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Jeudi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 septembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES
AND CONSERVING WATERSHEDS
ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À BÂTIR
DE MEILLEURES COLLECTIVITÉS
ET À PROTÉGER LES BASSINS
HYDROGRAPHIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 11, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to enact the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017 and the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017 and to amend the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act and various other Acts / Projet de loi 139, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Tribunal d'appel de l'aménagement local et la Loi de 2017 sur le Centre d'assistance pour les appels en matière d'aménagement local et modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire, la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature et diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, thank you very much to just allow me the time to—just a bit over four minutes, to when I started the other day. So I'll start from where I left off.

As I said the other day, we are listening carefully and closely and will continue to do so throughout the legislative process. I look forward to continuing to support the minister as we receive and consider the input of communities and stakeholders and the views of the members of this House.

I reviewed a lengthy list of significant reforms this government has already made to enhance the land use planning appeal process in Ontario. It is also important that I point to the impetus for this government's review of the Ontario Municipal Board and the bill before us today. Indeed, it was during the extensive public and stakeholder consultations on the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, the update to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, and the coordinated land use planning review that we heard at length from com-

munities and stakeholders of improvements that could be made to the OMB. We listened and we agreed. We need to build on the reforms we've made by addressing what this tribunal deals with and how it operates in Ontario's land use planning system. That's why, Mr. Speaker, this government reviewed the OMB and introduced Bill 139 in May of this year. We asked, we listened and we proposed reforms, and we agreed there was a need to do even more. Ontario continues to require a provincially mandated land use planning appeal process, but we heard during the consultations for the OMB review that this process must be carefully scoped.

A land use planning appeal process with too broad a scope can delay or disrupt the development of important policies. A land use planning appeal process with too broad a scope can negate months and even years of municipal planning work. Work completed with the public and stakeholders on planning policies to guide development and protect public interests should be respected. A land use planning appeal process that is too broad in scope can impede our ability to protect agricultural lands, natural heritage systems and our cultural heritage. A land use planning appeal process that is too broad in scope can discourage and dishearten residents who participate in community-based planning processes by subjecting their will to deferrals, delays and sometimes even derailment. That's why Bill 139 proposes to carefully scope the work of this tribunal to better protect the public interest in land use planning at the local level.

Our bill, if passed, would better serve all who have an interest in effective land use planning, which is to say all people in Ontario. As I've said, this bill would, if passed, make transformative changes to the land use planning appeal system in Ontario. Through these changes, we propose to build on land use planning reforms already made by government. This bill, if passed, would give the public and local elected officials a stronger voice in planning for growth and land use in their communities.

As we progress through the debate and consultation, hopefully it will clarify some of the issues that have arisen. Certainly, this is something that has been asked for and demanded by the public and stakeholders. We look forward to working with the whole of the Legislature to end up with the best possible product.

Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak on this subject.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to have a few comments to Bill 139 as well. I see it affects 21 different acts in the legislation. Our party certainly agrees that there need to

be reforms to the OMB, as has been talked about for many years by anyone that's involved in municipal politics. All of the different delegations we received at either Good Roads or ROMA have all, at some time or other, raised their issues with the OMB with the so-called interference, in some people's opinions, with municipal legislation and with decisions made back home.

We agree with the reforms to the OMB, but we have concerns about how the government is proposing to change the system. We'd like to see a system that respects the authority of the municipalities and the input of local community groups as always, without, of course, adding any additional red tape, which there seems to be an abundance of in this province, as many people have alluded to before. We'd like to see well-planned developments.

It's clear, from a number of concerns that have been raised by different stakeholders, from environmental groups to lawyers that work with the OMB, and home builders, that they feel, in their opinion, that this bill has missed the mark. Certainly, we're going to be making amendments to this and offering suggestions. I'm sure our municipal affairs critic, when he speaks a little later, will go into it in a lot greater detail.

It is a pleasure this morning to rise and speak to this. I'm sure all of the members are going to have something to say about this, so I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Northumberland—Quinte West.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —Northumberland—Quinte West for his comments.

I had an opportunity yesterday, along with a number of our caucus, to meet with ministry staff to get a technical briefing. It's interesting.

I want to focus once again on the conservation piece because, as you're all aware, we are having issues in the Niagara Peninsula with our conservation authority.

Some of the changes will clarify board member appointment processes, which is a good thing. I have a private member's bill in on that issue, which would see at least 50% of the members appointed having qualifications around areas such as conservation, the environment, climate change and all those kinds of things.

The one piece that I think is missing in this bill is, somebody has to have some ultimate authority for the conservation. Taxpayers put a lot of money in, whether it's at a local level or a provincial level. That's how they're run. At the end of the day, there needs to be an amendment here that puts a supervisor in place in situations where there is no accountability, integrity, trust or transparency left in an agency.

0910

I did make those comments to the ministry staff yesterday. I'm hoping that they will turn their minds to putting something in there that will actually assist the taxpayers in this province at the end of the day. I know

that we've had all-party assistance on this issue down in Niagara, but ultimately there has to be somebody that makes the decisions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I found the member from Northumberland—Quinte West's comments to be very, very good on this particular bill because he recognizes the virtues that are contained within this bill, both in terms of its effect on municipal planning and its effect on conservation authorities.

As with the member for Welland, I have a great interest in the conservation authority issues that are emerging in Niagara at this time, because we have to recognize—and this bill goes a long way to doing this—that the role and responsibility of those who are on conservation authorities is to protect the environment and the nature of the area, not to do the bidding of developers.

There are different departments within municipal government that are promoting development. They have that role and responsibility, if you have an economic development department in any municipality. But first and foremost, the responsibility of a conservation authority is to protect the environment. Unfortunately, what we have seen in Niagara is an exodus of people from that authority. This is staff members who have been fired out the door, and they are staff members who have a great concern about the environment. When the new group took over the regional government, they made a determined effort to make it pro-development, and I understand that. Again, within the economic development department, that's fine. But they wanted to change the nature and the role and responsibility of the Ministry of Natural Resources to promoting development or making development much easier, while all we want is the professional opinions of those who are there, just as we want the professional opinions of those in the Ministry of Natural Resources when commenting on proposed developments and when trying to protect the environment.

We've had some good experience with that in the past. There has been a huge shift, and that is what is causing the concern in our area.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to rise and say a few words on Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act.

The chief government whip was just talking about the Niagara area and the conservation authority becoming more pro-development and all the changes. I think that's what my constituents and I take away from all of these types of discussions—what we want is to have the right balance. That's very tricky and you can't get it exactly right. We want to get as close as possible between the government regulations, the authority of the municipalities, the interests of development, the people who already live in the community, the people who are moving

to the community, agriculture, conserving the environment and conserving all the watersheds.

We all know that there's a company, Ducks Unlimited, that comes to visit us to talk about watersheds. There are a lot of community groups—the Oak Ridges moraine is up in York region and I've met with them and spoken to them and learned a lot of interesting things. For example, one of the things that one of their members mentioned to me—and I wanted to look into it, so maybe somebody listening has some insight into it—is that one of the reasons the water table is rising so quickly in York region is because most of the houses or farms that were in the area used to be on a well system. That meant they were taking water out of the wet sponge of the ground. Now what we're doing is, since we're no longer on well water, we're piping water actually up and watering lawns and things like that from Lake Ontario. Between the rain and taking water from the lakes and putting it back into the ground, we're not taking that water out of the wet sponge.

I think that there's a lot of discussion that has to be had in preserving our wetlands, our watersheds and protecting ourselves from flooding. We've all seen what happens with the storms when the water isn't able to be absorbed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West to wrap up.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I certainly would like to thank the members from Sarnia, Welland, St. Catharines and Thornhill for their thoughtful comments. If I sort of bundle them together, I think there is some support for Bill 139, although we need to look at some other things specifically.

I know the members from Welland and St. Catharines spoke very passionately about the conservation authorities and the role that they play. Within my riding, I deal with three conservation authorities. They all do fantastic work with the resources that they have; I want to be clear about that. I do have a lot of respect for the work they do.

On the other hand, we need to help them, to give them the tools to be able to do that good work that they do. So when we talk about board composition, I agree with the member: We need to look at some expertise. They do that with hospital boards; they do that with other boards. Yet what troubles me is that the other day, in a two-minute comment from the official opposition, they said, well, the public should just appoint them at large; they elect us at large. I think it's a bit of a different story, because agencies like conservation authorities are there with a mandate. To have that expertise to guide them through the board, I think, is great.

I'm encouraged from what I hear as we debate Bill 139, and I look forward to working with all sides of the House to make sure we end up with the best possible product.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just want to say that I'm happy to be here to do the lead for Bill 139 on behalf of

the PC Party, and I thank the House for allowing it to be delayed because I was away on a conference.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be back in the House after our summer recess. It was a busy summer meeting with constituents and stakeholders, where I heard many concerns about provincial legislation and the impacts it is having on their lives. My constituents and Ontarians across the province are finding it harder under this government, and many small businesses are concerned about the increasing costs they're being forced to face. In my riding, we have also had three significant layoffs in the last 10 months; that is 1,300 jobs disappearing.

Over and over, I hear from people in my riding and across Ontario that this government charges ahead with new policies without doing the proper research on how those policies will actually impact their businesses. We saw that earlier this week, when the FAO looked at the impact of the government's Bill 148 and found that it would kill 50,000 jobs in Ontario. We saw that in the Green Energy Act that resulted in high hydro costs. We saw it again in the foreign homebuyers' tax, where the Minister of Finance would say there were three different numbers of foreign homebuyers depending on which day you asked him.

Madam Speaker, today I'm here to talk about Bill 139. These are planning issues that impact every single community in Ontario, so we need to ensure that the research has been done to get it right. But, unfortunately, there are still too many questions that haven't been answered, such as what the impact would be on the housing shortage. We haven't seen a single study or analysis from the government.

There's also research that hasn't been done. I found an order paper question that asked, "Would the Attorney General please provide the percentage of cases in which the Ontario Municipal Board approved or found in favour of a development that was previously denied by the municipality." The response I received from the government was that they don't track that information. That means that, once again, they are introducing legislation without doing the research or knowing how well the current system is working. Once again, they are making significant changes without doing the proper research to know what the impact will be.

Land use planning isn't easy. Most people agree with the concept of intensification to protect our agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas. But at the same time, many of those same people want to protect the character of their neighbourhood. People are concerned about sprawl, but many people still want the option of a house with a backyard. People are concerned about the housing shortage driving up the cost of housing, but they put up roadblocks to building the new housing that would bring down the price.

Balancing all of these interests is difficult, and it can and should be done better. We agree with the need to reform the Ontario Municipal Board. The question we need to debate here is not whether to reform it, but how.

How do we ensure communities have a greater say in their neighbourhoods? At the same time, how do we help planned developments get through the system faster so we can address the housing shortage? How do we ensure the new legislation respects municipalities?

0920

We have heard from numerous organizations having concerns with the government's proposed changes, from home builders to professional planners to environmental groups. In fact, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, CELA, said in their submission:

"In our view, none of the foregoing rollbacks from the current land use planning regime can be considered as progressive, justifiable or protective of the public interest. To the contrary, Bill 139 will make it exceedingly more difficult for CELA's client community to play a meaningful role in the land use decision-making process, or to ensure that decision-makers are held accountable through appropriate appellate procedures."

Their submission went on to say:

"Bill 139 should not be enacted as currently proposed. Instead, Bill 139 should be withdrawn by the Ontario government unless the legislative proposals are significantly amended in order to safeguard the public interest, and to ensure that Ontario's land use planning system is fair, robust, participatory, transparent and accountable."

As Karen Peterson of Environment North said in a recent Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal column:

"The main concern with the OMB transfer is that no matter how stellar the process, when official plans are more general in nature and not aligned specifically with sustainability concepts, planning can be compromised and disputes over the decisions regarding land use will have no choice but to go through the court system for resolution, a more costly process than an OMB hearing."

She went on to say, "For quality assurance and to enable trust in the planning process, the province needs to take pause and review the effectiveness as well as the efficiency of this proposed transition."

Madam Speaker, these are not people arguing that we should keep the OMB as it is today, but the fact that they are all raising concerns with this bill shows the government has missed the mark.

It has also been pointed out that many of the contentious hearings before the OMB have actually been developments for infill in the cities, which are a direct result of the government's growth plan.

I've heard from some groups, like the Advocates for Effective OMB Reform, who are concerned that these changes go too far and take away from the initial purpose of the OMB. This group has extensive experience at the OMB on both sides. It's a group of over 20 senior municipal land use planning lawyers with extensive experience concerning a wide array of land use planning matters. They believe that much of the OMB already functions properly to ensure that provincial policy is not simply discussed but it's implemented. They believe that "rigorous public debate and arm's-length checks and balances in the system are essential to good planning. They keep all of the players in the planning process

(including municipal staff, municipal councils, consultants, lawyers and applicants) accountable."

They support OMB reform, but they believe that Bill 139 will make the OMB less accessible to community groups and that more appeals will end up in the court rather than being settled by the OMB.

One of the challenges that they see is that municipal councils simply don't have the time to properly review development proposals. I've heard the same concern from a number of people in the development industry: Multi-million-dollar projects that are going to provide homes or jobs for hundreds of people are given just five minutes to present to municipal council. That doesn't always provide the opportunity for councillors to ask all the questions that they need to in order to evaluate the planning decision. For instance, expert opinions play a crucial role in planning. Committee and council meetings provide very limited opportunity or time for the scrutiny of these opinions, and while councillors work toward the best interests of their communities, there are times when some small groups speak up louder than the majority and can change the way decisions are made.

As the Advocates for Effective OMB Reform put it, "The will of the local majority is not necessarily good planning. It can fail to achieve the provincial policy objectives that are essential to the province as a whole. It can also oppress important and legitimate interests that happen to be in the minority. As well, the majority vote may be silent—those that are not concerned may not speak up—and thus the decision may not in fact represent the majority voice, just the loudest voice."

The Ontario Professional Planners are also concerned about the potential for the broader public interest to be ignored in favour of the voices of a few who are able to influence council decisions. As they said in their submission, "At this time, it remains unclear as to whether the proposed changes will support the principles of good planning and the broader public interest—that guide the practice of professional planners—or whether these will increase political pressure on local councils to make decisions that serve the narrow interests of a minority of private property owners, developers, builders, neighbourhood or other interest groups."

They went on to say that while "there is no doubt that the proposed reforms will increase the authority of local decision-making—and while the tests for an appeal are conformity with provincial policy/plans and local plans, these tools are often not distinct and typically provide minimal policy guidance on site-specific matters."

For example, most provincial plans and official plans do not provide sufficient guidance at the site level, such as heights and densities of buildings, and it is possible that two drastically different development concepts could both conform with provincial, regional and local policy, but one may be more appropriate, given the full consideration of planning matters.

It was pointed out that if someone gets a speeding ticket, they can appeal it, bring forward evidence and have their day in court. But under this legislation, people

who are planning communities or trying to protect their communities and environment won't have that same opportunity. Does it really make sense that you can appeal a \$40 speeding ticket but you can't appeal when millions of dollars of investment and economic opportunity are at stake?

It is telling that the development industry, the professional planners and a number of environmental groups all share concerns with this legislation.

The Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society published a column outlining some of their concerns with the legislation. In the column they said, "An important role in our OMB victory was played by our lawyer, David Donnelly, who acts in effect as a policy adviser to many Ontario environmental groups. He has warned that the proposed double hearing process could turn the proposed" tribunal "into a rubber stamp for municipal councils." That's the new tribunal that is being proposed.

The professional planners are also concerned that short-term objectives could undermine broader, long-term city-building objectives, and suggest that guidance be provided to municipal councils on this matter, reiterating the importance to the public interest of the role of municipal planning staff in providing expert advice to their respective councils.

A number of groups have raised concerns that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal's rules of practice and procedure, when they are written, will prevail over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, which governs legal proceedings to ensure they are fair.

This legislation also removes the protection of requiring a warrant before entering private property in a number of circumstances, including allowing a member or employee of the tribunal to enter into and inspect any place other than a dwelling if they believe there is evidence there.

Madam Speaker, we're talking about land use planning appeals. They are unlikely to be emergencies where a person couldn't take the time to get a warrant, or permission from the owner. In fact, I expect that the owner of the property would often be involved in the appeal, so asking for permission to access the property would be rather simple.

Madam Speaker, I've raised this point before: An exemption for a warrant should be for emergency situations only. This legislation says that the member or employee of the tribunal doesn't even need to identify themselves if they're not asked.

It's safer for everyone if the owner of the property is aware that people need access. It allows them to warn the visitors of any hazards, and in ridings like mine, it allows the farmers to better manage their biosecurity.

Requiring permission of an owner, or a warrant, also shows respect for property owners and the rule of law.

Concerns have also been raised that the government is showing a lack of respect for the rule of law by changing the hearing type to eliminate cross-examination. They will have written submissions to appeals rather than the traditional oral hearings required by the board. The

concern has been raised that it may mean that community groups are unable to sufficiently question information and expert opinions.

In his leadoff speech, the minister said that one of the things that they heard strongly during the OMB review consultation was the desire for more community involvement, and yet this bill achieves the opposite.

The use of oral testimony and cross-examination allows opinions to be tested and validated. Under the new tribunal guidelines, there should be criteria and guidance to allow the tribunal to undertake a more comprehensive hearing process where required.

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The hearing format should not be limited, and there should be flexibility for a range of different types of formats depending on the complexity of the case. There is not a one-type-fits-all solution for municipalities, and the same is true for their planning matters.

The Advocates for Effective OMB Reform met with the ministry to discuss the change to hearings and were told that these oral hearings aren't required because they take place at the municipal level—but in reality, that's not the case.

As well, under the new tribunal, many issues that local residents are concerned about cannot be appealed, such as changes to traffic, shadows from new buildings, and other concerns that may not be considered in local plans and council decisions. In fact, in a recent *Law Times* article, lawyer Alan Cohen said that under Bill 139, "Ratepayer groups may be denied the right to appeal. They may be disenfranchised."

Many groups support the introduction of limits to evidence introduction, where new evidence cannot be introduced as part of an appeal if it was not introduced before the original decision on the application was made locally at the local council. This would help to decrease the length and cost of hearings and encourage stakeholders to be involved earlier in the process by providing relevant information in submissions to the council in advance of their decisions. In some cases, this can save time and allow for quicker decision-making. However, in other instances, as noted by the professional planners, the introduction of new planning evidence in complex matters recognizes that circumstances can change between the time a decision is made by council and the time when an appeal is considered. Policies change, market trends evolve, and local conditions change.

AMO has also raised concerns that the way the bill is written will make the entire planning process more complex. In a recent letter to the minister, they said, "There are a few areas of concern, some are administrative and others pertain to work cultures. First, throughout the bill there are references to other acts, such as the *Metrolinx Act* and the *Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act*. The intent of the provincial policy statement is to assemble all provincial policy that affects land use planning into one document to simplify and thus ensure all municipal planning is done in keeping with the provincial policies. In the past, planners had to

sift through some hundred different pieces of legislation, regulation, and guidance to find provincial policy.”

AMO recommends that the bill be amended to remove references to other legislation and, instead, the provincial policy statement be amended to include those policies.

Madam Speaker, as I said, municipalities, community groups and individuals have long been asking for a review of the Ontario Municipal Board and its role in mediating decisions between municipal governments and developers. I'm not convinced that the way to do this is to abolish the OMB and create a new oversight body. We agree with the need for reform, but the new name seems to be more about public relations than making the system work better.

The OMB was created in 1906 as the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board, and has been called the Ontario Municipal Board since 1932. With such a long history, it's concerning that time and money are being spent to change the name when changes about the board's function could have been made under the name Ontario Municipal Board, ensuring that it maintains its familiarity while saving time changing documents and legislation to reflect the new name.

And while renaming the OMB in this new legislation to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal suggests vast changes and overhauls, much of the OMB remains intact under a new name. As written in the explanatory note of the bill, “Many provisions in the new act and the old act are substantively the same.” Those are not my words; those are the minister's words. This could be misleading to those anticipating a completely new oversight body under the new name. It could also be confusing to those who are familiar with the old name and are looking to access its services. This is another case of the government trying to give something a nice-sounding name rather than worrying about the impact.

If you look at community groups behind appeals to the OMB, most of them are not made up of professional planners. They are regular people who are taking time out of their busy lives to have a say in the future of their community. We need to make the process as clear to them as possible. Instead, this government is expecting them to know that a local appeal body can be set up and operated by each municipality, but a local appeal tribunal is a provincial organization.

For example, in my riding, the community has been fighting a proposed landfill site in Beachville. If developed, this landfill would pose a threat to the town of Ingersoll's drinking water as it is close to one of their main wells. The proposed landfill is also close to the Thames River, which means it could impact the entire Thames River ecosystem, from Oxford county to London and Chatham and the mouth of the river at Lake St. Clair. The county of Oxford has passed a resolution concerning a moratorium on the landfill's approval, and the community is united in its effort to stop the landfill development process.

The community has put significant time and resources into fighting the landfill, and while I've written the Min-

ister of the Environment many times to block this proposal, if that doesn't happen, the local municipalities, the community groups and the volunteers would need a strong appeals body to protect community interests, plans and our important natural resources.

Volunteers in these types of campaigns are people who became champions in their community because they saw a need. They didn't go to school to learn how the planning process worked. They don't have years of experience navigating government red tape. They are just trying to make their voice heard and make their community a better place.

Madam Speaker, I expect that there are MPPs in this Legislature right now who couldn't explain the difference between the city of Toronto's local appeals board and the government's local appeals tribunal. So is it really fair to expect our community volunteers to automatically understand that? In fact, budget documents from the city of Toronto already mistakenly refer to the local appeals board as the local appeals tribunal, as do some documents from the city clerk.

Trent University proudly states on their website that a member of their local board of governors has been appointed chair of Ontario's first seven-member local appeal tribunal. Unless the government has started making appointments before this legislation is passed, it is clear the new name is going to cause confusion, because that is not the tribunal that that member was appointed to.

A registered professional planner wrote on his blog, “Recently, the Ontario government has announced the creation of local planning appeals tribunals, which will replace the OMB with a locally appointed body that has limited power.” If an industry expert doesn't understand from the name that this is one provincial body, rather than locally appointed appeal boards, how do we expect community volunteers who have never been involved in land use planning to be clear on the role of this new organization? This is just going to create further confusion to those looking to appeal planning decisions.

The Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society said, “The proposed new name for the tribunal however, LAT, does not give sufficient dignity to the important matters it will be adjudicating. A more appropriate one would be the Ontario land use planning board.”

The name isn't the only part of this bill that's causing confusion. When the government announced this legislation, media outlet after media outlet reported that there would no longer be appeals permitted near transit stations. One media outlet ran a headline saying, “OMB Challenges To Be Barred within 500 Metres of Transit Stations,” following an interview with a government source who refused to be named.

The problem is that this bill does not ban appeals within 500 metres of transit stations. It says that municipalities may include in their official plan policies that identify the area surrounding and including an existing or planned higher-order transit and identify the minimum numbers of residents and jobs. If the municipality chooses to put these policies in place, they will not be appealable, but the municipality has to choose to do it. It

is a small step towards increasing the density around these stations, not the significant step that the media reported.

There has also been a lot of discussion about the need to address the missing middle: to provide housing options between high-rise condo towers and detached homes. However, this bill does nothing to solve that problem.

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As I pointed out in this Legislature numerous times, Ontario is facing a housing crisis. There are over 171,000 families on the waiting list for affordable housing in Ontario. Not only is the list bigger every year, but the wait times for every single category have increased. In 2003, seniors were waiting two and a half years for affordable housing, and now that has almost doubled to 4.4 years waiting for affordable housing.

We need to provide supportive housing for those who need extra services. We need to help those who can't afford a good place to live, and we need to ensure that there is housing available across the spectrum—from social housing to single detached homes, townhouses or rental units.

Earlier this week, the Minister of Municipal Affairs listed all types of buildings that he saw around the province, and nowhere in that list did he mention rental units. We believe they are an important part of the mix.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.'s 2016 figures show a vacancy rate of 2.1% for the province as a whole, with the city of Toronto facing an even worse situation with vacancies at 1.3% of local stock. Vacancy rates in the broader greater Toronto area have decreased from 3.2% to 1.4% since 2007. The vacancy rate is so low that people are having bidding wars over apartments. Clearly we need to encourage more landlords to enter the market and increase the supply. Yet this government continues to implement policies that discourage landlords.

Housing is a serious issue, and it isn't one where the government should be playing games. It's not an issue we should be rushing. It is complex. A problem in one part of the housing spectrum impacts all of the housing market. We should be taking time, doing the research and getting it right.

The same goes for planning and development. We need to ensure that new units are being created and that planned developments do not face unnecessary delays that leave Ontario families without options. And those options involve ensuring there is social housing available for those who need support services, as well as access to affordable housing for all Ontarians. It involves policies that would encourage rental housing development. It involves co-operative housing, where people not only have an affordable and suitable place to live; they have pride of belonging and ownership. It involves making sure that the dream of home ownership isn't out of reach for families. It means ensuring that the rapidly increasing cost of living isn't forcing people out of their homes or forcing them to choose between heating their home and eating. It involves ensuring that there is new supply on the market and that developments aren't stuck waiting years at the OMB or at the new tribunal.

Concerns have been raised about the potential for further delays and the cost that the new tribunal could create, especially in a housing market that is already struggling to meet the needs. Yet the government doesn't seem to have looked at the impact on housing at all. Once again, they've introduced legislation without doing impact analysis. If new rental housing developments or affordable housing options are held up at the tribunal, the wait-list will continue to grow and housing in Ontario will continue to be unaffordable. We need to ensure that we can allow developers to build where plans exist to do so, without unnecessary delays and red tape caused by challenges before the tribunal and delays allowed by the process.

A TVO column said, after this bill was introduced: "The cost of getting even a small project through the city's planning process can easily be tens of thousands of dollars after the lawyers and planners are paid, and timelines of two or more years are common. It's only worth doing if the home can be resold for well above market prices—exactly the opposite of an affordable housing strategy."

The column pointed out that while this government was introducing this legislation making it more difficult to build, two states had actually introduced legislation to do the exact opposite in order to make housing more affordable. They pointed to plans in California and Oregon, where they streamlined the building process to deal with high housing prices. Those states recognized that all costs that go into a development are eventually passed on to the homeowners or renters.

Just yesterday, a developer told me about an example where he had proposed to build 40 units, which he was planning to sell for \$190,000 each. As the development went through the planning process, he had to reduce the number to 27 units. As a result of the cost of the land, the planning process and the common infrastructure being shared by less units, he had to put the price of each one up to \$279,000. That's \$80,000 in additional costs per unit on that one development. That developer was worried that under the new system he would have even less units approved and would have had to increase the housing cost even more, making home ownership out of reach for many more Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, we frequently hear that we have too much red tape in the planning and building process. It takes years and years to get developments through the process. Those delays contribute to our housing shortage and add to the cost of housing for new homeowners and renters.

The Federation of Rental-housing Providers said in a recent column:

"Some of the proposed changes in Bill 139 may further complicate the land development process, resulting in more delays and costs. Any changes that lengthen or complicate the process, will impact the development of new rental housing supply."

Despite knowing the impact on new rental housing in this bill, the government has once again lengthened the

timelines for approvals. In Bill 139, the government is extending timelines for making decisions related to official plans and zoning bylaws by another 30 days. For official plans the timeline will be extended to 210 days, and for zoning bylaws the timeline will be extended to 150 days. The government says they want to cut red tape in housing, but at every opportunity they add more delays.

Last year, we put forward an amendment to restore a number of planning timelines to what they were in 2004. An industry expert said, "These are the type of amendments that would help facilitate bringing supply to the market more expediently and putting some more tension in the planning system to get discussions and negotiations moving more quickly." But the government voted our amendment down, and now they are lengthening the timelines even further. When the government does housing photo ops, they talk about wanting to cut red tape, but every time they have the opportunity they just add more.

The city of Guelph pointed out that municipalities and appellants are subject to timelines under this bill but the tribunal is not. Staff recommended that the government set timelines for the tribunal regarding the amount of time that can pass between the completion of a hearing and the issuance of a tribunal decision. For instance, city staff recommended 30 days for simple matters such as minor variances and 60 days for complex cases.

Setting a time limit for scheduling a hearing once a complete appeals package is received is also important. City staff recommended 90 days for stand-alone minor variance cases and 180 days for more complex issues. Timelines for complex cases should be firm but flexible.

The government also added another new delay. Under this new tribunal, municipal councils have a chance to reconsider a plan or zoning bylaw that did not conform to the local or provincial policy. However, if they still choose to ignore the policies, it goes back to the tribunal again, meaning a decision that could have been made sooner is delayed unnecessarily. While the intent is admirable, the result is an unnecessary delay in cases where the municipality does not want to reconsider or amend their official plan or zoning bylaw.

Oxford county—you may know where that is, Madam Speaker—suggested that, to further reduce delays, when councils knowingly adopted an official plan and/or zoning bylaw amendment that did not conform to provincial or local policy, it may be worthwhile to consider providing municipalities with the ability to opt out of the reconsideration period in certain circumstances and simply allow the tribunal to proceed with a hearing and decision on the matter, since it is less likely that a different decision will be made the second time a council is given the same information.

Some of the appeals occur because a municipality has been unwilling or unable to make a decision for some reason. Under this bill, if a municipality can't make a decision, it goes to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, which then refers it back to the municipality for 90 days.

If the municipality has already had 150 days to make a decision and has not done so for some reason, I suspect that the only thing that the 90 days does is further delay the project. Instead of an opt out, perhaps this should be an opt in. If the municipality is ready and wants the opportunity to make a decision, they should request that the matter be referred back to them. If no request is received, it would be assumed that they are still not able to make a decision and the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal would proceed.

Under this bill, if a municipality is unable or unwilling to make a decision, it is estimated that it will take at least 1,000 days to get a decision—1,000 days, and it could be longer. When the application is filed, the municipality has 150 days to make a decision. If no decision is made, then the developer files an application with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. Based on the requirement for mediation and current experience, experts are estimating it will take a year for that case to be heard and have a decision. Since there is no municipal decision to be ruled on, the issue would then be sent back to the municipalities to give them another opportunity to make a decision.

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After 90 days, if the municipality still hasn't made a decision, then it goes back to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, which then, once again, takes a year to hold a hearing and finally makes a decision. To put that in perspective, if an application was a child, it would be almost three years old. It would be walking, talking, able to tell stories and not far from going to junior kindergarten.

Along with the change of the name will be a change of the rules. If passed, the bill will overtake the OMB in adjudication matters. But what about decisions already before the board? The bill is unclear about how these will be dealt with, leaving much of the decision-making to the minister in regard to which cases will be presented under which rules. As suggested by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, "The province should include very clear guidance on the implementation of the proposed reforms and how existing appeals which are brought forward before the effective date of the legislation will be adjudicated."

One suggested method is put forward by the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto adopted a motion requesting that the province ensure the legislation contains provisions limiting the transition period so that any application made after first reading be subject to the new legislation. Other municipalities are also supportive of this motion, including the city of Oakville. Other municipalities, including the city of London, believe that certain cases that have started the appeal process should be considered under the new rules.

After significant public consultation, the city of London developed its official plan, the London plan. The plan was developed over many years with many revisions based on consultation with local and provincial input. It was also approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs late last year. The plan received 42 appeals and it began

its pre-hearing conference at the OMB on September 5. The city doesn't anticipate the hearing to proceed until 2018.

Now that we are debating replacing the OMB with the local tribunal, and under the new changes to the OMB, many of the appeals would not be allowed. Considering the hearing is still many months away, it is likely that the municipality and tribunal will be expending resources on appeals that would no longer have merit, except that the process was started under the old system and grandfathered into the new tribunal with the old rules. This kind of confusion is created when legislation is introduced that doesn't have clear rules.

There is also confusion about the development application. We've heard reports that some municipalities assume any application filed after first reading of the bill will be under the new appeal system. Others assume that it is when the bill passes third reading. Some organizations believe that it will only be applications filed after the regulations are in place. How can anyone operate in that much uncertainty? The answer is that they can't, so we are already hearing reports that planning departments are slowing down, waiting for answers. That will just make our housing shortage worse.

Not only does this bill leave the transition to the new organization up to regulations to be determined at a later date, it also gives the minister the power to choose individual cases heard under which rules. That means if someone who has been very generous to the Liberal Party happens to have a development proposal that is being appealed, the minister can decide to send it wherever the developer has a better chance of winning. I don't think most people would trust this government to make those kinds of decisions.

It also means that the new tribunal would have to function as the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and the Ontario Municipal Board until all old cases had been completed, making things more difficult for tribunal members who continually have to juggle two sets of rules for the same cases.

This bill also includes the creation of a Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. If it is implemented properly, that could be of great use to community groups like those fighting the landfill in my riding, if the need arises to fight it at the tribunal level. However, there is nothing that says that community groups will qualify for support through the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. In fact, this new bill prevents them from receiving some of the assistance they could qualify for under the old act.

Under the Ontario Municipal Board Act, the OMB had the right to waive fees when they deemed it was "appropriate circumstances." That means that they could waive them for community groups such as volunteers in my riding who are concerned about the impact of a landfill on their drinking water. Bill 139 says, "The tribunal may waive all or any portion of fees for individuals who are determined, in accordance with the rules, to be low-income individuals." So someone who is not a low-income individual and wants to protect their

community does not get the same consideration. That means community groups are no longer eligible to have their fees waived.

I am also concerned by how few details are known about the centre. For example, how will the centre operate? Who will be able to access the services? How will the services be financed? Where will the centre be located? Will there be limits on how many individuals or groups can access the services each year? And who does the support centre report to? We asked many of these questions during the ministry briefing, and the staff couldn't provide answers.

In their report to council, the city of Brampton said more information on the support centre and how to secure representation would be helpful as they try to understand this bill and the new tribunal. They too had questions about the tribunal, such as, "Would this option only be available to parties who are direct appellants? Can parties secure representation at any stage in the appeal process or only at the start before hearings begin? Where the tribunal appoints legal or planning representation for a party, how will that information be communicated to parties in advance of hearings?"

The appeals process can be difficult to understand, so I support the development of the support centre for the tribunal; however, the details must be worked out ahead of time.

There must be support for people in different areas of the province. It cannot simply be in Toronto or major cities. The group of volunteers fighting the landfill in my riding should be as able to access assistance as any group in downtown Toronto.

When individuals and groups are faced with the stresses of the appeals process, creating more stress through an unorganized or inaccessible support centre will only make things worse. There need to be clear guidelines on who can qualify for support to ensure that people and groups are treated fairly and equally. It cannot be determined based on the favourite causes of the people making the decisions.

There must also be consistent tests for which cases are frivolous and not worthy of support. A person who is filing an appeal because of a personal vendetta should not do so at the taxpayers' expense.

The taxpayers should also have a clear understanding of the proposed cost of the centre. We asked the government, and they can't provide even a draft budget for starting this support centre. Will the budget be so limited that it wouldn't be able to help anyone? Will the government be funnelling millions and millions into this organization and taking it away from health or education? We don't know, and it appears the government doesn't know either.

These are all questions the minister should be answering while the bill is before the Legislature so that all three parties can have input, and stakeholders can help improve the centre through the committee process. But I know that this government does not always want to listen to input from others and does not always put careful consideration into their legislation.

Madam Speaker, there are many other questions that haven't been answered. Who will the members of the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal be? These people will play an important role in shaping Ontario's future. The decisions they make regarding planning proposals will be important in building cities across the province, but in Bill 139 there are no details of what qualifications members of the tribunal will be required to have.

The city of Guelph has suggested that the tribunal members should physically visit the site of an appeal to better appreciate and understand the arguments based on local knowledge and features, as each municipality has unique features, opportunities and challenges. They also suggest that continuing education opportunities be available for tribunal members to improve their dispute resolution skills and exposure to best municipal practices on common issues. It is another area that has not been covered in this bill.

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While municipalities want OMB reform, they have also expressed concerns with the lack of details for many areas of the new bill. For example, in reference to changes to the way hearings are done and the elimination of cross-examination, the city of Brampton said that "additional details on the hearing process and submissions are needed to fully comprehend the effect of this significant change."

They also said that more clarification is needed about what tests and criteria will be applied by the tribunal to determine whether an official plan amendment or zoning bylaw amendment is consistent and conforms with applicable plans.

They also said it's not clear how these tests will be applied to different types of appeals, like non-decision appeals where the municipality has not made a decision within the required timelines in the Planning Act.

As the county of Oxford said, "There are still a number of areas where further detail and clarification would be beneficial. Further, given that much of the detail is to be provided through future regulations, they are requesting that a formal opportunity be provided for municipalities to review and provide feedback on such regulations."

Madam Speaker, in my own briefing with the ministry, they did not even answer some of these questions, which concerns me about their ability to implement the planned changes effectively and efficiently, with so much left to sort out through regulation.

While municipalities hope that the proposed changes to limit testimony, require case management conferences, and restrict new testimony will help to decrease the cost and length of the appeals process, they once again lack details. They require clarification and direction on the circumstances and criteria for how these will play out in the tribunal and how procedures will be applied to different types of cases.

It's difficult for a municipal partner to play a meaningful role in the OMB review if they do not have the details required to make detailed, knowledgeable improvements and suggestions.

In another example of lacking details, it is also unclear if public notices, meetings or open houses are required before a second decision is made by the approval authority. Therefore, as Oxford also suggested, it may be useful to allow a second opportunity for public input to be received on the matter, as there may be cases where the staff recommendation could change in light of new information gathered as the process proceeded.

One of the major concerns with the OMB was the amount of time and resources required to put forward a case at the OMB, and the delays that it created for developers and municipalities. I think we could all agree with that. I hope, when we have more details about the way the new tribunal will operate, that we strive to expedite the process wherever possible.

Our builders, developers and municipalities have enough red tape to get through already. Any amount that we can take away, to improve their ability to build world-class cities in Ontario and provide new housing, is a positive step in the right direction.

By hiding the details of how different aspects of the bill will play out, this government is missing an opportunity to allow municipalities, community groups, planners and experts to weigh in on the changes and influence the outcomes.

Rather than working with those who are experienced and have valuable input, this government is doing all the work behind closed doors, which will leave many stakeholders, municipalities and community groups scrambling at the last minute to understand regulations as they are implemented.

This is why we will be requesting that the minister and the Attorney General appear before committee to answer questions before the bill moves forward. If they have done their research and they believe in public consultation, this is their opportunity to demonstrate it.

It's also worth noting that comments on the Environmental Bill of Rights, or EBR, were originally due on August 14. Madam Speaker, you will know that our Legislature does not usually sit in the summer. We spend most of the time in our constituencies doing work there, as I pointed out at the beginning of my speech. While I know that our municipal governments work hard and are very diligent in getting things done on time, with so many things keeping them busy during the summer, there was very little time for councils to provide quality input.

Municipal councils have fewer sittings in the summer, to allow them to be out working in their communities and developing skills and knowledge through programs and conferences like that of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which actually was meeting this year from August 13 to 16. They had a wonderful conference, Madam Speaker.

I was pleased to meet with many delegations of municipal representatives and heard many concerns about the way this government was doing things and the challenges they are creating for municipalities. In fact, many of these meetings also took place on August 14, the day the comments were originally due.

On the Friday before comments were due, when many councillors were already on their way to AMO, the province announced a two-week extension. The extension was so late that it didn't help most municipalities.

The minister and committee may notice, as they review submissions, that there were many done as staff submissions because there was simply not sufficient time to get council approval. That shows a lack of respect for municipal councils and their input on local matters, as does waiting until the Friday before AMO to give a short extension.

I want to commend those who were able to put together a submission in time and thank all of the municipalities and different stakeholder organizations that made the effort to share their submissions with us.

Given that the OMB bill is together with the Conservation Authorities Act, it is important to ensure that reforms to the OMB allow for consideration of comments from public agencies like conservation authorities. Groups like the professional planners are concerned that the status of commenting agencies may be diminished or ignored through the proposed reforms.

Under this new legislation and tribunal, when matters follow the official local plans and provincial plans, they are given precedence in the adjudication process, meaning that the role of these agencies is reduced in their ability to suggest changes and point out areas to improve processes to meet standards.

Madam Speaker, as I said, we agree with the need to reform the Ontario Municipal Board. We believe that the process can and should work better. But we also shouldn't lose sight of the fact that there are cases where the OMB was needed in order to build services for vulnerable people. For instance, the Lynwood Charlton Centre for adolescent girls with mental health challenges would not have been built without the support of the Ontario Municipal Board. As the executive director said, "Without the OMB process as a counterpoint to the council process, our youth and our organization would not have been able to benefit from becoming a contributing member to the Corktown neighbourhood."

The Summerhill development and LCBO store where the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs did an announcement a few months ago would not have been built. Neither would the Distillery District or the church in Scarborough where the only land the congregation could afford needed to be rezoned and it was appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.

We need to ensure that, in reforming the Ontario Municipal Board process, we aren't stopping the well-planned developments that will provide needed rental units, affordable home ownership or the developments that provide services for our vulnerable citizens.

Madam Speaker, I've talked a lot about the Planning Act and the changes to the Ontario Municipal Board, but that isn't all that is included in this bill. It actually includes changes to 19 different acts, including significant changes to the Conservation Authorities Act. I know

that my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka has outlined many of our concerns with this portion of the bill, but I just want to point out that I believe the conservation authorities are an important part of conservation efforts in Ontario, and I think they deserve to have a stand-alone bill so these changes can be thoroughly debated.

During our briefing, I asked the Liberal staff involved in this legislation why they chose to put the OMB changes together with the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, to which they responded that it was because of the busy legislative agenda. In other words, they don't believe that municipal land use planning or conservation authorities deserve whole and meaningful debate in this Legislature or in committee, but can instead just share the time. You know, we're busy people here. It's just another example of this government's lack of respect for municipalities, and now conservation authorities.

These levels of government are important to deliver services to Ontarians and implement provincial plans. They're important partners in the work that we do, and we need to respect them and give their legislation careful consideration and time, especially when they put so much time and consideration into their work.

Madam Speaker, you may recall from the spring session that the government spent much of the session doing some spring cleaning, trying to tidy up the messes they'd made. They passed legislation in response to the outrageous hydro prices that were hurting Ontarians because they let the problem get out of control, and created a labour bill that required committee time after first reading just to fix all the errors it had.

So instead of spending more time focusing on other legislation and giving these acts stand-alone attention, they are bunching legislation together to get things done faster, to catch up. They're trying to push through as much legislation as they can, without the due diligence it deserves.

This government has been in power now for 14 years. They've had many opportunities to put forward legislation and make changes to the Ontario Municipal Board and the Conservation Authorities Act. But instead, they are waiting until right before an election to make these changes, as well as other changes to legislation, in an attempt to further their own interests rather than the interests of Ontarians.

I want to take a moment to point out a change in the Conservation Authorities Act that may create challenges for municipal councils. The government is proposing giving themselves the authority, by regulation, to set qualifications for who can serve on the conservation authority board. A number of municipalities, including Norwich in my riding, have already passed resolutions opposing those changes. The challenge is that municipalities fund 90% of the conservation authorities, so in many cases municipal councillors make up the majority of the board. Madam Speaker, it is not up to this government to tell the people what qualifications municipal councillors should have; that privilege belongs to the voters.

As this bill goes forward into committee, I hope that many of the questions and concerns I've raised can be addressed. I look forward to hearing from the ministers at the committee so that we can have time to ask some of these questions. I want to hear from the Minister of Municipal Affairs about the impact on development and how this will impact our housing crisis. We also want to hear from him about the transition questions and how he plans to deal with ongoing appeals such as London.

We want to hear answers about how the tribunal would operate and why the government has decided that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal's rules of practice and procedures, when they are written, will prevail over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, which governs legal proceedings. We want answers on conservation authorities and why this government doesn't trust municipalities to select the people who are appointed to the boards.

I hope that we can have community groups come and speak to our committee, to hear their concerns and ensure that these changes work for them and give them a say in the future of their community. It's important that bills are clear and can be understood by those people who are impacted.

When questions remain about the process, it can lead to legislation that needs to be put back through the legislative process to fix the errors. While the government is pushing through many pieces of legislation, even putting different bills together under one piece of legislation like this one, errors can and do happen. My goal is to correct the problems and to make legislation that works for Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, we've talked about some of the broader problems with the bill, but there are also drafting errors that resulted from rushing legislation through. For instance, in schedule 4 of the conservation authorities section of this bill, it still refers to the Ontario Municipal Board, even though the board is replaced by the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal in the same bill. In schedule 5, there is a subsection that says that a clause only applies if Bill 68 has had royal assent, even though Bill 68 had royal assent on the same day that this bill was introduced in this Legislature. Clearly, there is some confusion on the other side. That's why we need to make sure that we take the time to fix these mistakes, big and small. Let's get it right.

I hope that, as this bill continues, we continue to consult with our municipal partners and provide them with the opportunities to give input towards this bill, which has a significant impact on their mandates. There are many unanswered questions in this bill, and we need to work together—all three parties and our municipal sector—to make sure we get it right.

I want to thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to put the party's position on this bill on the record.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it is almost 10:15, I will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am honoured and pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Susan Noordermeer. Her daughter Nicola is page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome very special guests to the Legislature today: Sam Andrews; Amanda Avery; Carol Berdan; Tammy Carbino; Peggy Clark; Donna Corewyn; Gary Donovan; Naomi D'Souza, a family council network association founder, Toronto; Janice Duffy; Sue Fairweather; Madeleine Gill of the Ontario long-term-care family council network association; Deanne Houghton; Joanne Ingrassia; Debra Kusmirski; Jim Lamont; Don Mastin; Heather Neiser; Mary Oko; Catherine Renaud; Bob and Carol Saxby; and Gus Koutoumanos. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I just found out that there's a constituent of mine here from Pickering-Scarborough East: Cheryl Lewis-Thurab. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome Alan Reisler, who is here from the wonderful riding of Thornhill. Welcome, Alan. So good to see you.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome, in the east members' gallery, Amanda Yeung Collucci, Markham's ward 6 councillor and our newly nominated candidate for the new riding of Markham-Unionville.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to introduce—it's not his first time here—my son, Damien. But what is a first time here is his fiancée, Sophia Shiner. They are in the House.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me great pleasure to welcome today Susan Kitchen from the Coaches Association of Ontario, as well as, of course, Howard Brown. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature my constituency office manager, Monika Duggal; her husband, Satyam; and Saty's parents, who are visiting us from Jalandhar in Punjab, India. I'd like the Legislature to join me in welcoming Mr. Kamal Duggal and Mrs. Komal Duggal from Jalandhar. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to welcome, from northern Ontario and Sudbury, Peter and Melodie Hughes, as well as Ellyne Reider and Melissa Belanger. Welcome to Queen's Park. Bienvenue.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is my pleasure to welcome Anthony Buragina, who is a local constituent, and Ben Hendry, and of course Howard Brown, of the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario, here today to the Legislature.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to welcome the members of the Rowan's Law committee to Queen's Park today and congratulate them and thank them for their hard work on the report we're tabling today.

I'd like to welcome Susan Kitchen from the Coaches Association of Ontario; Elisabeth White, who's a nurse practitioner at SickKids hospital; and former NHL great

Eric Lindros, who I understand is going to be joining us later. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Chris Ballard: They've been introduced once already, but I want to introduce two fantastic employees from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change: Ben Hendry and Anthony Buragina. They're both engineers and are both here representing PEGO today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, accompanying Ms. Tonia Grannum from the Clerks' table, is a special guest. Members, please join me in welcoming Mr. David Wilson, the Clerk of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of New Zealand.

Welcome.

ARNOLD CHAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development on either a point of order or an introduction.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how appropriate this is, but a good friend of ours, Arnold Chan, MP from Scarborough—Agincourt—I've just received a note that he has passed away. He was a very, very good friend. He worked here for a number of years. I think most of us know him as a wonderful, wonderful man who dedicated his entire life to public service. I just received the note seconds ago, and I hope it's not inappropriate for me to advise the Legislature of this. Perhaps I could ask you to ask for a moment of silence?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to have a moment of silence for Arnold Chan. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask everyone in the House to please rise for a moment of silence to pay tribute in honour of Arnold Chan.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, the Toronto Star noted that Canadian incomes have risen by more than 10% over the last decade, but according to Statistics Canada, the number of low-income persons is rising in Ontario, where growth has been sluggish.

The fact of the matter is, we buck the national trend when it comes to growth. And now the FAO says that the latest Liberal policies do nothing to help low-income families.

Mr. Speaker, how can Ontario afford to continue down this road? Would the Minister of Finance please enlighten us?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition and his new-

found concern for those with low income, for those individuals who are most vulnerable in our society.

This is the member who is saying to them, "Do not"—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful. Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The question is—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order. And we'll move very quickly.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So the question is, what are the members of the opposition going to do in regard to the minimum wage and helping those most in need? Are they going to support increasing the minimum wage to increase consumer spending, to grow our economy and to enable all of us to be better off?

Ontario's economy is growing. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 16 years, at 5.7%. Companies and businesses are looking for—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the minister: The Liberal talking point when it comes to this tends to be that we're leading the G7 in growth. But we're not even leading Canada, let alone the rest of the world.

To quote the stats, "The median income in Ontario was ... up just 3.8% over the last decade, the slowest growth of any province or territory" over the last decade in which they have been in power. I'll repeat: the slowest growth of any province or territory in the last decade. That is their legacy. That is their record. This number has been attributed to the Liberal "gutting of the manufacturing sector and the loss of 318,000 jobs."

1040

How can the Liberals possibly be proud of this? How can they be proud and say that we lead the G7 in growth when we're last in Canada? It's unacceptable. We have to do better.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The opposition has voted against a number of initiatives that help those most in need. They voted against equal pay for equal work. They voted against increasing vacation time. They are not supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence. And in fact, they are voting against being more open and transparent with regard to unionization in our labour movement.

In our last budget—in our last many budgets, in fact—we have put programs and initiatives to grow the economy. We are leading Canada. We are leading Canada in economic growth. We are leading the G7 in economic growth. We have a debt-to-GDP ratio of about 39%, and it is tempering down much more effectively than it is in other provinces, and around the world, for that matter.

We'll take the effective initiatives that we put in place to have some of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are the lowest per-capita-cost government anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and we're growing the economy, no thanks to the members opposite who voted against those measures.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Finance: You get the Liberal spin that everything is rosy. But you look at Stats Canada and it paints a different picture. This was actually in the Toronto Star. I would encourage the Minister of Finance to maybe read the Toronto Star a little bit more, because it actually says that out of all the provinces in Canada and all the territories, we had the slowest growth over the last decade. And whatever spin you say, you can't change the fact that we're falling behind in Ontario.

Rather than trying to pitch some other story, how do you acknowledge that Stats Canada says that we are dead last? Is the Minister of Finance willing to settle for our great province being last in Canada? I'm never willing to settle for Ontario being last. We must do better.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario is one of the best jurisdictions around the world. We are number one in North America when it comes to economic growth. We've had over 720,000 net new jobs in the depths of the recession, and every year, even when we qualified for equalization, we were net contributing to the federation and we always have been.

In this last budget, in this last public accounts, we beat our target by \$3.3 billion, with over \$190 billion more in investment for infrastructure.

That member opposite sat in the federal party that voted in the largest deficit in Canada's history. He doubled debt for all of Canada.

We in Ontario are leading and we're helping the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I know the minister is probably just as excited as I am to head next week to the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce. I love attending the International Plowing Match, and I love to see all the amazing work that our farmers and agricultural sector do. I know they have a few questions for the minister and the government.

The Local Food Act passed in 2013 and in the law there was a section for the minister to set goals for "encouraging increased use of local food by public sector organizations." But four years later, nothing has happened. This section of the law has not been proclaimed.

Why not? And will the minister have this section proclaimed before he goes to the IPM?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question this morning.

We've been outreaching over the last four years. I think of Sysco. We have been dealing with Gordon Food Service and all the big suppliers in the province of Ontario to continue to make sure that they work with our local farmers in the province of Ontario—50,000 family farms contributing \$37 billion to Ontario's GDP.

While I've got the floor this morning, I'm very proud to say that one of the BMO farm families of the year that will be recognized at the International Plowing Match is the Crowley family from the great riding of Peterborough.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: Previously with the Liberals we had stretch goals; now we have outreach goals. They come up with new terms for why they can't honour their commitments. I would have hoped the minister had said he would have proclaimed that aspect of the act, but we didn't get that.

This summer, I had the opportunity to meet with the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, and they had a number of concerns with Liberal policies and the impact on farmers. They said that recent "changes greatly inhibit the ability of farmers to plan their investments.... At a provincial level, the result will be less investment in Ontario and less stability for rural Ontario."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Mr. Patrick Brown: We are seeing growers courted all the time to go to Mexico, to take their investment to Mexico.

Personally, I love locally grown food. I love locally grown food in my hometown and in Simcoe county, and I want all of Ontario to continue to enjoy Ontario-grown produce. But if the Liberals are intent on driving this investment out of Ontario, it's not going to be here.

What is the minister going to do to make sure we keep that investment in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Again, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question this morning.

Just recently we put in place support for our greenhouse sector in the province of Ontario—some \$19 million that we asked the greenhouse sector to design themselves to continue to make investments in innovation and productivity in Ontario's very robust greenhouse sector, whether you're in southwestern Ontario or the Niagara Peninsula or other parts of Ontario, to see this growth.

The Leader of the Opposition was in Ottawa. For four straight years, we asked Ottawa and Gerry Ritz, when he was the minister, to fund 60% of the Risk Management Program for our farmers in the province of Ontario. He sat there, didn't support it and said no every time it was brought to his attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary, the member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the minister: I'm going to read you a quote from Ken Wall from the Asparagus Farmers of Ontario.

"Several years ago, the Premier encouraged us in agriculture. She said, 'Listen, I want you, by 2020, to produce 120,000 new jobs here in the province in the field of agriculture.'" Ken Wall went on to say, "Do you have any idea how ridiculous that sounds to farmers like myself? We've got increased costs from hydro and cap-and-trade, and now we've got a 32% increase in our minimum wage rate."

I ask the minister: How can they grow, let alone survive, when you continue to attack their industries? Speaker, I ask the minister as well: As an adviser to the Premier, have you told her how ridiculous this sounds to farmers?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Huron–Bruce for her questions this morning.

I continue to engage the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I engage the National Farmers Union and the Christian Farmers. This past week, I had the opportunity to meet with other groups that are part of the leading driver in Ontario's economy today—\$37 billion to Ontario's GDP, 800,000 jobs each and every day, and a sector that's known around the world for quality and safety. Through these representations, we certainly heard the potential impacts of increases in minimum wage. I think the Premier said very clearly that we'll be looking at mitigation measures, as we go forward, on a sector-by-sector basis.

As I said, I want to thank the member for her questions this morning.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

This morning I was joined by 22 people from all across the province who have a loved one in long-term care. Many of them are here in the gallery now, and I personally want to commend them for the advocacy that they undertake on behalf of their loved ones each and every day.

1050

They came to Queen's Park today to tell the government that their loved ones are not getting the care that they deserve. Our long-term-care system is broken, and we need a broad public inquiry to begin undoing some of the damage that has been done.

Will the Deputy Premier commit to immediately broadening the scope of the narrow long-term-care inquiry already under way, to finally start fixing the mess that our long-term-care system is in?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, I would also like to acknowledge and thank the advocates, the care partners,

the caregivers, the family members and the patients who are here with us today to discuss this important issue.

Importantly, I also want to again express my sincerest and deep condolences to the families, the loved ones and the communities in and around Woodstock and London and the other areas that were affected by the horrible tragedy that led to the creation of the public inquiry in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we have created a public inquiry to look into the events surrounding the offences committed by Elizabeth Wettlaufer, who, as we all know, was the long-term-care RN convicted of the murder and assault of many patients who had entrusted her with their care.

I'm happy to speak in more detail about the inquiry in the follow-up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, these people didn't come here today because they think that the Liberal government is doing everything that it can do to make sure that their loved ones are properly cared for. They came here today with horror stories. Each and every one of them can tell you about a time when their parent or grandparent or spouse was left in bed for 17 hours without being moved, or when they missed a meal or more than one meal in a day, or, in some heartbreaking cases, when their loved one was abused.

Front-line staff are doing the best that they can, but they are run off their feet and they need help.

Will this Liberal government commit to expanding the public inquiry, so that Ontario families can get an honest picture—an honest picture—of the expanse of this crisis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the public inquiry—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate that we do have visitors here, but just as a reminder, there are no public displays whatsoever allowed in the House, and I'd appreciate it if you followed that rule. It helps me to make sure that we have civility in the House, so I'd appreciate you not participating in that.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The public inquiry, as we know, is being led by the highly capable and honourable Justice Eileen Gillese. This inquiry will help to ensure that we get the answers that we do need, to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Gillese inquiry will have a broader scope. It will have a broader scope than a police investigation or a prosecution. It will not only look into what occurred, but also look for any underlying issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the objectives of the Long-Term Care Homes Act were and are being met, and will make recommendations as to how to address them. It will provide the government with specific recommendations to improve the safety and well-being of residents by reviewing the policies, procedures, practices and oversight mechanisms for long-term-care homes.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public inquiry that this minister and this government have called is simply not broad enough. It is tied to the Wettlaufer murders. We know that that work needs to be done, but a broader inquiry needs to happen in the province of Ontario.

Seniors' care has been pushed to the breaking point. These families see it each and every day, and they are a small proportion of the hundreds and thousands of families around the province that are seeing the exact same thing happening, from community to community across Ontario. Every family with a loved one in care sees it every day.

It's time to get to the bottom of the problems in seniors' care in this province, and then actually do something about it. Why won't the government take this crucial, important, first honest step and look at this in a broader perspective through the public inquiry?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I fundamentally disagree with the assumption being made by the leader of the third party. The terms of reference for the Gillese inquiry were intentionally drafted to be very broad, including the potential to look at—and this is at the discretion of the commissioner herself—systemic issues of oversight and accountability in the long-term-care system.

We want to allow the commission the freedom to follow whatever direction the evidence requires, and this includes specifically in the terms of reference to be able to address “the circumstances and contributing factors allowing these events to occur ... policies, procedures” and others, but also, explicitly—and I know the leader of the third party has read this; I'd encourage our visitors to read it as well if they haven't already—it allows the ministry to look at any “other relevant matters that the commissioner considers necessary to avoid similar tragedies.” If that isn't broad, I don't know what is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I can tell the minister exactly what is broader: Looking at the hours of hands-on care, looking at the funding levels, looking at the for-profit versus non-profit model. These are the kinds of things that are systemic issues in our system that need to be reviewed.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier.

For too long, this government has heard these heart-wrenching stories, but they've only made the problems worse. They've continued with Conservative policies by cutting and freezing hospital budgets and refusing to listen to families who are telling them that their parents, their grandparents, their spouses, their loved ones are living without dignity in long-term care.

Why are the Acting Premier and the Liberal government content to just sweep this problem under the rug instead of actually fixing it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: All of the issues that the member opposite has articulated are absolutely at the discretion of Judge Eileen Gillese. It is almost an insult, I think, to the justice herself to suggest that, when explicitly in the terms of reference it gives her that degree of latitude, as I've said, to actually address and investigate any “other relevant matters that the commissioner considers necessary...” It includes policies, procedures, practices and accountability. It allows her to look at the Long-Term Care Homes Act, in its entirety, to ensure that its objectives are being met broadly across this province.

To suggest otherwise just simply isn't an accurate reading of what the terms and what the inquiry itself is allowed to do. It's absolutely at the discretion of the judge to look at the issues that the member opposite is asking for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Do you know what's an insult, Speaker? That this government did not have the courage to do the right thing, and are leaving it up to the discretion of someone else to do their damn job. That's what's an insult. That's an insult.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

Look, it is vital that we expand the scope of the public inquiry into long-term care to look at the systemic problems. We have residents living in fear of resident-on-resident violence. We have staff living in fear of going to work and experiencing violence. We have severely understaffed homes with front-line workers who are getting more and more burnt out by the day. How can the government continue to ignore this crisis, continue to refuse to take an honest, full look through this public inquiry? Why will they not do the right thing?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Ontarians want an answer. They want an answer to how possibly a single individual—a trusted individual—a registered nurse in a number of nursing homes and in the community could possibly be allowed to carry out the atrocious and tragic acts that resulted in the deaths and the assault of so many innocent and vulnerable individuals. That's what Ontarians are asking for. It doesn't matter what the third party thinks about that issue. We know that Ontarians expect and deserve answers to that horrific set of circumstances that we've all witnessed over the course of the past year. That's why we've appointed Justice Eileen Gillese, who is highly capable, from the local area and with remarkable expertise that can address this effectively.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is no doubt that people want those answers, but Ontarians want and deserve

answers to so much more of what's going wrong in long-term care today.

Our parents and grandparents don't have to live like this. It does not have to be this way. We can actually take action to fix seniors' care in Ontario. We can give our loved ones the care and the dignity, every single day, that they deserve.

Will the Acting Premier do the right thing; acknowledge that the scope of this inquiry is not broad enough to answer all of the questions that people have about our failing long-term-care system; seize this important moment and take the chance to make long-term care better for seniors in Ontario; commit to the broader inquiry; and then commit to fix the system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am absolutely confident that Justice Gillese will be addressing the issues that are critically important to Ontarians to ensure the safety, security and the quality of care for individuals that we entrust to our long-term-care homes and to provide them with that highest quality of care, particularly when they're vulnerable.

Justice Gillese has enormous experience both at the Superior Court and the appeals court. She was dean and professor of law at the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Law. She was named a Leading Educator of the World in 2008 and was one of Canada's top 100 women shortly before that. She has an impeccable legal record, and I have no doubt at all—I hope that all of us can trust this remarkable individual to do the work that's required.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The Premier was adamant that she was testifying at the Sudbury bribery trial as the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party. In fact, she swore an oath on the Bible and opened her testimony by saying, "I am the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party."

So I want to ask, who paid for the Premier's flights and accommodations in Sudbury? Who paid: the Liberal Party or the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Over to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question and thank you for clarifying the role of the Premier yesterday, unlike what your leader has done.

Speaker, this has been in the public realm for some time. We've been very clear that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All sides. That is not appropriate.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Ontario Liberal Party is paying for Pat Sorbara's legal bills, for Gerry Loughheed Jr.'s legal bills and for the Premier's legal bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: The Premier, as the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, didn't travel alone to Sudbury. So I ask, who paid for the Premier's staff's flights and accommodations in Sudbury? Who paid: the Liberal Party or the Ontario taxpayer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Ontario Liberal Party, as we have said.

But, Speaker, I see that the leader has stepped out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And this is where we want to go.

Interjection: She's laughing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not. Every member knows better. Every member knows better. Don't turn this into something you would regret. The member should not have done that.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I apologize, Speaker.

The Ontario Liberal Party is paying for those bills.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier.

The Liotti family has recently reached out to my office. Their mother, Joanne, was living in a long-term-care home in London. The Liotti family expected that their mother should have received the best care possible but when their mother, Joanne, suffered a stroke, she waited hours before receiving any medical attention or assistance. In fact, it was discovered by a privately hired companion, who finally brought their mother to hospital.

As a result of their mother, Joanne, being left unattended, she suffered irreversible brain damage and later passed away. That kind of tragedy should never happen to anyone in a long-term-care home in Ontario.

Is the Acting Premier ready to listen to families like the Liottis and take action to fix the crisis in seniors care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, my sincere condolences. My heart goes out to this family that has had to bear an extremely unfortunate tragedy, and I'm sorry to hear that.

We are making significant investments in the long-term-care system. We've been doing that since 2003, when we first came into office. We have approximately doubled our investments in long-term care. We have increased the number of long-term-care beds right across this province by 10,000 beds since that time. We are in the process of redeveloping a further 30,000 beds. Even in this year's budget, we had a significant allocation, an increase to long-term-care homes, which the third party voted against, which would continue to demonstrate that this is a high priority for this government, which I'll speak to in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The Liotti family is not alone. There are many more families here today, and thousands of families and their loved ones have experienced the crisis in seniors' care across Ontario. Some of those families are here with us today to speak up for the care that our parents and grandparents deserve. What I want to do is thank them for their courage in doing so.

Front-line workers are doing the best they can, but homes are chronically underfunded and understaffed. Some 30,000 people can't even get the long-term-care bed that they need. Instead of families spending quality time with their loved ones, they are spending sleepless nights worrying about the safety of our parents and grandparents in long-term care.

Is the Acting Premier prepared to do the right thing for families here today and expand the mandate of the public inquiry to look at the systemic problems in long-term care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There's nothing more important to me as minister and in government than the safety and security of Ontarians, especially our seniors who find themselves in our long-term-care system. We have a debt of responsibility. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and we have responsibility to ensure that that care is of the highest quality.

This year, we increased the budgets of our long-term-care homes: 60 million new dollars going into resident care needs, including specialized supports for those most complex individuals; and an additional \$10 million—for more than \$50 million—for behavioural supports, which is important because of the increased number of seniors with dementia. And we increased the raw food envelope for the diet, for the meals, by 6.5% this year.

Those are just three examples of how we continue to invest, but three examples that the third party voted against.

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COMMOTIONS CÉRÉBRALES CONCUSSIONS

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour la ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport. Il s'agit d'une question importante pour ceux d'entre nous de la région d'Ottawa qui ont été touchés par l'histoire de Rowan Stringer et pour tous les parents qui, comme moi, veulent encourager leurs enfants à être actifs, à faire du sport et à faire du sport d'équipe, mais qui sont inquiets pour leur sécurité. C'est une question importante aussi pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes qui s'intéressent à la sécurité dans le sport.

In May 2013, 17-year-old Rowan Stringer's life was cut short as a result of a head injury she sustained while playing rugby with her high school team. A coroner's inquest was convened in 2015 to look into the circumstances of Rowan's death. The coroner's jury made 49 recommendations for governments, school boards and sport organizations to prevent concussions.

The Rowan's Law Advisory Committee was created through a private member's bill that MPP MacLeod, MPP Fraser and MPP Fife—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

L'hon. Eleanor McMahon: J'aimerais remercier la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier pour sa question.

I want to recognize and thank the members of this House who introduced Rowan's Law and also thank our committee members, some of whom are here today, for their critically important work. In particular, I'd like to thank committee chair Dr. Dan Cass, VP of medical at St. Joseph's Health Centre, for his leadership. I especially want to thank Gordon Stringer, Rowan's dad, who was able to channel his grief into this work that will have a lasting and meaningful impact.

The committee met eight times this year, and the unique perspectives of its members have all contributed to a comprehensive report, which we were proud to table this morning. The report makes recommendations to our government, with ambitious but practical steps to make our schools, arenas, playing fields and communities safer.

Every Ontarian should have the opportunity to safely participate in sport, and we expect the committee's thoughtful input will make Ontario a national leader in concussion safety.

I hope all members of the House will read the report, and I look forward to adding more information in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci à la ministre pour son travail sur cette question.

Concussion safety is a priority for all of us, and I'm pleased to see this important progress.

Pour que les sports soient pratiqués de façon sécuritaire, il est primordial que tous les secteurs travaillent ensemble, soutenus par la coordination.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the minister to update this House on the government's response to this important report.

L'hon. Eleanor McMahon: Encore une fois, merci à la députée pour sa question.

Our government understands the importance of creating a world-class amateur sport system where athletes can play safely. That's why I'm happy to inform the House that our government is taking decisive action, informed by the comprehensive feedback in this report.

Working with sport and health care leaders, the province will review and work to implement the report's recommendations to make our sport system as safe as possible. As part of this, our government intends to introduce legislation that, if passed, would govern amateur sport across Ontario and serve to change the conversation about concussion protocol in Ontario and across the country. This report will inform our government's next steps and will have an important focus on surveillance, prevention, detection and increased awareness.

Above all, we want to honour Rowan Stringer and her memory to ensure that other athletes and families are spared such an agonizing loss.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The current Long-Term Care Homes Act includes enforcement tools like licence suspensions, financial penalties, duty to report and the residents' bill of rights, yet life for seniors in long-term care is getting harder and more tragic. Sadly, cases of vile abuse, neglect and sexual assault persist.

I want to know: Why aren't the minister and his government protecting seniors in long-term care by enforcing the existing law?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are enforcing the law. In fact, later this fall, I'll be introducing legislation to further strengthen our ability as a government to oversee, inspect and protect long-term—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Fourteen years too late.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know there's heckling coming from the official opposition. Unlike the Progressive Conservatives, we were the first party to actually implement that 100% of long-term-care homes in this province would have to undertake an annual inspection. Under the Progressive Conservatives, they were not inspected. So 100% of the long-term-care homes are being inspected.

What we're already seeing is the results of those inspections. We're seeing that the orders being issued by my ministry inspectors—year over year, the number of orders needing to be issued is going down. That's because, through the inspection process, our long-term-care homes are getting better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the minister: Not only is the minister not enforcing the law, but we have also learned that he has been sitting on recommendations that were a blueprint for change to protect seniors in long-term care.

From the 2005 Casa Verde inquest into murders in long-term care—less than 30% of the recommendations—to the Shirlee Sharkey and Gail Donner reports, this government and minister have had hundreds of recommendations from the multiple task forces, inquiries and reports over the last 14 years.

To quote the minister in an earlier comment he made, "The people of Ontario want to know." Why have you been sitting on all these reports and inquiry recommendations and not helped our senior citizens and residents?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There have been a lot of reports, and we've benefited from the expertise behind them. It's easy for the member opposite to cherry-pick the ones that he wants.

What we're doing this fall is we're introducing further legislation beyond the 100% inspections that we implemented under the previous Minister of Health, who is to my left. We are implementing further measures to further strengthen our ability to oversee and to ensure that the long-term-care act is enforced and adhered to 100% by 100% of our long-term-care homes.

At the same time as we invest in our long-term-care system, we are tightening, improving and strengthening

the regime, a regime that didn't exist under the Progressive Conservatives. They did not see this as a priority whatsoever when they were closing 10,000 hospital beds. They ignored the long-term-care sector.

We're investing. We're investing in oversight as well.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday, the Premier of Ontario took the witness stand in the Sudbury bribery case. Her testimony leaves Ontarians with even more questions. She seemed to have forgotten quite a few of the details of the interactions between herself and the Minister of Energy during the time that her party was courting him to run for them. For example, the Premier couldn't remember if she ever talked to the minister about paid jobs for his staffers.

Does the Acting Premier know why she had so much trouble remembering details yesterday on the stand?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Premier Wynne has been very open with the Legislature, with the media and with the public about the allegations related to the Sudbury by-election.

As I'm sure everyone knows, parliamentary privilege extends to all members of the Legislature, and exempts a member from the normal obligation to attend court if summoned as a witness. The Premier, however, chose to waive that privilege and appeared yesterday. She was open, she was transparent, and everything that she said is on the public record.

This issue is before the court. That's where it must be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Deputy Premier: The Premier has claimed over and over again—in fact, throughout this entire scandal—that she has been transparent here in this House and with the media. But yesterday, when she was on the stand, we learned a whole slew of new information from her that she had not disclosed in this House. Her recall was inconsistent.

Does the Acting Premier think that the Premier just suddenly remembered those details? Or does she care to explain why the Liberal Party's definition of transparency is different from everyone else's in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As has been said multiple times, this is an issue before the courts, and that's where it will stay.

ARNOLD CHAN

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of International Trade.

It is well known that the process of modernizing the North American Free Trade Agreement is currently well under way. The overarching benefits of this agreement for all three parties are well documented.

In 2016, in fact, the trilateral trade among Canada, the US and Mexico reached C\$1.4 trillion, more than a threefold increase since 1995. It is this trade inter-

dependence that supports millions of jobs across North America and strengthens trade and investment in Canada.
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Unique in its makeup, NAFTA is a robust trade agreement that covers a wide array of sectors, many of which are the backbone of local economies across Ontario, such as the auto sector. Speaker, our Premier and Minister Chan have worked tirelessly to ensure that the views of Ontarians on this important trade agreement are brought to the negotiation table week in and week out.

Will the minister provide the House with an update of the ongoing negotiations process?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the opportunity. Speaker, before I answer the question, allow me to say a couple of words about the passing of Arnold Chan. He was a good friend of mine and a great colleague. He was my first chief of staff. It's a great personal loss to my family and a huge loss to the community.

I ask the member to ask his second question, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too knew Mr. Chan, and he was an extraordinary Ontarian. He worked in the Premier's office. I had the pleasure on many occasions—and if the minister would like to take another minute and a half to talk more about Mr. Chan's legacy, I would be happy to ask him this question on another date. As important as our North American Free Trade Agreement negotiations are, nothing trumps personal relationships in this House or in our lives. With great respect, I will ask the minister if he would like to say a few more words, he would be welcomed to, or speak to the agreement, as he wishes.

Hon. Michael Chan: Arnold was a great guy. He was a person who never stopped talking. During his two years with me, because of the culture, he was able to give me so much advice, so much, many times, direction on running my ministry.

Three weeks ago, he gave me a call and got my family to his house. He told me, "There's no more medicine." The doctor advised him that after five doses of trial medicine, they decided there's no more. So at that time, he told me the fight, the battle will be between his body and the cancer. Needless to say, I expected this. He told me, "Michael, I'm dying." That's a message from him. So we had a very good talk. It will be a good funeral; I'll talk to the family.

You know what, Speaker? Life, for everyone, is short, so enjoy it. Thank you.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier.

More than 5,000 basements were flooded by a record-breaking rainfall in Windsor-Essex. The Windsor Star noted, "The disastrous 'storm of the century' that swamped Essex county in late August caused \$175 million in damage to homes in Windsor alone," and that number is likely growing. According to the Windsor Star,

even the minister doesn't hold out much hope that the province's disaster assistance program will be able to cover the costs and help those impacted—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip, second time.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mayor Dilkens told the reporters that it's likely there are going to be "thousands of people in Windsor and Essex" who simply can't get insurance, who can't get help. The province must step up and must help these families.

Will the Acting Premier promise that they won't turn their backs on the people of Windsor during this hour of need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm happy to take this important question on behalf of our colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I know that over the last number of days, he has had the opportunity to respond to questions on this very grave and important topic that is affecting the people of Windsor and Essex. I know that he has had the chance to speak to municipal representatives and leaders in that part of the province about the challenges that the people of their respective communities are facing. I know that he has also paid a personal visit down to the area to see first-hand exactly what the circumstances look like on the ground.

Just yesterday, I believe, the Minister of Municipal Affairs did reference specifically that the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program has gone forward. It is performing as the program is designed to perform.

Having said all of that, I know that the minister yesterday spoke to some of the challenges with respect to what has taken place, around private insurance versus not. But I know that this minister and his team, his officials, are on the ground, doing the work that needs to be done. They'll continue to talk to the mayor of Windsor, other mayors in the area and the residents to make sure that we strike the right balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the Acting Premier: The disaster relief program "does not cover damages to homes that were flooded due to sewage system backups." But according to one restoration company, "Every home we've been to, it's been due to sewage backup."

"Windsor mayor Drew Dilkens is asking the province to create a comprehensive affordable insurance package homeowners can buy if they can't get flood insurance," but instead of taking action, the Premier only issued a vague tweet about the flooding and would rather be in Washington than Windsor. Pretending to care on Twitter or leaving the country just isn't good enough, Acting Premier.

So, Acting Premier and Speaker, what assistance will the Acting Premier actually provide to the people of Windsor hurt by the flood?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I said in the initial answer to the first question, from the Leader of the Opposition, Minister Mauro has been to the area and he has spoken to the mayors. He referenced this exact issue around sewer backups yesterday in this Legislature, in response to a question from the member of the NDP caucus from the Windsor area.

Minister Mauro did say yesterday that insurance coverage for damage that is caused by sewer backup is widely available. The program that we have in place is there, and it's designed to help deal with what is known as "overland flooding."

This is not to suggest in any way, shape or form that there is not a great deal of concern on the part of the minister or our government or the Premier, or everyone on this side of the House, with respect to the challenges the people of this region of the province are facing. It's why the minister spoke very quickly to all of the mayors in the area. It's why he has paid a personal visit to this particular area. It's why he and our government champion the need to invest significantly more money—hundreds of millions of dollars more—in dealing with issues relating to water and waste water, which will help improve some of the challenges in the long term.

I know the minister will continue to be vigilant and work with the communities that are affected to make sure that we get it right.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to begin by extending sincere condolences, on behalf of my NDP caucus and New Democrats around Ontario, to the minister of international affairs, the minister of economic development and trade, and all of the friends and family and loved ones of MP Arnold Chan. His loss, I'm sure, will be very, very difficult to handle.

I do have a question of course, Speaker, and my question is to the Deputy Premier.

My hometown of Hamilton has had 79 code-zero events so far this year. For those of you who aren't aware of what a code zero is, a code zero is when one or even zero ambulances are available to be dispatched when someone calls 911.

Hamilton is a community of over 525,000 people—over half a million people. These are life-threatening events that occur sometimes two or three times a week in Hamilton: a code zero two or three times a week. People deserve to know that when they call 911 in an emergency, help is going to be there for them.

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Why won't the Liberal government do the right thing: Stop underfunding health care in this province and make sure that when there's an emergency, Ontario families have the confidence that they need to know that help will come when they call 911?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm always concerned whenever I hear messages like this. I'm well

aware of some of the pressures that exist around the province. Fortunately, our municipalities across the province work well together, so if there's a challenge faced by one, another municipality often generally has the opportunity to step up without any negative impact on patient care response.

But the leader of the third party raises an important issue where we know that we can do better when it comes to dispatch, and fully and effectively utilizing our paramedics and our EMS services. In fact, in a number of weeks I'll be introducing legislation that I referred to back in June which will allow our EMS workers to do a number of things that will make them more available. It will allow them, for example, to treat and release low-acuity patients, particularly individuals that don't require medical care, or divert them to places other than hospitals which might be more appropriate. This is what we'll be introducing shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the Minister of Health doesn't realize that a woman in Hamilton lost her life recently because it took almost an hour for an ambulance to get to her, and now the coroner is actually reviewing this set of circumstances. It is unacceptable that anyone has to wait that long for an ambulance.

An ambulance has to off-load patients in the hospital before it can be dispatched again. Everybody knows that. But frozen hospital budgets have meant that this process is taking longer and longer. Hamilton paramedics and city staff attribute our code-zero incidents largely to these increased hospital waits, and the Ontario Hospital Association itself has said that without immediate action, this crisis will only get worse.

Can the Acting Premier tell me, was it the Liberals' plan to put the bottom line ahead of people's lives when they cut health care services that families count on in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's hard not to find offence with that question—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's offensive is what's happening in health care. That's offensive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leader of the third party, please come to order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: She started off so gracefully.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Beaches–East York.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I was going to say, Mr. Speaker, that despite the nature of the question, I'm choosing to answer in a respectful way that we are working across the system. I'm happy to understand now that this is really a question about hospital funding. We're investing in our ERs with what's known as pay for performance, where we are directly addressing the off-loading challenges that certain hospitals face. We are implementing a new IT algorithm that is going to divert; it's going to be able to predict the patients who need the support quickly. We're making important things, and I think probably the most important thing, as paramedics will tell you, is the diver-

sion where individuals, paramedics, are going to be able to take people away from hospitals in the first place—

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

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, I begin by quoting the late MP Arnold Chan from Scarborough–Agincourt, who said in his final address to the federal Parliament, “I would ask Canadians to give heart to their democracy, to treasure it and revere it.”

Like the late MP Chan, I know that our government believes that everyone in the province deserves high-quality health care that is compassionate, timely, equitable, research-based and in the best interests of our patients. In particular, that includes those fighting substance-use disorders, which are increasingly prevalent.

Speaker, we’ve been clear as a government through the past year that what we are dealing with is a crisis. The opioid crisis has unfortunately taken far too many lives and led to debilitating dependence and addictions.

Last year, our government put in place the most comprehensive opioid strategy in the country, and also announced additional investments in this file. Would the minister please inform this House about the critical investments our government is making to provide urgent supports to those affected by the opioid crisis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for giving me this opportunity.

I want to start, if I can, Mr. Speaker, by acknowledging those who have tragically and needlessly lost their lives due to this public health crisis that we’re facing, the opioid crisis. Regrettably, 865 precious souls, individuals, lost their lives last year. That’s a 19% increase from the previous year—nothing like what they’re seeing in BC where they saw an 88% year-over-year increase, but nonetheless a single life lost is a tragic loss to that individual and their loved ones.

I want also to acknowledge and recognize the true heroes of our health care system, the front-line workers whose commitment and compassion under extremely difficult circumstances have saved the lives of so many.

The lives of those with opioid-use disorder or a substance-use disorder—those lives matter. Those people are valued, they’re important, and they are not alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, for your stewardship of this important issue.

As we know, we’ve attempted to bring to bear a number of investments, critical as they are, in the health care system, to ultimately benefit individuals, families and the communities that are fighting these substance abuse disorders. I have to say, Speaker, that I have personally witnessed in both a parliamentary and professional capacity the results of those investments.

Our sloganeering opposition believes that merely banning pill presses is the answer to the opioid crisis. In contrast, our government recognizes that, as with all things concerned in medicine, we need to address the spectrum of issues, in particular to prevent new instances of opioid dependency, and also to care for those already affected.

I’d like to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to weigh in on why banning pill presses is merely a band-aid solution to a public health crisis that deserves a full-spectrum treatment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: If I can, let me be clear on one thing: Focusing on restricting access to pill presses in Ontario is not going to solve this issue. In fact, the federal government has already passed legislation that prohibits and bans and makes illegal the importation of pill presses anywhere into this country without a licence. But this is an issue which is far more complex and multifaceted. In fact, I would argue that an illegal drug manufacturer, in his basement—the last thing that he is concerned about is the legality of the pill press that he’s using to make illicit drugs for distribution on our streets.

This opioid use disorder crisis deserves much more from us, and that’s why we’ve invested to date almost \$300 million over the next two-and-a-half years. It’s everything from the distribution of naloxone—more than 7,000 doses of naloxone going out each and every month—to making rapid access to medical treatment, support and detoxification available to those who do seek help and many, many other things.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier.

Yesterday, a major international energy company started construction activities in Prince Edward county. I know that the Minister of Energy has said on numerous occasions that we don’t need more power; we have an oversupply in Ontario. And I know that you know that the company isn’t welcome in Prince Edward county. Prince Edward county is an unwilling host community. Your government even had grounds to kill this project when the environmental review removed more than 60% of its generating capacity recently, removing the number of wind turbines—from 29 down to nine—in this environmentally sensitive area. But what did you do? Your government changed the contract for them to allow them to continue and build this unnecessary wind project.

Speaker, the government knew that the company was violating the terms of its contract, so why did it refuse to do the right thing? Why did it not step in and protect electricity customers in Ontario from another expensive, unreliable, unwanted—

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can't opine on the specific contract—the Minister of Energy might have some more specific information that he can share with the member on this—other than to say that this government has prioritized environmental protection as part of our renewable project considerations, and we've amended our system significantly over the years to accommodate, as much as possible, municipal input.

But the fact is—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I hear the members opposite squawking about not caring, but the fact is, what we do care about is having a clean future for the province of Ontario. What we do care about is the health of each and every Ontarian—man, woman and child.

Most of us spent the last weekend riveted to CNN, watching the ravages of climate change as it hit Texas, as it hit Florida.

We're going to do what we need to do to build renewable energy in this province, because it's the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The government has said on a number of different occasions that these wind turbines are producing unwanted, unreliable, unnecessary electricity. We know that it's driving up our skyrocketing cost of electricity in Ontario.

This one has been reduced by an Environmental Review Tribunal in Prince Edward county that said, "This is the wrong place, for environmental reasons, to locate a wind turbine project."

The Ministry of Energy has told me, and the IESO has told residents of the county, that they take the long view on commercial operation dates, often extending them by 18 months. This project is behind by more than three years, yet the government has given it the rubber stamp and actually made the case that it should go ahead with less capacity. This is an unnecessary project.

Could it be the fact that this foreign company donated on five separate occasions to the Ontario Liberal Party that the government has made this adjustment to the contract—

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, that party will go to any lengths to discredit anything that we've tried to do over the last dozen years to reform our energy system and remove us from coal to cleaner sources of power.

As I said in my first answer to the question—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): She's warned.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I, like most Ontarians, spent a good part of the last week looking at the ravages of those incredible hurricanes, record hurricanes, that have taken place—taken lives in the Caribbean, taken lives in Florida and taken lives in Texas. We have an obligation to do everything we can to reduce climate change.

The leadership we have taken—it's the single greatest climate change initiative during our time. That's getting us off of coal and moving us to cleaner sources of power, like wind. We're proud of that commitment.

ARNOLD CHAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, just briefly, I wanted to give, on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, our deepest, deepest condolences for the loss of Arnold Chan to the Liberal Party that he worked with, to his friends and family.

I had the opportunity to serve with Arnold in Ottawa for close to a year, and I'd seen him at community events. There was no one more decent and devoted, always putting partisanship aside. Frankly, he was the gold standard of what you like to see in a human being and a public servant. Our condolences to everyone feeling this loss today.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would entertain a point of order from the member from Brampton—Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Mr. Speaker, I was running a little bit late for introductions. I wanted to introduce a few of the guests here in the gallery.

I want to welcome our member of the Legislative Assembly of Punjab in Patti, who is here with us today: Mr. Harminder Singh Gill and his wife, Mrs. Parmjit Gill, along with their daughter Mahdkleen Kaur Gill; and also my good friend Raj Sandhu, who is a city councillor from Bradford; his wife, Mrs. Rana Sandhu; and Mr. Shiv Gill and Mr. Gurpreet Singh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

HAT ON DESK

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: Member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm requesting an opportunity, during my member's statement, to put this hat on, as I do my member's statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that means you're asking for unanimous consent to allow a prop to be used on your desk. That is wonderful.

The member from Niagara Falls is asking for unanimous consent to put the hat on his desk during his statement. Do we agree? Agreed.

WEARING OF PIN

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too would like to seek unanimous consent to wear a prop, the Aga Khan's diamond jubilee medal, on my lapel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a proper unanimous consent.

The member from Beaches–East York is seeking unanimous consent to wear his pin. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so pleased to rise and welcome Michael Warshafsky and Justin Rotman who are here today. I'm going to be giving a member's statement in a little while about a project of theirs. Welcome.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too would like to introduce some people in the members' gallery who are here for my member's statement celebrating the Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee. We have Sheherazade Hirji, Shemina Karmali, Zahra Nurmohamed, Sadru Jetha, who was the winner of the Agnes Macphail Award in my neighbourhood, Mohamed Manji, Shamsh Kara, Yasmin Kara, and a very dear friend, Yasmin Walji, who is a member of my constituency association and whose counsel I value very, very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: Regrettably, she's not here right now; she's down in, I believe, the dining room, but will be joining us shortly. I didn't want to miss the opportunity to introduce Chantel Elloway. She works in international public relations and investor relations. She is an entrepreneur, reporter for Euro Canada News, a true political enthusiast and a great lady. I want to introduce Chantel Elloway, and welcome her to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NUCLEAR TESTS IN NORTH KOREA

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: As the first and only member of the Ontario provincial Parliament with a Korean background, I rise today to highlight the disturbing situation in the Korean peninsula.

This year marks the 64th year since the end of the Korean War and the signing of the armistice to create a demilitarized zone. Today, the area is far from demilitarization. Since October 9, 2006, North Korea has con-

ducted six nuclear tests, each test more powerful than its predecessor. The last test was the equivalent to a magnitude 6.1 earthquake. To put it in perspective, North Korea's most recent nuclear test produced an explosion almost 10 times larger than the blast from the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

Mr. Speaker, we know that tougher sanctions alone cannot bring peace to the Korean peninsula. The Korean peninsula is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with 76 million people at stake. Cooler heads, discipline and calmer, more rationale language are what we need from all the parties involved. I urge all sides to do their utmost to diffuse this situation as quickly as possible. Nothing else is acceptable.

PARKWOOD ESTATE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Canadian auto baron Colonel Sam McLaughlin and his wife, Adelaide, made Oshawa their home, inspired and built an automotive empire and built a beautiful home: Parkwood. Today the world can see Parkwood in many movies, from Billy Madison to X-Men, but in Oshawa we see it as a special jewel in the heart of our downtown.

Our community recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of this beautiful estate—fittingly, on September 8, R.S. McLaughlin's birthday. The centennial celebration of Parkwood was a wonderful evening in the loggia of the estate, surrounded by beautiful decor and history.

Parkwood Estate and gardens is the former home of Sam and Adelaide McLaughlin and is a mansion with 53 rooms, with all the original furnishings, china and storied artifacts.

Adelaide McLaughlin was involved with and influential in the community, as was her philanthropist husband, Sam McLaughlin.

McLaughlin established the McLaughlin Motor Car Co. and later was the founder of General Motors Canada. His name can be seen across the community: on the cancer centre, the McLaughlin library, the R.S. McLaughlin armoury, the Robert McLaughlin Gallery and elsewhere. One of my favourite places, Memorial Park, was made great because of his vision.

I want to recognize the Parkwood Foundation and the awesome, long-standing Parkwood staff who lovingly maintain and manage the estate and award-winning gardens.

Parkwood will bury a time capsule, to be opened 100 years from now. While we won't be there, Speaker, I know that the people of 2117 Oshawa will still treasure Parkwood and enjoy it, as we have for 100 years.

Happy anniversary, Parkwood.

MISSISSAUGA POLICE AND FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Each September, the Chinese Business Association hosts the men and women of our Peel region police and fire services at an annual fundraising dinner with the broader community.

Our police officers and firefighters in Mississauga and Brampton live among us as our neighbours and friends. Our homes are side by side; our kids play together; we shop and worship in the same places.

For more than 17 years, Mississauga has been Canada's safest city to live, work, study, do business and raise a family. The secret of Mississauga's success is that there is no secret. Our officers go to community events, know many of the people they serve by name, and return phone calls. They're part of the fabric of the community that they serve and protect.

More new people move into Mississauga and Brampton each and every year than many North American police and fire services serve in total. In particular, our Peel region police force serves a region with a greater population and a larger economy than the province of Manitoba.

That's why our Mississauga families and neighbours celebrate the contributions, dedication and work ethic of the Peel region police force and our firefighters in Mississauga and Brampton. Our thanks to the Mississauga Chinese business community for its continuing commitment and leadership in sustaining that vital community support.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Niagara West—Glanbrook to speak about the inadequate planning and inefficient funding of long-term-care facilities in the Niagara region.

The reality is that inadequate planning and inefficient funding are hurting long-term care across Niagara, but Niagara region has been hit particularly hard because of our large and growing senior population. Nearly one in five Niagara residents are 65 years of age or older, and they deserve to know that they will be able to receive timely and prompt care if and when they need it.

Right now the provincial wait-list for long-term-care facilities stands at 27,000 individuals, and 4,858 individuals are on waiting lists in the Niagara region. On average, only 96 beds become available each month. That means that even if no more people put themselves on our local wait-lists, it would take more than four years at current levels to have the lists cleared. Looking at the direction we're heading in, I may have to put my name on the list soon just to make sure I get in.

The problem is compounded by staff-to-resident ratios that are remarkably low—shamelessly low, in fact. I know the Minister of Health has been made aware of this by concerned municipal representatives who have requested enhanced funding for long-term-care facilities and an increase in the number of personal support workers.

This government has wasted billions of dollars on a long litany of waste and scandal. Why won't it provide compassionate care for seniors who need and deserve it? They've contributed to the betterment of our communities for a lifetime, and now we have the duty to look after them.

OVARIAN CANCER

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to talk about an important issue that women all throughout our province are facing: ovarian cancer. This year alone, 2,800 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer and 1,700 will actually die from the disease. This is the highest mortality rate of women's cancer. I have three daughters, four granddaughters and my wife, Rita, so this is an important health issue that's very close to my heart.

Mr. Speaker, the women who are facing such a daunting outcome of having ovarian cancer are brave. I've witnessed the bravery of many women in my riding.

Last weekend, I had the privilege of attending the Ovarian Cancer Walk of Hope in my riding of Niagara Falls. Last year, the walk raised \$20,000.

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I would like to thank the volunteers. I'd also like to thank Ovarian Cancer Canada. They have created a wonderful campaign called "Got ladyballs?" The campaign is meant to bring attention to the fact that women have balls too, and they're called ovaries. This campaign has been their most successful in raising awareness and donations.

At that walk, I happened to meet and speak with a stage 4 cancer survivor. Her story was inspiring but also telling. Diseases like breast cancer and prostate cancer have seen great advances in outcomes and treatment, which is largely due to the amount of investment in research. However, outcomes for ovarian cancer have not changed for the last 50 years. This is simply unacceptable. Five Canadian women die from it each day. There have actually been no changes in treatment that is offered to women with ovarian cancer since 1990.

This government must take a look at this cancer and why there has been limited success in the outcomes for women who are diagnosed.

RIVIÈRE DES OUTAOUAIS

OTTAWA RIVER

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je me lève aujourd'hui pour parler de la rivière des Outaouais.

The Ottawa River is a jewel in the Ottawa region and it is at the heart of Algonquin territory. Indeed, Ottawa is a city that is the meeting place of three rivers: the Gatineau River, the Rideau River and the Ottawa River. And now, the Ottawa River is a designated heritage river.

La désignation vise à souligner le caractère historique et le caractère culturel de la rivière et nous aide aussi à mieux la protéger.

The designation, which represents the hard work of the Ottawa Riverkeeper, required the co-operation of the federal government, the Ontario government and the Quebec government.

Last month, I had the privilege of representing the Minister of Natural Resources at the official designation ceremony on a boat on the river. Elder Claudette Commanda, a great friend of mine, opened the ceremony

by reminding us of the importance of water for our survival and the importance of the river to the Algonquin.

La ministre fédérale était là, ainsi que le ministre du Québec, pour souligner l'importance de la rivière. La cérémonie nous a permis, évidemment, de nous rappeler du rôle de la rivière pour l'héritage algonquin—ils l'appellent, d'ailleurs, la rivière Kitchissippi—et aussi les liens entre le Québec et l'Ontario.

I just want to thank the volunteers who organized this great ceremony.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have two young professional gentlemen here, Michael Warshafsky and Justin Rotman, who both graduated from Queen's. As they explained to me, Michael spoke to Justin and said, "You know what? I want to do some research and do a little project," and Justin was game, to basically focus on financial literacy for young adults. Michael recognized that maybe he hadn't gotten the best education up to that point and he wanted to really have a true understanding and be able to invest properly for his future, and not in 10 or 20 years look back and say, "I should have done it this way versus that way."

What has come out of this project is the Surprisingly Simple Personal Finance pocketbook, and it's on sale starting very soon in all kinds of bookstores on campuses. I hope it's going to be in regular bookstores as well. I'm looking forward to the big launch.

I just want to remind everybody that it's an important discussion to have with your families, with your children. I think it's one of those subjects that people find hard sometimes to talk about: saving for the future and understanding, as Michael said, the difference between a tax-free savings account and an RRSP.

I'm looking forward to lots of continued success from Michael and Justin. Thank you for coming down today and joining us and sitting down and explaining to me about the book. I want to invite everybody to visit surprisinglysimple.ca. They created a special page just for us: [/mpp](http://mpp); so surprisinglysimple.ca/mpp for all the MPPs in the room.

ISMAILI COMMUNITY

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to rise today in celebration and to acknowledge the diamond jubilee of His Highness, the Aga Khan that was celebrated this past summer on July 11.

The Aga Khan is the spiritual leader of 15 million people around the world, including over 120,000 here in Canada, who belong to the Ismaili faith. Over the past six decades, His Highness the Aga Khan has helped transform the quality of life for millions of people around the world regardless of their religion.

Here in Canada, the diamond jubilee is an opportunity to celebrate His Highness and the Ismaili community's embrace of Canadian values. It allows us to recognize the

significant investment of the Aga Khan Foundation in Canada and in the province of Ontario, including the Aga Khan Museum and the Aga Khan Park, which are here in Toronto. Speaker, if you haven't been to the Aga Khan Museum to see the wonderful treasures there, I highly urge you to do so.

The Canadian Ismaili community is also celebrating the 150 years of Confederation of Canada, and have launched Ismaili Civic 150, a pledge of a million hours of voluntary service in Canada. Beaches-East York is home to a large community of Ismaili Canadians who devote countless hours to serving our communities, and I'm proud to call many of them friends.

Ismaili civic day will be held on September 17, when the Ismaili Muslim community in Canada will join hands in providing service to this great nation to improve the quality of life of all Canadians, and I would like to encourage everyone to participate.

Please join me in thanking some of the many volunteers who are here today, who, through the spiritual leadership of His Highness the Aga Khan, truly make our province a better place to live.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Mr. Lorne Coe: As part of the 2017 Sustainable Schools report, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority recently announced the highest-performing school boards across the province in terms of energy efficiency. I'm pleased to say that the most energy-efficient school board in Ontario for 2017 is the Durham District School Board.

Roughly 50% of the schools in the board are now outfitted with real-time energy monitoring, which allows consumption to be monitored so that schools can attempt to find efficiencies. Other initiatives include upgrades to lighting, mechanical systems and boiler plants, but also training custodians in the most energy-efficient practices and, of course, getting students involved in energy conservation. There are more than 70 schools certified through the EcoSchools program under the Durham District School Board. This program focuses on energy conservation, waste reduction and teaching ecological literacy.

I want to congratulate the Durham District School Board, the schools and, of course, the educational workers and students for this significant achievement.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JAMES GUY LIMITED ACT, 2017

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr68, An Act to revive James Guy Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

CUTTING UNNECESSARY
RED TAPE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
INUTILES

Mr. Duguid moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 154, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives inutiles, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, if passed, will amend more than 40 existing statutes in order to reduce the regulatory burden on business, while also protecting environmental and health and safety concerns. Specifically, the legislation aims to, among other things, offset new administrative costs to businesses due to new regulations by requiring government to remove other costs to business.

I'm looking forward to having this bill debated. I just want to thank the Open for Business team, who put a lot of working into a very detailed bill to put this bill before us.

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PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas seniors and families deserve long-term-care beds that provide high-quality care in their community;

"Whereas, according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association 2016 report, 97% of residents need help with daily activities such as getting out of bed, eating or toileting;

"Whereas there are currently 26,500 people on the wait list for long-term care, and that number is expected to double in the next six years;

"Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to help pay for the rising cost of operations, provide quality care and invest in more beds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to move quickly to pass Bill 110, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, 2017,

and ensure that funding for food and utilities reflect changes in the cost of living."

I support this, affix my name to it and give it to page Nicola.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES
FOR YOUTH

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the amazing young people from my community of London who collected signatures on this petition as part of the Middlesex-London Health Unit's youth group, One Life One You. It reads as follows:

"Whereas:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further petitions?

GO TRANSIT

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have

positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I agree with this petition. I'll put my signature to it and give it to page Rachel.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 3, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2016, is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

“Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

“Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 3 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money.”

I affix my signature to this petition and hand it to page Nicola.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions delivered its action plan seven years ago; and

“Whereas less than three of the select committee's 23 recommendations have been acted upon; and

“Whereas the committee's primary recommendation is the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, an organization responsible for overseeing all mental health and addiction services in Ontario;

“Whereas an opioid crisis continues to spread across our province; and

“Whereas stigma still exists around mental health and addiction, holding individuals back from seeking care, and those who do seek treatment wait far too long for services;”

They “petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Consolidate all mental health and addictions programs and services for all regions of the province under a stand-alone ministry of mental health and addictions.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Cole to bring it to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: Madam Speaker, it's nice to see you back in the chair.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PHARMACARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm proud to present this petition, which was signed by many residents in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. It reads:

“Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

“Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

“Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

“Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians.”

I'm proud to support this, sign my name to it and give it to page Cole to bring to the Clerk.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and

"Whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled, "Conduct a full inquiry into seniors care in the province of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas, over a period of 12 years, the government has consistently ignored recommendations regarding

long-term care from provincial oversight bodies such as the Ontario Ombudsman and the Auditor General; and

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

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

I fully support this petition, will sign it and give it to page Cole.

BRUCE POWER

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bruce Power provides 30% of Ontario's electricity production at 30% below the average cost to generate residential power;

"Whereas extending the operational life of the Bruce Power energy units will ensure families and businesses have long-term, low-cost stability and clean air to breathe;

"Whereas the Life-Extension Program (LEP) will secure an estimated 22,000 jobs and an additional 3,000 to 5,000 jobs annually throughout the investment program, injecting billions into Ontario's economy;

"Whereas BWXT contributes approximately 1,000 high-skilled, high-paying jobs to residents of Cambridge, Peterborough, Toronto, Arnprior and Dundas and their surrounding areas;

"Whereas BWXT generates over \$90 million in payroll and procures over \$100 million in Ontario goods and services annually across its five major operating locations in Ontario;

"Whereas BWXT contributes back over \$50,000 annually to worthy charitable organizations and celebrates a strong engineering co-op program to support the mentorship and development of local engineering students;

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

"To support the vital role that nuclear power plays in delivering clean, affordable electricity while contributing to a prosperous, well-employed regional economy and across the province."

I'll sign the petition and send it with Andy.

ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Canada is now the fifth largest organic market in the world and expanding by over 10% annually;

“Whereas the federal government adopted the Canada organic standards in 2009 for products labelled organic that are traded outside of their province of origin;

“Whereas the Canada Organic Trade Association rated Ontario lowest amongst all provinces for regulation, support and development of organic products;

“Whereas Ontario is free to use the term ‘organic’ on any product, even if they are not certified, as long as they do not use the logo or trade across provincial borders;

“Whereas this opens the door to fraud as the market grows, and whereas five other provinces have already enacted organic legislation to address this gap;

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

“To pass Bill 153, the Organic Products Act, 2017.”

I agree with this and pass it off to page Will.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

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

“Whereas Bill 3, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2016, is a vital tool that supports Ontario’s auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

“Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

“Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 3 into law, to promote Ontario’s auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money.”

I agree, Speaker. I’ll give this to Duncan to bring up to the desk after I sign my name.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE ET DES DÉPENDANCES

Madame Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to establish the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions / Projet de loi 149, Loi créant le ministère de la Santé mentale et des dépendances.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am delighted that this afternoon members from all three parties will have an opportunity to talk about mental health and addictions. This is not a topic that is talked about very often in this Legislative Assembly, but it is one that is very important.

I remember when in 2009 this Legislative Assembly decided to accept the recommendations for a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. At the time I had only been here for about two years. I was coming out of 25 years in health care and I sort of thought, “Well, you know, I’ve seen quite a bit of it.” Really, Speaker, I had seen nothing and I knew nothing. For the next 18 months, we heard from 230 people about the failings of our mental health and addictions system. We learned of horrific and catastrophic outcomes because our mental health and addictions system had failed people, had failed families.

Our recommendations came out in 2010, in the final report called Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians. All three parties stood together. Our number one recommendation was quite simple: to create Mental Health and Addictions Ontario—very much along the lines of Cancer Care Ontario—that would be responsible for giving mental health and addictions a home.

The first recommendation also was to determine a basket of mental health and addictions services that would be available to all Ontarians no matter their age, no matter where they lived.

Well, fast-forward to 2017. We still have about a thousand people each year who die by suicide. We have had 865 people who died by overdose just last year; that is, opioid overdose. We have 12,000 children right here right now in Ontario on wait-lists for mental health treatment. We have an Auditor General’s report of a few months back that says that, overall, 5% of all long-term-care psychiatric beds that existed five years ago have been closed.

Then yesterday, with my leader, we held a press conference. We were joined by a very brave young man. His name is Noah Irvine. Noah has lost both his mother and father to the failings of our mental health and addictions system. Noah is one of the many catastrophic outcomes, the many heartbreaking stories that we heard, and basically showed us once again that the mental health and addictions part of our health care system, a system that is so precious to all of us—that part of it is failing so many people. It is doing so poorly.

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I have the greatest of respect for the minister’s table on mental health—I think it’s called the mental health and addictions council—and the good work that they do.

I know that some of their recommendations will be coming out. The problem is that this is not a transparent or accountable process to the people of Ontario.

I also know, as the minister shared with us yesterday during question period, that as recently as 10 days ago, they had a cross-ministerial table with ministers from 10 different ministries and MPPs to talk about mental health and addictions. This is great news to me. At the same time, it also worries me that those are not transparent processes. Those are not processes that are accountable to the people of Ontario. Although I support them and this is something in the right direction, I think we are ready for more.

The strength of a stand-alone mental health and addictions ministry is that, for starters, it will be transparent and we will have a minister accountable to all of us, to everybody in Ontario, who will be responsible for finding more services, more funding, more resources and more attention. It will be the single focus of this ministry. It will be the priority of this ministry at all times.

So what will a new Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions do?

First, it will lead the transformation of Ontario's mental health and addiction services and build the system that we all know we want and that so many of us need. Right now, we have patches of good services here and there. We have partners at the local level that are able to work across different ministries and funding and make it work. But then one agency changes and it all falls apart. This is not a system, Speaker. We need a system.

It will also try to eliminate wait-lists and reduce wait times for people—I would say especially for children. For children, sometimes as young as six, seven or eight years old, to wait 18 months to be able to access treatment is, frankly, a lifetime. What should have been addressed and recovered from in the short term has now grown into a chronic illness with more and more ramifications for the family.

It will ensure that every Ontarian gets access to the support they need when they need it and where they need it. Because, again, some services do very good work at the local level, but those best practices are not replicated throughout our province, so it always ends up that, depending on who you are, where you are and how old you are, you may get services or you may not. We need to do better than this.

It will ensure that the recommendations from the select committee to build a real mental health and addictions system are looked at, reviewed and, hopefully, acted upon.

It will also improve Ontario's response to emergencies like the opioid overdose crisis that is going on in our communities. I know that the Minister of Health and the ministry have listened and have promised an investment of millions of dollars more for this crisis. But you see, Speaker, the agencies that respond to get that money are actually competing against one another. And in areas of the province, like the areas that I represent, where there are no service providers, there is no way for those

resources to flow to us, to become accessible to us. Why? I come back to the fact that we haven't got a system. So although I applaud it and I am absolutely positive that this money will help, it will help some people in some areas but it will still leave a lot of people in many areas without the increased services and without the support that they need.

It will also work to end stigma. I would say that just the fact that we are talking about the importance of mental health and addiction in this Legislature is a step. There are so many other steps taking place right now.

I will talk about Sudbury for a minute, because last Sunday, on September 10, at Ramsey Lake park, we celebrated World Suicide Prevention Day. We had a butterfly release, and it was Sudbury's way to take a minute to change a life. I know that other very nice celebrations took place throughout our province on that day, and that was really uplifting.

We're talking about this bill in September. I hope that everybody knows that September is Recovery Month. Again, it is a great opportunity to celebrate the great victory we have done towards recovery. There are a number of events planned throughout the month of September. I encourage all of you to go to the Addictions and Mental Health Ontario website to see what is going on in your own community and to learn about those positive stories. Some of them are really heartwarming.

You see, Speaker, the most recent study shows us that 50% of the people who live with addiction, once they have access to treatment, will recover. But they have to have access to treatment to recover. All of those beautiful stories of recovery can only become true when people have access to treatment, and this is what we're trying to do.

I see that the time is going way faster than I had hoped.

The bill is quite simple. It gives mental health and addiction a home. It makes a minister accountable to all of us on mental health and addiction. It makes mental health and addiction a priority, a single focus. It's there to make sure that we bring more funding, more attention. We can create a mental health and addiction system in Ontario that we can all be proud of, through the creation of that ministry.

Je crois qu'avoir un ministère dédié seulement à la santé mentale et aux dépendances va nous aider à s'assurer que les services de santé mentale et des dépendances ont les ressources, le financement et l'attention dont ils ont besoin, afin de répondre aux besoins des Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Il y a des milliers de personnes qui vivent avec des problèmes de santé mentale et des problèmes de dépendance. Si on leur donne accès aux services dont ils ont besoin, 50 % d'entre eux vont aller mieux. C'est un investissement qui en vaut la peine, et j'espère qu'on peut avoir le soutien de tous les partis.

I hope I can count on everybody's support for this private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to begin with what some may think a rare occurrence, but I try to do this as frequently as I can: to applaud the NDP and my critic for health care, the member—I'm going to get it right this time—from Nickel Belt, for bringing this issue to the Legislature.

She mentioned just a few moments ago that any time this Legislature does speak about and discuss mental health, that's important and it's appropriate, and it's a good day. It needs to happen, and it needs to happen more often, quite frankly.

We, as leaders within our own constituencies and as part of the elected leadership across this province, have a big responsibility to do two things: to ensure that we contribute and work towards decreasing and eventually eliminating the stigma that exists towards mental illness. But we also have a shared responsibility to make sure that as a province—and in our case, we have an added responsibility as government—we do everything we possibly can and make the right investments to ensure that we are providing the highest quality of care on mental health. I acknowledged this yesterday in question period as well. We have a long, long way to go. We have a long way to go on both those fronts. It's a very big challenge to society, I think.

1350

We need to comprehend mental wellness and mental health and mental illness in a different way. We need to view it through the exact same lens as we do physical health and physical illness. Clearly, it needs a unique approach and a sensitive one, but they are two sides of the same coin—mental health and physical health—and we can't be any less vigorous about one or the other.

Everybody imagines that you go to your primary care provider and you feel confident that if you've got a physical health need, you're going to get that adequately addressed. The same can't be said about mental health. It is as important. There can be no health without mental health.

Part of our job—of all of us as legislators—is to collectively reduce that stigma and work together. There are great examples in the recent past where we have worked together to improve the services, to mature the government and my ministry's approach to the delivery of services and providing supports to mental health.

I'll be the first to acknowledge that this is a challenging responsibility and we have a long, long way to go. It's not, regrettably, unique to Ontario or even Canada. The entire world, really, is grappling with the challenges of mental illness. It is, however, gratifying to see, through our communities and throughout society, whether that's through corporate leadership like Bell and their Let's Talk Day and the individuals associated with that, whether it's other workplaces where they've integrated just like we have—we teach employees first aid; there's mental health first aid that is taught to many employees across this province. That's how we need to begin to think about it. We need to acknowledge the

leadership and those front-line health care workers, the peer support workers.

If it's in the area of addictions, the harm reduction workers are giving it their all. They are so committed, and they're working under very difficult circumstances, and they need more funding. All of the areas of mental health need more funding, better coordination and better integration. That's what we have to aspire to do collectively.

It was a long preamble to say thank you for your efforts in bringing this here today and inviting this discussion. It's an important one.

As a government, I think one of the most important things we can do is rely on the expertise and evidence that is before us and what has been brought to us, including by the select committee, an all-party effort a number of years ago. We may not quite agree on the number of recommendations that have been implemented. Some of them are also rather complex and complicated. I wish we could just flip a switch and have a recommendation implemented. Some of them take many years to do. But we're working away, and the vast majority of those recommendations have in fact been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

We're also making investments in the right areas. Just this year, we were the first province or territory in the entire country to have made available publicly funded cognitive behavioural therapy and similar interventions which have a proven effectiveness and, beautifully, can be actually provided by a myriad of health care professionals. They have proven outcomes, particularly for individuals with mood disorders. There's a treatment, a support, a therapy that exists out there.

We've sort of dipped our toe into the pond, saying, "We want to be the first in Canada, and we believe that we need to fund this." It's a program that I'm confident we're going to grow as we see and Ontarians see just how important and how advantageous it is.

We're also investing in supportive housing, because this is mental wellness. It's a very broad issue when you think of the social determinants of health and you think of the factors that are responsible—or their absence is responsible—for individuals finding themselves vulnerable and in very vulnerable circumstances that may either lead to mental illness or may prevent them from recovering from an episode of mental illness. So the investment earlier this year of more than 1,000 supportive housing units across this province is another way that we're tackling, in a broad sense, the challenge that Ontarians face when it comes to mental wellness.

As was mentioned, we had the inaugural cabinet-level meeting of a table which, at the Premier's direction, we established on mental wellness, which covers both mental health and addictions as well, as a subcategory. We brought together all those ministers and also non-ministers to provide us with the best possible advice, including three members of the table who are also three individuals that were part of the aforementioned select committee of this Legislature.

In the last couple of minutes, if I can move to an area which I am very proud that, under my watch and my involvement as Minister of Health, I had a part in creating, and that is our leadership advisory council on mental health and addictions. It's chaired by Susan Pigott, who is so highly regarded throughout the mental health and health care community.

If you'll allow me, because we so rarely get this opportunity to acknowledge individuals and their contributions: As I mentioned, Susan is the chair. We constructed this advisory council to put our feet to the fire and come up, on an annual basis, with very specific and tangible recommendations on what they want us to do. In fact, CBT, cognitive behavioural therapy, was in last year's report. They said, "We've got to do this." Supportive housing was in last year's report. It was near the top of the list, if not at the top of what we need to invest in, and we did.

Susan has a long history both with St. Christopher House and with CAMH. But importantly—and it's not a matter of having a token individual with lived experience—we populated this council with people with lived experience. Quite frankly, they were self-declared, and I have no doubt that many of the other individuals on the council have lived experience themselves, but chose not to declare it.

There are remarkable individuals, like Pat Capponi, who is not only a psychiatric survivor, but she speaks very aptly, very well, to the social determinants. She comes from a background of an experience of poverty. Cynthia Clark, who is chair of Ontario Family Caregivers' Advisory Network, is on this council.

We've got:

—Rachel Cooper, who is peer initiatives manager at Stella's Place;

—Gail Czukur, who is the CEO of Addictions and Mental Health Ontario;

—Suzanne Filion, who is the director of strategic initiatives at Hawkesbury and District General Hospital;

—Carol Hopkins, who is the executive director of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation;

—Kwame McKenzie, who is CEO at the Wellesley Institute;

—Mae Katt, who is a primary-care nurse practitioner—she is First Nations—working with First Nations in northern Ontario;

—Ian Manion, who is from CHEO;

—Louise Paquette, who is the CEO of the North East LHIN;

—Camille Quenneville, CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association;

—Aseefa Sarang, executive director of Across Boundaries, which is an ethno-racial mental health centre in the province;

—Kathy Short, who is a mental health ASSIST lead at the Hamilton-Wentworth Board of Education;

—Peter Sloly, deputy chief of Toronto Police Services;

—Adelina Urbanski, commissioner, community and health services, regional municipality of York;

—Victor Willis, executive director of the Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre;

—Eric Windeler, founder and executive director of Jack.org, an incredible advocate for people with mental illness; and, finally,

—Catherine Zahn, CEO of CAMH.

I just wanted to give you that list to really acknowledge, and for the first time—we haven't had an opportunity to truly acknowledge the contribution over the last almost three years that these individuals have made. Believe me, if you've ever had the opportunity to meet with them or speak to them—and you're welcome to—they are keeping our feet to the fire, and they are providing direct and tangible ideas on what we need to do.

As I mentioned, their advice led directly to the funding that we have put in this year's budget. It was their direction that led to that. They will be the first to tell you, as well, that we have a long way to go. But I think if you were to speak to this cross-section of Ontarians, when you read the list and see the backgrounds, the people with lived experience, the family members that have lost a loved one due to mental illness—and we met an incredibly courageous young man yesterday who speaks to the heart of the importance of listening to those individuals and empowering them.

But, Speaker, that's one of the things on mental health that I'm extremely proud of. The work of those individuals is continuing, so I have no doubt that they will provide us with the guidance that we need.

1400

It is important—and this is not a knock against the suggestion of the party. It is important, I think, that Ontarians understand that that council has never recommended, and is not recommending, the creation of a separate ministry to look at mental health and addictions. It's also something I can honestly say I've never heard from any of the many individuals and stakeholders that I've met with. I know that in British Columbia they have recently announced that, but for me the important thing, I think, is that we're working together to provide better mental health in this province. That's something we have a tremendous responsibility to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to be able to rise today and bring some form of clarity on our part with regard to this legislation.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the member from Nickel Belt for raising this issue. I truly believe that we need to have more discussions regarding mental health and addictions continually, not just left to private members' business but more so around the grounds here. Collaborating together as three parties, we can work towards a better solution than what's out there today.

I believe we're here today with this piece of legislation because seven years ago the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions produced a report after 18 months of work. One of the purposes of this report was to

spark public debate about mental health and addiction treatments in this province, as well as give the government some guidance into recommendations.

If you look at the first recommendation that came from that committee, it was about not only creating a new umbrella organization, Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, which was also brought forth by the member from London–Fanshawe in one of her private member’s bills, but also that the “mental health and addictions programs and services—for all regions of the province and for all ages, including children and youth—should be consolidated in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.” That was the other recommendation. The government didn’t act on that. In fact, mental health and addictions remain splintered in this province. Children and youth services are an entirely different sector of the ministries.

I’m supportive of the spirit of what the member from Nickel Belt has brought forward, because we need to have this discussion. We need to fix this issue. It has been going on for too long. Mental health is not treated the same as physical health, and it needs to be.

The concern that I have heard on this piece of legislation is that creating a whole new ministry is going to take money away from much-needed services in order to create the structure of a whole new ministry, and that’s a concern of mine. I think what we need to do going forward is focus on services; focus on service improvements and creating access targets, and make sure they’re met. We don’t need to be focusing on restructuring government continually. This government has a history, over its 14 years, of spending money reconstructing itself, yet if you look at our health care system, it is failing so many Ontarians.

The other concern I have—and we’ve seen it with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services—is that this new Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions will have to compete with the Ministry of Health for funding from the Ministry of Finance. It will be competing against the Ministry of Health, which is a large ministry and has expertise on ensuring that the funding comes their way. If you look at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, we’ve seen that it’s a direct failure on our youth and children with regard to mental health.

I recently received a letter in my riding from community service agencies for children and mental health. Anago, Craigwood, CSCN, Vanier, Ways, Merry-mount—they wrote me a letter saying that their funding has been frozen since 2006. So we’ve got 11 years of funding freezing, even though we have an increased demand for mental health services in this province, for youth and children especially. Their funding has been frozen, so this ministry cannot compete with the Ministry of Health in order to get the funding needed. Unfortunately, these services—they’re writing me—are meeting monthly at board meetings, struggling away just to pay staff and pay their bills. These are services that are in our community, preventing children from having to access their hospitals in ER visits, but they’re failing. They

don’t have the money. I have written the Premier for some action on this issue, but to no avail; she was unresponsive.

Madam Speaker, if you look at what is occurring with our children and youth services, you’ll see that hospitalizations are up over 67%, ER visits are 63%, whereas other services for children—access to ER visits and hospitalizations—are down almost 20%. So we’re seeing that that’s a failure in the system because the government did not follow its own committee’s recommendations and bring everything under one body.

I’m going to let other members of the party speak, but I just wanted to bring that forward, that if the government had acted on this committee’s recommendations, just the very first one, we wouldn’t have to be here today debating this bill because all the services would be consolidated. There would be a focus on mental health in this province. It’s something that has been lost over the 14 years of this government, and I hope we regain it again soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It’s a pleasure to be able to stand today to speak to Bill 149, brought forward by my colleague the member from Nickel Belt. I want to thank this member for her ongoing work, stemming from her participation on the Select Committee on Mental Health, to her continuous advocacy and now for bringing this bill before the Legislature that would create a stand-alone Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

As members will know, it was the select committee that recommended the creation of a single body to be responsible for designing, managing and coordinating Ontario’s mental health and addictions system. That was in 2010, and still nothing has been done to address the recommendation. Six of the nine members of that committee were Liberals. Four of them are now cabinet ministers. It was their recommendation, but they have done nothing about it.

As the NDP critic for children and youth services, I am made very well aware of the extreme challenges being faced by children and youth in the province of Ontario. For years, the workers have been calling for funding so that they can deliver the services our children and youth so desperately need. But the fact is, Speaker, for some reason they just cannot attract this government’s attention to an ever-growing problem. A stand-alone ministry will make sure that it gets the attention and priority it needs.

Years of underfunding have resulted in a crisis situation for children’s mental health in Ontario. There are an estimated 12,000 kids waiting for treatment at publicly funded, community-based child and youth mental health centres. In my city of Hamilton, children and youth wait up to a year for counselling, therapy or in-home services. A recent study has shown us that this has meant increased demands on our hospitals. As we heard from the previous speaker, emergency department visits for mental health disorders by children and youth went up over 63%

over 10 years, and in the same period hospitalization increased by 67%.

These catastrophic results should have us ashamed, Speaker. Canada is one of the world's richest countries, yet it has the third-highest suicide rate in the industrialized world. It is the second most common cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 24. That is shameful. If you're a First Nations youth, you are five to six times more likely to die by suicide than if you are a non-aboriginal youth.

These are the consequences of pushing children's mental health to the background, and it's not acceptable. The government will want to remind us of their announcement of funding in February of this year, but it's important to understand that none of that money will actually make it to the treatment of youth with mental health. None of that money will do anything to address the 12,000 kids who are waiting more than a year for services.

Speaker, Children's Mental Health Ontario delivers a pre-budget submission each and every year. Every time, they make a strong case for increased funding. Their argument is not just that it's the right thing to do, because it is; it's also that it's a strategic investment in our children and youth, in their mental health. It will actually save money on our hospitals. In 2016, they pointed to \$65 million annually, which would actually save the province an estimated \$700 million over the next five years.

Over the years, these submissions have fallen on deaf ears, and that has to change. That is why I am delighted to support this private member's bill for a stand-alone Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions: a minister who has a seat at the table and is not distracted by other demands of their ministry.

1410

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm proud to stand and speak to Bill 149, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions Act.

Speaker, one of the greatest frustrations that I have experienced since becoming an MPP is the lack of mental health services for my residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Let us be clear: This Liberal government has failed this vulnerable sector and their families desperate for help.

The local police services report that a major portion of their time is taken up dealing with people with mental health issues—spending hours in an already crowded hospital emergency department, sitting with their clients waiting to be admitted, taking a number as more serious cases are dealt with. In addition to the cost to municipal governments and the health care system, it is the wrong way to deal with serious mental health issues.

Personal friends have been to my office, after spending years dealing with mental health and legal agencies, trying to get help for their family members. They are tired of the lack of available medical professionals and the long wait-lists.

In Cornwall, the government has brought most of the agencies providing mental health services under one roof. I believe the initiative has a lot of merit, and I applauded the government for this project. In theory, all the services that the patient needs are provided by professionals just down the hall, basically a one-stop shop.

But not too long ago, I was invited to the kick-off breakfast to highlight this new and bold initiative. The chief of staff rose to account for all the merits of this trial and the successes that one would expect with the creation of this new service hub. He talked to the ability of dealing with clients who walk in desperately needing help to be assessed and then accessing the required professionals just down the hall.

But reality quickly set in when a member of the public raised his hand to ask a question. He said, "Do you mean that if my family member is diagnosed as requiring a psychologist, he will be able to get the service?" The doctor's enthusiasm quickly disappeared, and he responded, "Sadly, no. We just don't have the resources."

Speaker, after spending so much money on bricks and mortar, we do not have the money to properly fund and staff the operation. Like so many expensive plans from this Liberal government, the promised goals will never be met, and more families will be left to deal with the problems on their own.

In my riding, just like the rest of Ontario, we are experiencing a rash of suicides and many cases of addiction and poverty-related cases. We need the services that Ontarians have grown to expect and deserve.

We look at the long waiting lists and the issues that we've been seeing the last number of years. A couple of years ago, we had a meeting with numerous not-for-profits, the services sector and others, and their message was clear: "We have not received any funding increases in the last five years." So as we see the demand skyrocket, how can we expect this demand to be met if we aren't putting the necessary funds in?

While I agree that we need to put some attention here, and I think this ministry might do that, I am concerned that the bureaucracy will just tie up the money as well. But we will be supporting this.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague's private member's bill to create a stand-alone ministry for mental health and addictions. One of the reasons that the member presented for bringing forward this initiative is the fact that we currently have 11 different ministries in this province that are involved in some way or another in the delivery of mental health services. This leads to system fragmentation. It leads to a lack of system coordination. This initiative creating a stand-alone ministry would address those concerns.

I'm going to focus, in the brief time that I have, on four of these ministries that are delivering mental health services that have a direct and very immediate impact on my community of London West.

First, of course, we have the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health funds hospitals, as we know, but, as I

have said here in this Legislature numerous times, the funding that is provided to our hospitals is not sufficient to address the needs of our community. In my city of London, we have had people waiting for a week or more on a hallway stretcher in the London Health Sciences Centre emergency room, waiting for a mental health bed. That is unacceptable, it is inhumane and it cannot continue in this province of Ontario.

Just two hours ago, the London Free Press posted another story: “London ER Waits Reach All-Time Worst for Patients Needing Beds in Understaffed Psychiatric Ward.” This has reached such a crisis, is such an emergency, that London Health Sciences Centre has asked for 24 additional beds to accompany the 74 psychiatric beds that are currently available. They have identified the need for a 32% increase in beds in my community.

We also have the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, which is funding children’s mental health. This week, on Monday, my first day back in the Legislature, I raised the issue of the crisis in children’s mental health in my community. This summer, I met with seven of the agencies that provide these services. These agencies are not even looking at what services they can cut; they’re looking at how they will even be able to continue to operate, because the level of funding has not kept up with the need for services in my community.

Within my caucus, I am critic for advanced education and skills development. There is a crisis in campus mental health across this province. Last academic year at the University of Guelph, four young people died by suicide. We have post-secondary institutions trying desperately to meet this need and trying to become mental health service providers, but they are crying for assistance from this government.

And finally, in our schools we are seeing—in Woodstock, we saw five young people who were attending Thames Valley schools die by suicide over a period of months. We have an epidemic of violence in our schools that has been identified by educators because young people are not getting the mental health services that they require.

This stand-alone ministry would enable the kind of coordination and integration that is necessary to address this problem and move our province forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m happy to speak to this. As many of you know, I leave the select committee report in my desk because I don’t want to forget about it and I don’t want the government to forget about the fact that many members of this Legislature took a lot of time and care to try to bring some very positive recommendations forward.

I want to talk about Noah. The member from Nickel Belt and the leader raised the issue of Noah from Guelph. I don’t know Noah, but when I heard that he came from Guelph, I was struck for two reasons. For those of you who know Guelph, there is an excellent, excellent facility in Guelph called Homewood. If Noah’s family, in a community that actually has very good service, struggled

and didn’t get help, then imagine what it’s like in our rural populations, in northern Ontario. Those are the stories that I remember and I think about and those are the stories that really struck, from families who appeared, who took that step that Noah did, which had to be incredibly challenging.

He’s dealing with a very personal tragedy. He’s making that public and saying, “I want to make sure that other young people and other families don’t have to go through what I had to go through with my mother and father.” I give him huge kudos for doing that. But Guelph is served a lot better than many parts of the province.

I asked—I lobbied, I demanded—to be on this select committee, because when I became an MPP, among the first constituents I dealt with was a family that was trying to get service for their young son. He was going to age out of the child and youth system before he even got assessed. What kind of service and what kind of Ontario do we have where someone who is actively seeking help at 16 and 17 is going to age out of the system before they even get in front of a clinician? It is an embarrassment.

1420

I want more to be done. If you won’t adopt all of the recommendations in this select committee’s report, fine. But do something. Make sure that there are no more stories like Noah’s. Make sure that we don’t, as MPPs, have to say, “I have called everyone that I know in my community and there is no one who can help you at this time.” Let’s stop those stories and let’s move together to make sure that those aren’t what we remember, that that’s not our legacy.

Thank you for bringing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In my community, every year we do a volunteer banquet and we honour those volunteers who have been outstanding in various fields. This last year, one of those volunteers was a young man named Mark Baratta.

Mark is an addict; he doesn’t hide the fact. He has had his challenges—always trying to get into recovery. We honoured him because of what he did. What he did, and what he does, is to carry around a naloxone kit and help keep his fellow addicts from dying.

On the night that we had our banquet, Mark was late. He was late because he saved somebody’s life on the way to the banquet, using his kit. That is the story of the tragedy of opioid addiction in my riding. It’s every day; it’s on the way to somewhere else; it’s every person. That’s how it’s affecting us. Mark is one example of many.

I heard the Minister of Health talk about the committee. I know many of the folks on that committee. Many of them are from my riding. Here’s the problem, Madam Speaker—and the problem is being addressed by this private member’s bill. It’s being addressed by our member from Nickel Belt, who I have to say has been this tireless champion of all things health-related since she has been here. So thank you.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely.

The problem is, we had a select committee. It sat seven years ago. It travelled around the province. It made these recommendations—23, to be exact. I was here when they did it. All parties agreed. It cost a lot of taxpayers' dollars to get that report on to the table.

No more committees need to sit. No more work needs to be done. What needs to be done is to put those recommendations into action.

We don't need more consultation. We know what needs to happen, and most of what needs to happen is more money. That's what needs to happen. It's more money and political will—two of those key factors that go into everything we do around here. More money and political will.

In a sense, we're trying to help you, Minister of Health. We're fighting for you over here. We're saying that we want you to have more money in your budget. We want you to be able to put into place what has already been decided, what has already been advocated for, what has already been proposed. Why should we have to reinvent the wheel?

Years ago, families came called Tragically NOHIP—that was the name of their organization—families who had children who couldn't get help. There is no help for children with addiction issues. Sorry; there's none. I'm just telling you the truth. There is no help for children with addiction issues. You have to mortgage your house and you have to send them out of province to someplace else, to residential care. That is the reality. There is no help for children with addiction issues in this province. You have to mortgage your house and send them out of province. Sorry; that's the reality, because they want residential care and are not going to get it here. They're going to die on a waiting list here. So they had to come here and they had to lobby here. That was years ago—years ago. Madam Speaker, come on. Really?

It's time. Just put the recommendations into action. Let's make sure that our select committees actually do their job and are recognized. Minister of Health, I appeal to you—not just to you. I know that your decisions are made somewhere else sometimes, too. You need the money. You need the resources. You need the political backbone. Do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Nickel Belt to wrap up.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very heartwarming for me to hear support from all sides of the House for mental health and addiction. As I said in my opening, we don't talk about mental health and addiction very often in this House. Today, a lot of the ideas that were talked about were kind of similar.

The bill is very simple: It gives mental health and addiction a home. It makes a ministry responsible and accountable, so that we get more resources, so that they get the financing that they need, so that we put the focus on mental health and addiction and nothing else, through a Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction. It's quite simple.

We have seen all of the efforts that have been done; we have seen all of the investments that have been done. But the fact remains that we haven't got a mental health and addiction system. People depend on a system that fails them, and catastrophic outcomes come out of it.

I think we are ready for this bold step. I think Ontario is ready to lead a new way in how we make mental health and addiction a priority, by coming forward with a ministry dedicated to prioritizing mental health and addiction at all times, so that the stories that we've heard of the failings never happen again, and so that the story that the young man, Noah Irvine, shared with us this week never happens again.

Le projet de loi est très simple. On veut un ministère de la Santé mentale et des dépendances qui a une seule priorité: c'est de s'assurer que les services de santé mentale et des dépendances ont les ressources pour bien faire leur travail.

Thank you, everyone.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately broaden the scope of the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in the long-term-care homes system to include the safety of residents and staff; quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and staffing practices; regulation, enforcement and inspections; capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; and government action and inaction on previous recommendations to improve the long-term-care homes system.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for a presentation.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good afternoon. I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking all the people who drove here this morning from Hamilton, the Toronto area, London and Sudbury to support this motion to expand the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in the long-term-care homes system.

This motion is so important to residents in long-term care across Ontario, and their families, as well as the hard-working front-line workers who take care of them day in and day out. We need to be able to trust that our aging parents and grandparents can get the care they need and live in dignity and comfort and safety.

Long-term care has been pushed to the breaking point by years of Conservative and Liberal cuts, underfunding and understaffing. It doesn't have to be this way. We can fix the seniors' care crisis in Ontario.

I am moving this motion today to expand the mandate of the public inquiry into the safety and security of long-term care residents. The first step to fixing seniors' care is to take an honest look at the problems today. We all agree that the public inquiry into long-term care must look into the horrific murders in Woodstock and London.

The families, the loved ones of the victims, deserve those answers, and every Ontarian deserves to know if there were warning signs that were missed and lessons that can be learned to ensure that this barbarity never happens again.

1430

But the government cannot stop there. The public inquiry must take a hard look at the systemic problems throughout the long-term-care system. There were eight murders that took place, and we have identified eight aspects of the system that we must examine.

We are calling on the government and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to expand the mandate of the public inquiry to address the systemic problems in long-term-care homes, as I mentioned, and I'll read them again, to include the safety of residents and staff; staffing levels and staffing practices; capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions; funding levels; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; regulation, enforcement and inspections; government action and inaction on previous recommendations; and the quality of care that residents receive. I want to address each of these issues in the time that I have left.

The safety of residents and staff in long-term-care homes continues to be a worsening problem for under-resourced homes. Violence is an escalating issue, and that is why the Ontario Health Coalition has been so vocal about the need for a public inquiry. We must look at the causes of resident-on-resident violence. If the staff and residents can't feel safe in the home, everyone loses confidence in the system. Families have even resorted to placing nanny-cams in their rooms.

Tammy Carbino told us about her 86-year-old father, James Acker, who was brutally beaten and sexually assaulted for a period of six months. The violence her father experienced was so severe that he was transferred to a hospital, and the family was told they would have to wait up to six weeks for another long-term-care bed. Because of the trauma, they all suffered. Tammy began searching for long-term-care homes in the area to evaluate them for safety. While waiting for a new home, her father succumbed to his injuries and died. These experiences are devastating and leave long-lasting scars in families. To this day, Tammy continues to advocate for the safety of residents in long-term-care homes.

We need a thorough investigation into staffing levels and practices. Long before the investigation into the heinous murders, nurses were reporting high levels of stress and demoralization. The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario recently conducted a research study of 734 nurses. The study found that, on average, each nurse was caring for 36 residents at one time. It's no wonder that residents in care homes are often left without being bathed or toileted; front-line workers are simply run off their feet. They are stretched too thin. Care homes are so understaffed that workers are not in a position to deliver the quality of care to residents that they so want to do.

The next term we need to acknowledge is capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions. Parents and

grandparents with debilitating health problems are often left languishing on wait-lists for months, or even years, while their condition worsens and their families are left to bear the burden. With approximately 78,000 long-term-care beds in Ontario and more than 30,000 people on wait-lists, it's clear that this issue is a major systemic problem in the long-term-care system.

Peggy Clark's mother was diagnosed with vascular dementia and Alzheimer's in 2011. After placing her mother on four wait-lists for long-term-care homes, Peggy became her primary caregiver. Although her mother needed constant supervision, the only help Peggy received was one hour per day via the community care access centre. As her mother's condition worsened, Peggy was forced to hire outside help three times a week out of her mother's small pension. By the time Peggy's mom was offered a spot nearly a year later, her condition had deteriorated to the point that she was tearing apart her room, without any memory of doing this.

In the context of this problem with worsening wait-lists, I met with workers from Meadow Park in London, where the home's for-profit owner is proposing transferring 46 long-term-care beds out of London. In an urban centre with a growing population of seniors, this is unthinkable, yet it isn't an isolated incident.

Many of these core issues in long-term care cannot be resolved without examining the current funding model. It only stands to reason that as our population ages, we must allocate more resources to the long-term-care system.

Carol Saxby from London moved her mother, who suffers from dementia, into a long-term-care home in 2010. Over seven years, Carol watched her mother's condition worsen as the amount of direct care she receives steadily declines. Carol has seen personal support workers' times divided by residents with increasing complex health issues.

In 2015, the Auditor General reported that long-term-care home administrators identified insufficient staffing and training as a major issue. Carol's first-hand experience exemplifies the dire need for funding levels to be reviewed and prioritized by Ontario's next government. I hope that's going to be the NDP. The primary motive for long-term-care assistance should not be cutting corners and earning a profit at the expense of the health and dignity of our seniors.

Hiring and keeping staff part-time to maximize profits is demoralizing to the workforce and deprives residents of continuity of care. When the care home hires temp staff agencies to staff long-term-care facilities, it shouldn't come as any surprise that there is such a high turnover of personal support workers. PSWs taking care of seniors with increasingly complex needs and challenging health problems deserve to be paid properly. Prioritizing the health and dignity of seniors over profit is a central component to solving the crisis in the long-term-care system.

Families in Ontario deserve the confidence of knowing that the care facilities where their loved ones are

being looked after are governed by regulations that ensure safety and dignity. Minimum front-line staff-to-resident ratios, minimum standards of direct care hours per resident per day, and funding that ensures nutritional needs are met are all regulations that need to be established. Ensuring that impromptu and scheduled inspections occur and that they are consistent and thorough is essential to prevent critical incidents. Making sure that all incidents that do take place are reported and impartially investigated ensures that there are the sort of accountabilitys that gives families confidence in long-term care across the province.

There must be serious consequences for regulatory violators. They need to know that when families speak up respectfully for improvements in their care, there will be no reprisals against them and that their families won't be subject to arbitrary no-trespass orders or other silencing tactics.

Despite multiple reports signalling a crisis in the long-term-care system that includes the 2008 Sharkey report, the Long-Term Care Task Force report and the chief coroner's office that called for increased support and resources into care homes across the province, the government has repeatedly failed to implement these recommendations. The needs of the long-term-care population are changing as more residents require staff-intense, complex care and the number of seniors requiring care increases. The government's inaction on previous recommendations to improve the long-term-care system has contributed to the crisis faced in care homes across Ontario.

Quality of care: Hard-working front-line staff want to deliver the best care for our seniors, but they are coping with unmanageable workloads and often are not receiving adequate resources from the government that has turned a blind eye to Ontario's aging population.

Quality care comes down to good relationships between staff and residents. Nurses and personal support workers want to develop and nurture relationships with residents. But when the average worker has 17 minutes per shift to attend to each resident, or nurses have 36 patients to oversee, there isn't enough time for even a quick hello. When the majority of staff are part-time or when temporary staff are widely utilized, community care is jeopardized, and that's when quality of care suffers.

People are here today and thousands more are calling on this government to implement and follow through with the second phase of the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in the long-term-care homes system. It goes beyond the actions of one criminal. In order to repair a broken system, we must root out the systemic issues that contribute to its problem. This motion is not only important to residents in care homes across the province—to our seniors, who are among the most vulnerable—but to the families, loved ones and the hard-working front-line workers who take care of them every day, day in and day out.

I hope that when we're debating this motion today, we'll remember that this government not only has called

a public inquiry into the investigation of the heinous murders, but they have an obligation and a duty and due diligence to call a mandate and have Justice Gillese expand her scope into this inquiry, and do the right thing, and look at the systemic issues and problems that are contributing to the issues that families today are experiencing with their loved ones in long-term care.

1440

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity. First off, as I did this morning, I want to acknowledge our guests. But particularly, I want to acknowledge and express my and this government's deepest condolences to the victims, their families, their loved ones, their friends and relatives, and the communities of Woodstock and London and the surrounding area that have been so impacted by this horrific tragedy. It was a tragic event, these murders by Elizabeth Wettlaufer, and we need to do everything we possibly can to ensure that it never happens again.

I want to also mention that earlier this afternoon I had the privilege of meeting with Susan Horvath, whose father was murdered by Elizabeth Wettlaufer at Meadow Park in London. I want here to publicly applaud her for her courage. As you can imagine—frankly, I don't think any of us can unless we were directly impacted by this. I can't begin to imagine the impact it's had on her, her mother, her brother, other family members and those close to her. She is confronting this tragedy with incredible courage and has, quite frankly, provided me with very powerful and sound advice on steps that can and should be taken going forward.

Madam Speaker, the safety and the quality of life and care that we provide in our long-term-care homes to residents who call those places home is our highest priority. It has to be. Resulting from the tragic events that we all regrettably are so familiar with—that's why the government took the decision to call a public inquiry to look into the events surrounding the offences—the murders and the assaults—committed by Elizabeth Wettlaufer, who, as we all know, was a registered nurse, now convicted of the murder and assault of patients who trusted her, patients in her care.

This is an inquiry that we're fortunate that the Honourable Justice Eileen Gillese accepted the tremendous responsibility to lead. I am confident she will help us get the answers we need to do the utmost, everything humanly possible, to avoid and prevent such a tragedy like this ever happening again.

We intentionally created the terms of reference for this public inquiry with a broad scope, with a scope far broader than either the police investigation or the prosecution. This inquiry will not only look at what occurred but also look for any underlying issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the objectives of the Long-Term Care Homes Act were met, are being met, and will make recommendations in that regard.

We want to allow the commission, and we are allowing the commission, the freedom to follow whatever direction they and she feel is warranted. This could include funding and this could include staffing levels. It will not only look at what occurred but also look for any underlying issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the objectives of the Long-Term Care Homes Act were met and will, as I mentioned, make recommendations as to how to address them. In fact, in the terms of reference that I have before me, it states that the commission shall inquire into, of course, the events which led to the offences and the circumstances and any contributing factors allowing these events to occur, including the effects, if any, of relevant policies—including government policies—and procedures—either within the homes or government procedures—practices, and accountability and oversight mechanisms. That's very broad. But in addition—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As it relates to that situation or case.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: No, you're incorrect.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No, he's correct.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, the commission shall inquire, too. It isn't in reference to the events which led to the offences; there's a third and separate term in the terms of reference that states that the commission shall inquire into "other relevant matters that the commissioner considers necessary to avoid similar tragedies."

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As it relates to that case, as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Madam Speaker, perhaps, unlike the third party, our government believes that the Honourable Justice Gillese was the best choice and has the—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —so disgusting you are—

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's interesting that the leader of the third party just called me disgusting.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To imply that we are disparaging—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. It's never too early or too late to name or warn people, okay?

We're going to have this debate. I'm going to return to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think all of us on any issue, particularly on an issue as sensitive as this, as impactful to so many individuals who have been deeply and will forever be deeply traumatized—I think all of us, and I hold myself to this bar as well, have a responsibility to remain respectful in our discussion. We can have differences of opinion, but I think we owe it to Ontarians, particularly those affected, to be respectful. That's what I'm trying to accomplish.

Interjection.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I won't repeat what the leader of the third party just said there. I don't want to further embarrass her, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Justice Gillese has been a sitting judge with the Ontario Court of Appeal since 2002. She spent a significant period of her life in London as well, in

the area. She's a professor and the dean at Western University's faculty of law.

I want to address this, because I think it's an important issue. There was a question about the timeline—and it's legitimate for all these questions to be out there. In setting up this inquiry, we suggested to the justice herself a two-year timeline. In fact, that is what she recommended. That is what she supports. In fact, it's in line with most other public inquiries that take place across this province. There's a belief that that is the right length of time to get the families the answers they need.

We have given her this very broad mandate to follow the direction the evidence leads her. We'd like to stress that we're providing the time, the resources and the authority to the justice so that her investigation is thorough and her recommendations will help ensure that a tragic situation like this will never happen again.

What happened was so deeply tragic to so many people. We owe it to them to find the answer to how this was allowed to occur. This is a tragedy that will live with these individuals forever. It is an endless responsibility that Justice Gillese has taken upon herself, and I thank her for taking that responsibility. I'm confident that in the time before us, within the scope of that two-year time frame, she will deliver the analysis, thorough investigation and recommendations to enable us to put in place the measures that will prevent this from happening again.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this motion to broaden the scope of the inquiry into long-term-care homes and how Elizabeth Wettlaufer was able to take the lives of eight seniors without anyone noticing.

Our community was shocked and stunned last year when we learned the news that Elizabeth Wettlaufer had killed seven people in our community and had then gone on to take another life in nearby London. It's horrifying to think that this can happen in Ontario. It's even more horrifying to think that it can happen in our community. For us, these are not just names; they are members of our community. They are people we knew: fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

I met with a number of the families, and they are all looking for answers to give them closure and to ensure that nothing like this can ever happen again. They want to know how this could happen with no one noticing. They want to know how it can happen that Elizabeth Wettlaufer could be reported to the College of Nurses of Ontario and yet still be allowed to practise. They want to know if anyone investigated that complaint and why no action was taken to prevent Elizabeth Wettlaufer from practising, or whether the first action was the misconduct hearing that took place after she pleaded guilty in taking the lives of eight vulnerable seniors. They want to know if the government took any action at all when they discovered that Elizabeth Wettlaufer had killed eight people in Ontario nursing homes. They want to know how we can be sure that this isn't happening elsewhere right now.

1450

That is why I pushed the government to conduct a full investigation. I'm pleased that the government eventually listened to calls from families, nurses, opposition and other groups to hold an inquiry, but I'm disappointed that the inquiry isn't required to report until July 31, 2019. If it's happening now, a lot can happen before that date. That means it will be more than two years after the government announced the inquiry before the families can get answers; more than two years after Wetlaufer pleaded guilty. That certainly doesn't seem fair.

The seniors in these homes are vulnerable people who are depending on the government to provide them with a safe place to live. The families of victims are looking for the government to provide them with answers and assurances that changes have been made. Clearly, there are problems in the system. The fact that no one noticed these deaths demonstrates that. The fact that if Wetlaufer had not confessed her actions they might never have been discovered demonstrates that. It was her confession that started the investigation. Our seniors and their families shouldn't have to wait two years to find out what all the problems are and whether action has been taken to address that.

Madam Speaker, this inquiry should be broad, and it should require an interim report so the government can begin taking action to address these problems. We all have a responsibility to protect vulnerable people, so I'm pleased to support this motion to expand the inquiry to ensure that it looks at all aspects of our long-term-care homes. Looking at issues like enforcement, quality of care, the safety of both the residents and staff is important. I believe that ensuring that those issues are addressed would be welcomed by the families of the victims and the families of all residents in long-term care.

No senior should have to suffer from lack of care. No family should have to worry about the safety of their parents and grandparents. I think it is valuable that we're having this debate today to ensure the inquiry looks at all the important issues across the system to ensure that all seniors are safe and cared for, and we can ensure that the tragedy experienced by our community never happens again.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much to all the people who are here today to hear this debate and to encourage everyone to commit to solving the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to speak to the motion tabled by my colleague the MPP for London–Fanshawe. I want to thank the families as well for being here today. I applaud their strength and their courage, and I thank the member for her hard work. I want to start by saying that New Democrats unequivocally support the public inquiry's goal in uncovering what the matters were that led to the situation that allowed Ms. Wetlaufer to murder the people that she did in London and in Woodstock. Those were heinous crimes, and we 100%

support a public inquiry looking into those issues that may have contributed to those particular instances, as the minister has set out in the mandate, as well as any other circumstances that may impact similar types of circumstances in the future or similar types of issues or events in the future.

That's as far as the minister is prepared to go in his mandate. That's his right. But it's our right as a political party to say we don't think that that's good enough. We are exercising that right, along with the voices of many, many people here today and those who also represent thousands of others across the province, because whether the minister is prepared to acknowledge it or not, there is a serious crisis in long-term care. When people can't get toileted on time and then, therefore, have to deal with the indignation of lying in soiled diapers or bedclothes for hours and hours on end; when people's bodies are rotting from bedsores, like we read about in the *Toronto Star*; when family members go to visit their loved ones and find unexplained fractures and bruising and other kinds of injuries to their loved ones; when people are left in bed for 18 hours or 20 hours a day without having seen a single health care worker in long-term care; when people are not even gotten out of bed to get their basic toileting done or their basic morning rituals done of brushing their teeth and combing their hair, we know that there's a problem in long-term care.

We know that the mandate that this minister has set out does not have a broad enough scope to address all of those issues that these people are so frustrated with having to deal with, and everybody else who has loved ones in long-term care are forced to deal with, each and every day. That's why the scope of this inquiry needs to be broadened and that's why I will also be supporting this motion.

I think it's a little bit worrisome that the minister doesn't acknowledge that what he has set out is specifically tied to those heinous crimes. We support that part of it. But what we are saying is, the prevention of heinous crimes similar to those in the future is not enough. We must take this opportunity. Take a hard look. Be honest about the problems that exist in long-term care. Let's not yet again sweep this stuff under the carpet. For the minister to not acknowledge that is very, very worrisome.

It actually is similarly worrisome that the minister implies that the New Democratic Party, by raising very legitimate concerns about the crisis in long-term care that's negatively affecting our most vulnerable seniors as well as their family members—people who wring their hands every day because they're just so worried about what might be happening to their loved ones in care, people who can't sleep at night because they're worried about what they might find when they go visit their father, their mother, their grandparent, their spouse in long-term care the next day—for this minister to insinuate that New Democrats are somehow disparaging or not confident in the work that Justice Eileen Gillese is going to be providing, is absolutely odious. To deflect the criticisms that we have of his mandate and pretend that somehow the NDP is critical of that justice is beneath the

office of the Minister of Health. I'm embarrassed for him that he has sunk to that level, to pretend somehow that we're disparaging this justice's capability of doing her job.

What we are concerned about, Speaker, is this minister's ability to do his job; to seize the moment, to take the opportunity to do the right thing and expand the scope of this public inquiry so that we get the answers that we need. Yes, around what happened with the Wettlaufer murders. And, yes, those answers are going to be broader than the police or the prosecution's investigations; of course they are. But they're still tied to the Wettlaufer murders. It's in black and white. I can send it across with a page to the minister, but I know he has it on his desk already. He can't pretend that what is in black and white is not in black and white.

Let's actually expand the black and white and turn this public inquiry into what the people of Ontario deserve, what our most vulnerable seniors deserve, what our loved ones deserve and let's take the hard look at long-term care, expand the public inquiry, do the right thing by the people of Ontario and then fix the problems in long-term care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to start off, first of all, by expressing our deepest condolences to the victims, their families and communities in Woodstock, London and the surrounding areas. It's very, very tragic, what happened. It was a tragedy, and we're going to do whatever we can—the government—to make sure this never happens again.

The safety, quality and care of Ontario's long-term-care residents continue to be the government's priority. This is why the province has established a public inquiry to look at the events surrounding the offences committed by Elizabeth Wettlaufer, a long-term-care registered nurse who was convicted of the murder and assault of patients under her care.

I just want to read a couple of quotes, Madam Speaker, into the record. The government has received support from organizations such as the RNAO and CARP, who have applauded the terms of reference for the scope of the inquiry. The government believes it is listening to stakeholders.

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I want to go first to CARP. This is their quote. "We are pleased that the inquiry will look into both the circumstances and the systemic issues around the Wettlaufer case," said Wanda Morris, vice-president of advocacy, CARP, Canada leading advocacy association for older Canadians.

"This opens the door to issues like funding and staffing, which may indeed be the root cause of why Wettlaufer was able to continue to kill and assault care residents for so long."

There is also a quote here from the RNAO: "RNAO Welcomes Broad-based Public Inquiry into Nursing Home Deaths at the Hands of Elizabeth Wettlaufer.

"We are pleased the government listened to our request to set up a public inquiry with a broad mandate. We now urge Justice Gillese to exercise her full authority to make recommendations that will address"—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Madam Speaker, I'll start again. There's a bit too much chatter here, and I can't hear myself speaking.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Can you stop the clock?

I already made comments earlier that I don't like this cross-talk and talking over each other, so the next time I stand up, someone will be warned.

I'm going to return to the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'll start that again, Madam Speaker.

This is from the RNAO: "We are pleased the government listened to our request to set up a public inquiry with a broad mandate. We now urge Justice Gillese to exercise her full authority to make recommendations that will address the failings of our current system, including examining legislation and regulations, funding models and staffing, and any other aspects required to create a safer environment for seniors living in nursing homes," says Doris Grinspun, RNAO's chief executive officer."

We have in front of us two well-respected organizations that are supporting the government's steps that are being taken in terms of launching this inquiry and appointing Justice Gillese to lead it.

"Last week, the College of Nurses of Ontario held a discipline hearing where they found Wettlaufer guilty of professional misconduct and revoked her nursing licence."

We have taken action, and I think that we are on the right path. The inquiry, as the minister said earlier, will be very broad and will encompass all that is required, and even more.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I am pleased to rise and discuss the motion regarding broadening the scope of the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in long-term-care homes.

I believe that societies can and should be judged, at least in part, by their treatment of their senior citizens. We live in a province that was shaped by our oldest citizens, and the Ontario that our children and grandchildren will grow up in and live in will have been shaped by its senior citizens.

I believe that we must always strive to make Ontario a province that values the contributions that seniors have made, but also one that looks forward and values the contributions they have yet to make.

The motion before us this afternoon properly weighs those contributions. It is a motion rooted in respect. It's also a motion that recognizes that supporting seniors living in our long-term-care homes means also support-

ing their families and caregivers, some of whom are in the audience today.

As you may know, Speaker, the number of seniors in Ontario is growing, and it has consistently been higher than the Canadian average. Further, the Ontario population update, 2009-2036, from the Ontario Ministry of Finance indicates that this number is projected to more than double, from 1.8 million in 2009 to 4.2 million by 2036. For reference, Speaker, that would constitute nearly 25% of the population here in Ontario.

I would submit that there is both an opportunity and a duty to transform our long-term-care system to meet the needs of the growing and aging population that I just highlighted. More must be done to help Ontario's long-term-care homes evolve to meet the changing needs and growth across the province. These changes must include the requirement for long-term-care homes to report all critical incidents, injuries necessitating hospitalization and other environmental hazards to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, this is especially true if the care, safety or well-being of residents has been or could be affected in the future. Increased oversight in these areas will help to ensure that residents are receiving the care, support and protection they need and deserve in long-term-care homes; and additionally, further staff training that focuses on improving the safety of residents, abuse prevention and advancing the quality of care for seniors with specialized care needs.

In closing, the contributions that seniors have made to society in Ontario must be respected, now and into the future. Without the implementation of the measures stipulated in the motion, and the flexibility to implement all of the recommendations, long-term-care homes are going to increasingly turn into institutions, not the homes our seniors deserve. We owe them no less.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise as the member for London West to speak strongly in support of the motion that was brought forward by my colleague the member for London-Fanshawe.

I'm also speaking as the women's issues critic for the NDP, because I think we all have to recognize that the quality of care in our long-term-care system is very much a women's issue. You walk into any long-term-care home in this province, and you will see that the residents of long-term-care homes are overwhelmingly women, especially the most frail residents. You look at the workforce—the PSWs, the RPNs and the RNs who are providing the care for these vulnerable residents—and they are also overwhelmingly women, and they are feeling incredibly stressed out. They are experiencing burnout, to a degree that they have never experienced before in their working lives, because of the challenges of working within the system.

Then you look at the caregivers, the family members who are reorganizing their work. They are moving from full-time to part-time. They are quitting their jobs

altogether so that they can go in and help feed their loved one. They end up helping out around the long-term-care facility. And who are these caregivers? Who bears, disproportionately, the burden of care? It is women in this province. This is one of the reasons why we need to broaden the scope of this inquiry into the long-term-care system.

I want to reiterate what was said by our leader and the member who brought forward the motion: There is no question that the New Democrats unequivocally support an inquiry into the Wettlaufer murders; we have to get to the bottom of what happened there. But we also have to take a much broader systemic look at the needs of our system, the challenges of our system, and the safety of the most vulnerable people who reside within our long-term-care homes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: As the long-term-care, seniors and accessibility critic for our PC caucus, I'd like to extend a welcome to all of our guests and condolences to all of the families and loved ones involved in the tragic deaths of the Wettlaufer case, on behalf of Patrick Brown and all of my colleagues.

I support the member from London-Fanshawe's resolution. Seniors deserve dignified, safe, quality care. No senior, or their loved ones, should ever worry that their health and safety may be at risk.

Sadly, this government isn't doing its job, which is to protect seniors in care. In fact, they're not even enforcing the law, the Long-Term Care Homes Act, to the full extent. Madam Speaker, they have neglected this file for so long that, after 14 years in power, they have left the system in shambles: 26,000 seniors waiting for a bed, and no new beds being added to increase capacity, despite knowing that the wait-list will double to 50,000 by 2021. This, sadly, is the Liberal record on long-term care.

I'd like to acknowledge my colleague Ernie Hardeman from Oxford and all of the great work he has done on this case to make sure that it was brought to the forefront, to ensure that an inquiry was called and investigated fully, so that we can prevent these in the future.

Madam Speaker, we have harrowing, gut-wrenching stories from victims and their families that this government has abandoned. I've been speaking with families of victims in Ottawa's long-term-care homes and with families across our great province who are suffering in the same capacity. Do you know what each one asked, Madam Speaker? "Why is the minister not enforcing the law to the full extent to protect seniors in long-term care?"

1510

The protections are there. They're enshrined in the Long-Term Care Homes Act—enforcement tools like licence suspensions, financial penalties and duty to report—yet families and advocates are telling us that protections of seniors in care are declining because this government is turning their eye; they're shunning the law. This government is neither enforcing the long-term

care act to the full extent nor acting on the hundreds of recommendations that were a blueprint for change to protect seniors.

As an example, the government has only implemented some 30% of the 2005 Casa Verde inquest into murders in long-term care. Since 2005, only 30% implemented: What could we perhaps have avoided had all of those recommendations been implemented? That's the concern, that another one is going to take two years. What happens in the two years intervening? Our party, as soon as it happened, said, "Yes, an inquiry is okay, but what we want is to see action today to prevent one more person from suffering."

They ignored the rest of these recommendations, just as they have ignored hundreds of other recommendations from the Shirlee Sharkey and Gail Donner reports and the Auditor General's reports. They ignored hundreds of recommendations from the multiple task forces, inquiries and reports over the last 14 years. Those are all actions that could have been put in place.

As a result, life for seniors in long-term care is getting harder and more tragic as, sadly, cases of vile abuse, neglect and sexual assault persist. What's more, their failure to enforce the law 100% strikes at the core of their commitment to fully protect our most vulnerable citizens.

What's their self-prophesized fairness principle when we're hearing and reading horrific stories time and time again?

I'm going to challenge the health minister: I will work with you to protect our seniors in this province, but I'm going to ask you first to start enforcing the law. You have the abilities and you have the tools—your government, not just you. Your entire government has to wear this, has to step up and do the right thing.

I respectfully remind you that the health minister admitted that this Liberal government has not been enforcing the law this morning in my question to you. You said you would get to 100%. That's not acceptable, Minister. It has to be today. Not one more person should be in fear of having these types of things happen to their loved ones. The person in that bed should never have to suffer through this.

At the end of the day, another inquiry is good. Yes, we need it, and I applaud you for pushing it and for expanding the scope to ensure it, but what we really want is to see action. We want to ensure that we have the actions in place that will never allow something like the Wettlaufer case to happen. She was fired from one place and was able to be hired somewhere else. I believe, and I've said on record a number of times, that there could have been actions put in place immediately to stop this so that it could never happen again. I want to see this.

Ontarians deserve to have the best standard of care possible for Ontario's vulnerable senior population today. They can't afford to wait.

Minister, please, today, start enacting the legislation to the full extent, the 100%, today. Don't wait for another study. Don't wait for the inquiry to be done. I know you are genuine and you want to make a difference. Please do

that today so that all of our seniors have the respect and dignity that they deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, support my colleague's request for expanding this inquiry.

I will try to put it in a very simple perspective: In our long-term-care homes, we have 78,000 of what I would call a captive group of very, very vulnerable people. We know—we all know—that things are going on right now in our long-term-care homes that are worrisome. Things are going on in our long-term-care homes that should never happen to anyone: lack of respect, lack of dignity, lack of basic care.

When those people—most of them are not able to come forward by themselves. When their family members reach out to us to tell us what goes on, the next thing they say, after crying and crying, is, "But I don't want anybody to know," because if we put in a complaint, then the home that they depend on will take it out against their loved one.

You have a perfect storm, where we know bad things are happening in our long-term-care homes—don't get me wrong; wonderful things are also happening in our long-term-care homes that we should be proud of, but really bad things are happening in some of the homes. They make the front page of the Sudbury Star, I can tell you, and of most of the papers.

This has to change. We have an opportunity right here, right now, to look into this, to look into something that we know is happening, but it is almost impossible to do that because of the vulnerability of the people who live in our long-term-care homes. When their family members—and they're here today—try to advocate for them, they are banned, there are restriction orders put against them, they are put down and then they can't speak and they worry even more.

We have an opportunity to go have a look. Let's take it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Of course, the member London–Fanshawe has brought forward this expansion of the inquiry. It is so needed. As we have been knocking on doors this summer, I can tell you that the predominant emotion at the door from residents in Kitchener–Waterloo has been fear. If you're a young person, you have a personal experience with a grandparent in a home. If you are my age, you are worried about your own parents and what the plan is, because there are 30,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care.

If you are elderly, you actually have genuine stress about what is in your future and what your future will look like. They're quick to sign the petition, because they say to me that if the government is going to spend two years looking at this issue—even though you have reports that you have not acted upon right now—and all that time and money, let's get it right. It's a reasonable,

rational request. It is. It will affect every Ontarian one day, and every MPP in this place understands that.

I can tell you that the biggest issue I see is the corporatization of long-term care. The profit agenda is driving the services in our long-term care. It is undermining the quality of quality of care, because there really is no money. If you are doing your job in a long-term-care facility, that means it's time, and time costs money, with nurses, with PSWs.

I must tell you that if you don't do this, an NDP government—and I hope it happens—will expand the scope of this public inquiry to investigate the systemic problems in long-term care. We will do it within 100 days of forming government. We will get to the bottom of the problems in long-term care and we will do something about them. The families here today and the thousands of families across Ontario deserve nothing less. Please.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from London—Fanshawe to wrap up.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Before I wrap up, I want to thank the staff that helped, of course, work on this private member's motion with me: my London staff in general, and Theresa Kiefer; the staff at Queen's Park, Michelle Steele and Ryan English; all my colleagues here in staff caucus at Queen's Park; and also my NDP caucus members, who have supported and helped me make this motion possible. So I want to extend my thank-yous to everyone who made this a wonderful journey. Of course, the topic is not something that we ever wanted to have to put in the forefront and make sure that we're pushing a government to do something like this.

As you saw, this is a very sensitive topic here. When you talk about health care, when you talk about vulnerability, seniors and children, those kinds of topics, people become very passionate. Our pleas on this side of the House are because we want to see long-term-care issues solved. We want to find those problems and we want them fixed.

I understand, Minister, what your mandate is in the public inquiry, but if you read it, it is not broad enough. I want to support you. I want to support you in doing the right thing. I want to support you in any way we can on this side of the House, and that means working together with you to get to the problems so that families like the ones here today get answers. They deserve answers. They deserve closure.

Everyone who has a loved one that's coming up into a long-term-care home deserves to have that confidence rebuilt, that when they have a decision to make, their loved ones are going to live with respect and dignity, have safe, quality care, and that there is going to be the right level of staffing to help them get up in the morning, go to bed at night and get their meals.

That's what we are asking, Minister. I would be so proud if you would actually expand that. I don't even want credit—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

1520

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PTSD BENEFITS), 2017
LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(PRESTATIONS POUR ÉTAT DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Mr. Natyshak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to expand the entitlement to benefits under the insurance plan for posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail pour élargir le droit à des prestations pour un état de stress post-traumatique dans le cadre du régime d'assurance.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thanks to all of my colleagues who are in the House for this debate today.

I also want to begin by thanking those who are in attendance in the gallery today, and who have been instrumental in pushing this bill forward and many others that have come before it. I'll quickly read them off: Danielle Du Sablon, Scott McIntyre; Chris Hoffman, who is the vice-president of the OPP Association; Monte Vieselmeyer, Stephen Reid, Chris Watson, Lawrence Walter, Leslie Codsí, Johnathon Martin, Dawn Smith, Danielle Latulippe-Larmand, Priya Bates, Ken Marciniak, Chris Jackel and Greg Arnold. These are just a handful of folks in our community safety and corrections universe who have stood for a long time with their colleagues in advocating and demanding that this government support their colleagues when it comes time to address post-traumatic stress disorder and the conditions that bring that about in a person's workplace.

I want to also thank two of my colleagues specifically: the one sitting right in front of me, Cheri DiNovo, from Parkdale—High Park; and my predecessor on the file, Jen French, from Oshawa. Speaker, they both, in tandem, have advocated for the changes that you will hear about today, for a long time and in various incarnations through this House. They are relentless. They understand the issue. I think they've done a tremendous amount of work to bring us to where we are today, which is a point in time where I hope this House finally expands the definition and the scope of those who are covered under presumptive PTSD legislation.

What I'm going to do, for the benefit of the members in the House—and I'm sure you have heard it over years

and years—is go through the who, the what, the where, the why and the how, to get rid of any questions that may remain as to why this bill is so desperately necessary in our province.

The “who” are those who were left out of the original bill, Bill 163, that expanded post-traumatic stress disorder benefits and presumptive benefits to those first responders in policing, and to our firefighters and paramedics. There was a subset of that group who were explicitly removed or explicitly not put into the original bill.

At that time, Speaker—you can go back into the Hansard and check—we advocated at committee to bring these folks that you’ll hear about today into the fold, because we know that they are exposed to the exact same incidents and trauma in their day-to-day routines that everyone else is.

This is an opportunity for us in this House to right a wrong, to correct an injustice. It doesn’t happen very often that we get a second chance to do that, so I implore my colleagues to take this opportunity to do the right thing and support this bill.

Those who will be covered under the bill today, through its expansion, are those in our probation and parole sectors; nurses; police services personnel, including special investigators and bailiffs; and others who were excluded.

I’m not certain why they were excluded to begin with, but I can only imagine that this government is precluded to baby steps instead of going the full way and doing the right thing the first time.

Here we are, as New Democrats—anyone who has watched the debate throughout the afternoon has heard three separate bills where New Democrats have proposed how to do the right thing and have pushed on how to do the right thing. At a time when folks in our communities are asking for action, we are right here doing it. This is action in motion.

A couple of facts for the benefit of members: 30% of the 154 probation officers in Ontario who were surveyed have been exposed to four or more primary traumatic events throughout the course of their work. Of those officers, 10% were assaulted, 69% were threatened and 19% received death threats.

Bill 163, of course, excludes the segments that I am including in this bill today, covering predominantly female occupations in health care, such as nurses. It provides entitlements solely for first responders and male-predominant occupations. That was Bill 163. We can remedy that today. We can ensure that there is protection in these sectors, which is so desperately needed.

We have to look at other jurisdictions around the country. In Manitoba, Bill 35 is called the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, and it includes probation and parole officers. It actually covers everyone; that’s a step that we put forward as New Democrats, which was denied at the committee stage throughout various incarnations of this bill.

In crafting the bill, I relied heavily on the testimony of those who presented at committee during Bill 163, and I’m going to refer to a couple of them right now. If you ever wanted to know why we needed to do this bill, it’s right here in that testimony. I can’t believe that at that moment, those members who were in the committee who voted against the expansion did so. I don’t know what your marching orders were at that time, but after hearing and reading this testimony, you can’t help but understand the effects that traumatic incidents have on people. It affects their family life, it affects their psyche, it is a trigger to other mental health issues and it affects their financial status.

These are things that we are obligated in this House to ensure that we protect, when we ask our first responders to do the work that no one else could do and to see the things that none of us in this House wish to see. When we ask the best of us to protect the rest of us, then it is our obligation to ensure that we do everything that we can, so that they go home with peace of mind and support, should they come into mental health distress. That’s what today’s bill is all about.

From Erna Bujna of the Ontario Nurses’ Association: “While ONA supports the government’s efforts to move forward with presumptive legislation for post-traumatic stress disorder ... ONA must express our disappointment with the government for excluding front-line nurses from coverage under Bill 163.” Right out from the outset, we heard that people on our front lines in our health care sector couldn’t imagine that they would have been excluded—and why? Why would they have been excluded, Speaker?

Here’s an example—unfortunately you’re going to have to hear some of the details—of some of the incidents we see in health care system: “One nurse had her finger amputated in a violent assault by a patient. Another nurse, screaming for help, was dragged from the hospital, out toward busy Toronto oncoming traffic, only to be saved by construction workers who heard her screams for help over their jackhammers.” Those are called code whites, Speaker. If you can imagine, the nurse who was assaulted in that incident applied for PTSD support through WSIB and was denied.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Shame.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Shame.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is a shame.

There are other examples. A nurse was essentially kidnapped and held in a room by a patient obviously suffering mental distress and, locked in the room, was told by that person that they were going to take their clothes off, they were going to rape them and then they were going to kill them. They began by taking their clothes off. They began that process. They were going to beat them to death. That nurse’s colleagues could not enter that room. Fortunately, someone did break into the room and intervened. That nurse never returned to work. There is no way we can expect anyone to be inflicted with that type of trauma and to return to a regular

workload. But despite those challenges, some often do. Some are able to overcome the stresses of life.

1530

We heard from Danielle, who is here today. I want to thank Danielle for being here today. Thank you so much for your advocacy.

Danielle talks about those in probation and parole, dealing with violent sex offenders, having been threatened, having been followed, having to deal with people that obviously are, you know, without hope, day after day, and being able to overcome that but actually feeling fortunate, actually feeling that she's a fortunate one to have not yet succumbed to what could be PTSD symptoms. But she understands that for the sake of her colleagues, this has to be here.

The supports that are currently offered within the ministry of corrections are inadequate. They aren't there. They are often required to be triggered by management, who don't feel as though they need to do that. The workloads that probation and parole officers are currently under are unmanageable. This provides stress not only in their daily working lives but in their family lives, compounded by the nature of that work, Speaker, the fact that you are dealing with essentially the worst of the worst of society, day in and day out. We are asking them to do that without the protection of acknowledging that they are vulnerable to mental health issues.

This bill will provide that protection, will ensure that we won't—we can't—question whether that trauma of those crises that they deal with, each and every day—that we will never question that that was incurred under work, because we asked them to do that. We asked them to be brave in the face of so much tragedy each and every day. It is a simple step for us in this House to make that step. It will take some courage on the part of the government to do so after years of neglecting, but here's another opportunity to do the right thing and to extend those benefits to those who support us each and every day in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I am pleased to rise today to speak on this important issue. I think that "There is no health that does not include mental health" is what the minister said, and I could not agree more. Indeed, I think one of the big tragedies of compensation in Ontario and elsewhere in the world has been the inability of adjudicators, of claim adjusters to recognize mental illness for what it is.

I have to say that in my own work, prior to being in politics, we had created at the university a centre for workers' health. Indeed, one of the key issues was the way in which workers' health, including mental health, was undervalued and taken for granted. Certainly, I think the issue that is in front of us today speaks to a change in the system that is absolutely required, so that we have adjudicators who recognize for all workers that exposure to trauma deserves to be compensated. In my view, this is the starting point.

For many years, and it's still coming, there continues to be an inability to recognize what mental health is and how it's important and necessary to continue to work. So all work has to be here to make mental illness visible, recognizable, curable and compensated. WSIB has a duty to protect all workers and ensure their health, and compensate them when they have suffered illness at work. I am pleased to see that we have now moved, finally, after many years, to recognize that chronic mental illness must be compensated. All workers should never shy away from acknowledging, recognizing and seeking help when their work makes them sick, whether it's psychologically or physically.

PTSD is a pernicious form of mental illness which is caused by exposure to a traumatic event or a series of traumatic events or a series of traumas in the workplace. It can also be experienced by people in their personal lives. In my own work for survivors of sexual violence, I had the occasion to meet many women who had experienced PTSD. We know—it's quite documented—the way in which PTSD is experienced for long periods of time. It triggers a flashback; people can't sleep; they are unable to attend to their day-to-day life because of the trauma they have suffered.

This, I think, must be an occasion to continue to speak to the way in which all adjudicators and all the mental health system, as well as the legal system, must recognize the enormity of what PTSD is, and recognize the symptoms and the necessity that we continue to compensate it well.

Many workers experience PTSD. It's caused by incidents at work. Certainly, I've met many nurses, probation officers, but also, when we look at the way in which we attended at the workers' health clinic, teachers who have been exposed to violence from their students. I had the case of a construction worker whose co-worker had died, and servers in restaurants who witnessed a serious accident and increased violence. We know that this is an issue that must be addressed generally by the WSIB.

My commitment is that maybe we can continue to expand the list, but we should not shy away from demanding that the WSIB train their adjudicators better to actually recognize mental illness for what it is, the complexity in which it is experienced, and ensure that all workers are treated very fairly.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Five minutes.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: What?

Mr. Arthur Potts: You're done.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm done? Okay.

I just wanted to thank the advocates who continue to be at the forefront of ensuring that mental illness in all its forms is well recognized. I think we need to continue to salute your work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I first wanted to recognize that post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, is a serious and debilitating condition. I'm pleased to support this legis-

lation, just as all of us here, in fact, supported legislation to help provide faster access for first responders to resources and treatment of PTSD—albeit I did question the government at the time about why no money was announced to support this change. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has a very positive and constructive relationship with our first responders. Our party understands and appreciates the work they do, and this is why we will continue to stand up and support them.

It's also important to recognize that PTSD is a mental health issue, to actually recognize that people truly are suffering and, more importantly, that they receive timely access to care.

Consider what the numbers show us. In 2015, we had as many as 40 emergency workers and 12 military personnel in Canada die by suicide. There was also an investigation by the *Globe and Mail* that found that 31 Afghanistan war veterans had killed themselves since returning to home, and that the Armed Forces have struggled to cope with the number of soldiers who are dealing with serious and debilitating mental health challenges.

I recently had the honour of meeting one of them, and I'm going to share his story. I met Bojan Joksimovic at a riding event, where he gave an amazing soldier's perspective. Bojan is currently serving as a sergeant in the 2nd regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, at the Meaford army base in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. But his personal story began in Sarajevo, where Bojan was born and where he lived through the Bosnian war, until he fled in 1994. He then went on to study criminology at Yukon College and enlisted in the Armed Forces, and, as an artillery man, he has since served Canada in three tours to Afghanistan, including Operation Medusa in 2006.

While Sergeant Joksimovic survived the Bosnian war as a child and survived Afghanistan, he said he returned to Canada with post-traumatic stress disorder. His message is, "Most people I know are hiding; they feel ashamed and guilty because they're battling mental health issues. I want people to feel free to talk about mental health, to fight the fear and stigma attached to it. Fighting this stigma helps those suffering from PTSD feel better."

He was speaking to the Sauble-Amabel men's club that night, to a couple of hundred retired gentlemen. I have to share with you, it touched me to know that someone would stand up and do this. The bravery it took to stand in front of those people and show that he was suffering from PTSD, from mental illness, stuck with me.

1540

We talked about it this morning in some of the debate about mental health. We still always look for that physical ailment that we can see, and we want to do something with that. But a mental health illness, where we can't see, where we can't put our hands on it, is much tougher for us to diagnose in many cases, or to believe, perhaps. But it is there. If you talk to the people—many people in all of our ridings come to us with these types of cases and

plead their story with us. What we want to ensure is that we have the resources there.

Madam Speaker, it's why, time and time again, you will hear me in this House deplore the waste and mismanagement of other resources. When people come into my office and are pleading for help, when they're pleading for mental health resources, access, someone to listen, someone to give them some help—oftentimes there isn't, because there isn't the money in the budget, because of that waste.

When I hear of things like gas plants and \$2 billion, or eHealth or Ornge ambulance—that colossal waste of resources that could go into not just PTSD but all of mental health. We have talked about it a lot in here today, the mental health issue. Those resources are not there. They're not there at the front line for people to be able to do that. Then that expands itself on to the caregivers, the family members, the loved ones and the friends of those people that are suffering. It becomes exponential, the challenge to society because of that.

I think legislation like this helps to raise the profile. It ensures that we are paying attention. We have to, all of us, work together to find ways to put more resources into things like PTSD.

It's important to remember that PTSD can be prevented and it can be mitigated, but you need the right supports and treatments, and timely access to those is so critical.

We hear, time and again, how long it takes for people to get in. If you are in a situation—for many of the people who have come through my constituency office, you can't put things off for two months and six months on a waiting list. If you're suffering from mental health issues and you actually had the courage to reach up and say, "I need help," I can't fathom that the message you get on the other end is, "It will be a six-month wait, and we'll do our best to get you in."

We have to ensure that resources are there. We have to ensure that every single one of us in this House forgets about the partisan stuff; that we do the right things with our budget; that we put priorities on resources for things like mental health; that we ensure that people have timely access to care; that when people do reach out to us—in our capacity as leaders in our community who have had the privilege and the honour to have been sent here—that when we look at legislation, we're putting that as the paramount thought process; that we always put people and the outcomes and the front-line resources and care as our first priority; and that we don't caught up in all of the other stuff that sometimes happens in politics. We need to give people like Bojan the hope and the belief that we are truly here to do the honourable thing, that we're going to put legislation in place that puts people first, that puts people and their families and the care that they require first and foremost in everything we do.

I go back again: Yes, we passed in this House—almost unanimously, I believe—the PTSD bill many months ago, but there was nothing in the budget that was specific to this. So then you start to challenge and say, "Are they

really going to do this?" The people like Bojan step back and say, "Is this really going to be a reality, or was it just a headline in a newspaper or on the radio at some point?"

Madam Speaker, this is good legislation we need to push for. We need to let the people who are suffering from PTSD know that we're aware of it and that we are prepared to stand up in unison and do something about it.

I want to publicly thank Bojan for sharing his harrowing story, for championing awareness, for pushing to end the stigma surrounding PTSD, and for literally doing all he can to help walk people back from that very edge of darkness—and, frankly, all of the people who are brave in the same way, who step up and tell their stories so that we raise the awareness and we don't hide behind stigma.

The best thing that we can all do, if someone even looks like they're reaching out for help, is to lend an ear, to give them a shoulder, and to say that we will do something to try to help them in their journey.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I want to commend the member from Essex for keeping up the fight. I want to talk a little bit about the ideology of his bill.

Some 10 years ago, a young woman named Shannon Bertrand, a young paramedic, came into my constituency office and talked about her troubles getting WSIB coverage for PTSD. There was no presumptive diagnosis, and that's what this bill was about at that time. There was no presumptive assumption at WSIB that because you were a first responder, you would get coverage, of course. So we tabled the bill for the first time, probably about nine years ago now.

I tabled that bill five times. The first bill was for all workers, and it was very clear that the government would not support it. There was no support from the government side for all workers.

So we dialed it back to first responders, where it was critically clear that they were going into war zones every day: paramedics, firefighters, police. Then, the next iteration of the bill was for them. The next four iterations of the bill were for them. Two second readings, and still the government did not act. I have to say that in that period of time, there were multiple suicides of folks who had PTSD, multiple suicides that could have been prevented if the government had acted.

Here we are now—11 years I've been in this House—some 10 years after Shannon first walked into my office, and we're still talking about it. We're still talking about expanding the definition to cover workers who go into danger zones every day on our behalf. That is shameful and that is shocking, Madam Speaker, that we still have to bring in a bill like this.

So, commendations to the member from Essex for doing this. Absolutely, we need to extend the coverage. You know that as New Democrats, we have always fought for that from the very beginning, and at committee we have always fought for an expanded coverage where PTSD coverage is concerned.

I don't know what the hesitation is, because—in contrast to my colleague who just spoke—it's not a question of money. It's not a question of money. It's a question of political will, because there is no extra money involved here, really, for this government. For WSIB, yes. You heard about the adjudicator issue, but that's not the issue. The issue is political will here, to just make it so, to just do the right thing.

Again, we ask folk to bear the brunt of all of this for us. These are folk who we ask to go into danger zones, to deal with dangerous people on our behalf, because we don't. It is absolutely imperative that we protect them when they do that. You know that some of them will come down with PTSD, and there is no way of screening in advance for who those people will be, Madam Speaker.

So when someone does come down with PTSD, we have to protect them and we have to treat them. It's very simple. Why can't we do it? Why has it taken a decade? I don't know. Do it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm sorry about Arnold; we lost a great man there.

I want to thank the member from Essex for his bill. I think it's a sincere effort try to help workers who work in vulnerable situations.

The member from Parkdale–High Park was mentioning her frustration with some bills. I've been here for a few years. I can remember when I brought forth a bill to have red-light cameras at killer intersections. I think it took me 15 years to get that legislation, 15 years to put red-light cameras at intersections.

For the last number of years, we've been working on getting recognition for the 100,000 women in Ontario who suffer pregnancy loss. Some 100,000 women every year suffer pregnancy loss, stillbirths or early childhood death. We've been trying to get help for them. We did make a breakthrough with Bill 141, but there's still more work to do.

Good things seem so easy sometimes, but they are never that easy. That's been my experience. And this is a good thing. We should be looking at expanding it. I think someone mentioned construction workers. They're the number one group that suffers death in the workplace: construction workers. People think, "Oh, it's another statistic." All the co-workers who see that happen have to go back to work—or the first responders there, their co-workers. Teachers: the violence in schools that teachers witness on a regular basis in some of our more challenging schools. These are some of the other areas we should be looking at.

1550

Thanks to Cheri DiNovo and her persistence, we did get to pass quite a fundamental change, Bill 163, with the work of the Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn, who did pass the first responders' bill. We covered full-time firefighters, part-time firefighters, volunteer firefighters, fire investigators, police officers, members of emergency response teams, paramedics, emergency medical attend-

ants, ambulance service managers, workers in correctional institutions, workers in places of secure custody or secure temporary detention, and workers involved in dispatch.

Prior to this legislation, it was a real struggle—almost double jeopardy—for a first responder trying to deal with their mental challenges, you might call them, and then deal with the WSIB or their employer. As of this act, in Bill 163, we've made a huge breakthrough. Can we expand it? There is no doubt that there needs to be a continued look at this expansion. There's no doubt about it. But let's make sure that we don't expand it to certain groups and then leave other groups out.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Like you're doing in Bill 148.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, Bill 148. Why did the NDP not support Bill 148, the breakthrough legislation for minimum wage, in the first-reading committee? The NDP did not vote for the bill.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We haven't voted on it yet.

Mr. Mike Colle: You did have a vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Member from Eglinton–Lawrence, you know the rules: When I stand, you sit.

I've already warned people. The next time I stand, somebody is going to be warned, okay? I'm not going to stand again. The next time I stand, somebody is going to be warned, if not named. It's five to 4; it's never too early and never too late.

I return to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Getting back to this bill, before I was interrupted with the sort of double standard the NDP sometimes have—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Sometimes they have a double standard.

The fact is that we, as a government, passed a bill that made a major breakthrough. As I said, this is a bill asking to do more, and I think those of us here are saying that the government is willing to look at it, to do more.

The funny thing is that I hear the Tories talking about, "Well, we've got to do this." At the end of the last session—private members' bills are usually agreed upon to go through by each side. We all pick a couple. The Conservatives, last time, didn't want any bills to go forward. They said, "No. No private members' bills." So they can stand up here and talk about this private member's bill, but there was no private member's bill that went forward in the last session. Perhaps we should get the Tories to stop talking about cutting taxes to solve all the problems, and investing in people, investing in programs and not cutting. You can't have it both ways, to cut taxes and then have programs.

To employ this kind of initiative, you need tax dollars to make sure that there are good people hired in government at the Ministry of Labour, that there are good inspectors. That is what tax dollars do. You can't say,

"Well, we're going to cut this and cut that, and still give you all these services." It doesn't happen.

With this initiative here, in this bill, we think that there's a lot of merit here, looking at these suggestions. I hope it does go to committee. I hope there are good deputations, discussions and reports, whereby there can be a thorough examination of the proposals put forward by the member from Essex. That is what private members' bills are about. It should go to committee, and let's see. Stakeholders come out, and the general public is invited to come out and participate and listen. There needs to be that dialogue with the public, because you can't do this unless the public is involved, because these affect a lot of different people in all different walks of life. So we need to go to committee and perhaps pass a private member's bill this session, not like last time, when the Tories blocked it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today and to speak on this private member's bill, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to expand the entitlement to benefits under the insurance plan for posttraumatic stress disorder, brought forward by the member from Essex and the New Democratic Party.

I'm on the social policy committee, and it was actually my committee that heard all the deputations and all the presentations. For people who are maybe watching at home and don't understand how things work here, when we debate bills, we have what we call second reading, but really it's our first debate. Then it goes to the committee, and a lot of these sorts of bills that affect people's everyday lives tend to go to the committee on social policy, on which I sit.

We heard a bill last year. It was Bill 163, I believe. It dealt with allowing post-traumatic stress disorder for firefighters and police and first responders. We heard a lot of deputations from people from other groups who felt very excluded. One of them was from the Ontario Nurses' Association: Ms. Erna Bujna.

I'm just going to read exactly what she said. Part of her testimony was, "Thank you, and good afternoon. I'm ... a health and safety worker's compensation specialist for the past 16 years at the Ontario Nurses' Association...."

"ONA is Canada's largest nursing union, representing 60,000 registered nurses, RNs, and allied health professionals, as well as more than 14,000 nursing student affiliates providing quality patient care each and every day across the health care sector.

"While ONA supports the government's efforts to move forward with presumptive legislation for post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, ONA must express our disappointment with the government for excluding front-line nurses from coverage under Bill 163. This exclusion ignores both the growing experience of nurses with extremely violent and traumatic incidents in their workplace, and the findings in the literature showing that the traumatic experiences that nurses face at work are closely linked with PTSD."

She goes on to talk about Manitoba, which brought in legislation which I believe the member from Essex mentioned is much more comprehensive and includes a lot of other professionals. We heard from probation officers who have been assaulted and threatened; they're not covered under this. We heard from a lot of other occupations: bailiffs, other health care workers and even people who work in forensics.

Madam Speaker, what I want to say is that we need to support those in our communities. We know that there are a lot of overlaps. We were just discussing support for mental health and people in crisis. We need to, I think, move that from long-term care—or chronic health care, I guess, is a better term—to acute.

We all know that if somebody has an emergency and needs to have surgery, they're not put on a waiting list. If somebody is having a heart attack, they're not put on a waiting list. They show up in the emergency room or they're brought to the emergency room and they get care, and we all know that it's great care in the province of Ontario.

The problem comes when something is chronic or not acute. Then, all of a sudden, they're put on a waiting list in the province of Ontario. Health care, I think we need to recognize, is an acute problem, and specifically post-traumatic stress disorder.

What happens if a family member has PTSD is that it affects their day-to-day. It affects how they're raising their children. It affects how they interact with their family. It affects how they take care of their elderly parents. And that problem gets passed on and exacerbated down the road.

It's interesting that we're having a debate today on so many mental health problems and different types of problems, because there's so much overlap. I think that the government obviously needs to fund—don't just talk, but actually fund whatever it is that we need to do. But we also need to focus on some prevention and discussion and teaching our students and having the discussion with young children about anxiety and about nightmares and what it means, and not to just ignore it and pretend it doesn't happen.

We've heard of people who have been kidnapped who coped very well with the trauma of it and were luckily able to survive being kidnapped, and we hear of other people being kidnapped who just never regained their same life back or maybe even succumbed to supporting—I think some of us are old enough to remember Patty Hearst. I believe they call it cognitive dissonance where you sort of align yourself with the kidnappers, even, as a way to survive. These all tell us that different people cope in different ways.

1600

We need to look at the people who can't cope in these difficult situations, and what we can do to help them so that they can recognize that they're in a very traumatic situation and what they can do in terms of helping themselves have less emotional trauma and deal with it better. It's not enough just to give them the support when

they have a problem. We need to also give people the tools to deal with a tough situation when they are faced with a tough situation.

I'm really looking forward to seeing this bill maybe coming to my committee, as I said, and hearing from community members and people with expertise.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to stand in support of this PTSD benefits amendment act brought forward by my colleague from Essex.

Frankly, this bill should not be necessary because we should have ensured that all first responders and front-line crisis workers were covered by Bill 163. The member from Parkdale–High Park first introduced a PTSD benefits bill that included all workers, as we have heard, about eight years ago. So let's get this done and let's get people the help that they need to heal.

The government finally extended presumptive coverage to many of our first responders in Ontario. Great. But many others who work in highly stressful, dangerous and potentially traumatizing situations, who didn't meet some arbitrary government standard for inclusion, were left out.

I want to thank the many first responders and crisis responders who have been denied coverage, first by WSIB, then by their government, then told to get back in line for WSIB just so they can be denied again, but who have continued to advocate for themselves and others. We have already recognized them, but I really appreciate seeing them here again today. Thank you for your presentations at committee. Thank you for your letters. Your pain and torment and journeys are heartbreaking, and some of them horrifying. We just have a few minutes, so I can't share those stories, but because you already have, time and time again, we'll let the record stand.

This government declares nurses to be first responders on First Responders Day, but hasn't followed through when it comes to PTSD coverage. At committee, first-hand accounts of traumatic events shook all of us up. But it shakes me up that nurses have to come to defend their work and beg for their health from this government who, like WSIB, denies their appeals. Let's cover them.

Bailiffs were left out. They are critical incident stress managers, ICIT members and incident negotiators. In order to even become a bailiff, first you must be an experienced correctional officer. You shouldn't be able to have two correctional staff working the same traumatic incident, with one covered and one left out in the cold. Let's cover them.

The OPPA and the PAO advocated for special constables at committee: "Exposure to trauma and its effects is not an issue faced only by police officers. We must ensure that no one who commits their career to public service in the policing field is made to suffer as a result." Let's cover them.

Another group that must be included is probation and parole officers. Legislation should support those who need it most. Their employer, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, collects that data. They know that this group of peace officers needs to be included under this PTSD presumption.

I heard from a 10-year probation and parole officer whose world came crashing down in 2011, and a WSIB claim was submitted by the ministry. As she said, “I was denied. When I called to ask why I was denied, the woman stated, based on her checklist, I did not have a workplace injury. I asked her if she was a mental health professional to make that determination, and she stated she was not and I was denied based on a checklist. I did not appeal.”

This should not be the process. This government and its checklist team shouldn't be allowed to deny or further traumatize our first responders and front-line crisis workers. They look after us; we need to look after them. Support this bill and let's cover them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from Essex for bringing forward this important issue in such a timely way. I want to welcome our guests today, in particular my friends and former colleagues from ONA. As many of you know, I am a registered nurse—as are you, Speaker. I'm not practising at this moment, but I have a couple of stories to tell about a day in the life of a nurse from my time with ONA and from my time practising.

An incident in early 2000, when I was working for the Ontario Nurses' Association, at Greater Niagara General Hospital: a hostage-taking on an in-patient psychiatric unit, where the staff were held hostage for a number of hours. I represented a nurse there many times over the years who was on WSIB benefits and who was repeatedly re-victimized when she had to endure new psychiatric assessments and relive the trauma of that day in order to not have her benefits cut off—all the more reason we need PTSD coverage for nurses. This nurse eventually was awarded permanent benefits, but it probably took about 15 years. I'm sure she may even be retired today.

Imagine responding to a code in the emergency department of a smaller community hospital where a couple of ICU nurses also go down to assist in emergency for that code. It's a cardiac arrest. You are there, you are defibrillating a patient, you are doing CPR, you may be administering medications to try to save the life of this person, and you're not successful. At the end of the day, you find out that that was actually your father-in-law you were working on. That is a true story. So imagine the trauma from that event—trying to save somebody and finding out it was your father-in-law.

Some of the PTSD is very insidious. Imagine working in an oncology unit or an in-patient or outpatient clinic, knowing that many or most of the patients you're treating today might not be there when you come back for your next shift, or they might not be back for their next

oncology treatment—they won't survive—and experiencing that loss day in and day out, over and over and over again. Or imagine working in a small community, perhaps somewhere in the north like Sudbury or in some of the other smaller communities across this province, where you know every patient who comes into your hospital. They are your friends, they are your family members, they are your friends' kids, and you're looking after these people, and they die. If you experience a death in your own family, you know how long it takes you to get over that loss. Imagine being a nurse in a community where you know everybody. Every time somebody dies, you are once again experiencing that kind of loss and trying to deal with it. It wears on you, Speaker, over the years, so nurses need to be covered.

The government had the opportunity to do the right thing the first time around. The NDP put forward many amendments to try to have nurses, probation, parole and bailiffs included—everyone who was excluded—and the government voted down each and every one of those amendments. This time, we are giving the government another chance to do the right thing. We hope you do. We know the people who are here with us today know that it's the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mes commentaires vont être très courts. Quand on parle du trouble de stress post-traumatique, on parle de santé mentale. Je voudrais vous dire que la discrimination contre la santé, elle est là. Elle est palpable, puis elle est ici dans notre Assemblée. Pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a des gens qu'on sait très bien sont à risque du trouble de stress post-traumatique, mais parce qu'ils sont dans un groupe d'emplois plutôt qu'un autre, ils ne seront pas couverts?

On parle ici d'une politique qui ne coûte rien aux contributeurs de taxes. On sait tous que c'est une agence qui est autofinancée, mais encore on voit un gouvernement qui est prêt à dire aux infirmières et infirmiers : « Oui, on comprend que vous êtes exposés à ce genre de trauma, mais si vous avez besoin de compensation, par exemple, vous n'y aurez pas droit. » Ça n'a aucun sens. Il faut arrêter la discrimination contre les problèmes de santé mentale, puis il faut s'assurer que tout le monde qui fait face au trouble de stress post-traumatique ait droit à la compensation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'll return to the member from Essex to wrap up.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my colleagues from Ottawa–Vanier, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Parkdale–High Park, Oshawa, Eglinton–Lawrence, Thornhill, Welland and Nickel Belt—merci, Madame.

The member from Parkdale–High Park gave me some chills in thinking about the potential fate of this bill in that, if we look at the history of other incarnations of the same bill, it's taken a decade to get to what could have been done 10 years ago. I'm fearful that this bill could receive the same fate, because people will suffer in the meantime. That's not right; it's not just.

1610

I ask the members on the government side, if you are so inclined to support this bill, then do your very best. Do what in fact you are asked to do on behalf of the citizens that you represent, and move this bill forward. Don't try to come up with another example where we missed somebody or let's one-up each other. It's already done for you; the work is done. Save your slot for something else.

Move this thing forward and protect the people who dedicate their lives to protecting us each and every day. The quicker that people can break through the stigma, the quicker that it can be acknowledged that the triggers are there and that the support is there, the quicker they are to potentially heal and return to work. There's an economic case for this too, as well as a humanitarian case.

I implore, again, the members across the way and the government to push this thing forward. Let it see the light of day, bring it to third reading, get it through this House and protect those who do their best each and every day to protect us in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTIONS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
MENTALE ET DES DÉPENDANCES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 64 standing in the name of Madame Gélinas.

Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 149, An Act to establish a Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

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

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

We're going to vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Armstrong has moved private member's notice of motion number 62.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear—okay.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

We're going to vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PTSD BENEFITS), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(PRESTATIONS POUR ÉTAT DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Natyshak has moved second reading of Bill 151, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to expand entitlement to benefits under the insurance plan for posttraumatic stress disorder.

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

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe this will be a recorded vote.

I will be calling in all the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1613 to 1618.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members, please take your seats.

MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTIONS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
MENTALE ET DES DÉPENDANCES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 149.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Martow, Gila
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	McDonell, Jim
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras
Coe, Lorne	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
DiNovo, Cheri	Hillier, Randy	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Horwath, Andrea	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Jones, Sylvia	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Walker, Bill

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Duguid, Brad	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Potts, Arthur
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Qaadri, Shafiq

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 24; the nays are 18.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member: Which committee?

M^{me} France G elinas: I would like to send it to the committee on finance and economic affairs, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agree? Agreed.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Armstrong has moved private member's notice of motion number 62.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Thirty seconds; I'm sorry.

Members please take your seats.

Ms. Armstrong has moved private member's notice of motion number 62.

All those in favour please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Armott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Coe, Lorne
Coteau, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.

Gates, Wayne
G elinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
Leal, Jeff
Mantha, Michael

Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
Natyshak, Taras
Sattler, Peggy
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Colle, Mike
Dhillon, Vic

Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Hoskins, Eric
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina

McMahon, Eleanor
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 18.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Let the door open.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PTSD BENEFITS), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA S ECURIT  PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (PRESTATIONS POUR  TAT DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members, take you seats.

Mr. Natyshak has moved second reading of Bill 151.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Armott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Baker, Yvan
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Coe, Lorne
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Dhillon, Vic
DiNovo, Cheri
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine

Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
G elinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jones, Sylvia
Leal, Jeff
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina

Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
McMahon, Eleanor
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Natyshak, Taras
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sattler, Peggy
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 44; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I am turning to the member from Essex to let us know which committee. The member from Essex, please inform us of the committee?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To regulations and private bills, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? I hear agreed.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I believe we have unanimous consent to revert back to motions to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Albanese is seeking unanimous consent to revert back to motions. Agreed? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that, pursuant to standing order 113(c), the following changes be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills: Mr. MacLaren and Ms. Vernile are added.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Orders of the day.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, I know the great folks of the Peterborough riding are now tuning in to Cogeco cable number 95, because they're so enthralled that we're going to be dealing with government order G142.

CONSTRUCTION LIEN
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PRIVILÈGE DANS L'INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act /
Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège
dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I must say, maybe they're tuning in in the member's riding on Cogeco over in Peterborough—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Channel 95.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Channel 95? I hope we can provide them with an entertaining and informative time while they're watching.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Hillier, they're going to be riveted by your speech right now.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, the minister says that people will be riveted. Let's see what we can do to help that along.

It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, this afternoon. I wanted to offer my critical support for Bill 142 the construction lien act. I want to speak of a few elements of this bill today. First, although the government has addressed some serious problems in the construction industry with Bill 142—and they should be commended for that—I also want to speak about some of the process and some of the context surrounding Bill 142. It's also important, I believe, to illustrate and identify some of the concerns that remain with Bill 142.

1630

I'm going to first start with some context. A bill to address the problem has been introduced to this House on three different occasions. This is the third iteration of a bill to address disputes in the construction industry. Let me also say, Speaker, that our construction industry includes many tens of thousands of tradesmen, many tens of thousands of employers, contractors, builders, owners and developers, and it generally works very, very well. It works very well. Every day in this province, we have tens of thousands of transactions between contractors and owners and developers that go off without a hitch, and where everyone is very satisfied with the outcome.

However, there has been a long-standing problem, and that is when some owners or some contractors don't

pay—when there is, in essence, a dispute. The dispute resolution methods that we have had in this province have not been effective, and therefore the industry has spent much time trying to resolve and find a remedy that will permit these disputes to be resolved effectively. I think we've gotten pretty close to that in Bill 142.

But again, one of the problems that remains, or a problem that has been evident and that I believe still remains, is that at the end of the day, our courts, our civil courts, have not been as effective as they ought to be in helping to resolve disputes within the construction industry. I think you can probably broaden that out to include most disputes that end up going into our courts for resolution. We have seen on many occasions where the process can be misused, sometimes even abused, to lengthen, delay and frustrate the parties from finding a resolution to that dispute. In the grand scheme of things, in the big picture, they are a small element of the construction industry, but it is also very, very important to those contractors and owners and developers that there is a method to resolve.

Let me start with a little bit of this process. I think it's good to contrast the process of Bill 142 with what we have seen in the development of public policy that this government has advanced in other areas. As I said earlier, this is the third time a bill has been introduced into the House to address this problem. It's come under different names. In 2011, it was introduced as the Protecting Contractors Through Prompt Payment Act. That bill died on the order paper when Parliament was prorogued. I believe there was a Premier at the time who decided it best to prorogue Parliament, and the member for Brant's bill for prompt payment died.

The second time the bill was introduced, it was Bill 69. It was the member for Vaughan, the current Minister of Transportation, who introduced, in 2013, a bill called the Prompt Payment Act. It did go through second reading, it did go to committee, but then it never saw the light of day after that. The government never called it forward.

But something important happened, and this is where I want to draw people's attention. The government created an advisory group after that to actually study this problem. I have to commend that expert group who came up with the recommendations striking a balance. They've done a marvellous job.

The point of what I was getting at here is that this bill, for six years now, has been going through the process, and we're very, very close—I think we were at a place where we had a bill that industry was satisfied with, that the members of this Legislature are satisfied with. Although there are some improvements that could be made, it's a good bill.

I want to contrast that with another 15 bills this government has introduced and has time-allocated. There have been 15 bills introduced by this government, in this Parliament alone, that they used time allocation on to prevent debate discussion, to prevent that deliberative, methodical approach to getting legislation right. We've

seen it in other examples; it's not just time allocation, but time allocation is an important one.

My conclusion is this: When we take the time and when we are methodical and deliberative in our approach, we end up with good public policy. We end up with good legislation. Indeed, if we don't do that methodical, deliberative approach in the development of legislation and public policy, the consequence is usually junk legislation. That's why we see so often bills coming back and back and back, and the government amending what they just did, coming in with omnibus bills and budget bills to try to correct what they didn't do right the first time.

We had time allocation on the bill that permitted the privatization of Hydro One. That's a substantial public policy position to take, to divest 60% of Hydro One. That was time-allocated. Surely, when we are talking about an asset worth in the multi-billions of dollars, a public asset, there ought to have been time permitted to investigate and determine the best avenues. But no, it was time-allocated, and the same with a number of bills on the electricity side that have been time-allocated.

We had Bill 41, the patient care bill. Now, what is more important than getting patient care right? We should spend some time so that we understand what is wrong, and understand how the proposals will work and how they will address the problems. But that one was time-allocated.

My message to the members on the other side of the aisle is to do a good job. Do it right. Don't time-allocate. Don't be dismissive of the functions and the responsibilities of this Legislature and its members. If you take that in a respectful approach, you will actually come up with a bill that is good and that people can support. At the end of the day, I think that is what we all ought to be striving for in this Legislature: a substantive, good bill that we can all support.

1640

Listen: We did this with Bill 89 as well—time allocation—and Bill 68. I'm not sure why the government took this approach with Bill 142 and didn't take the same approach with so many other bills that are far more transformative in their nature and their substance. But they've done it with this one, so I will recognize that that was a significant undertaking, and beneficial.

As I said, there are tens of thousands of transactions that happen each day in the construction industry, and most of them go on without any disputes and without any hitches. But, of course, there are some significant deviations from that. The TTC is one example. I believe they have over \$1 billion in various construction contracts now before the courts. It's an astonishing number, that the Toronto Transit Commission has that many disputes with their contractors—very significant and very much out of the ordinary when we look at other construction projects. I just put that on the table for some discussion.

That gives some of the context and some of the process that that we're dealing with on Bill 142.

On Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, it's also important to identify some of the significant positives. We've seen some significant improvements on the construction lien side itself. I believe that homeowners and contractors will all benefit from the changes in the process for liens. We have seen in the past where the ability to exercise a lien has been difficult, has been problematic, with the rules. We've also seen, in the past, times when liens have been placed that ought not to have been placed, and the difficulty in discharging a vexatious or false lien. They've made some improvements there as well.

Let me now go to some of the concerns on Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act. I do hope that the members opposite are listening and that when these topics come up for discussion in committee and amendments are proposed in committee, they will consider them and reflect on them and, hopefully, improve Bill 142.

The first one is the adjudicative process that is now implemented in Bill 142 when it's passed. That adjudicative process to resolve disputes in a more timely and efficient manner and, I think, reasonable manner is not applicable to P3 projects.

As we know, Speaker, P3 projects take up a significant amount of government projects. Billions of dollars of projects are P3 projects, but this resolution mechanism is not applicable to P3s. Whether that P3 is a provincial ministry initiative, whether it's a broader public service initiative or a municipal P3, these benefits of the adjudicative process are not available to those contractors. I've not heard any good arguments on why we should exclude and exempt P3 contracts from this dispute resolution mechanism in Bill 142. I know the government has put forward in Bill 142 a mandatory bonding mechanism for P3 contracts. That will help provide certainty of payment, but it is not a way to resolve disputes. I believe excluding P3s from Bill 142 is a grave and serious mistake, and I have not heard through the debate so far what the rationale is. Of course, it is contrary to the recommendations from that expert group of Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel in the Striking the Balance review. If the minister or the parliamentary assistant is listening, I hope that maybe they will address why they are exempting P3s from this dispute resolution mechanism.

Something else that I think strikes out and is a failure or an omission in Bill 142 is not using or improving our Small Claims Courts for dispute resolutions. As we know, in Ontario our Small Claims Courts are capped at a maximum of \$25,000 in dispute. I think many people would argue that that level, that threshold, is not consistent with where it needs to be. It could be expanded, and indeed, jurisdictions such as British Columbia have elevated the thresholds in their small claims courts up to \$50,000. I think Ontario is lagging in having that threshold remain at \$25,000.

Again, there was discussion about this in the Striking the Balance report. My own view is that we could have easily moved the small claims threshold, in the case of

construction disputes, closer to the \$75,000 or \$100,000 threshold and allowed that much more expedient process of Small Claims Courts to be an adjudicative body for some of these smaller construction disputes. I think that's one of the oversights that the government has made with Bill 142.

This is a vast improvement. I think it will be strongly beneficial for the larger contractors, the larger general contractors, the larger sub-trades, but for the smaller contractors and those in the home renovation industry, they won't see the same benefits or improvements or value.

So P3s and Small Claims Courts.

Also, in the bill it indicates that there will be a mandatory review of Bill 142 after five years—a good step. Whenever you take a new path in life, it's never a bad thing that after a number of steps you take a look behind and see: How far did you go? Did you go where you wanted to go, and is it doing what you want it to do? The problem, as I see it, with the mandatory review is that there's no mechanism to ensure that it's a public review or that the review will be tabled. I think it would be far more substantial and beneficial if the bill incorporated a public review mechanism after five years.

1650

I also wanted to mention the mechanism that they're using for this adjudicative process. I'm not going to get into the details of this process, but, in essence, we are creating a new delegated administrative authority in the province that will be charged with providing, training and developing adjudicators for the construction industry.

Where I have a question and a concern is—I believe we have 13 delegated administrative authorities in this province as it is; some of the better-known ones are Tarion and the Electrical Safety Authority and the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. Delegated administrative authorities have proven to be problematic in some areas. I mentioned Tarion. Of course, the government just did a review—actually, Justice Cunningham was charged with reviewing Tarion because of the number of complaints and unresolved complaints from so many consumers who must interact with Tarion.

With these DAAs, delegated administrative authorities, they do end up having an exclusive monopoly on that function, and exclusive monopolies are not generally conducive to high standards of customer service. I think we can say, and have agreement by everyone in this House, that choice in competition often leads to better customer service. But we've also had a problem with the transparency and the accountability of delegated administrative authorities. So I caution the government on using that mechanism for the nominating authority and the training and provision of adjudicators to the construction industry.

Again, hopefully we will see a willingness by this government to listen to people coming to committee—because I think I can say with some level of certainty that it will pass second reading and will be sent to committee—to actually hear the other side, hear industry and

give due consideration to amendments that are proposed in committee.

I don't know, Speaker, what else we should say about Bill 142. I do want people to recognize that very significant contrast between how some bills are put forward, how some bills are advanced, how there's thoughtfulness and detail included in them. This is in an area of law that is not widely used by everyone in the province; this is about the construction industry, an important industry, but why do they not provide the same level of interest and dedication in the advancement of so many other important bills, bills that have far wider application to everybody, such as the patient care bill and the various hydro bills, the 15 different bills that, in this Parliament alone, they have time-allocated?

Just for the viewers to know, the time allocation process is that after a few hours of debate at second reading the government can allocate the bill. What we've seen in these cases is that they provide usually a minimal amount of committee time, as low as an hour or two of committee study, and then back for just one hour of debate, divided by three parties. It's certainly impossible to listen and hear from stakeholders and interested parties when debate is cut off in such a manner.

I also want to just mention, Speaker—I touched on it briefly—that the smaller contractors will not see quite as much benefit from this as the larger ones. I say that just from my own perspective. My comments on this bill today are not only that of the opposition critic, not only that of somebody who has listened to industry, but also as a former electrician, a former employee and a former employer of tradesmen who has had to use in the past some of the mechanisms available to resolve disputes between contractors, builders, developers and homeowners.

I should also say that this is not a new or unique model. It is in place in many other jurisdictions around the world—the UK most notably, but there are others—and it does appear to be effective.

I just want to end off with this other concern, just to expand on this a little bit. The adjudicative process, the dispute resolution mechanism—of course, at the end of the job, there is still one other step that could be employed, and that is to resolve the dispute in our civil courts. I mentioned this earlier about some of my concerns, but I think the government has missed the boat a little bit and they ought to have and they still can—well, it will be a little more difficult now at second reading. But they ought to have looked more closely at the failures in our civil courts and looked at mechanisms that could have been employed, some mandatory time lines on discovery, mandatory response times to at least prevent or limit some of the misuse or abuse that happens in our civil courts.

That's really the essence of our courts. Our courts are there as a dispute resolution mechanism. We're having to create this new adjudicative process for one reason only, and that is that our courts are not an effective remedy or resolution process for so many. I'm talking about the

civil courts, but the same is applicable in our criminal courts. We have seen this government have a real apprehension, a real reluctance to look at the failings in the administration of justice in this province. We've seen recently, with the Jordan decision, how many cases in our criminal courts are being stayed and withdrawn, people not finding justice in our courts. I would implore members on the other side to start taking a look at those failings. I think it's long overdue. I think it's a travesty. I think it brings disrepute throughout when our courts are not provided the resources, the mechanisms or the tools to provide people with an avenue to find justice and to seek remedy.

1700

It's not acceptable that people should wait years and years and years to go through a process seeking justice or remedy. In my view, it's not unlike health care. We don't want people to wait years and years and years to get necessary health care to remedy a health problem. They shouldn't have to wait years and years to find a remedy for a legal problem or a problem of injustice.

With that, I would trust and hope that the members opposite will come to committee and will entertain reasonable, thoughtful amendments that will strengthen Bill 142, that will strengthen the dispute resolution process—make it more effective, make it more timely and maybe even less costly.

Also—take it to heart—we're going to have lots of bills introduced this fall. We've already started. I know that there is a thirst and a desire from the government to ram legislation through, that all bills must be passed. I'm going to say, once again, it's the wrong process. It's the wrong process: Using time allocation or preventing adequate discussion and discovery at committee invariably, undoubtedly, ends up with a bill that has faults.

Here I see that we've got a new bill that was introduced yesterday in the House. I don't recall the number of the bill right now, but it's the bill to provide for additional electoral ridings in northern Ontario. Included in that bill are some new provisions on the election financing laws because the government, in their haste last year on the election financing laws, made errors. They were pointed out to the government, but they weren't interested and they would not accept any amendments at committee to address those errors. Now we see they've introduced a bill that has amendments to the Election Finances Act when they could have easily listened a year ago and had a good bill.

Let's stop repeating the same errors. Let's stop repeating the same mistakes that are done so frequently and so often by this government. Let's start doing a good job the right way, just as we expect our contractors and tradesmen to do a good job the right way. That way, it only needs to be done once instead of brought back time and time again.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 142 today. As I said, I do hope that we will see some similar changes in direction with this government on the host of bills that they want to table this year and that they

want to get passed come something or high water in advance of next year's general election.

Let's do it right. Let's do it well. Let's keep the people of Ontario in our focus, not just the general election of next June.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to comment today on this bill and the comments made by the member.

Our party supports this legislation. I expect that we will have a number of amendments to it when it comes forward to committee, but we've always taken the position that it's only fair that people who have completed work, and the work being certified, get payment.

There's no question, Speaker, that when a large company holds tens of millions of dollars in funds back from their contractors and subcontractors, they are in a position to invest that money and make money on it while their contractors and subcontractors are put into an impossible position where if they have difficulty securing a line of credit, they can't pay their tradespeople and their suppliers. Their operation grinds to a halt, and yet the entity, the business, that got the money in the first place is able to do extraordinarily well.

As you're quite aware, Speaker, this is something that people in the construction industry, on the work side, have been pushing for for quite a few years, because it has caused, many a time, crises for contractors and subcontractors who can't get payment for work they have done or for the equipment and material that they have installed in buildings and other structures.

It's only fair that we have such legislation. I will have an opportunity shortly to talk at greater length about what's here and what's not here, but I would say that if we believe in a fair society—not the one that the Liberals are talking about, because I think there's a lot of puffing smoke over there, but if we really talk about a fair society—people who do work should be paid for that work and should be paid promptly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened carefully to the member from—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington; I hope I got that right. He's the critic for the Attorney General, and as parliamentary assistant I am pleased to say a few words.

He mentioned adjudication quite a bit. Part of the new bill, a large portion of it, talks about adjudication and the prompt-payment system. It's key to speeding up the resolution process. We're going to change what exists. Instead of going to court to dispute what should be paid or not paid, we're going to introduce a new system that would mark a dramatic change for the industry. In most cases, adjudication would allow people who have disputes to resolve them in short order, freeing up funds,

and that's going to be done by having an adjudicator set up who would understand and have a lot of experience in the construction industry and who would make a decision, sometimes as fast as within six weeks.

We're working hard to make sure that everyone's interests are covered within our proposed amendments, maintaining a sense of fairness and balance. Adjudication would be conducted by private individuals who, as I said, have extensive experience in construction and specialized training in dispute resolution. A private authorized nominating authority would be responsible for selecting and training adjudicators, as well as maintaining a list of qualified adjudicators.

In a dispute, both parties would be able to select an adjudicator from the list and work with that adjudicator. They still have the option, if they want to, to go to court, but this new system with the adjudicator is a great change and will speed up disputes when it comes to prompt payment.

1710

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to rise and add a few comments on Bill 142 as well. Our party, the PC Party, has long been an advocate to bring prompt-payment legislation to Ontario.

Fifty thousand dollars or less being moved to Small Claims Court provides an avenue for smaller contractors to recover money owed to them by larger contractors.

The spirit of the bill is supported by the stakeholders that I've heard from and our party has heard from across the industry. We think that the bill could be improved with amendments, which we intend to move if and when it gets to committee.

There are three main areas which the bill addresses, part I being the prompt payment regime, part II being the part where it contains the creation of the authorized nominating authority to manage these new adjudication models, and part III, which actually outlines the adjudicative process.

I think I counted up to 10 or more acts that are going to be affected by the bill. When you have a bill that affects that many different acts that are already in existence, there is always room for improvement or something that has been overlooked.

I think this is the third time that prompt-payment legislation has been brought to the House. Both past attempts died on the order table due to elections being called by the government itself. With another election on the horizon, there's a possibility that this could happen again. History could repeat itself.

The proposed adjudicative system in the bill appears to mirror some of the less desirable aspects of delegated authority.

As we look forward and look to other comments today on this bill, we'll look to improve it, if and when it gets to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond to the comments from the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington with regard to Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act.

First off, Speaker, I want to say that New Democrats support this bill. The bill is modelled after the content of the expert report *Striking the Balance: Expert Review of Ontario's Construction Lien Act*. It is always good to see public policy informed by evidence and input from experts. That is a positive thing.

We know that a number of jurisdictions around the world have already introduced prompt-payment legislation, so this initiative is long overdue.

We know that it is important to Ontario's economy. We know that it will help create more jobs in the construction industry. It will support employers in bringing in apprentices, giving young people, people who are looking for careers in the skilled trades, those kinds of opportunities. It will enable firms to invest in machinery and equipment, and to lower the cost of construction, because they will be able to make more competitive bids if they are paid on time.

The problem, Speaker, is that this legislation, as we see in so many pieces of Liberal initiative, does not include a rigorous enforcement mechanism. Without enforcement, frankly, the bill really will lack in terms of its effectiveness. So, as we go through this legislative process, you can be sure that we will be pushing to introduce those enforcement mechanisms that will really make a difference with this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to the members from Toronto-Danforth, Scarborough Southwest, Sarnia and London West.

I'll just leave you with this: One of the main thrusts of my debate today was that this ought to be used as a good study in how good public policy can and ought to be developed: that quantity is not as important as quality and that we need to take time to put good policies into place.

As I mentioned, it has been six years and three different iterations. Now we're getting close to getting it right. Right? It's supported, certainly—and I said that we will be supporting this bill. I think there are still some elements that could be improved upon, but that only happens through thoughtful discussion, thoughtful debate, and a full and comprehensive understanding of what the problem is.

The term "prompt payment" has been used often, and I understand that because some of the bills have had that title, but this is not about prompt payment. This is about finding a good remedy for disputes within the construction industry which will lead to faster payments. But you have to resolve the dispute first, because that's where the problem lies and that's where our courts are not doing their job. They're not providing that remedy to a dispute.

I would like to see us also take the time to look at the administration in our courts and fix the failings there.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to say that this is the first time I will have spoken extensively since the House came back last week. It's funny, Speaker. It's as if I had never left. It really is.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk today about Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, 2017, because I did have some experience with this whole process back in 2013.

I want to speak first a bit about the bill itself and then about the background and my history with it. This bill before us is a long-promised follow-up to a 2016 review of prompt-payment practices in the construction industry. My colleague Mr. Hillier was talking about getting into things and doing them right, going through a long process, and he's right. It's been six years that we've been going through this process. I'm not sure we've got it entirely right.

My colleague from London West was actually dead on the money when she noted a lack of enforcement mechanism that could make this bill far more beautiful than effective. If you don't have an enforcement mechanism, then a lot of what you do is just simply a question of aesthetics and optics, not a question of actually making a difference in the world.

That being said, it's still not a bad idea to have this bill come forward. As I've noted, there was a review done in 2016 called *Striking the Balance: Expert Review of Ontario's Construction Lien Act*, authored by Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel. It was tabled in March 2016 and it examined the issue of prompt payment after long agitation by industry trade groups as varied as the Ontario building and trades council and the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects.

I have to say that prior to my life in electoral politics, I was a co-op housing manager. I had an opportunity in the 1980s, as a manager, to take on the operation of a newly built housing co-op in downtown Toronto. I had some very difficult experiences in that process and when I was first approached by people in the prompt-payment coalition in and around 2012, I had a lot of questions for them. I understood the principle; no doubt in mind that when people do work, when they provide equipment, when they've met their contractual obligations, they should be paid. I thought their argument was a really good one.

But I also had experience that I brought to the table. When I took over the housing co-op in downtown Toronto, back in—I'm frightened to say what year it was, but it was 1984, so fitting both in terms of Mr. Orwell and the doublespeak that I encountered very quickly in dealing with some of the contractors, and a long time ago when you think about one's life.

Our architects and our engineers were not happy with the product that was turned over to us. They were unhappy with good reason. The walls of this building, a complex of townhouses and high-rises, were clad in stucco. That stucco, when subjected to consistent rainfall,

had the consistency of cottage cheese. It would run down the front of the building. I took a lot of pictures and I tacked up a lot of plastic sheeting on people's homes alongside our maintenance staff—because when it's raining and the water's running into the house, you've got to put up plastic sheeting; you can't just depend on cottage cheese.

1720

I have to say that I had an amazing moment, in the process of suing the builder, of being in discovery—for those who are not familiar with the process, before you go to court, the opposing parties sit at a conference table and present their evidence. We were presenting evidence as to why the building wasn't up to standard and wasn't up to contractual requirements, and I remember opening the book showing pictures of the walls that had disintegrated in the rainfall. There were two lawyers on the other side: a senior and a junior. The junior, her jaw just dropped, and she said "Oh, my God." She was then heavily elbowed by her senior associate to never say such a thing again. But the evidence was clear, overwhelming and compelling.

Similarly, the electrical contractor had engaged in some of the most dubious wiring that has been encountered and identified in this city in a long time. At the time, when we found that people's lights were going out all over the place and circuitry was burning out, we found that the circuit panel, the panel that was supposed to protect the house from overloads and fires, had been wired completely inappropriately—very cheaply, but completely inappropriately.

I remember talking to an architect at the time and asking for his advice. He said, "Well, before you make the decision as to what you're going to do, think about what you're going to say at the coroner's inquest." I thought, "Right. Okay. I understand what you're saying to me." The next day, I hired an electrician, and we went through every unit and rectified that wiring, because, frankly, Speaker, the people in that complex had become friends, even in the short time that I had been working with them, and the thought that their lives would be in danger from totally irresponsible practice was one that was completely abhorrent to me.

So I brought that experience of dealing with the person we referred to as "the pirate" to this discussion. I thought that the prompt-payment coalition was very good on that, because we went through what conditions would have to be in place in order to ensure that the payment for work done was paid for work that was properly done. They were very clear that work that was not passed by an engineer or signed off on by an architect shouldn't be getting payment. Yes, there should be prompt payment, but only when it was certified to be done in accordance with the plan and the details.

That, Speaker, I think is a central piece here, because many people argued back in 2013 that prompt payment was a bad idea, because what do you do with contractors who do bad work? They had a really good mechanism: It had to be signed off. But once it was signed off, once it

was certified to be what it should be, then there was no good reason to hold back on the funds.

It's no wonder that people in the construction industry—subcontractors, contractors and the skilled trades and the labourers who depend for their paycheques on the money flowing through—wanted prompt payment. Because, as I think I had the opportunity to say during comments and questions, if you're a construction company doing hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of work and you can hold back payments in the \$10-million or \$50-million or \$100-million range for even 30 days—or, even better, 60, or, amazingly, 90—you could make a good buck farming that money out in short-term loans or GICs. So it is a very profitable thing to have the money stop in your bank account for a long time before it flows on. The construction trades, the subcontractors and the contractors who wanted this legislation were right. Morally, they were right, and practically, in terms of the operation of our economy, they were right.

The advocates of prompt payment note that a lack of urgency in paying the contractors and subcontractors on major construction and infrastructure projects backs up the whole supply chain, so that everyone gets hurt all the way along—except, of course, for the one who's holding the money and able to make interest on it.

Our colleague Paul Miller from Hamilton East talked about the Pan Am-Ticats stadium in Hamilton that saw delays in payment from an international contractor that, in turn, rippled down the whole supply chain, leading to delays in construction. That was a huge problem, not just for the contractors and subcontractors, but for the city of Hamilton and all of those who wanted to use that stadium. The prompt-payment coalition, the people who initiated this, suggests there are about 400,000 workers at the end of that payment chain, that supply chain, who are affected by tardy or non-payment in the sector.

The people who reviewed this whole matter had a very good observation. They noted that a broad consensus was generally reached with relation to three core issues: maintaining and modernizing the lien holdback remedy, introducing a made-in-Ontario promptness-of-payment regime, and introducing targeted adjudication to enhance the efficiency of dispute resolution throughout the Ontario construction industry. Speaker, they actually were taking a very balanced approach to this. It wasn't all on the contractor side, all on the owner side, all on the subcontractor side, all on the worker side. It was making sure that everyone who participated in that commercial relationship was treated decently and fairly.

Now, there is, unfortunately, not a unique situation here with construction. There is a problem with timely payment in other sectors of the economy. That isn't what we're addressing today, but I'm sure there are others who are saying, "Yes, prompt payment, not just in construction but in all kinds of other activities. That makes sense." As my colleague from London West was saying, failure to have prompt payment will affect employment, because if contractors and subcontractors are out of cash, they're going to lay people off. They can't meet their commitments; they're going to protect themselves.

It will cause a reduction in investment and apprenticeships. Speaker, we don't want that. We need skilled trades; we absolutely need skilled trades. Again, if you squeeze the contractors and the subcontractors, they're going to squeeze the people below them. It's going to negatively affect our economy.

It means that contractors and subcontractors are very cautious about bidding because they have to limit their risk. That reduces, really, the range of bids that come in and thus the ability to get the best possible price. Frankly, lastly, that risk of non-payment means that contractors and subcontractors have to up their price in order to protect themselves, to set aside money—a contingency—for troubles that will come further down the road. All of those things are negative outcomes of people at the top not paying promptly and holding back money for their own benefit.

Interestingly, many of those who oppose prompt payment said, "Well, payment is prompt now anyway. It's not a problem. I don't know why you're grouching about this." which is a very handy thing to have on record, because you can only say, "If there's no problem, then surely this legislation has no negative impact on you."

Other jurisdictions already have comparable legislation in place. The United States, the UK, Ireland, the EU, Australia and New Zealand have prompt-payment protection in place. This issue, as I noted earlier, first came forward around 2012-13 and flowed into early 2014. Minister Del Duca brought forward a private member's bill. As you're well aware, he's connected to the carpenters' union. They have practical experience on the ground with the negative impact of payment not coming through when work is done.

We supported that private member's bill. I was chairing the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, where that bill had been allocated. It was fascinating to me as the Chair of that committee to watch the Liberal government, who had supported the bill, who had supported their member, realize that they didn't want to have it happen anymore. They had come to the conclusion that it was a political liability.

1730

I remember coming to committee that morning, and all the prompt-payment coalition people came in happy as clams because finally the bill—at first reading, "Okay, we got through that hurdle;" at second reading, "All kinds of debate, but it got through;" and committee, at last, "We're going to get through committee." The government was on side. I think the opposition was on side; we were on side.

Within minutes of bringing the committee to order, the government indicated they weren't supporting the private member's bill. As you may imagine, Speaker—you have chaired many a committee in your time—a fair amount of pandemonium broke out in the room, with lots of wailing and gnashing of teeth, rending of garments, throwing of ashes. It was an unhappy moment in the political life of the province.

We adjourned while everyone tried to figure out what on earth had happened, because it looked like this was

motoring forward. It wasn't a perfect bill; no one would ever argue that. The bill needed a lot of work, a lot of amendments—that's why we had committee. That's why we were going to have hearings. That's why we were going to move this forward to try and hammer out a bill that would do what Ontarians needed to have done.

But, Speaker, as you may imagine, once we figured out everything that was going to happen, we realized that this little guy was going to be put to sleep. And he was, within minutes—again to the great consternation of the prompt-payment coalition folks, who left the room looking very downcast.

In response, as a follow-on, an expert committee was appointed to review the whole issue and come forward with a series of recommendations that would allow for a piece of legislation, the one that we have before us, to move forward. I have to say, an expert review is a useful thing and evidence-based policy-making is a wonderful, amazing and rare thing—I'm glad to see it when it happens—but, let's face it, with this there was also the time for people to work out the politics. I have no doubt many an expert review goes under water and is never seen again. They only hit surface when everyone agrees that they can live with what has come forward.

What came forward out of that expert review was a process that set out rules and requirements for payments made under construction contracts. It provides entitlements for contractors and subcontractors to receive progress payments and to suspend work or terminate a contract if such payments are not made. Good move. If someone is really raking you over the coals, taking advantage of you with your money, why on earth would you continue working for them? You need to have the legal room to say, "This isn't working. You're robbing me. I'm out of here."

It provides that payments can only be withheld if the payer notifies the payee that a payment application is disapproved or amended within 10 days after it is submitted. In fact, there's a process where an invoice is reviewed—hopefully by the consultants, the engineers and architects—and approved or not approved in a way that's timely rather than leaving everyone in limbo for an extended period of time.

It requires of owners to provide contractors and subcontractors with certain financial information before entering into a contract. Now I don't know precisely what that certain financial information is, but my guess would be, "Are you solvent or not?" and "Are you going to depend on not paying me in order to get through this contract?" Those would probably be the fundamental questions that a contractor would ask before they would sign a contract.

There's an authorization for cabinet to make regulations to deal with all the very detailed work that is going to have to be put in place for such a bill to be effective.

What this bill does—and I've given you the broad outline there: Section 1.1 is added to the Construction Lien Act to set out how this act applies to alternative financing and procurement. That's your standard P3, your privatization of public business arrangement.

Now I find it odd that—I guess I shouldn't find it odd that that's going to be addressed, because we have two parties here who like P3s a lot. The Tories did a ton of it when they were in power, and the Liberals said, "We will not have P3s. We will rename them." So they have alternative financing.

I remember questioning Minister Smitherman about this one day in committee, and he assured me that P3s were not part of this government's plan; alternative financing and procurement was. He could not actually give me, in any sharp or clear way, the difference between the two, but I knew that the title was different, and that's what we settled on: "Yes, they have different titles." So that's going to be addressed in here.

Interestingly, even though the payments for AFPs, alternative financing and procurement, are addressed in this legislation, there's no definition of what alternative financing and procurement is, which shouldn't surprise me, Speaker. Creative ambiguity is one of the wheels that makes government go around, and there's an awful lot of wheeling and going around in this one if you're not defining one of these key terms.

The allied stakeholders, the trades, were able to get in the legislation timelines for payment of amounts payable under contracts to contractors and under subcontracts to subcontractors—really important.

I only have a few seconds left. I want to just go back to my colleague from London West. What is missing here, again, is a mechanism for enforcing it. You can have very beautiful legislation, poetically written—the Shakespeare of legal texts can apply to this—but without enforcement it is useless.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Pardon; I've got a bit of a cold, so my voice might sound strange.

I listened intently to the comments from the member from Toronto–Danforth. He ended off and started, basically, with an issue about enforcement.

First of all, this new bill will rename the Construction Lien Act to the Construction Act.

We've seen other jurisdictions implement prompt-payment systems. Unfortunately, they haven't always worked.

We've talked with those in the construction industry. They have experience with litigation—and we understand that sometimes litigation takes too long in the courts. Sometimes it can take over a year. The new system that we're proposing, if passed, would mark a dramatic change for the industry. Adjudication will allow these disputes to be resolved in short order, freeing up funds down the construction pyramid. This means that the parties do not have to wait for the issue to move through the court system, and they can continue to work on the project without delay. The adjudication system would examine the matter and reach a decision on the amount owed in usually less than six weeks. So in six weeks a decision can be made—or less than six weeks—which is, I think, groundbreaking.

If the adjudication decision is that the owner must pay and the owner refuses to comply, the contractor would then have the right to suspend work on the contract, which is something new.

One important aspect of the new prompt-payment adjudication scheme is that it would only apply to contracts and subcontracts entered into on or after the relevant parts of the bill are proclaimed into force.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, we've worked hard to make sure that everyone's interests are covered with our proposed amendments and to maintain a sense of fairness and balance. This will, of course, be debated here and go to committee. There will probably be some amendments put forward, and then it will come back here for third reading. So we're just starting the process now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to this bill.

In a place like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the challenge that I see is, many of our contractors are very small. They're the mom-and-pop shop; they're the people who have started with one employee and now there are five, six, seven, eight, maybe 10. But most of them are small. If they don't have prompt-payment legislation that allows them to get paid promptly, then that just slows everything down. So not only does it impact them—they don't have the ability to carry large sums of money for long periods of time, nor should they, because that takes away from their profitability—but truly the biggest concern is that it trickles down to the employees. If they don't have the ability to carry that, how do they keep moving forward? How do they keep paying employees and keep extending themselves? This is a very dangerous precedent to be set for someone who can utilize these types of delays. And the burden on a small business—one of the concerns that has been addressed by the Ontario Home Builders' Association is the timeline. After receiving an invoice, the owner only has 14 days to give a notice of nonpayment to their contractor. So a small contractor may have to actually go out and hire an engineer to deem if it's done safely and according to all the specs—again, another incurred cost that no one was realizing, the ability to do that.

Again, Madam Speaker, I reflect: In many cases, like in my riding, in the great riding of Sarnia and across our area, we have many small, family-run, owner-operated businesses with limited ability to jump in immediately. If the main contractor is big enough, they have the resources and they can then go back and do an appeal, and they can hold up the system even longer, and that small employer—one of the concerns, again, is that then you get into the whole arbitration process, and the costs and the administrative burden, which again can really impact these.

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This has come back to the Legislature, I believe, three times now. Ironically, someone said earlier, it's just before elections. Funny, we're going to go into an

election next year. Isn't it interesting that this is back again? I'll speak more to this in my full comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm honoured to just add a couple of comments onto those of our colleague the member from Toronto-Danforth. He, obviously, didn't surprise us with his depth and breadth of knowledge on this file, even though it's early in the session. He came at it fully knowledgeable of what the impacts are, and brought about some of his own experiences.

On this side of the House, I think, we're comfortable with the language in this bill. We've seen it before. We supported it then, and we support it now. We wonder what the politics have been all along in the backrooms of the Liberal party. But lo and behold, it is here before us again, and it will hopefully provide the remedy for those contractors and subcontractors that they've been asking for.

We can only imagine the effort that goes in, from start to finish, from the bidding process alone, on infrastructure jobs, to the cleanup, to when the job is done and you're cleaning the job site. You've done a great job; your reputation is on the line. Sometimes you've extended your own credit to finance that job, and you're waiting for payment. And lo and behold, for one reason or another, your customer has decided that they're going to hold back payment.

It's something that shouldn't be done in a mature economy. I think that this is one way that we can provide the assurance for those who are in the construction sector that we value your work. We understand the pressures that are put on your day-to-day operation, and the risks that you take. We're going to try to eliminate one, the simple one, in that you should be paid for the work that you do.

On this side of the House, as New Democrats, we wholeheartedly support the principle in the bill before us.

I just want to give a huge shout-out to the member from Toronto-Danforth for knocking it out of the park. We aren't surprised—we're never surprised; the guy is amazing—but he certainly did a great job in explaining this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 142, the Construction Lien Act.

My riding of Halton is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country. Drive down just about any road or sideroad in Halton, and you will come across bulldozers, cranes and dump trucks. People are at work building homes, just about throughout the year. There's no question: The construction industry is a driving force in my area and region, and in Ontario's growing economy. So we must ensure that this critically important industry continues to thrive for years to come. To do that, we need to make sure that the province's construction laws are up to date and reflect today's realities.

When a company does not get paid for its work, it affects everyone. It sets off a chain reaction that affects

payrolls, and payments to trade workers, suppliers and other people who have worked on the construction project. Nonpayment affects people and it affects families, and it affects their ability to pay their daily bills. Delays in paying companies and people who do construction work also disrupt cash flow from contractors and subcontractors, and can have devastating effects on construction projects.

This proposed legislation includes measures that would, if passed, support the industry and the workers. It would do this by creating new prompt-payment rules to give contractors and subcontractors certainty about when to expect to get payment. That's so important for families. It would also extend the timelines to file liens and court actions. It also requires holdback funds to be paid as soon as the deadline to file liens, and it creates an adjudication process to speed up disputes.

If passed, the legislative and regulatory changes would come into effect in a phased-in approach beginning next year, and it will make such a difference in people's everyday lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Toronto–Danforth to wrap up.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Scarborough Southwest, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Essex and the Minister of the Status of Women and minister responsible for early years and child care.

Member for Essex, you were very kind. Thank you.

Member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, you're right: You've got these small contractors, and they don't have long lines of credit; they don't have 100,000 bucks in the bank to tide them through tough times. Do we or don't we want to have small contractors able to do work and—

Mr. Bill Walker: We do.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. We do too. Good thing.

We want them to be able to function, pay their employees, pay themselves, make their bills, and provide the work necessary to build homes, offices, bridges, whatever. We need a full economic range of activity. So it makes sense that we have a bill in place that provides for prompt payment.

I just would urge all, when this is going through committee, when people are listening to presentations, to think about this whole question of enforcement. Again, if a small or a medium or a large contractor finds themselves in a situation where they're squeezed by a lack of cash and cannot actually get the entity—the person, the business, the government—that owes them money to pay, then this bill will not be doing what it purports to do and it won't be doing what it needs to do. So whoever of you get a chance to sit on the committee and deal with that issue, I urge you to address that problem to ensure that the bill does the full range of things that it's supposed to be doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's good to see you this afternoon, and my colleagues in the Legislature.

I want to go back to something the member from Toronto–Danforth said—because it does feel like we've been at this one for a long time. I've been elected for almost six years now, and if I think of all the topics that I've seen with some regularity here in the House, as well as emails from stakeholders, I think this would be right up there—not that I claim to be an expert, but I feel like we've all become experts on the topic by virtue of the length of time we've been looking at this.

We all, I think, agree on so many parts of this, especially when it comes to how the construction industry is a driving force in our economy here in Ontario, supporting more than 400,000 jobs and nearly 7% of the province's gross domestic product. That's a big part of our economy. So it is absolutely important to ensure that the industry continues to thrive, and we need to make sure our construction laws are up to date and reflect the realities of the sector today.

One thing I always look at when we're looking at legislation going through this House is, what are the stakeholders saying? We've all received some of those emails from people in the sector; we've been invited to receptions to talk about this legislation and prompt payment. So I thought I'd use a few minutes of my remarks to talk about some of the stakeholders who commented on this.

The first one is OSWCA, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. They said, "Striking the Balance"—the report—"made a number of recommendations that will significantly improve the construction payment and construction lien process in Ontario if they're fully implemented."

The Surety Association of Canada said that they "enthusiastically support the transition to digital bonding, and that has been instrumental in facilitating the transition...."

"From a technical standpoint, there's good news. The technology to create, record, execute and deliver electronic bonds is readily accessible, and there are a number of commercially available electronic surety systems...."

Also from the Surety Association of Canada: They "sincerely appreciate your efforts to resolve and take on this complex but critical initiative that's long overdue and will have a profound positive impact on the construction industry and the economy of our province. Again, we pledge the full support of the association."

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Back to the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association: "We support the drafting of new legislation."

And then there are our friends at the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, who appreciate the opportunity to submit commentary to support the review and enhancement of Ontario's Construction Lien Act, acknowledging efforts of the minister to ensure the legislation is fair, balanced and reflects a diverse degree of perspectives by consulting with industry stakeholders. I know it's taken some time to do that, but there's clearly some recognition for the experts that have been involved

in this and the panel. “In the months and years ahead, Ontario’s CLA will prove critical to our ability to capitalize on historic foreign, federal, and domestic investment in the brick and mortar projects that enable our provincial economy to flourish.”

There is also commentary from the Ontario Road Builders’ Association. They’re very pleased to see the final report and they commend the ministry on the work.

The TTC is also commending the review on its thorough work and analysis of issues raised therein: “Thank you, Ministry of Attorney General, for the opportunity to provide feedback.”

The Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario also provided extensive supportive feedback. Local 793, representing 14,500 members across the sector: “As a whole, very pleased with the legislation that’s drafted.”

When I look at these comments, I sense a lot of consensus and a lot of agreement moving forward. Some of my colleagues have talked about enforcement and what is contemplated in the adjudication provisions of this bill.

I’m looking forward to seeing this continue to progress. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill and talk a bit about the stakeholders in this sector today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was a little surprised that we went by this so quickly. For a piece of legislation that has been reappearing many times in many different reiterations through, frankly, many different members, I’m surprised that there wasn’t a little more—how do I say this delicately?—depth to the comments made by the minister, but I guess to each their own.

I find it interesting that we can talk about this legislation, but the government has chosen not to talk about why every time it comes to the precipice we don’t actually take the final leap and pass it. There are an awful lot of individuals, businesses, municipalities and school boards that are anxious to see some action on this file. It’s encouraging that it’s coming forward today.

I hope that we can move beyond second reading and even get to a point in committee where there are actually deputations and presentations, as opposed to blocking—I shouldn’t say “blocking”—stopping this legislation moving forward.

As someone has already pointed out, the timing of how we always talk about prompt-payment legislation is suspiciously close to when we inch closer and closer to general elections. I hope that is not the fate of this most recent reiteration. I look forward to having it go to committee and having it move forward in the legislative process.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am also glad to have an opportunity to put some quick thoughts on the record on Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, in response to the minister’s comments. I look forward to my own speaking rotation on this where I can bring, like

others, a lot of stories about our local situations, because as the minister mentioned, this is a file that we all know. The member from Toronto–Danforth can get up at the beginning of debate and fill 20 minutes because we know this. This is an issue that has been around far too long.

When I was new to this conversation, I couldn’t understand it. When you have folks who are doing a job, meeting the terms of that contract, doing good, safe work, to not be paid for that work, and not just promptly but on time and with any sort of way that they could make plans when it comes to their own finances and commitments, didn’t make any sense.

To imagine that you have this large construction giant holding onto this money, so much so that they even have their own investment departments to make sure the money continues to grow, and then they’re starving and squeezing everybody else on the rest of that chain—the contractors, the subcontractors, the workers, their families—everyone is affected by that. It isn’t right. It isn’t fair. We should absolutely fix this.

This is not a loophole we just discovered. This is something that, I would say, by design has been allowed to continue, especially when I hear my colleague the member from Toronto–Danforth, who reminds us about a committee process and how poorly it went. I look forward to this going better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened to the minister earlier speak about this bill, and I just want to add a few steps more to that.

This is a very important piece of legislation, as people today have recognized. It’s going to go to committee, of course, and there will be debate there. But over the summer, we sought feedback on the bill from stakeholders from across the industry. We received a number of submissions telling us what worked for them and what did not. Our government is working still alongside Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel, who are experts this field, and the advisory group to address these concerns. We’re proud of the level of input and collaboration and interest that we’ve received from the industry, and as the bill progresses through the committee stage, we’re looking for continued suggestions and ideas from our stakeholders to identify more changes that might be made to this bill. The bill contains revolutionary changes for Ontario’s construction industry.

The government is serious about getting this through to committee and bringing it here for third reading and then for a vote.

We want to get the legislation right. We’re going to spend the appropriate amount of time to make sure we do it right and get it completed on time.

With that said, Madam Speaker, have a nice weekend.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I’m pleased to enter the debate. Not unlike the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and

the member from Scarborough Southwest, I've received a number of submissions and I've read them, in particular from the Durham Region Home Builders' Association and the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

One section in particular, Speaker, has predominated in those types of consultations and in my reading of the material, and it's section 6. I'd like to quote from the submission from the Ontario Home Builders' Association:

"The legislation creates a 'pay-when-paid' model. This means if the owner does not pay the general contractor, payments can be legally stopped to subcontractors." In the opinion of the association, "This model may create more non-payment to subcontractors as large general contractors can use this legislation to legally stop payment to subcontractors that have completed their work." That's an important aspect for the MPPs to consider.

"Currently, contractual agreements between owner and general contractor or general contractor and subcontractors have their own legal terms and conditions. When there is a breakdown in this legal arrangement it is unlikely to impact other contractors not party to those agreements from getting paid. Under this legislation any breakdown in a legal agreement at the top of the construction pyramid would now impact contractors with no legal standing to those agreements working below." What this means is that, "This bill leaves subcontractors vulnerable when the legal arrangement between the owner and the general contractor is compromised."

Our hope would be that the government will take this into consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to wrap up.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: There have been some excellent comments from different members—Whitby—Oshawa, Scarborough Southwest, Oshawa.

I wasn't exactly sure what the member from Dufferin—Caledon was trying to suggest, but I think it is important to listen to stakeholders, especially when you're dealing with a complicated and very important industry like the one before us.

Just to recap: What is important to talk about is, what happens next. People want to know where this is going and when.

If passed, the legislative and regulatory changes would come into effect in a phased manner, beginning in 2018. We've heard that the industry will need time to become familiar with the new rules and make the necessary adjustments to its practices. However, I'm very confident that will go forward smoothly, given the time it has taken to get us here, as well as the participation of the stakeholders and the expert advice, which has provided excellent recommendations to government. It is important that people know what the rules are in advance.

I know there's a lot of discussion this afternoon here on the enforcement side of it. The member from Scarborough Southwest spoke very specifically to what's contemplated here, in terms of enforcement and the lessons that are being brought forward in this bill from other jurisdictions, and I think this bill speaks very specifically to that.

We know there may be tweaks down the road. It's important we get it right.

Again, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak to this this afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 6 p.m., I will be adjourning the House until Wednesday, September 20, 2017, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Munro, Julia (PC) Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	York–Simcoe Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
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James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley