powerful tool for young people, providing them with valuable opportunities to explore their interests, develop lifelong skills and build meaningful relationships as they take control of their own learning journey.

As a government, we're committed to helping all Ontario seniors live their best lives. Our goal is to ensure that seniors today and all of those who will one day join their ranks are able to age with respect and dignity and remain healthy, independent and as active as they wish—for example, through retiree knowledge-sharing. I've seen the evidence and effect of this sharing in my own riding, as I visit the retirement homes and long-term-care homes in the town of Whitby.

My thanks to MPP Wai and our Minister for Seniors and Accessibility for what they've done for the seniors' community—not only for the town of Whitby, but other parts of the region of Durham and other parts of the province of Ontario.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this great bill. With this bill and its adoption here tonight, you'll make a substantial difference in the lives of seniors in our great province.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

I'll go back to the member for Richmond Hill for a two-minute reply.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I want to once again express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues Minister Raymond Cho, MPP Lorne Coe and MPP Anthony Leardi. I'd also like to say thank you to the member opposite from Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Thank you for sharing your point of view and your speeches on the different aspects of keeping seniors active, healthier and engaged, as well as addressing the challenges in the labour market, in support of this bill.

This bill—when I first think of it, it is really an awareness day to help the retirees, to make sure that we get their experience being appreciated and valued. I appreciate the member from Thunder Bay giving us the challenges of seniors, but perhaps my bill here is focusing more on really giving them the awareness, being on a positive side—

exactly what I was told by people in my community. They want to be valued. They want to be respected. They are proud of their professions and contributions. We're just giving ways for them to achieve that, and I hope this awareness day will make that difference.

This bill is about more than just a day of recognition. It is a call to action and a step forward in creating a culture where retirees are celebrated not only for their past contributions but for the ongoing value they bring to our communities. I hope I will get the support from everyone in this House. Our seniors, as well—especially our retirees—will be encouraged by this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MPP Wai has moved second reading of Bill 217, An Act to proclaim Retiree Experience Awareness Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Pursuant to standing order 108, the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless the member—the MPP for Richmond Hill, do you want the bill to be sent to the Committee of the Whole House or another committee?

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Social policy.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

All matters related to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1737.*







**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt  
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott  
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day  
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim  
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,  
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong  
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
<b>Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
<b>Barnes, Patrice (PC)</b>	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
<b>Collard, Lucille (LIB)</b>	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	Oakville	Associate Minister of Mines / Ministre associé des Mines
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)</b>	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (IND)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
<b>Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)</b>	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
<b>Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)</b>	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre associé de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
<b>Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)</b>	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Electrification / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Électrification
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)</b>	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Ministre associé de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
<b>Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)</b>	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
<b>Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)</b>	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	