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Mercredi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 August 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 août 2022

Report continued from volume A.

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THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Continuation of debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: Monsieur le Président, je vous félicite sur votre élection comme Président.

C'est un grand honneur pour moi de me lever pour mon premier discours dans cette Chambre comme députée pour Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to rise for my inaugural speech as the member for Ottawa West-Nepean.

I want to start by acknowledging the First Peoples of the land on which I live and work and which I now represent. Ottawa West-Nepean is on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe, who have been caretakers of the land and water for generations. In making this acknowledgment, Speaker, I am aware of my responsibility as a settler on these lands to work for justice and for reconciliation, to uphold the treaties and to do my part in ensuring that Indigenous rights in Ontario are respected, historic wrongs are redressed and that Indigenous peoples in Ontario have access to the clean drinking water, high-quality health care and education and decent affordable housing that we all deserve.

I also need to begin my tenure in this House by thanking the residents of Ottawa West-Nepean who put their trust in me and have sent me here to be their representative. I can't tell you how honoured I am, and I promise I will work hard for our community every single day over the next four years as your voice in the Legislature and your representative in important policy discussions that affect our shared lives and our common future.

Thank you as well to my campaign team, to the hundreds of volunteers who came out over the course of the year to knock on doors, to make phone calls, to connect at events and to put up signs. They worked tirelessly through snowstorms, unseasonable heat and for 10 days during the campaign in May with no hydro at the office and, for some of us, at home. No disrespect to any of my new colleagues, Speaker, but I seriously have the best, most talented campaign team in all of Ontario. I particularly need to thank Darren, David, David, Daniel, Donna, Matt, Matthew, Myrna, Maaz, Leif, Emile, Nate and Alex 1 and Alex 2 for all their hard work. As you can tell, we like

to collect people with similar names to make things more complicated for volunteers to keep people straight.

I especially need to thank my indispensable campaign manager, Stephen Yardy. Stephen is one of the best organizers in Canadian politics, and I was so lucky to have his support.

Thank you as well to my extended family—the Psmas, the Hellemans and the Dikkens—who provided moral and financial support, child care and child entertainment. My sisters, Karianne and Bethany, were two of my greatest boosters, and I can't tell you how much that meant to me.

And, of course, thank you to my husband, Matt, and my kids, Mira, Luc and Clara, for your unwavering support throughout a long year of campaigning and now as I embark on this new journey. They always keep me very humble, making sure I know all of my faults and shortcomings and errors, and yet they love me and support me in spite of them, keeping me grounded with their laughter and their teasing, their insights and wise questions, and all of the cupcakes they make for me. One reason I got into politics was to make the world a better place for them and for all our children. They remind me of the importance of building a fairer, cleaner, safer future every single day.

Like many Canadians, I am the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants. In my case, my grandparents came to Canada from the Netherlands with their young families after the Second World War decimated Europe. They came to Canada with nothing but their hopes and dreams. One set of grandparents, the VanderVaarts, were so poor that the Dutch government actually paid to get rid of them, buying them a plane ticket to Canada. The other side, the Psmas, were provided lodging by their new employer in a converted tobacco kiln when they first got here. They arrived at dusk, and my grandma later told me she was so happy to see that they had so many neighbours around them. She cried the next morning when she discovered they were surrounded by tobacco kilns, not houses.

But like it has been for so many people, Canada was a land of opportunity for my family. I grew up on the dairy farm that my Pasma grandparents were eventually able to buy, which my father took over. Growing up in a tightly knit Dutch community with a strong Christian faith, I learned about the importance of looking after one another, helping one another, supporting one another, from that community. That's why, when I had grown up and finished university, I became an anti-poverty advocate, working at a small faith-based NGO. Through that work, I met Tony Martin, then the federal NDP's poverty critic, and learned more about Tony's work in this Ontario

Legislature and his People's Parliament on Poverty. I worked alongside Tony in calling on the federal government to implement a poverty reduction strategy and was so proud to be in the gallery of the House of Commons when Tony tabled Canada's first Poverty Elimination Act.

I had always been interested in politics from a very young age, but was rather non-partisan in my interest. It was the work of Tony Martin and Jack Layton that inspired me to become a New Democrat. I saw that the NDP truly cared about addressing the root causes of poverty, about finding solutions rather than shrugging their shoulders and calling problems complex, and that the NDP were truly on the side of those who needed help the most in our society. I am so deeply honoured to be following in Tony's footsteps now as the Ontario NDP critic for poverty.

From my NGO job, I went on to work for the federal NDP as a policy adviser, where I learned from many wonderful mentors. I will just mention three because they were all strong women parliamentarians, and in the NDP, Speaker, we love our strong women. I was lucky enough to work alongside Jean Crowder, Chris Charlton and Libby Davies on important issues like poverty, housing, income security programs and health care, and to see how the NDP's dedicated advocacy could make a difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable communities, even in the face of a Conservative majority. I know those are lessons I will need to draw on over the next four years in my role as the critic for poverty and homelessness.

Sadly, despite the fact that so many people in our province live in poverty and too many more are falling into poverty because of our housing and affordability crisis, the throne speech did not even mention poverty. The measly 5% increase to ODSP doesn't even begin to address rising inflation, let alone make up for the fact that rates have been frozen below a livable level for years. And the government didn't even touch Ontario Works, which is at a preposterously low level.

Since being elected I have heard, from food banks and service organizations in my riding, how much demand has risen over the last two years and how they are struggling to keep up with demand. The government seems content to ignore this problem, to allow our fellow Ontarians to go hungry, to struggle to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. Well, I will be here, reminding the government constantly of its moral obligation to address poverty and homelessness in Ontario.

Ottawa West-Nepean is a great community, a place I have been proud to call home for nearly a decade and to raise my three children. We used to be a riding that was famous for having the oldest population in Ontario and the second-oldest in the whole country, but that's changing. While we still have many seniors who raised their own families here, then stayed on in their family homes or moved to one of Ottawa West-Nepean's many seniors' residences or naturally occurring seniors' communities, we also have many young families that are moving into the riding—as mine did nine years ago, when my twins were born—looking for an affordable place to live, with great parks and green spaces, good schools and neighbourhoods

with unique identities. Some of these young families are coming from other urban centres in Ontario because life is more affordable here. Many others are arriving as newcomers to Canada and finding a home in the riding's tightly knit immigrant communities. We have a lot of diversity in the riding—from housing type to income level to language spoken at home to the historic identity of our neighbourhoods—but we share in common a sense of solidarity, of pride in our community, of love for the beauty of our parks and beaches and green spaces.

I stroll through Andrew Haydon Park or Britannia Park in the evening or on a weekend afternoon and I see people from all walks of life, shoulder to shoulder, enjoying time with family and neighbours, participating in festivals and gatherings, sharing meals, sharing cultures, and I feel so lucky to live where I do.

I first decided to run in 2018 because I was worried about the direction of our province and the effect it was having on Ottawa West-Nepean—from our hallway-medicine health care system and all of the code oranges at the Queensway Carleton Hospital to the shameful neglect of our seniors and persons living with disabilities in long-term care to the underfunding of our education system and the failure to address climate change. I didn't win the first time, but that only meant that I needed to work harder.

My hard-working team and I knocked on every door in the riding over the course of a year, having thousands upon thousands of conversations with residents in Ottawa West-Nepean. From these conversations, I heard some common themes and key priorities emerge.

The first is health care. Our health care system was in trouble even before COVID. Now it is teetering on the brink. I have heard so many horror stories of 10- to 12-hour wait times at the Queensway Carleton or the civic hospital; people calling for ambulances and then waiting two to three hours for the ambulance to arrive, in pain and wondering all the time if they are going to survive; people waiting months for surgeries, in deep pain and unable to look after their families; and residents wondering if they were going to survive a cancer diagnosis because of all the delays in their care.

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But I also heard from so many health care workers that they were absolutely at their wits' end—long hours, working short-shifted, assigned to fields they weren't familiar with, with a rising level of violence in health care settings, and doing all this while risking their lives to provide care in a global pandemic. And their government didn't even respect them enough to pay them fairly. Workers cried as they told me they were thinking of changing careers or that they were on disability leave, burnt out from dealing with the violence of trying to care when the system doesn't.

We urgently need to fix our health care system. Sadly, nothing that I heard in the throne speech gives me confidence that the government understands the depth of the problem, let alone has the will to tackle it. So I will be sharing my constituents' stories here every chance I get until the government understands the human cost of the

problem and finally understands the urgency of immediate action.

The second priority is affordability. Everyone—everyone—is feeling the pinch of the rising cost of living. Housing has become completely unaffordable. Half my riding rent their housing and half own, but housing isn't affordable for either group. Building McMansions in the GTA that no one can afford doesn't do a thing to help my constituents, nor does it do anything to help the thousands of Ontarians struggling with homelessness or insecure housing. It's time for the government to take the housing crisis seriously.

Meanwhile, groceries and gas prices and the cost of everything else is rising rapidly while wages aren't keeping up and social assistance rates have been frozen at unlivably low levels for years. I had constituents of all ages and backgrounds explain to me the struggle they were facing to pay their bills and how they just can't catch a break. They want a government that's on their side, and I didn't hear anything in the throne speech that acknowledges that struggle.

The third priority is climate change. We all know, Speaker, that we only have eight years left to stave off catastrophic climate change, but we are already experiencing the effects of climate change now. In Ottawa, we had a massive storm, a derecho, that ripped through in May, causing intense damage and knocking out power across almost all of Ottawa West–Nepean. Some communities were without power for up to 12 days. For two weeks, we had to balance door-knocking with community check-ins as so many people didn't have lights, couldn't cook, and had to throw out all the contents of their fridge and freezer. We were just lucky that the temperature was fine and nobody was at risk of freezing.

This is the second major storm to hit the west end of Ottawa in four years. In 2018, we had a tornado come through which also caused significant damage and knocked out power for days. That's on top of the two once-in-a-century floods we've had in the past five years. We need immediate and significant action on climate change. We cannot afford inaction, but the throne speech doesn't even mention climate. We are going to pay more for the government's failure to act than we would for taking climate change seriously, while also missing out on all of the benefits of investing in retrofits, green energy and community resiliency.

The fourth priority I heard about is our kids. I spoke to so many parents who shared stories of watching their children struggle during the pandemic, and I could relate; I saw my own kids struggle. Our kids spent the most time out of school of any jurisdiction in North America, and then we returned them to the classroom without any additional supports or resources, to crowded classrooms without proper ventilation, and with no supports at all to address the fact that children's mental health has suffered. Kids with special needs, with learning disabilities, who are immunocompromised or living with family members who are immunocompromised, were especially left behind.

I spoke to many teachers and education workers who feel burnt out and frustrated, trying to do their best to

support kids who are all over the map after three years of disrupted learning but feeling like they are doing so without a government that has their backs—in fact, with a government that is often actively making the problem worse with their cuts.

We should be investing in our kids, not cutting their supports now. We should be supporting our teachers and education workers who do so much good work to educate, support and care for our children, not threatening them. We should be ensuring smaller class sizes so every child has supported learning with mental health supports available in school.

J'ai parlé aussi avec des francophones qui s'inquiètent de l'accès aux services en français. La communauté francophone est la communauté qui grandit la plus vite dans l'ouest d'Ottawa, mais les services de santé et les services sociaux ne sont pas toujours disponibles en français. Les francophones ont droit aux services dans leur propre langue. Il faut absolument que nous investissions dans les services et que le gouvernement s'attaque à la pénurie de main-d'œuvre francophone qui limite les services en français aussi.

I am proud that, following the work my team and I did, I was the first New Democrat ever to be elected in Ottawa West–Nepean and the first woman to be elected as an MPP for the riding from any party.

But I also acknowledge the serious responsibility, Speaker. I carry the concerns that I have heard over the past year and the hundreds of stories in my heart. I will be carrying them here with me whenever I speak in this chamber, sharing as many of them as I can. I hope that they will move the government's heart to take action on poverty, on affordability, on climate change, to fix our decimated health care system, to support our workers and to support our kids. Whenever they do, they can be sure they will have an ally in me. And whenever they don't, I will be here to remind them who is paying the price for their decisions.

So, with your indulgence, Speaker, let me conclude by speaking directly to the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean with an invitation to continue to reach out to me with your stories, with your concerns, to let me work alongside you to identify solutions and fight for policy changes and to bring your stories here to the Legislature. Politics is ultimately about people, and you will always be at the centre of my work, whether it is here, in the riding or across our great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean?

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's always a pleasure to rise in this chamber. Thank you to the member opposite for that speech. I really appreciate it.

The member was talking about investing in students, and I just want to ask the member a simple question. I was listening to the throne speech. It was talking about having an \$175-million investment, the largest of its kind in the country. We just announced that yesterday. And even in the Ministry of Labour, we are spending \$22 million on the OYAP program, which is, again, another investment

in students. I just want to ask the member opposite, do you support these investments, and do you support the throne speech?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously, kids are a great concern to me as a parent, and I've had the opportunity to speak with many parents across my riding. We had significant concerns about how the government handled kids' return to school. I know that in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean, while the government was trumpeting all their investments in ventilation, there was a ventilation system sitting on the lawn of a school. Although I'm not a mechanical engineer, I do not believe that substantively improves the air quality inside the school.

While I'm sure that parents appreciate all the support they can get right now, many of the parents in my riding don't have time to track down tutoring and mental health supports for their kids, let alone the fact that \$90 per student is hardly going to cover the cost of catching up for three years for many of these children. I know that parents are desperate for help from this government, and I hope that this government will listen and provide.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's not just an honour to rise after that fantastic speech; MPP Pasma has broken new ground in our city with a fantastic campaign that I think should be a road map for anybody who wants to get elected, any single person who is ever told, "Oh, you can't win here." They should talk to MPP Pasma to figure out how to get it done with a terrific team. That is what I want to say in this House, for the record—an amazing campaign.

One thing that didn't come up in your speech, my friend, was our light-rail transit system in Ottawa. I can't resist the urge to ask you what you heard at the door—those thousands of doors—when the subject of the Ottawa LRT came up. Over to you.

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Ms. Chandra Pasma: I thank my colleague for the question. Of course, as a suburban riding, many of my constituents have felt let down by public transit for a long time, as we have seen so many cuts to service provision that many of them don't really have access to public transit. But even then, the Ottawa LRT is a new low in the annals of public transit, since we had a public-private partnership that built a train that did not even have round wheels, whose doors did not open in the heat or the cold—and we tend to have a lot of both in Ottawa. So, I am looking forward to the results of this inquiry. I hope that this is a lesson to all of us that we should avoid public-private partnerships when we build public infrastructure, so that people will actually get trains with round wheels.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I would just like to welcome the member from Ottawa West–Nepean here to the Legislature. We've known each other for a while. I met her first at an all-candidates debate in 2014—right? We're in different parties, but I'm happy that you're here and I know

that you're going to do what you can for the constituents of Ottawa West–Nepean.

What I want to ask you about is—we heard the Minister of Health today say that everything is on the table. Privatization in health care? Well, that's okay. That's what she said. It's all on the table. I know Queensway Carleton is in your riding. Can you explain why this government refuses to make the investments that are necessary to ensure that we have the personnel in places like the Queensway Carleton Hospital to make sure people get access to care?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I thank the member for the question, and I am looking forward to serving alongside you in the House. I know there's a lot I can learn from you on serving our constituents well.

If there is absolutely a crisis at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, it didn't start in the last few years; it predated 2018. There have been many occasions over the past years that the hospital has had to ask people not to come because they didn't have the beds or the capacity to serve people. I spoke to the president of the hospital recently, who told me they've had occasions lately where there are more patients in the ER admitted, waiting for a bed upstairs, than they have beds in the ER. So they can't even take new patients in the ER. Things are absolutely desperate.

I do fear that the government may have driven things to the brink just for the sake of introducing privatization. That is absolutely not the solution to the problem. That will only make the problem worse, and it will create a situation in which the most vulnerable members of my community who need health care the most will be pushed to the back of the line.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions? The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the new Ottawa West–Nepean MPP. Congratulations for winning and being here. I heard it said in your speech and the question asked by the MPP from Ottawa Centre that you had a hard-fought campaign. All of us, I think, are very grateful to all of our volunteers and family and everything else that helped to get us here today. So, I was just wondering if you could tell us a bit more about your campaign and about your campaign team and maybe also shower some more praise on them, because I'm sure you want to do that anyway.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: That is a great question, and I'm always happy to shower praise on them, although I'm also a little afraid that if I let you know how amazing they are, you will all try to steal them from me next time, because they really were the best. There's about 20 consecutive campaigns of experience between all of them, and yet many of them said this was the campaign with the most talented staff that they had ever had the opportunity to work on as well. Everybody came to work hard every single day. We knocked on doors for a year in all kinds of weather, with only a little bit of complaining when it snowed or there was freezing rain on us, a little bit more when it was 30 degrees and we felt like we might pass out going up stairs. But everybody was committed to speaking

with constituents and appreciated the honour and the opportunity to speak with everyone across Ottawa West–Nepean.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: To the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, congratulations, and to your entire team. You sound like you had the best team in the election. Congratulations to you.

I’m just wondering what you may have heard at the door from renters in Ottawa West–Nepean. I know that’s a big issue for us in St. Paul’s, where over 60% are renters, so I’d love to hear what you heard from renters about housing affordability, the lack of real rent control from this government, speculation through the roof. How are they doing in Ottawa West–Nepean?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member for that great question. As I mentioned, about half of my riding rents, so I heard this a lot as we talked to constituents across the riding. So many people are feeling so squeezed and the lack of rent control means that their landlords are able to try to find ways to try to squeeze them out, to jack up the rent for the next tenant, and because rents are so high across Ottawa, there was a lot of incentive for landlords to be doing that. So, in addition to the high cost of rent, there were also serious concerns about units not being repaired, serious problems not being addressed within the unit as the landlord tried to edge someone out.

We absolutely need to be building more affordable housing, providing more options for people, but we also need to ensure that tenants are only charged what the last tenant paid so we get rid of that incentive to squeeze people out. The bill that was presented by some of my colleagues, including my colleague from Ottawa Centre in the previous Parliament, was very popular with our constituents, and I would urge the government to take advantage of that hunger and that goodwill by implementing that vacancy control so that renters can afford to stay in their home and have a decent place to live.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): One more quick question. The member for Ajax.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: To the member: You talked about being first and breaking ground in so many ways, and I wanted to ask you to share what that means to you and to your family. I’m sure it’s an impactful journey that you’ve been on.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I do recognize that as a white woman I don’t break as many barriers as some of my other colleagues, but it is an honour to be the first woman to represent Ottawa West–Nepean at the provincial level. I have two daughters, so I’m very proud to be providing that example to them, that women can succeed in politics and can represent our communities. And I’m also proud to be the first person representing the New Democratic Party for Ottawa West–Nepean, bringing those social democratic values to the west end of Ottawa and fighting for vulnerable communities, those living in poverty, who are in need of affordable housing and who are concerned about our

environment in the west end and who have felt for a long time like their voice hasn’t been represented in our politics.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election. I will be sharing my time with the member from Kingston and the Islands as well as the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

In the speech from the throne yesterday, the government did not mention climate change once. There was no mention of green space, parks, endangered species, trees or greenhouse gas emissions at all. At a time when there are wildfires on every continent, heat waves being experienced by much of the world, including Toronto, and the risk for floods increasing now more than ever, this government could not even say the words “climate crisis.”

And that’s what we’re in, Mr. Speaker, a climate crisis—a climate emergency. Just because this government doesn’t want to say those words doesn’t mean it’s not happening. This throne speech and budget that we are debating today mentions Highway 413 more times than “climate” or “environment.” How is that possible, considering the unbelievable crisis we are in? The only plan that this budget has for the environment is electric vehicles, and we can’t manufacture our way out of the climate crisis. We can’t solely focus on electric vehicles and ignore the limited energy supply that we have.

We know that Ontario is facing energy supply strain, so where is the increased investment in the renewable energy supply to support EVs? Where is the funding for any conservation efforts whatsoever? The cheapest, quickest and easiest climate action measure is conservation, and we are not even considering it. How does this make sense?

1700

This is supposed to be Ontario’s Plan to Build, but we can’t focus on building infrastructure while doing nothing to address the high cost of inaction on climate change. We need infrastructure to get goods to market, but what happens when our roads flood? We’ve seen this happen in Toronto in 2013, and again in 2018. It is only getting more prevalent, and the damage is getting worse and worse.

There is no mention in the infrastructure chapters of the budget for how we can make infrastructure more resilient for climate change. This will cost Ontarians tens of millions of dollars in the long term to fix. Every single time we have extreme weather, we will need to pay to repair the damage caused, and not a single line in the budget is given for this. How is this economically responsible? How is this being fiscally conservative?

This government loves to say it’s open for business, but where is the investment in green jobs? Why can’t we recognize that investing in a resilient future would truly make Ontario open for business by creating even more employment opportunities? Instead of waiting to pay for our inaction on climate, how about we actually try to address solutions to mitigate the worst of the climate crisis? How about we take a proactive approach to what we know is already happening, at the same time bringing

thousands of jobs to the province through climate resilience? We can do better. We can protect our future, build resilient infrastructure and create jobs for the next generation—green jobs.

Ontarians are worried about their future. Ontarians of all ages are concerned about the climate emergency, especially our children and youth, who feel a sense of hopelessness and despair about these current predictions. They are worried about job opportunities and the turbulent economic outcome that we are seeing today. On top of this affordability crisis, our young people are also facing pervasive climate anxiety, and this government won't even say the word "climate" in their throne speech.

Everyone is looking to the Ontario government to be an environmental leader. They are looking to us to help mitigate the climate emergency and to do so now. The cost of inaction is too high. We must act now.

I relinquish my time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

M. Ted Hsu: Je me lève aujourd'hui afin de discuter de quelque chose d'important qui ne figure point dans le discours du trône.

It's the energy supply crisis knocking at our door at the same time that we have a climate crisis, which is already the elephant in the room. Experts have been looking at the closure of the Pickering nuclear plant and the urgency of climate action. This Premier has had four years, five budgets, and has moved us backwards, if anything: cancelled renewable energy projects; not paid attention to conservation, demand management or storage; and, last June, in Bill 276, repealed legislation that prioritized and promoted renewable energy.

The Independent Electricity System Operator says there are going to be shortages starting from the summer of 2025 onwards. Because of the Pickering closure, we expect shortages of electricity on peak summer days. Actually, this year we had a problem just a few days ago in Belleville when the city told residents that there was a danger of rolling blackouts if they didn't cut their electricity usage. This is a canary in the energy minister's coal mine. It's in his riding, the city of Belleville. Starting from the winter of 2023, IESO is expecting winter shortages, and it's worthy to note that on really cold winter days Ontario actually exports electricity to Quebec.

We're expecting shortages and yet we need to transition to electric vehicles. If that's the government plan, we'll need more generation and infrastructure to support electric vehicles.

Now, there was no mention in the throne speech about new clean energy generation, storage, conservation, demand management, load shifting, transmission infrastructure or sourcing electricity from other provinces. What's the result? The result is delays. Imagine you want to buy electricity from another province and it's the last minute. You're in a really poor negotiating position, and that's going to make things more costly. It's going to be more costly because now we're considering more nuclear energy without planning properly.

It's going to be more costly to procure new natural gas plants in a rush, and they're only going to increase our greenhouse gas emissions. It's going to be more costly when manufacturing is challenged by lack of supply or reliability. This government will talk about cheaper electricity, but I say, don't be penny wise and pound foolish, and don't ignore supply and reliability that's needed by people at home and at their workplace. This issue is poised to bite us in a couple of years. Don't forget to think ahead. Don't wait for another crisis. We've got enough crises today. Health care, cost of living, climate change—nothing new in the throne speech about these either.

I would like to say to the Premier, please don't wait. To the Minister of Energy: Don't wait. Don't lead from behind.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: A speech from the throne is supposed to express the intentions of the government's plan to tackle its challenges for the next four years, yet after months of waiting, while crises of affordability and health care worsen, it did not do that in the throne speech. The throne speech failed to outline any new solutions to the problems that threaten the present and the future of this province, signalling something far more alarming than this government's lack of vision. It laid bare a refusal on the part of the Premier and his government to recognize or to address a deepening crisis that the people of Ontario are struggling with. Throwing out token phrases such as "more can still be done" and there being "no easy solutions" is really a speech that waxes ambiguous.

Interjections.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: And I see the government side is agreeing with me.

Frankly, throughout the past four years, this Conservative government has not stood up for the most vulnerable, and we see that it's persisting along that same course. It's not standing up for students, for parents, for teachers and education workers, for our public education system, and it will not stand up for our health care workers.

As my colleagues have already outlined, there's no mention of the climate crisis. The government simply missed the boat.

So why the big delay in this throne speech and in this budget when there's nothing new here? The government is ignoring that we have rising inflation, and a deepening crisis of affordability that is sweeping across this province. They're unwilling to take the action that is needed right now to address soaring rents and skyrocketing inflation.

They're unwilling to take the action needed by more than 500,000 individuals and families in Ontario counting on ODSP for their next meal. It should now be crystal clear to the Premier and his government that a 5% rate increase is not nearly enough for the most vulnerable people in our province to survive on; it falls well short. When asked whether he could live on \$1,169 a month, the finance minister admitted that this is only a step in the right direction. But it's the wrong step and it's too little too late.

In my own riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, we have been receiving many troubling calls and emails from those

who have to exist on ODSF. One of my constituents, Bruce, called us last week and said that with the price of everything going higher, “This 5% bump is basically chicken scratch.” Those are his words. He expressed frustration over the lack of information and the lack of urgency to respond to this need.

Speaker, with the limited time that I have, I want to touch on public education, which should be the bedrock of this province and the province’s future. Yet in the speech that we just heard, we heard the words “highways” and “roads” 27 times, and we heard the word “students” just six times; “schools” only five times. When did public education fall off the radar of the priority of a provincial government? It should be its number one mandate. It’s a shame that this government is trying to do really almost no work by handing out cheques to parents rather than fixing the public education system to make it safe for students and education workers to return to school this fall.

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Speaker, we obviously have a long road ahead of us in this 43rd Parliament. I look forward to working with you and all members of this House to hold this government to account.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the Liberal members?

Mr. John Yakabuski: We’ll do this as a collective because they somehow spoke as a collective as well.

I heard so many comments about, “My gosh, energy policy.” We lost 330,000 manufacturing jobs in this province, almost primarily because of the government’s energy policy when the Liberals were in power. They left the province in droves. We’re refurbishing nuclear plants so we have energy for the future. Our minister is investing in small modular reactors for the future so that we have the energy for the future. All the Liberal government did was put a \$50-billion tax on the people of the province of Ontario under their energy policy. We’ve got jobs coming back to Ontario. Do you know why? Because of our energy policy. Because they know there will be a secure supply of energy for the future.

I understand the new members weren’t there for the tragedy of the Green Energy Act. But I would ask the members to stand up in their place and actually say to the people of Ontario, “We apologize for the Green Energy Act. We recognize the damage that it did to this economy and”—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will invite a response. The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I hardly heard the name of my riding, Speaker.

The member is exaggerating, frankly. Actually, I want to applaud him for speaking up for nuclear energy. I used to live in his riding. It includes Chalk River and Deep

River. So, I applaud him for speaking up for his riding. But he is exaggerating.

What you’ve got to do is, you’ve got to put the energy infrastructure in first, and that will attract companies. You can’t say, “Oh, you want to locate a plant here? We’ll build in four or six years the electricity transmission infrastructure that you need.”

Let me give you, Mr. Speaker, an example from my riding. The city of Kingston did a lot of work to put in sewage infrastructure. You think, how does that connect to manufacturing? Well, we had yogurt companies come to Kingston and say, “Wow, you have got a lot of extra sewage capacity. That makes it easy for us to locate here.” They didn’t find that similar capacity in another place. So, infrastructure in place will attract manufacturing and jobs.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I want to give a personal congratulations to the member for Beaches–East York. Your predecessor was quite a voice in this Legislature, really addressing systemic oppression, calling out homelessness and poverty, anti-Black racism and anti-Semitism.

With Emancipation Month being celebrated here inaugurally in August, I’m wondering—to the member from Beaches–East York—what some of your plans or some of your commitments or passions around addressing anti-Black racism and other forms of systemic oppression here in the Legislature will look like.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s for that.

I was recently part of the Freedom Train, launching the start of Emancipation Month the other day. It was amazing to see everyone involved with that and that it’s going on and so celebrated and so important. Jean Augustine was there, at 85 years of age, after midnight, dancing at Sheppard subway station. It was phenomenal.

I’m happy to work with everyone here on always bringing everyone’s voices to the table.

Today, we’re talking about the high cost of inaction for not addressing the climate emergency and investing in the infrastructure that is vitally needed. We’re talking about youth, who are so worried. When we grew up, what were we thinking of? The hole in the ozone layer. Acid rain. The kids nowadays are not—some of them don’t want to procreate. Some of them are so fearful of their future, of the economics, jobs and whatnot, they’re in despair. They’re feeling hopelessness. What can we do for them? We can be environmental leaders. It behooves us. Some of us have children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. We want to look them in the eye and know that we’ve done the right thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry, Speaker. I’m used to last session where we could sit basically anywhere except for your seat.

I just want to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands and all of my colleagues who spoke so eloquently. I do want to say it’s really great when, the first time you say something, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–

Pembroke stands up because you got a burr under him, which is great.

I just want to reiterate, it's about a problem that we're having right now and that we're going to have in the future because the current government is not building enough capacity in the system. Can you elaborate further?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Let me elaborate in terms of electric vehicles. We are hoping that we will have millions of electric vehicles in Ontario, but that requires infrastructure. It starts even from making sure that enough houses have enough amperage in the service. We've got to upgrade houses, we've got to upgrade building codes so that people can install electric vehicle chargers in their homes. Also, you need those extra amps if you want to have heat pumps. Whether it's for heating your hot water or cooling your home, heat pumps are part of the future. It requires more electricity infrastructure.

Then, throughout the province, you need more transmission infrastructure to go from renewable energy projects or maybe storage locations to the rest of the grid. This is something we need to invest in today, and we can take advantage of that tomorrow.

I'll give you another example, Speaker. Sometimes—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I will not do that, and yield my time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Energy is next.

Hon. Todd Smith: Well, thank you, Speaker. I'm surprised to hear the Liberals talking as much about energy as they are here today, to be quite honest, given their record, but the member did raise some important questions or did have some comments of importance.

We are dealing with the supply gap in the province of Ontario and we're doing it in a way that provides a proper procurement. There's a mid-term RFP that's currently out there; there's a long-term RFP as well where we're actually getting companies that currently exist and have generation capacity in the province to bid on providing electricity to the grid here in Ontario.

I'm just wondering if the member opposite believes that we should have a competitive procurement process, or if we should go back to the way the that Liberals did it where they got donations—political donations—and then awarded unreliable intermittent contracts under the Green Energy Act that drove the price of electricity up by 12% to 15% year over year. I'm wondering, which is the better option, from the member opposite.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Of course, we believe in competitive bidding. The point of my speech was that we've got to start early. We've got to recognize the problem early. I thank the member opposite for recognizing that there are supply issues, which the first member who asked me the question didn't seem to acknowledge. I thank the member for acknowledging that there are supply issues, but this government could have started acting sooner. We know that in the future we cannot rely on burning fossil fuels to generate the electricity we need. We've got to start earlier, we've got to acknowledge that difference, and that is the point of my speech.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I want to start by acknowledging the two newer members who got up to speak. I remember what that was like for me eight years ago. When you were asked to get up and do a question or speak for two minutes, it seemed like a really, really big deal. After you've been here a while, you'll roll through 20 minutes without even thinking about it, wondering where your time went.

I'm going to ask a question to the member for Scarborough—Guildwood. I actually want to recognize too that it's kind of amusing watching the Liberals and the Conservatives argue over hydro, because it was a Conservative government that started the privatization of hydro. The Liberals then picked up the ball and really went for it, and the Conservatives continue to drive up the price of hydro. It's really a competition of who privatized it better.

Interjection: Who privatized it better?

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Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Who privatized it better.

I want to ask the member for Scarborough—Guildwood: We know that under the Liberals there was back-to-work legislation. We know there was Bill 115, similar to what the Conservatives are doing to the nurses now. So, I'm just wondering, when did you have this change of heart? With the Conservatives, we know they're going to Conservative, we know they're going to privatize—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. And to reply, the member from Scarborough—Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for her question. I was very clear in my remarks that there's no greater priority in our province than public education. I think that that's something that that we should all agree, on all sides of the House: that we need to invest in the future of this province, we need to invest in public education. And we have labour negotiations that are happening right now. The teacher agreements are set to expire. I would expect that this government would create a fair bargaining process at the bargaining table and do deals with our education workers and with our teacher unions—

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: It's an honour to rise today to address this assembly as the elected representative for the beautiful riding of Essex. I thank the people of Essex for choosing me as their MPP, and I promise them that I will represent their interests in this assembly to the very best of my ability.

Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your election. I undertake to assist you in maintaining the proper decorum of this chamber.

This is an inaugural speech, and in the tradition of the inaugural speeches, it is the role of the speech-maker to give the fellow members of the House a glimpse into the speech-maker's personal experience and personal philosophy. And if I'm going to do that, then I'm going to have to start at a place called the second concession of Anderdon township, because that's where I grew up.

As a young person growing up on the second concession of Anderdon township, I could hop on my bike and ride down the concession road and see all of my neighbours, all of whom we knew by name. We knew the

Cristofaros and the Simones and the Pacittis. We knew the Sauros and the Dinunzios, the Delmontes and the Contes. And as we rode our bike down the second concession, big 18-wheel trucks would rumble by us on their way to the south end, where they would be going to Allied Chemical. That's where my father worked.

My father was Biase Leardi. He worked at Allied Chemical, just like everybody else's dad in town, or so I thought at the time in my child's mind. My dad had what we call a "good" job. He had interesting work, good pay, a pension and health benefits. That was important because he had four kids to raise.

We continue to talk about good jobs today. Good jobs are ones that give you interesting work. Maybe they pay you well and give you a pension with benefits, such as health benefits. Good jobs today are in the skilled trades. Boilermakers, plumbers, pipefitters, electricians, carpenters, drywallers, bricklayers—these jobs give you an interesting career. They might give you good pay and a pension and health benefits. So, I'm very glad to have heard in the throne speech yesterday that Ontario will continue making strong recruitment efforts to get people into the skilled trades so that they can have good jobs just like my father had.

Now, if I rode my bike down the other end of the second concession, I would pass all my neighbours and we knew all those neighbours by name. There were the DeLucas and the Cervis and the Rosatis. I could ride my bike down that road, around the corner and up Middle Side Road, and that would bring me to Anderdon Public School. We all went to Anderdon Public School. I went there; my brother Peter, went there; my sister Marta went there; my sister Carla went there. We thought then that Anderdon Public School was probably the best school in the world.

We did a lot of things at Anderdon Public School. We played every sport you can imagine. We had all sorts of clubs. We even had a chess club and a stamp collecting club. We loved school. Part of the reason we loved it so much was because we got to go there with our friends and we got to play sports and we got to participate in activities. So, I'm glad to hear in the throne speech about the government's commitment to have young people in full-time in-person learning with a full complement of extra-curricular activities.

We took school very seriously. My mother taught us to study hard. My mother is Anna Leardi and she's 83 years old. She taught us to respect our teachers and we certainly did. We had wonderful teachers, like Ms. Glenna Bond, who taught us to sing, and Ms. Valerie Luscott, who gave us a love for literature. We had Mr. David Hernandez, who we liked to call Dr. David Hernandez. We had Mr. Craig Parrot, who I adored because Mr. Parrot talked politics with me in grade 6.

Now, in some homes politics is a taboo topic, but not in my house, not when I was growing up. Politics was a common topic, and that was probably because of my uncle Remo. Now, if you walk outside these doors and if you look at the walls of this building, you'll see Remo Mancini's name carved in the wall several times, because he was elected to this chamber several times. Remo

Mancini is my mother's brother and he taught us about politics.

Now, so far, I've only talked about my little world growing up on the 2nd concession of Anderdon township, but, as you get older, the world gets a little bit bigger. I joined the working world by getting a job at Boblo Island Amusement Park. Boblo Island is obviously an island and it's located in the Detroit River. We got there by taking a little ferry back and forth across the river. But the really impressive ferries, the big ones, well, those came from Detroit. They brought thousands of visitors down the Detroit River to Boblo Island. They were called the Columbia and the Ste. Clair. They plied the waters in front of my hometown of Amherstburg. By coincidence, in front of my hometown of Amherstburg there's a channel. It's called the Livingston Channel, and many boats from all around the world will come and use that channel. You can watch them on a daily basis. Some of my favourites come from as far as away as Thunder Bay.

Now, we didn't know it back then, but ports and shipping channels and things like highways and roads, well, these are key pieces of infrastructure. They're vital to maintaining Ontario's economy, and I'm pleased that the throne speech made a commitment to the continuation of building and maintaining key pieces of infrastructure.

I mentioned the Detroit River, but there's another river in my riding in the county of Essex that's very important to me.

Monsieur le Président, j'ai mentionné la rivière Détroit, mais il y a une autre rivière dans le comté d'Essex qui est très importante pour moi. Si je conduisais mon auto jusqu'à l'autre bout de la route de la deuxième concession, j'arriverais à la Rivière-aux-Canards. Là-bas, les familles avaient des noms français comme Seguin, Bezaire, Renaud, Meloche, Bondy et Bénéteau. Ces familles françaises étaient différentes de ma famille. Nous, les Leardi, venions d'arriver ici au Canada en 1955. Mais les familles avec les noms français, il s'agissait de familles qui vivaient au Canada depuis plus de 200 ans.

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Il y avait une fille spéciale qui vivait là-bas à la Rivière-aux-Canards. Elle s'appelait Jacqueline Magri. Sa mère était une Bondy et sa grand-mère était une Bénéteau. Elle habitait à la Rivière-aux-Canards et elle fréquentait une école de langue française. Comme le destin l'a voulu, Jacqueline et moi sommes tombés amoureux et nous nous sommes mariés.

Le centre de la communauté de la Rivière-aux-Canards est l'église paroissiale appelée Saint-Joseph. Aujourd'hui encore, c'est le monument le plus reconnu de tout le comté d'Essex. C'est là où nous nous sommes mariés. C'est la même paroisse où les parents de Jacqueline se sont mariés. Ses parents sont Tony et Audrey Magri, deux personnes qui sont des piliers de la communauté. Les grands-parents de Jacqueline se sont mariés à la même église, et ses arrière-grands-parents se sont mariés à la même église, Saint-Joseph, aussi. C'est une tradition chez nous, monsieur le Président.

Mais comme je l'ai déjà dit, le monde s'agrandit à mesure que l'on gagne en maturité. Parfois, les traditions

passent et meurent. Vos enfants grandissent plus vite que vous ne le pensez. Ma fille Carmen a déjà 22 ans et travaille dans le domaine des arts. Ma fille Miriam se prépare à commencer l'université à Amsterdam. Mon fils, Andrew, a un horaire chargé avec la ligue de soccer de l'Ontario. Le monde s'agrandit à mesure que l'on gagne en maturité. C'est pour ça qu'il est important de s'accrocher à des leçons que vous pouvez utiliser toute votre vie.

Et cela me ramène à l'école publique d'Anderdon.

And that brings me back to Anderdon Public School. One day I was walking past the grade 8 classroom and I noticed there was a book on the shelf. This book had a dragon on the front and the dragon was sitting on a hoard of gold. I wasn't in grade 8 at the time but I asked the teacher, "May I borrow that book?" And she loaned it to me. I read the book cover to cover in three days, and then I read it again.

The book was a fictional story, by the author J.R.R. Tolkien. The story is called *The Hobbit*. Some members of this assembly might be familiar with that story but please allow me to give you my interpretation of it. The story is about a hobbit, a small person of about three feet high. The hobbit is from a quiet and insignificant part of the world where nothing out of the ordinary ever happens. But this particular hobbit gets swept off on an adventure and he actually finds himself doing things that are quite out of the ordinary, especially for someone from such a quiet and insignificant part of the world. For example, he winds up saving his friends more than once, he discovers the secret to a long-lost kingdom and he even helps stop a war.

But the interesting thing about the story is that the hobbit does not possess any remarkable physical power and he does not possess any remarkable intelligence—no, he does not. But he does possess one remarkable thing. He has what I would call strength of character.

It is strength of character which helped my immigrant parents start a new life in Canada. It is strength of character which helped our predecessors in this chamber build a greater Ontario. It is strength of character that helps parents care for their children and helps children care for their parents when their parents become frail. Strength of character is something anyone can have, regardless of their size or where they're from. You can possess strength of character regardless of your age or your background or your education.

Mr. Speaker, as I close my comments for today, I know that some days in this assembly will be challenging, I know that some days in this assembly will be confrontational, I know that some days in this assembly will be downright awful. But I would like to wish every member of this assembly the strength of character to carry out their duties to the people of Ontario in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to welcome the new member to the Legislature. I want to encourage him to take a ride on his bike down the street, where you're going to find a previous member, Natyshak. He was a great friend

of mine, one who was a fierce member here who always carried the heart of Essex to this House. I see it in you, and I look forward to building that relationship with you. I also look forward, one of these days, to taking my bike—it's going to be on my Harley, by the way—and going down there, because I know your area quite well. I've met with many of the Lyme advocates who are out there, and I encourage you to reach out to them because they so desperately need some help. I'm going to look at you as an ally to help me pursue the government to really provide the services and the care and the treatment that many of these people feel in your area.

I really don't have a question for you other than to say, welcome to the House. I enjoyed your inaugural speech. I look forward to working with you as an ally.

Don't ever be shy to cross the floor, as you're going to see many of our caucus members cross the floor as well. We are going to be in some challenging days ahead. I encourage you, as the hobbit did: Don't use the cloak to hide and run away. We're going to have some very difficult discussions in here.

Again, I look forward to working with you in the many years to come. Welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I was delighted to hear the speech from the member from Essex—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've got to let the member reply. I apologize.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: In reply to the kind words offered by the member from Algoma: I look forward to exchanging very heartfelt and useful conversation with the member. I sincerely hope that I will have the opportunity to visit his great riding, because that would be something that I would find very enriching.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. I'm always excited to wait my turn.

Congratulations to the member from Essex for his election. I'm really thrilled to be a colleague of yours in this Legislature.

I want to take this opportunity to ask you a little bit more about your family, coming from immigrant roots, and how that has really developed your sense of character as well, being in this Legislature, and what kind of inspiration you draw from your family.

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Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the kind member for the question. I do have the most intelligent and best member of my family in the House today, my wife, Jacqueline Leardi. There she is, sitting in the Legislature.

With regard to other members of my family, regretfully, my father passed away in 1998. But as they often say, every day that I get older, that old guy gets smarter and smarter because I recognize the wisdom that was in him. And the other members of my family—well, I have many members of my extended family, especially on my mother's side. She had the good fortune of having five

brothers. Those five brothers are very close to her and they continue to have a very good and loving relationship.

I am very, very pleased to be able to say that the experience of my immigrant family is very similar to the experience that other people in this House would have been brought up in as well. Whether your immigrant parents came from this part of the world or that part of the world, one of the common experiences that immigrant parents have is that they want their children to do better than they did. Whatever that means to you, I know what it meant to me, and it meant that my parents sacrificed for my sake. I learned what sacrifice means from my parents, who were awesome people.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The members for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'd like to congratulate the member on making his inaugural speech. Thank you for sharing some of your journey with us. It's always fascinating to hear what brought members to this House, and I appreciate having that insight into your journey.

You mentioned that your mother is 83 years old. I'm sure she's very proud of you being elected here, especially given your family history.

I spoke to many people in Ottawa West–Nepean over the past year who are very concerned about their aging parents. Under the circumstances, they are absolutely terrified to put them into long-term-care facilities. Also, they've been struggling to provide care for them at home, with private home care services not being reliable or showing up. So, a lot of the burden of care is falling on the sandwich generation.

I hope that's not a problem you're experiencing within your own family, but I'm hoping you can comment a little bit on the need to make sure we're providing great care for our parents.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I did mention the fact that sometimes we require great strength of character to care for our parents, especially when they get frail. There are many good examples. The member previously made a reference to her strong religious upbringing. There are many religious figures who have often said that rather than looking upon the mission of caring for your frail and aging parents as a burden, you should look at it as a gift, as it opens up a door of opportunity for you to learn much about your parents and perhaps even more about yourself. Thank you.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I've gotten to know the member from Essex a little bit over the last year and a half. I had an opportunity to get down to his beautiful riding and meet some of the folks who he has actually talked about today, which was kind of neat.

There's one thing that I wanted to ask him. I've had an opportunity to meet a lot of small business owners in your riding, folks who are out there providing good jobs and really helping advance and push forward Ontario's economy. It was obviously a big part of the throne speech. I wondered if maybe you would like to touch on a few of the small businesses that are in your riding, that are doing those good things.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: In the riding of Essex, we could talk about many small businesses. I guess "small" could include small businesses such as the Waterfront Ice Cream store, located on the beautiful waterfront of the town of Amherstburg, run by a wonderful family by the name of DeLuca. Or we could talk about other businesses. This riding called Essex has 18 wineries.

Interjection.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: And my friend to the left here is invited to move and come to the riding of Essex and enjoy those 18 wineries. In fact, it's very difficult to drive anywhere in the riding of Essex without passing a winery.

Some might describe that as one of the most blessed parts of the world—and those would include some of the small businesses that would be in the description that the member offered.

The riding of Essex is also, interestingly enough, closely allied with the automobile industry. Oftentimes, we think in terms of big industries when we think of manufacturing, but the manufacturing process also includes many small processes, second-tier and third-tier suppliers, and those suppliers who supply the suppliers. Those are spotted all around the riding of Essex.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'd like to congratulate you on your speech. I enjoyed it. It was a pretty good speech.

You mentioned—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, it was. It was okay.

You mentioned "DeLuca." I just want to let you know that I'm married to a DeLuca, so we have something in common. You look like you're short, but I can't tell since you're sitting down.

Also, I believe you said your wife is Jacqueline. My daughter is Jacqueline. So, I thought that was pretty neat. As you were doing your speech, I was listening and thinking, "Wow. I've got to get this guy to come to Niagara Falls." And I'll try and go to your—I've never been to your riding. I have been to Windsor once in a while to watch hockey games.

You touched on something that I thought was interesting in your speech, about the strength of character. I don't usually give advice for free, but my suggestion to you is that you're going to need all the strength and character over the course of the next four years.

I wish you nothing but the best. Enjoy your time here. It goes really quick. So, good job—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. There's time for a brief reply.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the member from Niagara Falls for those comments. It is to his credit that he has both a DeLuca and a Jacqueline in his family.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's truly an honour to rise today for what is really my first speech in this new Parliament.

I want to start by thanking the good people of Davenport for again giving me the honour and the responsibility of representing them in this place. It is an honour today to speak, on their behalf, on the government's throne speech.

Over the course of the election, I had the chance to speak to thousands of people across my community, and certainly in the last few years as well, and to hear their concerns, their fears, their hopes. I know some of what I heard is going to be very familiar to members here from their own conversations on the doorstep, no matter what part of this great province we represent. It was things like people very much still feeling the impacts of COVID-19. They've lost loved ones. They've lost employment. They've fallen sick themselves or have experienced long-term effects of being sick. Families are still adjusting to new routines after almost three years of life-changing public health restrictions and upheaval.

People are feeling the pressure of a world where everything costs more. They're joining people who were already feeling the pressure of high rents and credit card bills and student debt before the pandemic.

I met people, as I always do—and many come to my community office for support—who are barely scraping by on Ontario's really cruel ODSP rates, trying to make a measly \$1,000 cheque cover rent in a city like Toronto or anywhere in this province right now, food, medications.

Young families are packing up and leaving our community because they can't find an affordable place to live and raise a family.

I talked to seniors—and this I really find heart-breaking—who are struggling with the reality that their grandchildren might end up worse than they were, with fewer opportunities.

Speaker, the feeling out there wasn't one that I would describe as particularly hopeful, and I think we saw how that feeling impacted our democratic process, with the lowest voter turnout in the history of our province. That is something that none of us should be proud of, and all of us need to take some responsibility for that as elected officials. It's just one symptom of a malaise, I think, that's setting in in our democracy.

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Another is the continued warping of the vote through the first-past-the-post system, a system that once again delivered 100% of the power to a party that just got 41% of the vote—and I don't say that, Speaker, to diminish the results or the victory of my colleagues or the victory of my colleagues across the way. But I do want to remind the government that although their majority grew in this place, it should not be mistaken for the confidence of a majority of Ontarians, and it is most certainly not a blank cheque to impose a narrow and regressive agenda of cuts and privatization on this province.

The thing is, people aren't looking for business as usual, because it has not been working in this province. They want to see us, all of us, get to work and deliver for them. Governing is a tremendous responsibility, and those of us on this side of the House have been given a tremendous responsibility as well, to watch closely, to hold to account, to propose alternatives and to defend the institutions and the services that people rely on in our province.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the speech from the throne, to hear what might have changed since the election, because for Ontarians, as I mentioned,

a lot has changed, and it changes every day, from inflation, which is absolutely exploding and driving up the cost of everything, to a seventh wave of COVID and a new health care crisis that's worsening every single day. We raised many of those issues here this morning. Since May, we have seen the impacts of climate change on communities across our country and more extreme weather here in Ontario, raising questions about Ontario, raising questions about our readiness for what's to come, and workers, despite this government's rhetoric, are still fighting for respect, for basic supports, like better wages and better paid sick days.

Did the speech from the throne or the subsequently re-tabled budget convince me that this government has changed course? It certainly did not. Did it convince me that this government has heard what Ontarians have been saying? It certainly did not. Did it convince me that this government has been doing any of the work that the people of Ontario expected them to be doing over recent months? It did not, and I don't think anyone watching the speech at home was convinced either, and that's really truly a shame.

Instead of taking urgent action to repeal Bill 124, address working conditions for health care workers, ramp up real investment in hospitals, the government is shrugging off the crisis that's facing our health care system. It's offering more of the same while people languish in hallways waiting for care.

Instead of putting supports directly back into classrooms, which I'm going to get back to in a few minutes, to help students get back on their feet, we've got a back-of-the-napkin plan that's going to divert public dollars away from our public education system and into private services. That is shameful.

Instead of delivering real relief from the increasing cost of living, this government continues to let the biggest corporate players carry on gouging Ontarians on essentials like groceries.

Instead of reversing four years of cuts to environmental programs and outlining a plan to beat our targets, this throne speech didn't even include the words "climate change."

As I said earlier, governing, we know, is a tremendous responsibility. It requires us to think, I hope, beyond the electoral cycle. It's really incumbent on the government to take their responsibility seriously, to replace hubris with humility, and maybe, sometimes, even try to offer Ontarians some hope. I think we could all use some of that.

Ontario deserves a government that's going to believe in the good in people; a government that understands that when we look out for each other we're all better off; one that's willing to use the power of government in the public interest, to tilt the scales away from inequality and division and toward an economy that's going to deliver prosperity for absolutely everyone.

We can start with the basics, right? I think we have a shared commitment to the ideals we hold as Ontarians and as Canadians, like universal public health care, like high-quality public education, like the right to housing, to be able to afford to keep a roof over your head. Right now, in Ontario, all those things are at risk.

This throne speech was an opportunity for this government to recommit to those fundamentals. But instead of outlining what I think we're hoping for, like a bold agenda that meets the urgent concerns of today, that charted a new course for the future of this province, this throne speech actually asked Ontarians to expect less of their government. It patronizes Ontarians. It shrugs off the biggest issues in health care, in housing, in education with a message of, "There are no easy solutions out there, people," while it ignores the obvious policy choices that are available to it, like funding public services, like investing in people, like investing in communities. At a time when people are struggling harder than they've ever struggled to make ends meet, this government, through the throne speech, just didn't offer any relief.

This government is still going forward with the largest rent increase in a decade this January. In my community, that's going to mean that more people are forced to move because they can't afford that rent increase. The absence of real rent control means that as soon as one of those tenants is priced out, I can assure you, the rent is going to skyrocket even further out of reach for the next person, for the next family, and those folks have nowhere to go.

If you want to see the results of this government's housing policy, I invite you to visit any of our downtown parks or ravines where people have been forced to sleep in the rough because shelters are so darn overcrowded it is shameful. New data from the city of Toronto's shelter, support and housing administration showed that over the last year and a half, 40 people a night have been denied shelter after calling central intake in search of a bed. We should all of us, every one of us, be ashamed that a province as prosperous as ours can allow people to go without basic housing, that we can watch the problem grow and so consistently fail the most vulnerable among us. Something has got to change.

The new plan that this government has put forward for housing is to weaken the power of elected municipal councils in Toronto and Ottawa—the people who are, let's face it, the closest to the residents of our communities and

the closest to the big planning issues. Indeed, what that move is about is really concentrating power, moving it away from the people and into the backrooms.

I want to return to another issue that demands greater focus from the government in this new term, and that is, as I mentioned earlier, the ongoing health care crisis—and it is a crisis. Despite what this Minister of Health and this Premier may think it is, it is a crisis. As I've mentioned earlier and if you're opening any news site, you'll see that our system is in deep trouble. Health care workers are absolutely exhausted. They're demoralized. They're getting sick on the job. Wait times are increasing exponentially and emergency rooms in communities across the province cannot keep their doors open—emergency rooms. It's really, I got to say, hard to remember a time when it was this bad. I was doing health policy research in the Harris years, I will say, in those government years, and in some of the Liberal years, and it's hard to remember a time when it was this bad.

The throne speech tries to reassure Ontarians. In it, the government claims that the most high-urgency patients are finishing their emergency visit within target times. But you don't have to look very far to see beyond this government's rose-coloured glasses, because it isn't even close to reality and we know that. I want to quote somebody here: "Woman Says She Blacked Out from Pain During 19-Hour Wait in Windsor ER before Learning She Has Cancer." That's a particularly upsetting headline from CBC News yesterday.

I shared earlier this morning some stories from my own community of conversations I had just yesterday with nurses working in ERs. Is this the kind of care that Ontarians can expect under this government? Is it even remotely acceptable to any of us here?

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is 6 of the clock, so this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	
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Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
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Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

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Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
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Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
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Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
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Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
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Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulrone, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
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Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
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Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
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Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	