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Lundi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 August 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 août 2022

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: This is my first opportunity in the 43rd Parliament to thank residents of Oakville North–Burlington who put their trust in me for a second time and re-elected me to represent them at Queen's Park. I am grateful to my campaign team and the volunteers who worked hard to achieve a victory in our community.

Under the leadership of our Premier, we presented a strong and clear message to the people in my community and across Ontario: rebuilding Ontario's economy, building highways and key infrastructure, working for workers, keeping costs down by cutting gas taxes and building 1.5 million new homes over 10 years.

We promised to get things done for Ontario—and the people responded. Because in communities like ours, this government was getting things done long before the election: five new schools in four years; more than 1,100 new long-term-care beds; \$295 million for electric vehicles at Ford Canada in Oakville; and 120 acres added to the greenbelt along Fourteen Mile Creek. And we are continuing to get things done in Ontario: catching up in schools with \$225 million for families with kids—and \$26.6 billion for education this year, the highest ever; keeping our hospitals open with 6,000 new health care workers; and \$10-a-day child care.

We've got a great record, a great plan, and we can look forward to a great future for the people across Ontario.

HOUSING

Mr. Jeff Burch: My constituents in Niagara Centre need affordable places to live right now. I've been telling this government that repeatedly since 2018. The affordable housing crisis has been getting worse and worse over this government's term and they have done nothing to address it. Wait-lists in Niagara are out of control, and with rising costs, folks are becoming more and more desperate.

My office heard from Barry Smith, who lives in Welland with his wife and five-year-old daughter. Barry is on disability. His wife worked but didn't qualify for CERB. They were suddenly faced with a single ODSP income.

His wife was then diagnosed with a rare lung disorder and is now also disabled. She's applied for ODSP, but because of health care backlogs, she is stuck waiting for a doctor's report.

They've lived in their home in Welland for 10 years, never late on rent and never any problems. Now, they have to move because the landlord says they are renovating and moving in. Their rent was \$1,000 a month. They've looked and looked and have been turned down by property management companies over and over. One such place was a basement apartment renting for \$1,600 a month. The requirements to apply are a credit score of 700 or more, and you need to be working. It doesn't matter that they are excellent tenants and wonderful people; it's all about the numbers—a dehumanized process.

1020

I want to once again urge this government to listen to the stories of Barry; of Steve, whom I spoke about back in April; and of Christine and Dave Hunt, whose story I told in November, and act swiftly to ensure people have affordable, safe places to live. The government has an obligation to all Ontarians, regardless of their background, to ensure they can keep a roof over their head, because housing is a human right.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning, Speaker. You'll know that the world-renowned Abilities Centre, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary, is situated in Whitby. So I am particularly pleased that its membership and town residents can now apply for, renew and replace lost or stolen accessible parking permits online from the comfort of their homes.

Local not-for-profits, like Community Care Durham, which support disabled residents will also be able to take advantage of this full suite of online services any time, anywhere. What is clear is that we are improving our services to make life easier for all Ontarians, especially those with accessibility needs.

With these new online services, residents can apply for their new accessible parking permits, renew subject-to-change permits and replace lost or stolen permits. Providing a full suite of online options to obtain an accessible parking permit is a major step forward for the hundreds of thousands of members of the Abilities Centre, making services more accessible to them and organizations supporting them, like Community Care Durham.

RIDING OF WINDSOR WEST

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm honoured to rise in the House as the MPP for Windsor West for a third term. I want to thank my constituents for again placing their trust in me. I want to thank my family. No MPP can effectively do their job without the support of their family. Every one of us in this House can attest to that. Thank you to my campaign team: Farah, Kallie, Robin, Ian, Darlene, Mirna, Brian, Mo, Melanie, Dougie and Joyce, and to every volunteer for all their work supporting me and the people of Windsor West.

I rise today knowing many in my community are struggling to make ends meet. The immense pressure from increasing costs of living and stagnant wages is causing great distress for families in my community.

Everyone in this province deserves a safe, stable place to call home. They deserve access to food and shelter without having to choose between the two or to rely on food banks.

People with disabilities live in legislated poverty, something this government could change, but won't.

Mental health and addiction struggles are impacting many in my community and across the province as financial pressures escalate.

Our health care system is in crisis and government policy is making it worse. We're losing our doctors and nurses while this government continues to chip away at public health care.

Seniors deserve the best care, to live with dignity, to choose where they live in the community they want to live in, yet this government is ramming through a bill that strips them of the ability to consent to where they live and receive support, and who has access to their personal information, simply because they accessed hospital care.

My NDP colleagues and I will continue to stand up for the public good rather than private interests, and I will continue to rise in this House to fight for what matters most to my constituents.

EVENTS IN BRAMPTON EAST

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: As the amazing weather continues, Peel has been flourishing, with community events across the region. Firstly, I would like to congratulate MPP Graham McGregor on a successful community barbecue in Brampton North, as well as MPP Tangri in Mississauga–Streetsville and MPP Smith in Scarborough Centre.

Just this past Saturday, I had the opportunity of visiting the Bayridge Block Party in support of SickKids hospital in my riding of Brampton East. I would like to congratulate the young boys and girls who organized this amazing yearly fundraiser and applaud their commitment to giving back to the community. Through their efforts of selling locally donated items and knocking on friends', families' and neighbours' doors, they have managed to raise over \$10,000, a commendable achievement. As they are all preparing to go back to school, colleges and university in the

coming weeks, I would like to wish them well, and hope they have an amazing academic year ahead and continue to make us proud.

Speaker, I would also like to recognize the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation on hosting their annual Inspirational Steps 5K and 10K over this past weekend dedicated to raising funds in support of educating children and helping those less fortunate across the world.

NAZEM KADRI

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, I am proud today to offer my congratulations to Nazem Kadri and the whole Muslim community in London. On Saturday, Kadri, who was born and raised in London, brought Lord Stanley's cup to the London Muslim Mosque, the first time hockey's highest trophy has visited. Incredibly gracious, Kadri thanked the Muslim community, as they were essential to his growth as a hockey powerhouse.

He told the massive crowd, "I am very appreciative, very privileged and honoured to be the first Muslim to bring the Stanley Cup to the mosque."

It was a bright and beautiful moment for the Muslim community in London, who have had an incredibly difficult few years dealing with the aftermath of the murder of a Muslim family.

Dr. Munir El Kassam told the thousands-strong crowd, "We are a strong community who learns to cope ... with every difficulty there is ease," and welcomed Kadri back to London in a heartfelt speech.

Kadri is an inspiration to many, especially young Londoners. What sets him apart is not simply his focus on being a champion on the ice but his work outside of the rink. The Kadri Foundation gives back, with a focus on mental health and supports for kids, and he states, "The true meaning of being a great NHL player is to be good on the ice and great off the ice."

From our chamber, I would like to thank Nazem Kadri for always remembering his roots, his family and his community. Thank you for visiting our great city and for being such a strong role model for young people.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have always been proud of the youth of Oxford because they punch above their weight and are a huge asset to our community. I am constantly amazed by their success and these past few weeks have been no exception.

Alanna Rusnak, who is a student at Glendale High School in Tillsonburg, was crowned Miss Teenage Canada on August 20. As youth across Ontario are struggling with their mental health, Alanna has used her platform to be a positive role model, spreading a message of positive body image and self-love. She has been speaking to schools across southwestern Ontario about social media, bullying and how it's okay to reach out for help.

The youth of Oxford have also shown their incredible talent at the Canada Summer Games. With their training,

hard work and perseverance, it's no wonder Oxford's athletes do so well, and I want to congratulate all who participated.

I would like to give a special mention to Mason McKay and Mitch McKay of Tavistock for their gold medal in softball, Mason Van Zantvoort for a gold medal and bronze medal in wrestling, and Kate Foster of Sweaburg for a gold medal in box lacrosse.

It is often said that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, but I disagree. The youth of Oxford are already showing that they are leaders today.

HARASSMENT OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the verbal attacks, intimidation and misogyny inflicted upon Canada's Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland, as documented on video this past weekend.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Assaults against women are endemic to Canadian politics today. In our recent election, I heard from female Ontario Liberal candidates who were assailed in even more extreme ways, on the streets, in front of family members, in social media messages and emails. I am sure candidates from other parties experienced equally appalling assaults that, for their own health, I would not want them to recount.

Speaker, why is it important that I make this statement here? In February 2014, when new MPP Chrystia Freeland stood up in the House of Commons during question period, she was dramatically interrupted by members who made fun of her raising the pitch of her voice to make a point, and prevented her from finishing. This led directly to social media which mocked her for not speaking with a deeper voice. There was no licence-granting bogeyman south of the border to blame back then; an elected body was to blame.

Today, I not only condemn this attack against a female Canadian leader but all the attacks that have happened and are increasing, which are a threat to women, democracy, and Canadian values. I call on this assembly to lead by example and to not repeat the mistakes of the past.

1030

TASTE OF THE KINGSWAY

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning, everyone. I am rising in the House today to celebrate the return of an important annual event in my riding, the Taste of the Kingsway. For two years, the Taste of the Kingsway has been on hold. I'm very glad to inform this House today that it will be returning September 9 to 11, and I'll be kicking it off at 6 p.m. It's located on Etobicoke's bustling Kingsway strip.

This festival has a history of more than 20 years, and it is the largest street festival in south Etobicoke. At the Taste of the Kingsway you can experience live music, rides and games, a Ferris wheel, street performers, children's activities and even a dog show. This festival has been a critical

event on the Etobicoke summer calendar for a number of years, and I'm sure my excitement is shared by many people in the Etobicoke community that it will be returning.

Not only is it a fun time, it is supporting a great cause. The Taste of the Kingsway is a proud supporter of Campfire Circle, a non-profit summer camp for children affected by childhood cancer.

The Taste of the Kingsway can be reached via Royal York subway station. The city will be closing Bloor Street for the festival.

I sincerely invite all members of this House, as well as the broader public, to come down and help celebrate the return of this local institution. And please, while you're at the Taste of the Kingsway enjoying our local shops and restaurants, don't forget to drop by my booth and visit me and say hello.

HOGS FOR HOSPICE

Mr. Trevor Jones: It gives me great pride today to share the story and outstanding efforts of a grassroots charity organization formed in my hometown of Leamington. Hogs for Hospice was a vision of a small group of local citizens who shared a love of motorcycling and community. Recognizing that many of us will at some point require the compassionate supports offered by palliative care, this dedicated group sought to create a world-class, family-friendly motorcycle and music festival to raise money to build and maintain a world-class hospice campus while advancing health care in Leamington and surrounding communities.

This past civic holiday weekend, Leamington welcomed thousands to the 5th annual Hogs for Hospice. This event featured exceptional food vendors, a motorcycle stunt show, a guided motorcycle ride along the shores of Lake Erie to Point Pelee National Park, and it culminated in an amazing live music concert at our Sunset Amphitheatre, headlined by legendary rock band The Cult and country music artist Brett Young.

To date, Hogs for Hospice has raised over \$1.5 million for Erie Shores Hospice. I want to thank and personally recognize the many volunteers, the dedicated board and everyone for their efforts to this worthwhile cause. This event could not be possible without the leadership of Joe Oswald, Donny Pacheco, Benji Mastronardi, Brian Cornies, Dave Hodare, Tim Iles and Kevin Safrance.

In 2023, we're going to continue this tradition, and I welcome everyone to bring their families and enjoy Hogs for Hospice in Leamington.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome my very good friend, a community activist and a mentor to many international students, Sukhjit Singh Ahluwalia; his father, Gurdip Singh Ahluwalia; and his family Mandip Singh Nijjar and Vijay Marwaha. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: We can impact people in so many different ways. I am going to introduce someone who has done so through art. His music has touched the lives of millions around the world. It is my honour and great pleasure to introduce two-time Academy and Grammy award winner, and one of the greatest artists of our time, A.R. Rahman.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my great pleasure to introduce to the House my wife, Susie. We celebrated our 32nd wedding anniversary last Thursday.

Applause.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you. I couldn't get her tickets to the Jays game, so I promised her a front-row seat to today.

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to welcome our friend Chief Jason Henry of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. Thank you for coming down and paying a visit.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm really excited and proud to welcome to Queen's Park today my sister, Nicole Windsor; her husband, Jeff Windsor from Newbury, Ontario; as well as the daughter of Chief Jason Henry, who's joining us today, Banaise Henry. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'd like to introduce my and MPP Bailey's shared staff, Hunter Kell, who's joining us today.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'd like to welcome the members of the family of a new page, Daniyal Elahi. His mother, Saadia Elahi, sister Nadia and brother Harris are with us this morning as well.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I, too, want to introduce someone very, very special. He's one of the world's most prominent, prolific music composers—and, I might add, that I am a huge fan of his. He's a two-time Academy Award winner, with two Grammy Awards, a BAFTA award, a Golden Globe, four National Film Awards, 15 Filmfare Awards and 13 Filmfare Awards South, and numerous other awards and nominations. It is my distinct pleasure to welcome the one and only Isai Puyal, A.R. Rahman, to our Legislature.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Less than two weeks ago, the government announced sweeping changes to Ontario's health care system. And late last week, they revealed they would be rushing these changes through and bypassing any hearings at all.

Why is the government refusing to hear from the front-line workers and families who will be impacted by these changes?

Hon. Doug Ford: These are problems decades in the making. They were created by the NDP and Liberals, but they don't like the solutions.

Let me quote the NDP member from Waterloo, who, on December 12, 2019, said about ALC, "These are patients who should not be in a hospital." Unbelievable, after what we've been hearing, what they've been saying lately. "They should be in long-term care or in retirement or assisted living options."

A second NDP member, for Oshawa, who, on March 26, 2018, said on ALC: "I'd love to have a conversation about alternate level of care, or ALC, which is taking up our hospital space for folks in transition, in limbo. Are they even on waiting lists? They're just in limbo, so do they count? Are they on the waiting list? I'd love to put them somewhere."

So, on one side, they're saying that they shouldn't be in the hospitals; next day, they should be in the hospitals. Make up your minds.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, just to be clear: We don't advocate coercion of the frail and the elderly.

1040

The Ford government's scheme could force patients into long-term-care homes up to 300 kilometres away from their families—300 kilometres—and hit them with massive fees if they refuse to move.

We just completed an election campaign. We didn't hear a single word from this government about this scheme at that time. But now after announcing it less than 12 days ago, they're shutting down any discussion.

Why are they afraid to hear from the families and front-line workers who will be devastated by these changes?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader and Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I honestly do not know where the NDP have been. As the Premier just highlighted, of course, they talked about this before. We have known that this has been a problem for decades in the province of Ontario: how to handle ALC patients in our hospitals. We have said the status quo is not an option. We have invested billions of dollars into our long-term-care system. Experts agree that the best place for somebody who has been discharged from hospital, who is on the long-term-care-home waiting list, to wait for their preferred home of choice is in a long-term-care home, not in a hospital bed.

The status quo will not work, and we will not stop. We will improve the system for the people who are in our hospitals, who are waiting to become residents of long-term-care homes. Despite their protecting of the status quo, we will move forward, because it's better for the residents of long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it's not clear who the government is listening to. Long-term-care homes have told the government there are not enough beds in long-term-care homes to relieve hospital pressures—the operators themselves. Front-line nurses have told the government that Bill 7 does nothing to address the hospital crisis

in Ontario; it simply forces patients from one understaffed environment into another.

Is the government refusing to hold hearings because they know their plan won't work and they don't want to hear it?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, to put this into context, there are some 6,000 people who are in hospital, who have been discharged from hospital. Close to 2,000 of them are long-term-care-home patients who want to be transferred into a long-term-care home. They are on the waiting list for long-term care. Medical professionals have said that you're better serviced in a long-term-care home. That is what we are trying to accomplish here, Mr. Speaker.

I look at the words of the former member for Timmins, Gilles Bisson, when he talked about long-term care. What does this mean when we don't transfer people out of hospitals into long-term care? He said what this means is "that when you bring your child to the hospital because they broke their arm, you have to wait longer at the emergency because there is no place to deal with them."

While they can support the status quo, we will not, because we know that if you're a senior on the long-term-care waiting list being discharged from a hospital, your better place to be is in a long-term-care home, not in a hospital bed waiting for that transfer.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: The government is refusing to hear from patients and front-line health workers about Bill 7, so the NDP held hearings of its own this morning. Here's what front-line experts called the Ford government's scheme this morning: "The process is antidemocratic. The bill is a shocking abandonment of patient rights." They called this "Hunger Games health care. The bill is callously misleading Ontarians."

Why is this Ford government moving ahead without hearings? Because they don't want to hear what a disaster it will be.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, we've talked about this often. When you start to build up the system, the NDP's only avenue is to start to tear down the system. Right?

We've invested in 58,000 new and upgraded homes all across the province, in every region—north, south, east, west, rural, remote, urban. We are adding 27,000 additional health care workers, four hours of care, the Fixing Long-Term Care Act—a ground-breaking piece of legislation that they voted against.

But the reality is, there are 6,000 people in hospital beds who have been discharged and are looking for care somewhere else. Long-term care can be part of the solution for the first time in decades. There are close to 2,000 seniors in hospital, waiting to be in a long-term-care home, Mr. Speaker. Experts agree that that is not the place for a senior. They deserve to be in long-term-care homes. This bill facilitates that from happening and allows our acute

care system to recover for the first time in decades. We can be a part and we will.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: The scheme of the Ford government will force seniors to move hundreds of kilometres away from their families and loved ones. Experts tell us this can be fatal. Not having support nearby can lead to premature death. Advocates and family are worried about their ability to care for their loved ones. This stress alone will make patients' health deteriorate.

People on the front lines are warning this government: This puts seniors' lives at risk. Why are they refusing to listen? Why are they not thinking about the 5,000 seniors that have already died in long-term-care facilities, 40 over the last two weeks? Repeal Bill 124.

Hon. Paul Calandra: For some reason, the NDP think that it is better to have a senior who has been discharged from hospital wait in a hospital bed as opposed to going into a long-term-care home—a home that they are on the waiting list for. We are facilitating that to happen.

Long-term care can be part of a solution, and you know why we can be part of that solution, Mr. Speaker? Because we are making incredible investments into long-term care: 58,000 new and upgraded beds across the province, 27,000 additional health care workers, four hours of care—all things that the Liberals and NDP refused to do when they had the opportunity, something that this Premier said he would do even in advance of becoming the Premier. It was a major plank.

We started from day one transitioning health care in this province, and we will not stop. We will not support the status quo, because we can do better and we will do better for seniors and all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Lise Vaugeois: You had four years to improve the system and made it infinitely worse over those four years. The system has been in desperate crisis for that whole time.

The health care crisis is hitting northerners especially hard, and Bill 7 will make the crisis worse, not better. Forcing seniors to move 300 kilometres away from their loved ones will be devastating and traumatic for elders and their families. Currently in Thunder Bay–Superior North, we face—actually, we have beds. We have some beds, but there's no staff, and this has been going on for a long time.

Seniors and persons with disabilities are being defined as bed-blockers by this government, only to be repurposed as profit enhancers for privately owned homes when they haven't fulfilled their 98% fullness to get their full public allotment of dollars. Why is this government refusing to address the staffing crisis that is the source of the funding crisis?

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

Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: You could ask anyone in Ontario: Would they want their elderly loved-one sitting in a

hospital, in a bed, as noise is going around 24/7, not being able to get out and take a walk, when you can give them a home—not a bed, but a home. And a home would be in a long-term-care home. They have entertainment at night. They are able to walk around. Family members are able to come in and watch the entertainment with them. That’s a home versus a hospital, where you’re stuck in a room with four other patients, the alarms are going off, bells are going off.

That would be cruel, to leave a loved one, any parent in this province, in a hospital. We need them in a home. And that’s what we’re providing: 58,000 new homes.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: This morning, we heard from people across the province, actually, who represent different sectors: seniors’ advocates, retirees, health care workers. We heard from folks who represent workers. We heard from people who are very concerned about Bill 7. And, of course, we heard from health care workers from different sectors.

One PSW told us that Bill 7 “blames the most vulnerable people for a health care crisis that’s not their fault and forces them ... hundreds of kilometres outside their communities, away from their families and friends.

“There absolutely is a staffing crisis in health care in this province,” this PSW said, but “this won’t do a thing to address it.”

1050

Already overworked and underpaid health care staff will be faced with the ethical dilemma of compromising quality of care to discharge and clear beds. So my question is, why is this government refusing to listen to front-line workers who are offering real solutions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just the opposite, Mr. Speaker: We are listening to front-line workers and we’re listening to health care professionals, all of whom are unified in telling us that when your loved one has been discharged from hospital, the best place for them to be is in a long-term-care home. There are close to 2,000 seniors waiting in hospital who have been discharged who want to be in a long-term-care home.

This bill facilitates that to happen. It ensures that they stay at the top of the waiting list for their priority home. It provides additional levels of care, whether it’s Behavioural Supports Ontario or kidney dialysis. It works with our health care professionals.

Had the opposition even read the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, they would know that no home in this province can accept a patient unless they have the appropriate level of staffing and resources to handle the person that they are getting. It is about fixing long-term care. It is about making things better for seniors—

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

Ms. Doly Begum: We are in a health care crisis. Emergency rooms are closing. Hundreds of health care jobs are vacant. The fundamental problem with this bill is

that it’s blaming the patient—the most vulnerable, the seniors—for a problem that’s not their fault. Instead of solving the issue, it’s blaming the patient, the seniors. Patients, experts and front-line workers have offered this government solutions. Instead of listening, this government has ignored them all.

Repeal Bill 124. Give them paid sick days. Hire more nurses. Hire more PSWs. You can do so many things. Get internationally trained professionals recognized. These are real solutions to address this problem, not Bill 7.

This government has put a cruel plan forward that threatens seniors with huge fees if they refuse to move hundreds of kilometres from friends and families. My question is, why is this government being so cruel to the most vulnerable people of our province?

Hon. Paul Calandra: An odd question coming from the opposition, given that all of the things that the member listed, they have actually voted against. We did bring in additional health care workers—27,000, just for long-term care; they voted against it—and 14,000 additional nurses. We are bringing on new medical schools—the Minister of Colleges and Universities has talked about this—for the first time in, what, over 100 years.

We are making massive investments in health care all over the province. We started in 2018, when we brought in Ontario health teams. We then went further by adding 58,000 new and upgraded long-term-care beds. We closed down the ward rooms. We brought in infection prevention and control measures and supported that.

This bill brings back the respite care program, when a senior has no other option but to bring one of their loved ones to hospital because there’s no other option. We are bringing it back so you can bring them back into home care. Experts agree this is the best quality care, and we will stand up for the best quality of care for our seniors.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Under the previous Liberal government, people and jobs in rural regions like mine felt abandoned. Announcement after announcement of investments and employment concerned only the GTA. My constituents want to know that things are different with our government. What is the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade doing to ensure that my constituents and others in rural Ontario will have good, secure, well-paying jobs for themselves and their children for years to come?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We’ve heard time and time again that the Liberals and the NDP have damaged rural Ontario’s economy. That’s why in 2018 we promised families that our government would do things differently, and we have. We quickly launched a \$100-million Regional Development Program to support businesses and create rural jobs. This program supports regional and rural Ontario companies and it invests and creates jobs. It has attracted almost \$1 billion to date in outside investments and created 2,200 jobs.

In Woodstock, ArcelorMittal Tailored Blanks invested \$17.4 million in a project to upgrade its auto parts manufacturing facility. With the help of our rural Regional Development Program, 32 jobs were created. Speaker, that's an example of our commitment to the people of Oxford and the families of rural Ontario.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that answer and the investments that we've made in Oxford.

Last week, I heard the member from Newmarket–Aurora mention that her constituents are concerned about entrepreneurship opportunities in her riding. Well, today I'm echoing those concerns for my constituents. Entrepreneurs and their small businesses employ thousands in Oxford. While the Regional Development Program supports companies in Oxford and across the province, it does not have provisions for those with business aspirations or in the start-up phase.

Entrepreneurs and those with small business ambitions need support too. Speaker, what is the minister doing to help entrepreneurs in my riding start and grow their businesses?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our small businesses and entrepreneurs are absolutely critical to Ontario's prosperity. That's why we will never forget them, Speaker. That is a promise.

Together, the Liberals and the NDP turned the dreams of entrepreneurship into nightmares. Red tape, unaffordable hydro, high taxes: All of that threw cold water on their entrepreneurial flames. We saw the problems that they created, so we cut red tape, reduced taxes and fixed their hydro mess. We lowered the cost of doing business by \$7 billion each and every single year.

We are providing \$362,000 to the Woodstock Small Business Enterprise Centre, to offer those entrepreneurs all the tools they need to start and grow their businesses, and another \$95,000 for Oxford's Summer Company and Starter Company Plus, to help students and young entrepreneurs start their business. Speaker, that's how we're helping those entrepreneurs.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

LONG-TERM CARE

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Le projet de loi 7 est un grand souci pour les gens de la province, encore plus pour les francophones. Pourquoi? Parce qu'il y a déjà une lacune quant aux établissements de soins de longue durée désignés francophones. Il y en a 30 en Ontario. Il y a des listes d'attente exorbitantes dans tous les foyers du Nord.

Cela dit, cette loi va forcer des résidents francophones de se faire transférer à des centres unilingues, et ça, à plusieurs heures de chez nous et à l'encontre de leur désir. C'est inacceptable.

Ma question : est-ce que le gouvernement va modifier le projet de loi 7 et respecter le choix d'emplacement des résidents?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

L'hon. Paul Calandra: Merci, monsieur le Président. Comme vous savez, nous avons fait beaucoup d'investissements dans les logements pour les Franco-Ontariens. J'ai travaillé avec la ministre Mulroney pour assurer que la communauté francophone de toute part dans cette province avait les services dans la langue de leur choix. En même temps, la députée—the parliamentary assistant—a travaillé avec moi pour assurer que la communauté francophone, comme j'ai déjà dit, de toute part dans cette province avait des choix de nouveaux logements et, en même temps, de communiquer dans la langue française. Ça continue avec ce projet de loi.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M. Guy Bourgouin: J'apprécie la réponse du ministre, mais beaucoup de ces lits ne sont même pas construits aujourd'hui.

Les études démontrent que 68 % des gens en soins de longue durée souffrent de démence, et souvent ces gens reviennent à leur langue maternelle. C'est primordial pour la santé et le bien-être des personnes âgées d'être parmi leurs proches et d'être entourées de gens francophones.

Est-ce que le gouvernement va respecter les lits NSD francophones et leur accorder le droit de demeurer dans leurs communautés et de ne pas être transférés sans leur consentement et faire face à des coûts exorbitants?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll answer it in English, only because I want to make sure that I'm accurate with the answer, because he raises a very good point in his question. He talks about dementia and the importance that many of the people being transferred out of hospital have dementia. That is why this bill is so important, because, the member will know, we are adding additional resources for dementia care as a result of this bill, some \$60 million a year. What that will allow us to do, is to look at each home individually to assess whether they can handle the patient. And if somebody needs additional resources for dementia in the language of their choice, as he mentioned in his question, we will be able to provide that for the first time. It is part of fixing long-term care in this province.

1100

I hope, given the member's question, he will agree that given that, it is obviously better for somebody, as opposed to being in a hospital, to be getting that care—the care for dementia, kidney dialysis—in a home. That's what this is about, and I hope they will support us on this.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Christine Hogarth: A new Statistics Canada report has indicated that the number of residents in the province could climb to more than 19 million by 2043. This is an increase of about 30% since 2021. And many are choosing Etobicoke and Toronto as their home.

Experts warn that Ontario is ill-prepared to handle the growth as it lacks the infrastructure to support the growing population, especially in major urban centres like Toronto. Because of years of neglect and improper planning on transit expansion by the previous Liberal government, propped up by our friends the NDP, cities like Toronto are already living with the consequences of their inaction.

Speaker, what is the government doing to build up our transit infrastructure to address the incoming population increase?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The associate minister.

Hon. Stan Cho: That member is a tireless advocate for building transit in her riding. I want to thank her for her efforts and for the question this morning.

It's indeed true: The previous Liberal government left Ontario unprepared for both today's and tomorrow's transit needs. Fortunately, though, under the leadership of this Premier, we have a bold plan to advance forward, build transit and get people moving across the GTA.

I'm glad to remind members that we broke ground on the Ontario Line at Exhibition station earlier this year on March 27. The Ontario Line is the crown jewel of our historic \$28.5-billion expansion plan for the GTA—the largest in Canadian history—fulfilling our promise to deliver transit relief to Toronto's core. It's going to stretch 15.5 kilometres from Exhibition to the Ontario Science Centre. The Ontario Line will generate \$11 billion back to the local economy, support over 4,700 jobs a year during construction and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 14,000 tonnes annually.

Through the Ontario Line, our government is delivering on the promises we made and moving people from point A to point B.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Well, Speaker, this is great news. We have had the opportunity to address the congestion issue today by building a better, cleaner transit network that will benefit future Ontarians and the people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Transit and infrastructure experts are raising concerns about what the future could look like if we don't make the investments needed for tomorrow. They have warned us to keep pace with the growth we see; and we need to plan and act now on transit and other infrastructure needs.

Speaker, can the Associate Minister of Transportation please explain how our government is addressing future transit infrastructure needs today?

Hon. Stan Cho: I'm really proud of the city I was born and raised in, but the reality is that after 15 years of zero action from the NDP and the Liberals, we're behind when it comes to our transit needs, with gridlocked roads and a congested transit system. You see it every day, Speaker.

That's why we're advancing the largest subway expansion in Canadian history with an investment of \$28.5 billion, to build not just the Ontario Line but the Eglinton

Crosstown West extension, the Yonge North subway expansion and, of course, the Scarborough subway east extension as well.

We're making travel easier for people by connecting them to work, connecting the grid—a spider web of transit to home, school and all the places they need to be, not stuck getting from point A to point B.

What's more, we're expanding the GTA's subway system by 50%, and that's going to create local jobs and community benefits, cut emissions and gridlock and connect parts of the GTA that have never been connected to the subway network before.

Speaker, unlike the Liberals and the NDP, we're building transit and getting Ontario ready for the future.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

My question is to the Premier. Northern Ontario hospitals are disproportionately impacted by health care staff shortages. In Sioux Lookout and in Red Lake, hospitals are relying on locum physicians and agency nurses to fill the staffing gaps. Speaker, this is not sustainable.

Why is the government allowing private agencies to create these gaps, when they should be working with northern hospitals to create sustainable solutions?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is important for all of us to appreciate that there have been many plans in the works, including, of course, two exciting new announcements in Brampton and Scarborough for new opportunities for people to become doctors in Ontario and stay and train in Ontario. Along with adding 400 physician residents to support the workforce in northern and rural Ontario—we've been doing that work.

Clearly, when you hear from individuals like Anthony Dale of the Ontario Hospital Association that "Ontario's hospitals are rapidly becoming the health care provider of last resort for thousands of people who actually need access to home care, long-term care and other services," it is precisely why our government has invested a billion dollars in our most recent budget to ensure that community care happens in community, where people want it.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre has to use, again, agency nurses to remain viable in providing care to the people of Kiiwetinoong. Today their nursing complement is 70% agency nurses and 30% staff nurses. These ongoing unbudgeted nursing costs lead to a deeper health care crisis.

What is this government doing today to fix the health care staffing issues in Kiiwetinoong, not in southern Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: This question gives me an opportunity, of course, to highlight some of the work that is happening right now, today, in the province of Ontario. We're working with the College of Nurses, because we

understand that there is a backlog currently waiting to see if they have the appropriate education accreditation to get that licence to practise here in Ontario. We'll continue that work, because we want to ensure that supply of all health human resources is there where people need it when they want it.

The issues raised by the member opposite are not new. They are not something that has happened in the last weeks and months. This is something that has historically been a challenge: to recruit and retain people in northern Ontario to practise. Frankly, I would respectfully remind the member that it was a Progressive Conservative government that actually started the last most recent medical school in northern Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: My Don Valley West constituents are also concerned about Bill 7 and the effect it will have on patient care, which is stated as a priority in the government's budget. Yet elderly patients risk being transferred to facilities far from family and their community, which play an important role in supporting seniors in need.

Seniors in long-term-care facilities—in particular, private ones—have suffered a great deal during the pandemic, with higher death rates and long periods of isolation. Once again, this government is asking seniors, some of our most vulnerable, to take one for the team and help solve the crisis in our hospitals by moving to a home not of their choosing, instead of acknowledging that we are in a staffing crisis created by measures like Bill 124.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Long-Term Care tell us why this government is treating our seniors like a burden and legislating unfair treatment with Bill 7 instead of solving the staffing problem and treating our health care workers respectfully by repealing Bill 124?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I can only surmise that the leader of the Liberal Party put a new member up to ask that question because perhaps the member didn't understand the legacy of the Liberal Party.

It was the Liberals who treated our seniors so poorly for so long. Six hundred and eleven beds is the legacy of the Liberal Party; 611 beds is the legacy of the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker.

We have invested in 58,000 new and upgraded beds across the province. They refused to do it. They froze the food budget; we increased it, Mr. Speaker. We increased staffing; we increased inspections. These are all things that we are doing, and we are increasing the level of care to four hours a day. When we took over, it was at two and a half hours. That is the legacy of the Liberal government—a government that spent more than any other government in the history of this province and has what to show for it? They have nothing to show for it. We'll get the job done for seniors because we know we can do better.

1110

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister for his view of history. I'll add to that history that the momentous decrease in hospital beds—from which we are still recovering—occurred between 1990 and 1999, under two other previous governments.

This government's Bill 7 will send seniors to long-term-care facilities that are not amongst the choices that are best for them. Furthermore, these seniors could be going into for-profit long-term-care facilities which are suffering from severe staffing challenges, as referred to in their recent quarterly reporting increases.

Will the Minister of Long-Term Care tell us how he can assure patients and their families that seniors sent to their non-preferred homes—in particular, for-profit ones—will receive the care they need when these facilities continue to deal with pervasive staffing challenges?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Because it is the law in the province of Ontario, and became the law through the Fixing Long-Term Care Act. Nobody can be moved into a home that does not have the resources to handle the person that is being transferred in. That is the whole point of this bill. I'm not sure how the member could actually get up in her place and ask this question, and then say that she's not in support of the bill that we are bringing forward.

But I'll go even further: I challenge the member to lay on the table what the Liberals did with respect to long-term care. Did they get us to four hours? No. Did they build new homes? No. Did they increase the food budget? No. When it comes to health care, they failed not only seniors in this province, they failed so many people in the province of Ontario. We're reversing that. We are making historic investments because we know how important health care is to ensuring a strong, stable government that can meet the needs of Ontarians for decades to come, for the economy and education. We're getting it done because we know how—

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

HEALTH CARE

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: The pandemic pushed Ontario's health care system to its limits. After years of chronic staffing shortages, budget cuts and neglect from the previous Liberal government, deep flaws within the health care network were exposed. We must alleviate the strain on the system and ensure that we build a more robust, more resilient health care network. That means having doctors to meet future health care needs of Ontarians.

Speaker, can the Minister of Colleges and Universities explain what the government is doing to train the health care professionals needed to care for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Oakville North–Burlington for that important question. We need to increase health human resources, and that starts with post-secondary education. Our government is getting it done by taking action to increase health human

resources across Ontario through our historic expansion of health care post-secondary education.

Earlier this year, we established the Northern Ontario School of Medicine as the first stand-alone medical school in northern Ontario. This gives students the flexibility to study closer to home and serve remote and underserved communities across Ontario.

We are also building the first new medical school in the GTA since the University of Toronto built their medical school back in 1843. We are the government that is building the new Toronto Metropolitan University medical school in Brampton. We are also creating the new University of Toronto Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health in Scarborough, and expanding the Queen's Lakeridge Health campus in Durham.

Our government knows that training more doctors will ensure that Ontarians have access to doctors.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Expanding medical school education needs to happen province-wide so that those in growing and underserved communities can access family and specialty physicians. We remember when the previous Liberal government cut medical residency places amid a doctor shortage. Troubling choices like this push students to pursue their health care education in other jurisdictions and hurt Ontario's medical future. We must bolster Ontario's health resources to ensure that Ontarians can access the health care they need when they need it and wherever they live.

Can the minister share with us what the government is doing to increase the number of undergraduate and post-graduate medical education positions across the province?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again for the question. I am happy to say that our government has taken action on this issue.

We need to train more health care professionals across Ontario. Not only are we increasing the number of medical seats that will serve both urban and rural communities across Ontario, but we are also enhancing existing medical and health care programs. Our government is adding 160 undergraduate and 295 postgraduate positions to six medical schools across Ontario, but we are also enhancing.

Earlier this year, we also announced our learn-and-stay program, which, over the next four years, can help 3,000 nurse graduates receive financial support to cover the cost of tuition in exchange for two years' service in an underserved community.

Speaker, we understand that in order to keep Ontario safe and open, we need to ensure that we have a high-quality, resilient health care system, and that starts with a high-quality postsecondary education system across the province. That is why we are expanding opportunities for students in every part of Ontario to join the health care profession.

HOME CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. This government's failure to deal with the health care crisis is

not just affecting hospitals; it's hurting patients who rely on home care as well.

This month, Robin Floyd's son, who is vision-impaired and has a heart condition, went for surgery at London Health Sciences Centre. After being discharged with a drainage tube, he was told that a home care nurse would come the next day to check the incision and drain the tube. After countless phone calls and endless frustration, Robin finally managed to get a home care appointment nine days after her son had his surgery.

Does this government believe that that is an appropriate standard of care?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, clearly our investment of a billion dollars in our most recent budget speaks to exactly why we want to improve home care in homes, where people want to be able to recover and recuperate.

In our last budget, a billion dollars over the next three years—but what does that actually give you? In your community, in the case of Robin's son, the funding will support an estimated 28,000 post-acute surgical patients and an estimated 21,000 patients with complex health conditions every year by providing 739,000 nursing visits. That's 739,000 nursing visits that never happened under the previous governments.

We are making the investments because we understand it's not just about hospitals. It's not just about primary care and long-term care. It's also about community care, because there are many thousands of people who want to do that recovery in their own home with appropriate supports. We're providing those appropriate supports.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Kim Fowler's mother has severe COPD and dementia and cannot care for herself. PSWs are supposed to bring her breakfast and dinner, but at least once a week they don't show up. Earlier this month, Kim's mother became sick from dehydration because, with no PSW, she had nothing to eat or drink. Kim is trying to manage all aspects of her mother's care while she waits for a long-term care reassessment, but she is desperate and close to burnout.

Kim's story is not new and not unique. The VON told me they can't meet 50% of the referrals they get. Why is this government completely ignoring the long-standing problems in home and community care?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, the member opposite highlights true, actual stories that are happening in her community, and yet—and yet, Speaker—they did not vote in support of a budget that included a billion-dollar investment over three years.

One very specific example: I've talked about complex health conditions, but over two million hours of personal support services will now be provided in Ontario in communities like yours to make sure that your constituents, your residents have that quality of life in their own home with their families.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are making it challenging for businesses in Ontario to find the skilled women and men they need to grow and prosper. Small business owners continue to feel the pressure of the labour shortage, and the skilled and semi-skilled labour shortage remains one of the main factors limiting business growth. We know that small businesses are a significant contributor to Ontario's economy, so it is essential to help them thrive and feel confident about the future.

1120

Speaker, can the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development share with the House what assistance our government is providing workers to train them with the skills they need to help restart our economy?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for that question, but most importantly for all the work that he did in our first Working for Workers legislation to recognize international credentials, Mr. Speaker.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is really on a mission to make our families and all of our communities stronger. One of the many ways we're achieving this is through our brand new program Better Jobs Ontario. Mr. Speaker, we're offering training to who wants to train for in-demand jobs in any community across the province. This includes those on social assistance, those who are self-employed, gig workers, youth and newcomers. Better Jobs Ontario offers up to \$28,000 for tuition costs and up to \$500 a week for basic living costs like rent and mortgages.

Mr. Speaker, we're all in for Ontario's workers, and we're just getting started.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you, Minister. The future of our economic recovery and the success of our businesses rely on Ontario becoming a skilled trades and training leader. Our province badly needs carpenters, electricians, plumbers and a full array of skilled trades and blue-collar workers who will help us overcome our housing shortage, reconstruct our infrastructure and help restore our economy.

Our workers are the best in the world, and they deserve to have a government that values the contributions they make day in and day out.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what our government is doing to help level up skilled trades for our province's workers, which will help return our economy and businesses to their previous position of strength?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, thanks to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, it's true that under the previous government, Ontario really had a maze of confusing and limiting programs that workers and employers struggled to navigate. We're changing this. Our government is putting workers and their families first.

We launched our flexible Skills Development Fund, which supports innovative programs that help workers learn the skills that local employers want.

And over the past number of years, it's no surprise that training has really taken off. We've launched almost 400 training projects across the province and supported nearly 400,000 workers with the skills they need for better jobs and bigger paycheques.

Mr. Speaker, with game-changing investments like these, we're helping workers, businesses and everyone in their communities succeed.

NORTHERN HIGHWAY
IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jamie West: In 2018, the Premier promised to complete the four-laning of Highway 69. At the time, there were 68 kilometres left to be tendered. And four years later, after many, many broken promises, not one kilometre has been tendered.

Meanwhile, preventable accidents continue. People continue to be injured. People continue to be killed. I'll tell you, just this month, Speaker, there were head-on collisions on August 2, August 8 and August 15. That's three collisions in 15 days—multiple injuries and one preventable death in 15 days.

My question, Speaker, is, when will the Premier finally keep his promise to complete the four-laning of Highway 69?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Stan Cho: Any tragedy on the roads is of deep concern to this government. Our hearts go out to the families and friends that are affected by those incidents on Highway 69.

Speaker, when it comes to this important highway—widening—that project is a priority for our government. We said that from the beginning in 2018, despite the lack of movement on that by the previous Liberals.

I want to remind the member opposite that 70 kilometres are already complete on Highway 69, and MTO is working diligently to get the approvals needed to complete the remaining 68 kilometres of the corridor.

In December, Minister Mulroney announced the opening of a 14-kilometre extended stretch between Highway 69 in the French River area. Speaker, work continues to complete a 14-kilometre four-laning project south of Alban, and this is expected to be done by the end of the year. We're continuing to work diligently to build the rest of the highway and negotiating with the First Nations, an important piece of getting this process done, and the environmental assessments that are necessary. But we're going to finish the job.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I appreciate the associate minister taking credit for not cancelling the projects that were already tendered. I'm talking about finishing the tendering of the 68 kilometres. Like he said, the Liberals promised

to do this for almost two decades. They couldn't get it done. You've been in power for more than four years; you can't get it done. The good people of Sudbury are fed up. They're fed up with years of broken Liberal promises, and they're getting fed up with years of broken Conservative promises as well. I am simply tired of asking for this again and again. People are dying, Speaker.

If the Premier is not going to keep his promise to finish the last 68 kilometres of Highway 69, will he come to my riding to explain to those families who have been affected by this why it's not a priority for him?

Hon. Stan Cho: I'm going to repeat that finishing Highway 69 is a priority for this government, and I highlighted in my first answer all of the progress that has been made. I will agree with the member opposite, however, that this must be frustrating for the great people of Sudbury, because the Liberals did simply nothing on this file when they had 15 years to do something. And we're moving this as fast as we can, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

But also curious from the members opposite is the tone when it comes to building highways. On the one hand, they say no to Highway 413. But when it comes to Highway 69, Highway 7 in Waterloo and Highway 7 in Guelph, they're all for the widening of highways, they're all for the building of new highways. It's almost like they acknowledge that we need to expand the transportation network across a growing province, a world-class province like the one we have here in Ontario.

We're not only going to build that Highway 69, we're going to make sure we build Highway 413 and prepare the future generations of Ontarians to come.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Trevor Jones: The critical mineral deposits in the Ring of Fire represent an unprecedented opportunity for economic development for First Nations partners and all Ontarians. The Ontario government is partnering with First Nations communities to build road projects that will unlock development in the Ring of Fire and lead to more critical mineral mines.

The Anishinabek Nation Grand Council chief recently said that the Ontario government will need to consult with First Nations the "right way" and that it can be done in the right way, and it can be done faster. What is the Minister of Mines doing to ensure that First Nations communities are consulted effectively, and as the Grand Chief said, expediting the process faster?

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

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you for the question from the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

By working with First Nations, we are ensuring that consultation is done the right way. Webequie and Marten Falls First Nations are leading environmental assessments for road projects and are integrating Indigenous principles with the provincial process. Just last week, the Webequie Supply Road Project team held another open house session

for Indigenous community members to learn about their project.

Our government stands shoulder to shoulder to shoulder with the First Nations partners. During my recent visit to Webequie First Nation, I offered our government's full support to assist with consultation. When we consult the right way, we get things done, and we will make real progress on economic reconciliation.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: Under the previous Liberal government, the Ring of Fire development was not a priority. The only work they seemed to do amounted to platitudes, photo ops and not getting people working.

The Liberals promised action on the Ring of Fire, and time and time again, they didn't deliver. They announced funding for the Ring of Fire for three budgets in a row, but this was just window dressing. They then removed any reference to the Ring of Fire whatsoever.

Speaker, I agree with the statement from the Minister of Mines that "at the end of the day, we can do better than taking 15 years to get a mine built." What is the government doing to get this project done?

Hon. George Pirie: Again, thank you for the question.

Our message is very simple: There is no green economy without mining. We need the critical minerals in the Ring of Fire to meet our climate goals. That's why our government is getting it done by working with the First Nations to build the "corridor of prosperity" that leads to the Ring of Fire.

Our government committed almost \$1 billion to support road development, broadband infrastructure and other community projects. Environmental assessments for two of the road projects are already under way. We can accomplish anything when we build strong partnerships with the First Nations, and that is exactly what our government is doing.

1130

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: From hospitals to urgent care to doctors' offices, people across this province and in my home community of Niagara are facing dangerously long wait times. My constituent Howard Disher, a 79-year-old from Welland, has an enlarged prostate that is of great concern to his family doctor. He was referred to a urologist. However, not only are they still facing a serious backlog from COVID, Niagara is also facing a doctor shortage. Howard was told not to expect an actual consult appointment for over a year. To complicate matters, Howard's family doctor is expected to retire soon.

Can the minister explain to Howard how it is acceptable in the province of Ontario to have to wait over a year to have a serious medical concern addressed?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I will take this opportunity to highlight yet again the five-point plan that, together with the Minister of Long-Term Care, we brought forward a

number of weeks back. It included—speaking directly to your constituent Howard—investing over \$300 million as part of the province’s Surgical Recovery Strategy, bringing the total investment to \$880 million over the last three fiscal years.

Specifically related to doctor shortages, we now have 400 new practising physicians in the province of Ontario in rural and remote communities. We also are working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to ensure that any individuals who have applied to practise in the province of Ontario have that opportunity to go through the assessment and ultimately receive their licence, when appropriate. We will do this work because we know how important it is.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Niagara has 250 physicians; 20% of them are over 65. Some 147,000 individuals in our region are not attached to a family doctor. Niagara Health tells me that the rate that family physicians qualify on a yearly basis is a drop in the bucket compared with what is needed to address this shortage. We know that when people cannot see their family doctor or a specialist in a timely manner, they end up in an already overcrowded and understaffed ER. It is a domino effect that leads to some of the tragic outcomes we are currently seeing.

Will this government finally implement the recommendations we brought forward back in March and remove the barriers for the internationally trained doctors and health care workers we want and need in this province?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We’ve made it very clear that the status quo is not appropriate and we are not accepting that. Frankly, in Niagara region—I will give you a very specific example: Leaders in Niagara are using and utilizing their excellent paramedic program so that individuals who call 911 can be diverted, whether it is to mental health facilities, to long-term care or, in fact, to their home, once they have stabilized and have appropriate community care.

We’ve done all these things, working with our partners, because we know that innovation is here in the province of Ontario and we want to make sure that when we see these best practices, like the Niagara paramedic model, we encourage other communities to do the same.

HOUSING

Mr. Aris Babikian: It cannot be more contradictory when the Liberals oppose having a strong-mayor system despite their track record of supporting one. In 2008, Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty was on board with Toronto mayor David Miller’s request for additional power, saying, “I’m in support of a strong-mayor system. My support remains there.”

With our province in a housing crisis, the members of the opposition must put aside their partisan politics, and we should all stand together to ensure we are building more affordable homes for hard-working Ontarians.

Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing share with the House how a strong-mayor system will be

valuable in moving housing projects forward so that more families can achieve their dream of becoming homeowners?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for that question. The member is absolutely correct: Former Premier Dalton McGuinty mulled proposing a strong-mayor system, but it is this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, that’s actually going to get it done.

Speaker, under our proposed changes, the mayors of both Toronto and Ottawa, our province’s two largest cities, will have new tools to help them be able to move priority projects, like housing projects, faster.

This past election, Premier Ford committed to the people of Ontario that he was going to keep costs down and he was going to ensure that we put a plan in place to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years, and I can assure the honourable member and the people of Ontario that we’re going to get it done.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you, Minister.

Speaker, former Toronto city councillors of all political stripes have touted a strong-mayor system for its ability to give more decisive direction to the bureaucracy about priorities and shift resources in that direction.

To quote former Toronto city councillor Kyle Rae from 2008 on the need for stronger mayor powers, “Toronto is an economic engine, and that’s beginning to get in trouble. If that engine starts to break down, those fabulous neighbourhoods are going to stop working.”

We are already seeing that prediction come true regarding the need to build more housing faster and cut through red tape on the priority projects of my constituents.

What are the minister and all members of the Legislature doing to get this done?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the honourable member from Scarborough–Agincourt once again.

I’ve said many, many times in this House that we need to get shovels in the ground faster; we need to build more housing of all types, of all shapes and all sizes. Too many families are frozen out of the housing market because there simply are not enough housing options for them across the province. That’s why our government made the commitment in the last election, under the leadership of Premier Ford, that we’re going to build 1.5 million homes over the next years.

But, Speaker, the opposition would rather have us wait. They would actually rather have us delay. They’d rather us sit around for 15 more years to start building homes. That’s why we made that clear commitment. We looked people in the eye during the election and said, “Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we were not going to do as the Liberals had done for 15 years before.”

Regardless of what is being proposed, the hateful eight is not going to make us wait.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to caution the minister on his wording.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. The Income Security Advocacy Centre along with over 230 social service providers and community organizations have called on you to double both OW and ODSP rates and to index these rates to inflation. My office of Hamilton Mountain has received over 3,200 emails in just a very short time in support of doubling these rates.

People on social assistance are relying on food banks, shelters, improper medications, and, quite frankly, are in dire straits, where homelessness is their only option. Renovations and rent increases are forcing people on social assistance to spend over 60% of their income on substandard roofs over their head. Seventy-three per cent of food bank users are on social assistance, and yet food insecurity is falling on the priority list due to substandard housing.

Will the Premier and his minister listen to ISAC and the over 230 providers, increase the rates—double the rates—and include people on Ontario Works?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. In fact, our government is aligning our increases—historic increases—of ODSP to inflation. That’s exactly what we’re doing, and we’re taking an all-of-government approach. We’re listening across the board. We are making sure that those who can work are receiving the job readiness programs and the training they need, and for those who cannot work, we are supporting those individuals, those also in financial crises, the municipalities, and making sure that the social service providers have the resources they need. That was exactly what the \$1-billion social services relief funding was for.

We are getting the funding to the communities, the people who need it, through the micro-credentialing strategy, the Roadmap to Wellness, the new child care spaces, the Ontario Child Benefit, the dental care for low-income seniors, the CARE tax credit, the LIFT tax credit, the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, and the minimum wage increase. We are continuing to listen, continuing to do what is necessary to support our most vulnerable and to help those who can work get back into the workforce.

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

WEARING OF JERSEY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha has a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I just want to congratulate the world-leading lacrosse centre of Peterborough for once again, last night, defeating the Six Nations Chiefs to win the MSL and represent Ontario for the Mann Cup for an unprecedented second four-peat. And I’m requesting unanimous consent for my seatmate, who represents Ohsweken, where the Six Nations Chiefs play, to consent to wearing my Peterborough Century 21 Lakers jersey.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Brantford–Brant to wear the jersey that he doesn’t want to put on. Agreed? Agreed.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to government notice of motion 4, relating to allocation of time on Bill 2, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes, and Bill 7, An Act to amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 with respect to patients requiring an alternate level of care and other matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask members to please take their seats.

On August 25, 2022, Mr. Mantha moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 4 relating to allocation of time on Bill 2 and Bill 7.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Blais, Stephen	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Bowman, Stephanie	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Burch, Jeff	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Todd

Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Ford, Doug	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Michael D.	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 72.

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

We'll now deal with the main motion.

Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 4 relating to allocation of time on Bill 2, An Act to amend Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes, and Bill 7, An Act to amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 with respect to patients requiring an alternate level of care and other matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Health Care Consent Act, 1996. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 4 related to allocation of time on Bill 2 and Bill 7. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Leari, Anthony	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Dixon, Jess	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Michael D.	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pierre, Natalie	Yakabuski, John
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George	
Ghamari, Goldie	Quinn, Nolan	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Blais, Stephen	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Bowman, Stephanie	Mantha, Michael	Vanhof, John
Burch, Jeff	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 73; the nays are 27.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Jordan: I'd like to introduce my wife, Brendah-Leah. We celebrated our 35th wedding anniversary last Monday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Congratulations.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's my pleasure and honour to introduce Guru Hari H.D.H., Prem Swaroopdas Swamiji and Pujya Tyagvallabh Swamiji from Yogi Divine Society, a worldwide organization performing many social activities and uplifting youth worldwide.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAPORE DI CALABRIA INC. ACT, 2022

Mr. West moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Sapore Di Calabria Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONVENIENCE STORE WEEK

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It is, once again, a true honour to rise in the House today. Today it is in recognition of the second annual Convenience Store Week in Ontario. Last year, our government passed the Convenience Store Week Act to recognize the important role convenience stores play in our day-to-day lives. We're very proud to be here today to kick off this important week and celebrate the hard-working employees in the convenience store industry and their significant contributions.

When we think about convenience stores, we often think about shops in our own communities, the corner store staples that we pick up, the people we see when we are visiting. We remember those friendly faces at the cash register, aisles with all of our daily necessities, and that familiar sense of community that you get when you enter a convenience store. But all of that would not be possible without the dedicated business owners and the employees who work around the clock to ensure that their stores are open and ready to serve all of their customers.

Convenience store owners and their employees are some of the hardest-working people in our communities. Many of them, as we all know, work seven days a week; they're open 365 days a year, all to make sure that they can meet their customers' needs. And this is especially true in rural and remote communities, where convenience stores are often the only source of fresh food and other daily necessities. I think of the Trout Creek convenience store that's owned by Sam and Tariq—and that's it. There's nothing around Trout Creek. There's not another place that you can go into and get fresh food, produce and things like that. Sam and Tariq are some of the hardest-working people I've met. My wife, Patty, and I have had a great opportunity to have dinner with them, with supplies, by the way, that were purchased at their Trout Creek store. It's a great little spot.

On behalf of our government and all of the people of Ontario, we say thank you to the thousands of convenience store owners and their workers for the incredible impact they have on all of us each and every day. Ontario is home to more than 8,500 convenience stores that employ more than 78,000 people across the province. From Cornwall to Kenora, from Wawa to Windsor, you probably know somebody in a convenience store, especially your local convenience store.

We know that small businesses, like many convenience stores, are vital to our communities and critical to Ontario's economic growth. Our government is quite proud of our support for these hard-working men and women. That's why we have consistently cut red tape and made it easier for people in Ontario to start a business. And that is why we continue to put money back into the pockets of our business communities. Since the day we took office, we've lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion a year—I think I've stood in this Legislature and said that almost every single day I've ever stood up. We've cut red tape, fixed the Liberals' hydro mess, lowered taxes so that businesses in Ontario have more money to invest in growth and invest in their people. We're creating jobs and opportunities in every single corner of the province.

In July, Ontario had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the past 30 years, at 5.3%. That tells you we are strengthening the economy. We're building these vibrant communities for all of the people in Ontario.

Convenience stores remind us that there are opportunities right across the province for everyone and anyone. We hear stories all the time about these hard-working individuals who open their own stores and hire people in their communities. Many of these stores have 10 or less employees, including their own family members.

To me, these aren't just talking points; this is the story of my own family. My dad, Hub, opened Hub's cigar store on Main Street in North Bay, right across the street from my office, in the 1960s. Employed there were my mom, my grandmother and my aunt Emelia. They worked there every single day. My dad then expanded to open Hub's Hilltop, and as it sounds, it was on top of the hill in North Bay. It was a really popular convenience store—although I never understood the word “convenience” then. We opened at 10 in the morning, so I don't really know what was convenient about that. But we closed at 10 at night. We were open for 12 hours a day. This was long before there was ever such a retail category—

Hon. Paul Calandra: You can see how he made the connection from cigars to convenience.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, exactly. I will give a shout-out to my dad, who opened, in the Hilltop and at Hub's cigar store—yes, we sold cigars. I can tell you, Paul, I was six years old, standing on a stool, learning how to punch the cash register, and selling cigars at six years old. It was very exciting. In the back of the shop was my godfather, Mario Mendicino, who had a barbershop—something near to your family's heart. In the back was a barbershop, and when he opened up Hub's Hilltop, there was yet another barbershop, another small business that rented space from Hub, from my dad. All of these were family-owned, family-operated businesses. Along with my very slightly older sister—we stood on those stools, and we learned how to punch a cash register. I'm thinking back to those days—this is more than 60 years ago. It's where our family taught us math. It's where we all learned about customer service and where our family bond really strengthened as we helped each other solve problems together.

1310

I see Minister Monte McNaughton nodding. He comes from a small business family in a small town—which we visited together, at your store. You know exactly what we're talking about. This is how our families bonded.

I don't know about the rest of you, but I can tell you that around our kitchen table at dinner every night, there were discussions on courier rates and Bus Parcel Express times. That was the kind of thing we talked about—

Interjection.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: A little bit of politics—but more business than politics.

I've got to also tell you, looking back, that those were the best days ever. We miss them, and I must say, everybody in the riding of Nipissing really misses my dad, Hub—it has been about 13 years. We really miss him and thinking about those fun days.

In communities across the province, convenience stores are more than just a place to buy necessities. They sponsor local sports teams. They raise money for community causes and charities. They are filled with familiar faces for people to talk to when you stop by during the week. As they grow, they build an even stronger presence in their communities and have an even bigger impact on their customers and people all around them.

That is part of what makes our province so special. Premier Ford likes to call that the Ontario spirit. It is a can-do spirit of entrepreneurship, hard work and compassion. No matter who you are or where you come from, there are opportunities to thrive in small businesses in every single community. That's what we think about when we are supporting our local convenience stores. We think about the family who opens a new store, the employees who get to know their regular customers, the small businesses that grow and thrive.

This week, we encourage everyone to visit a local convenience store, as we celebrate Convenience Store Week, and thank them for the important role they are playing in each and every one of our communities. It's a signal that Ontario is open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour to rise today to speak on behalf of the official opposition, to recognize the second annual Convenience Store Week.

For many people, the convenience store was a cornerstone of growing up in Ontario. You'd spend your hard-earned coins on little bags of candy, run last-minute errands like picking up a bag of milk, or get a slushy on a hot summer day. It's really the first place you learned about finance and about budgeting. It brings back so many memories for me and I'm sure for all members across this chamber.

Convenience stores are a vital hub in many neighbourhoods, providing fast, friendly service, and are also vital small businesses in our communities all across Ontario. Many stores are family-owned and represent the Canadian dream. It's inspiring and, quite frankly, astonishing to hear how many hours these dedicated folks spend serving their customers well and always with a smile. They are some of the most hard-working people I know.

I think of my friend Amit at Springbank Mini Mart, who fosters relationships with the people who visit his store and who is always looking to improve his offerings, like adding a postal outlet or a balloon store. His convenience store is just one of the businesses that he owns. Honestly, where the guy finds the time I will never know—but he also gives back. Outside his store is a food donation cabinet, which he replenishes every single day.

These dedicated folks, who run almost 8,500 stores and have almost 80,000 employees, sponsor local teams. They give back to charities. The convenience store is even more vital for your family's needs up in the north.

As a teenager, I began my first real job in a convenience store, and I remain thankful to this day for all the lessons I learned. I spent my secondary and post-secondary years in various service roles, and it gave me an appreciation for hard work, long hours, and truly listening so you can provide the help people require.

I believe that every person should work in the service industry at some point or another. I will always be thankful that the service industry helped alleviate the burden of student debt and helped put me through university.

Throughout the pandemic, corner stores remained open to serve us, to provide food and to help us with our essential needs, such as masks and so much more. Corner stores

are exactly that—the cornerstones of our communities. I'm thankful that after many months of advocacy, the Ontario government finally listened to the official opposition NDP and provided much-needed supports to small businesses.

Small businesses, like convenience stores, also require further supports—not just in name alone—like paid sick days. They're the backbone of Ontario's economy, yet time and again we see governments, federal and provincial, look after big businesses and ignore that 80% of our economy is comprised of small businesses. It's disturbing when you see massive, highly profitable grocery chains getting free freezers. I know that many small business owners would love a fraction of that level of support.

In my community, US retail giant 7-Eleven is pursuing a liquor licence and wants to serve alcohol—not take-home, but serve beer and wine in a busy gas station location, to turn a gas station into a watering hole. As if that weren't questionable enough, this location is near Western University. Granting a retail giant like 7-Eleven a liquor licence would take away from other struggling small businesses, and that's not the kind of action people need right now.

Let's honour the great people who work seven days a week, including holidays, open before the sun is up and close well after the sun has gone down and others are tucked into their beds. Convenience stores routinely go above and beyond the big box stores and serve their neighbours with pride.

Let's honour them this week, listen to their concerns and ensure they stay open for years to come. I encourage everyone across Ontario to visit their local convenience store and thank them for everything they do.

I wish my great thanks and congratulations to all our corner stores, the cornerstones of our communities—the unsung heroes of our convenience stores. Thank you for serving your communities with pride, dignity, respect, and, most of all, care. From the official opposition, thank you for all you do.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition.

“To Raise Social Assistance Rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada's inflation

rate in December 2021 was 4.9%, the highest rate in 30 years;

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

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

I agree with this petition, I’m going to affix my signature to it and give it to bring to Arushi to bring to the Clerk.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Andrew Dowie: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas our government was elected on commitment on keeping costs down and putting more money back in Ontarians’ pockets by increasing housing supply, making it less expensive to drive or take transit, and by providing relief on everything from child care to taxes; and

“Whereas the government is delivering on that commitment by:

“—reducing 5.7 cents per litre on the gas tax for six months starting July 1;

“—\$120 each year in savings in southern Ontario and \$60 per year savings in northern Ontario by eliminating licence plate renewal fees for passenger and light commercial vehicles;

“—\$300 in additional tax relief in 2022, on average, for 1.1 million lower-income workers through the proposed low-income individuals and families tax credit enhancement;

“—scrapping tolls on Highways 412 and 418;

“—cutting child care costs by 50% on average by December of this year; and

“Whereas the government is reducing the cost of housing by:

“—increasing the non-resident speculation tax rate from 15% to 20% and expanding the tax beyond the greater Golden Horseshoe region to apply province-wide and closing loopholes to fight tax avoidance;

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“—implementing reforms that reduce red tape associated with new housing builds, making it easier to build community housing, and speeding up the approval process; and

“Whereas this plan is working—last year, over 100,000 new homes began construction, the highest in more than 30 years in the province of Ontario;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the housing action plan of the Ontario PC government.”

This petition was circulated by Aaron, and I will affix my signature and submit it.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present the following petitions on behalf of Mary Margison, who collected all the signatures. It reads:

“Stop Highway 413.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is pushing ahead with plans to build Highway 413, a redundant and wasteful 400-series highway through the greenbelt that would cost taxpayers an estimated \$10 billion; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s expert panel concluded that Highway 413 would be a waste of taxpayer money that would only save drivers 30 to 60 seconds on their commutes; and

“Whereas Highway 413 would pave over 400 acres of greenbelt and 2,000 acres of farmland, destroy the habitats of at-risk and endangered species, pollute rivers and streams, and cause significant harm to historic Indigenous sites;

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

“Stop the plans for building Highway 413.”

I fully agree with the petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it to page Juliet for the Clerks.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’d like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer of McMaster University for her petition campaign to raise social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada’s inflation rate in December 2021 was 4.9%, the highest rate in 30 years;

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

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

I am proud to affix my name to this petition. I will send it to the table with page Zara.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

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

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

MORE BEDS, BETTER CARE ACT, 2022 LOI DE 2022 POUR PLUS DE LITS ET DE MEILLEURS SOINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 24, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Calandra has moved second reading of Bill 7, An Act to amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 with respect to patients requiring an alternate level of care and other matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

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

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 25, 2022, 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?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to rise and provide my remarks, my observations and my recommendations in terms of this government's throne speech.

When we heard the throne speech, we knew it was an opportunity for relief, an opportunity for hope. And yet, unfortunately, there were some serious letdowns with this throne speech.

I think back to when I first entered this chamber back in 2018. I was pleased to see that this government has learned, because in 2018, if you will remember, Speaker, the throne speech began without a land acknowledgment—a very curious omission, something that was completely absent. Also, in mentioning the pillars of diversity in 2018 and going through all of these different attributes, the government included the word “lifestyle,” which anyone knows is a dog whistle to suggest that being gay is a choice. So I was glad to see that this wasn't included in this government's current throne speech.

I worry that the throne speech is really full of empty words, that it's flimsy window dressing for actual substantive changes, and I am also concerned that it fails to directly address many of the most pressing issues that we see across our province as this time. Some of those issues include affordability, with inflation at an all-time high, and our health care crisis—such a precarious state in all of our hospitals, seeing emergency rooms closing, seeing people leaving the field; it's a deep concern—also, in education. We need to make sure we have more robust supports for workers and social assistance and actually address the climate crisis in a meaningful way.

To begin my remarks, I'd like to take a deep dive through the throne speech itself. It starts off by talking about the virtues of partnership and collaboration, which is good to hear—that this government is interested in collaborating and interested in listening to the official opposition.

It also mentions the affordability crisis. It does mention inflation, yet we don't see enough relief to stem that rising tide of costs.

Curiously, it does mention hard-working people, but it also, directly after that, just two paragraphs away, talks about the rising costs of labour. Therefore, they talk about inflation—they know that life is getting more unaffordable, that people are working hard—but they're also talking about people wanting too much money. That's a shame.

The government talks about creating good jobs in the throne speech, but they don't mention, in combination with that, good wages.

They talk about high-quality hospitals and long-term-care homes, but they've left out the mention of public hospitals. That is a strange omission, but I get it; we see with government bills like G7 that they're hoping to move money away from the public system and put it into the hands of a few shareholders.

As well, the government talks about the free rapid antigen tests that were provided directly to Ontarians, but they neglect to mention that that was yet another example of their privatization, of taking public money and putting it into the hands of people like Shoppers Drug Mart, who had a direct financial benefit from this government's decision.

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They also mention adding 3,500 new hospital beds and thousands more nurses—it's funny that they first mentioned the furniture, almost as though the people are an afterthought.

They also talk about investing \$1 billion more to expand home and community care, but what they fail to mention is that, largely, that system is private. In fact, they undertook great pains to make sure that some of the remaining vestiges of home care were privatized under the last Legislature.

There is a mention, as well, of 30,000 new long-term-care beds. I'm sure that people with private interests are just rubbing their hands together, thinking about all the profit they are going to get from people in our system.

There are, again, some very flimsy words, some sentiments saying that in the health care system there's "an exhausted workforce and increasingly stressed emergency departments." Those words are incredibly true, but if the government actually believed them, they would repeal Bill 124.

It mentions that nine out of 10 high-urgency patients are finishing their emergency visit within target times—as if nine out of 10 was a success.

They're attempting to change the channel. But what is deeply concerning, when you analyze the language of the throne speech, is—they mention working with "health system partners." They talk about doing "whatever measures" and that there's "meaningful reform." This is concerning because these are coded words. These are words that are signalling the increasing privatization of our publicly funded health care system.

There's a mention of paramedicine, yet this government does not take into account the fact that, for instance, in my community of London, one third of paramedics want to leave. They're actively pursuing another job because of the backlog at hospitals, the amount of stress they're under, the fact that they don't get breaks. They're worked off their feet. All of their shifts are incredibly long. This government provides words, but we don't see any investments to help make their lives better.

There are further buzzwords, like "stifles innovation," "status quo." Yet again, these are buzzwords. This government wants to overhaul the publicly funded health care

system. It's almost as though they're suggesting that public funding is the status quo. Actually, funding hospitals properly is the status quo. They can't claim that they have actually maintained that, because they have not funded hospitals properly. We have not seen that under this government's mandate, yet they're saying it's not working. Well, it's no surprise. If you strangle a system when it stops working, it's no wonder it stops working because it is underfunded and cut to the bone.

There is also, of course, much finger-pointing. They've said that the federal government needs to pay its fair share of health care funding. Let's look back at history. Provincial governments are calling for 35% of the health care transfers. Let's never forget that it was a Conservative Prime Minister who cut the federal health care yearly increases from 6% to 3%—yet another example of austerity that we have not seen changed under a federal Liberal government, for that matter.

We also see: "Together, let's build an economy with better jobs and bigger paycheques," but it's very careful language in that they are not saying "better wages." It's almost like this government is expecting people to work more so they have a bigger paycheque, but they're not going to pay them what they're worth—because they're clearly not repealing Bill 124 at this stage.

They do, however, include an increase to the Ontario Disability Support Program. I'm reminded of when this government first took power. There was a promised 3% increase, which was cut to a 1.5% increase. After having learned the lessons throughout the pandemic, with everyone agreeing that \$2,000 a month was an adequate, sustainable income for everyone in this province, this government still has chosen to ensure that people living on social assistance are well below the poverty level.

I'd also like to take a look at some of the things that we need to consider in terms of affordability. We see across our province that people are having to accept lower wages, and that everything else is going up in price, whether it's the cost of food, the cost of fuel—the cost of everything else. It would be refreshing to see this government raise the minimum wage, repeal Bill 124—raise public sector compensation by getting rid of Bill 124. ODSP rates need to be doubled to make sure that people are able to maintain housing, to feed their families properly and to have a healthy life.

We also need the government to take an active role to protect people from price gouging. During the pandemic, we heard the Premier talking about becoming an 800-pound gorilla, being on people's backs, and yet we saw no one who was pursued who reported price gouging across our province.

From the official opposition side, we introduced legislation for a consumer protection watchdog, yet this government didn't feel it was important to protect consumers; they didn't feel it was important to make sure seniors aren't getting fleeced. We saw that door-to-door sales were banned under the previous Liberal government, but that doesn't stop people—they call on the phone, they make an appointment, they get into people's homes, and

they force them to sign terrible agreements for HVAC systems, for home automation, for so many other things, and this government has done nothing to stop that.

If we take a look at our current health care crisis, right now there's so much of our public money that is going to private, for-profit industries as it is. We know that health care spending is being used on hiring temp nurses, that spending on temp agency nurses has gone up 550% since pre-pandemic levels. There's a clear connection here. Many nurses have been exhausted, and they feel, quite frankly, humiliated by this government—to be rejected, to be ignored, to be completely cast aside. We have words, and then we have actions. This government could repeal Bill 124 and deliver the respect that they deserve, and yet instead we see talking points and no actions.

This overreliance on these temp agency nurses is a stopgap that is not helping anyone—it is not only privatization, but it's ensuring that people are similarly leaving the field to pursue these private industries. We also have the greater risk of injury at work for places that are unfamiliar. We also have concerns about the continuity of care. It's yet another example of privatization, where this government is taking public money, our tax dollars, and flushing it down the drain. They're making sure that only a few people are benefiting from that. Here, on the official opposition side, we believe in publicly funding health care and making sure we stretch every last one of those dollars as much as they can go to the greatest level of care, yet this government seems immune to that.

What's a further tremendous concern is when we see this hinted privatization language within the throne speech. We see examples in Bill 7. We heard the government actually speaking about how people who are in hospitals, who are in an alternate-level-of-care situation, should be paying. This government believes that those people should be paying. This government wants hospitals to charge people up to \$1,500 a day for their care. The only other option is for them to be forced into a situation that is not necessarily one of their choosing, into a long-term-care home that they did not choose, through really what is a disgraceful level of coercion for seniors, who deserve far better.

We also want to look towards inflation. We know that inflation is around 8.1% at this stage, yet this government doesn't offer much relief for taxpayers; it doesn't offer much relief for the middle class. In fact, in a recent report, it has been indicated that only 16%—did you hear that—of workers believe their wages are keeping up with inflation. That's shocking. That would leave out so many people across this province. Think about the gig workers. Think about the PSWs who aren't provided full-time jobs with benefits, because this government is happy to allow private, for-profit long-term-care homes to operate in the way they do.

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I want to take a look at privatization itself because, as I've said, this throne speech reeks of it; it stinks to high heaven.

In long-term care, for-profit residents—let's do some facts and figures here—were 60% more likely to be

infected with COVID-19 and 45% more likely to die. In the for-profit homes throughout the pandemic, they were five times more likely to die than those in publicly and municipally run homes and not-for-profit homes. Yet instead of taking that information, instead of learning that lesson throughout the pandemic, we see this government is hell-bent on continuing to take public money and put it into shareholders' pockets, put it into the pockets of insiders. It's truly frightening. For-profit homes spend 24% less per year on care. That should be obvious. We have a government that talks a good game about finances and conservation of wealth and spending money in a wise, frugal way. This should be clear and it should be very obvious: If the money is not going towards its intended purpose, then it should not be spent. If we wanted seniors to be cared for correctly, then we would have publicly funded, not-for-profit long-term care. It's obvious.

We also want to look towards how these private, for-profit long-term-care corporations and businesses are able to funnel that money away. Do you know how that is, Speaker? It's because they pay their staff less money. They work their staff in ridiculous ways—they have part-time jobs without benefits, without respect—and they pay them far less. They hire, in fact, most times, casual staff, part-time staff. They rely on these very same agencies I mentioned earlier to keep their doors open—not just keep their doors open, but keep the pockets of their few investors full.

We should be expanding home care and making sure it is publicly delivered and publicly funded, instead of it going into agency pockets. If we look at how much the home care companies are paid with public funds for a nurse, it's between \$58 and \$70 per hour—this was from 2015, mind you. How much do those companies actually pay the staff, pay that nurse, from that \$58 to \$70? They pay them about \$30 an hour. That's hefty profit—for a PSW, it's between \$30 to \$50. That's how much money they get from the government, yet they pass on less than half of that: \$15 per hour for a PSW. That's a shame, and that should be stopped. That is a very inappropriate and ineffective expenditure. It's an unwise way to spend our public money.

Speaker, we also need to take a look at a government that needs to build affordable and supportive housing. Throughout my community, we have a really amazing organization, the Forgotten 519. Jenna Rose Sands, Dan Oudshoorn and Dr. Andrea Sereda came together to really show the plight of what's happening to people who are losing their lives; people who have hopes, people who have dreams; people who have families who are dying on the street in front of our eyes. Yet this government is not funding social assistance well; they're not building affordable housing. This is the problem. We need to make sure that people are housed, that people are safe, and then and only then can they build back their lives. Frequently, whenever I've brought this issue to the House before, we've heard this government talk about wraparound services, yet they don't provide those wraparound services. They are not funding mental health support. They aren't funding things correctly. We can fix that.

As I look back on this throne speech, we see that this was an opportunity. I had hoped, through all the different iterations of the pandemic and all the different waves, that this government would have learned and that it would have looked at how it did not create an iron ring around long-term care; how it failed working people in Ontario by waiting so long to finally provide sick days, the paltry few that they did, and finally looked towards the future by providing 10 paid sick days—like the member from London West has brought forward once again.

We also have opportunities to make sure we expedite the credentials of foreign-trained nurses, like the member from Scarborough Southwest—the excellent legislation she has brought forward. There was an opportunity back then, and yet we only hear the government making noises about this now.

There is so much more we can do. I look forward to working with this government to make sure we find—that we show what has been missing from this throne speech and what actually needs to be done here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: The member, in his speech, was saying how he wants to work with the government. If we are going to be working together to improve health care, to improve patient outcomes—every step of the way, unfortunately, the member's actions haven't matched the words. So I'm wondering if his actions will actually match his words going forward.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member for Barrie–Innisfil for the question. It's almost like she borrowed words from my speech and was trying to use them against me. It's rather interesting.

On the official opposition side, we have always advocated to listen to the front lines in health care.

Throughout this throne speech, we don't see any listening to the front lines of health care—we hear “working with system partners,” and we saw a government that worked with long-term-care owner-operators throughout the pandemic. They created legislation to protect them from legal liability for all the deaths that happened on their watch. That's frightening.

Instead, we need to listen to the workers. We need to listen to the nurses. We need to listen to the PSWs. We need to listen to the patients who are actually being impacted. That would include having a committee so that we could actually discuss Bill 7 and hear from the people who are going to be impacted, the people who are going to be coerced and forced out of the hospital into a place where they don't want to go, hundreds of kilometres away, away from their family. That would be listening. That would be your actions matching your words.

Instead, we have all sorts of talk in this throne speech—but it's coded language; it's hiding what is actually going on, and that's increasing privatization. Quite frankly, that is something I believe Ontarians are frightened of.

Why don't you just be forthright and tell Ontarians what you're hoping to do—and that is to make health care for-profit in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the comments from my colleague from London North Centre.

We've just heard the member from Barrie–Innisfil stand up—and she makes it sound as though it's a one-way street, that we're just supposed to agree to everything the government wants to do, and that it doesn't work the other way around.

I know that we have brought forward many solutions to the health care crisis—and it's not just us bringing them forward; it's actually because we've listened to the front-line health care workers, we've listened to people who have accessed health care. I shared a story in the House about a woman in my riding who waited over 16 hours to be seen in an emergency department.

This government seems to think that, with Bill 7, just transferring seniors and people with disabilities into long-term-care homes hours away from their own home, without their consent, is the answer to fixing the health care crisis.

I'm wondering if the member from London North Centre could talk about some of the things that we have brought forward and that the public has brought forward, because this government doesn't want to do committee on Bill 7. So maybe we can have an opportunity, through my colleague, to share some of the things that we've heard from the front-line people, the workers, and the people accessing health care in the province.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for Windsor West for her question. It's an incredibly important one.

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By listening to people, by actually engaging with Ontarians, the official opposition has been able to advocate on some very important pieces of legislation. Those include the member for Windsor West's More Than a Visitor Act, something that would give essential caregivers more of a role within health care decisions that are being made for folks in long-term care. That was incredibly important, because, throughout the pandemic, we saw that many of these essential caregivers, these loved ones, these people who provided care, who helped buttress a system that has been woefully undercut and underfunded for many, many years—they were the ones who were actually providing that care, and they were shut out from these homes. They were not allowed to see their loved ones, and that's so difficult on a senior, on someone with disabilities—the only thing that they look forward to every day is seeing that loved one.

Also, we had other legislation—like Till Death Do Us Part Act, to make sure that loved ones are kept in the same home, from the member for Waterloo, and so many other things.

We see a government that doesn't want to work across party lines and that doesn't want to work with each other.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I listened intently to the member opposite—and of course, as we approach the 10-year anniversary of the passage of the 2012 budget, I was thinking

about budgets throughout the years—and it was interesting to me to hear the member opposite say that his party has always stood with front-line workers, when we know that they were a party that propped up the Liberal government, including in a 2012 budget that froze wages across the board, that many public sector unions and labour partners across the province spoke out against.

So my question is, why would the member opposite be part of a party that passed legislation that spoke against the rights of workers and yet now won't vote for anything that is ensuring that there is more staff in our long-term-care homes, more staff in our hospitals, and more supports for these front-line workers, who deserve all of our support in order to ensure that they are given the tools they need to provide world-class health care here in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for his question, although I think there are a few mistakes in there.

One of the reasons that I became very interested and very engaged in politics was Bill 115—and that was wage-suppression tactics that were by the Liberal government at the time and supported by the Conservatives. That was a direct attack on teachers, a direct attack on workers, and one that the Conservatives really supported.

And you see a parallel: There was Bill 115, which took away the bargaining rights of educators in the education system, and now we have Bill 124, which takes away the bargaining rights of nurses and front-line health care heroes. So, really, it's old wine in new bottles. We see the same tricks. We see the same sorts of omnibus legislation.

Supporting workers in my riding is something that's very key, and I find it very concerning that the member would try to paint this brush—we keep hearing about this coalition that never existed. It's funny how this government is really trying to change history, but it's really not working.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I've got two quick questions for the member.

This government has been in power since 2018, so they've gone through one term. They're into a second term.

Can the member explain to this House what this government has done with regard to helping front-line workers get the respect they deserve, with bill removal and repealing Bill 124?

Also, I'm sure you are hearing from your constituents, as I am—from northern Ontario—on the measly \$58 that people will see on their ODSP increases. How is that actually going to impact their lives? What are you hearing from your constituents in your riding—what this government is touting as the biggest 5% increase ever being made on ODSP rates? What is the reality? What does that mean for people who are sitting at home, who are facing many challenges, who are looking for help, who are looking for leadership from this government?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his question.

We don't see any support from this government for front-line workers; if we did, we would actually see them repeal Bill 124.

I want to turn to the Premier's comments from March 30, 2020, when he was speaking about Bill 124 and speaking about health care professionals. He said: "If it was up to me, I'd just give them the bank." Well, it has been two years, and we still see this deliberate wage suppression, this disrespectful Bill 124.

To the second part of the question, in terms of social assistance rates: We know that there was a Conservative government that slashed social assistance rates by 22.5%, and then there were 15 years when the Liberals could have fixed that and they chose to do nothing—so much so that that initial cut was drastic, and yet people are worse off now than they were then. And this government seems to claim that 5% is going to change everything; it's not. As the member points out, \$58 is not going to fix it for people. There are people who have spoken to me who have indicated that they've withheld medication, that they are on the brink of losing their home, and that if they're about to go on the streets, they may choose to take that medication. That is a shocking reality that this government refuses to admit. They should not be patting themselves on the back for 5%; they should be doubling it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member opposite for his speech. I did pick up a couple of themes, especially with respect to involvement of the private sector.

Just a couple of months ago, when I was visiting long-term-care facilities, a staff member came to me and wished me success in the election. She let me know that she was voting PC for the first time in her life. That's probably why I'm here. She was a proud long-term-care nurse who works in the private sector. She cares about her patients and is proud of the work she does to care for people. The narrative that the private sector is not competent and is not doing the appropriate work for their patients is distressing.

Can the member explain how opposing the hard work of our private sector long-term-care facilities that can help build up supportive services to more people and keep Ontario open—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll allow the member for London North Centre to have a few seconds to reply.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, although I think—I'm sure it was an honest mistake, but my pronouns are "he" and "him."

We always from the government that the private sector is going to somehow be the greatest thing since sliced bread—it's going to be choice; it's going to be efficient; it's going to be accurate. And yet, no, as soon as they take over contracts, it ends up costing far more, and people don't have the care that they need.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I see some of my friends on the other side. I'm glad they're here, and I hope we can have a nice, healthy debate and I can bring a smile to your faces.

It's not about what's in the throne speech; it's about what's not. A throne speech is supposed to be about what a government's priorities are.

If you look at this throne speech, the thing that really stands out is: aucune mention des besoins des Franco-Ontariens; pas une seule ligne en français. Les services en français pour la communauté sont très importants dans les foyers de longue durée, dans les soins de santé, dans les services communautaires pour les personnes âgées. C'est très important—pas une mention. C'est un grand problème pour la communauté franco-ontarienne. It should be a problem for all of us. For years, governments have continued to try to work and improve upon French-language services. It's especially critical in health care, and we're never done. That's something that should be part of every throne speech. It's very important. It's a very important part of our province. That's why we have the flag flying up here.

The other thing that really stood out is, I couldn't find the words "environment" or "climate change." That's on the minds of most Ontarians these days. If we take a look at some of the storms and floods that we've had over the last number of years, the derecho that just hit Ottawa—and, by the way, we're still waiting there for disaster relief. I know my colleague asked a question about that. Other areas in Ontario are getting disaster relief, but farmers, especially in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell right now, are looking for—there are some sugar bushes out there that are looking for that. I know the member would like to see that as well. So I hope the government obliges their own members and ensures that that assistance that's happening in Ontario comes here.

Bill 124: It's an obvious priority for the government, because they keep hanging on to it. It's not in the throne speech. You have to ask yourself why, if it's such a priority for the government, they don't want to mention it again in a throne speech. They're hanging on to it—except that nurses are leaving at twice the rate.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: How many nurses did you fire, John?

Mr. John Fraser: Not as many as you guys did. You should check your numbers.

1400

Bill 124 has been the most damaging piece of legislation to our health care human resources that I can remember, and that even goes as far back—because I'm old—as Mike Harris firing 8,000 nurses and saying they were basically hula hoops. I know I'm bringing back some history, but you guys are familiar with that. And we won't talk about the 26 hospitals that you closed; they weren't in the throne speech.

Our challenge in this province and actually across Canada right now is competing for health care human resources, the best and the brightest nurses, doctors, front-line health care workers.

What has Bill 124 done? It has driven nurses out of the system, to retire. It has driven nurses to go and work for private agencies, because private agencies aren't bound by the restriction of 1%. What happens? They get driven towards private agencies and then they go back and work in our long-term-care homes and our hospitals for sometimes two or three times the rate. That's not great fiscal policy—and sometimes the same nurses. I don't know about you, but I don't think paying two and three times as much for the same person is going to be very helpful. It has also sent the wrong message to health care workers who are currently in the system. What it says to nurses and others is, "You're not allowed to bargain." But if you are on a police service or you're a firefighter, you can bargain. How do you think nurses feel about that? It's not just about the money, although the money is really important; it's about respect.

So if the government is so tied to Bill 124, they should have said something about it in the throne speech.

Bill 7: We didn't see that coming in the throne speech, did we? Nary a mention, not a thing—amazing. A few weeks later, we're now saying that we are going to pass a law that is going to allow people in the health care system to move people without their consent. I know what the other side is going to say later on in questions: "No, that's not what the bill says." I would just ask you to read the bill. It says expressly—even in the explanatory note, two lines in—that this will allow patients to be moved without their consent. Would any of us accept that for our families? I don't think so.

And now we find out that the threat of a big hospital bill can be used because the patient is deemed to be discharged. The government is kind of covering that over. Oh, they're going to come out and somebody can stand up—I don't know if anybody can stand up today and has the authority to say, "That's not going to happen." Not one person on the government side has said that. You haven't said it. Using the threat of a big hospital bill to coerce consent out of somebody—it's not great. You didn't mention in the throne speech, (a) that you're going to do this, (b) how far you can send people—we still don't know. It doesn't say how much it was going to cost people if they didn't consent to something that might not be good for their families.

I've seen recently that there were some comments that a 35-minute drive isn't so bad—well, maybe not for you or me, but for an 80-year-old, that's a long way away. I know; I've watched it over the years—couples get separated. It's a really difficult time in their lives, and taking out this big stick to say, "You're going to do what we want you to do. You guys are the problem because you don't want to co-operate in the system, because you're going to be uncooperative"—that's the message it's sending.

The crazy thing about this is, you're going so fast—there are 2,000 families out there right now, and if 150 of them know about it, I'd be shocked. So this thing is going to come down the pipe at them, and you're going to give the people who are dealing with them a tremendous

amount of power. That's dangerous. Whether it's this or anything else—there's no check and balance in it.

The government is putting forward the bill as if it's a temporary measure. That's the way they're trying to make it sound. Read the bill. Does anybody see a sunset clause? I don't. This bill is permanent. It's not for next week, next month or next year; it's forever—because you're not making a bill to repeal it a year later. If you're going to do that, you're going to put it in the bill.

Make no mistake about it, someday one of us may be in exactly the same position—and I'm probably closer to it than most of you, so maybe that's why it makes me more upset.

Actually, it makes me upset because there are so many people out there who already don't know their rights, who already don't have power in the system, who already don't have a voice, and you're setting up the system—Bill 7, not a mention in the throne speech. Bill 7 is going to fundamentally change how we treat people going into long-term care—our seniors, the frail elderly, people close to the end of their lives, and people with disabilities. It's a fundamental change.

I know for a fact that this is something that has been talked about for years. There was a reason that it has never been done: It's not right; none of us would accept it—and we're going at lightning speed. We could be debating this bill tomorrow afternoon and have it passed by Wednesday with no public consultation—not a comment. The people who are going to be most affected by this? They don't know. They won't know until it comes down the pipe and runs smack into them, and they won't know what their rights are. Here's the thing—and we're not thinking about this: We're all talking about it right now. It's in the media. It's in our minds. After that bill has passed, there are 2,000 families out there in Ontario it's going to happen to. We're not going to see them. Maybe you will if they call your office, if they know to call your office—because not everybody knows to call our office. Or maybe you hear about it—but you're not likely to hear about it. Some 2,000 people out of the millions of families in Ontario—that's not a lot. But for those 2,000 people, it is a lot—it means a lot to them. It's a senior they've loved through their lives, who they want to make sure gets the best care—and now we're treating them as if they're the problem. That's what this bill does. It's fundamentally wrong.

I don't think anybody here wants to do what this bill is going to do—I don't believe that. I think this bill is just getting rammed through because it's not the right thing to do and the government knows it. The people who are putting this forward know it. We'll pass it. We won't see what happens. We'll hear stories now and then. But if this was your intention, it should have been mentioned in the throne speech. We should have had a longer debate about it. We should have been talking more about this.

The last thing is, I didn't hear “status quo” in the speech, but what I do know is that every time I hear the Premier say “status quo”—well, for the last four months, his status quo was what we have now. We couldn't find the Minister of Health for five weeks in an ER crisis. So

the Premier needs to know that the status quo he talks about is his.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for his presentation. He mentioned the previous Mike Harris government and talked about hospital closures, funding cuts—I would add on the destruction of the model for our education system—privatizing our health care sector, long-term care, seniors' care or home care. There are a lot of things to mention.

I would like to ask the member if you would enlighten us a little bit in terms of the way that the Harris legacy has impacted us and where we are today, and what this bill would mean for the future.

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Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

This bill is about long-term care. Twenty-five years ago, we started an experiment in long-term care here in this province, bringing in for-profit long-term care, and successive governments, of which I was a part, continued it. I have to say, during the pandemic we all saw the results of that experiment—not good results. It's not a path we should have gone down. It doesn't work. You can't serve two masters. You can't pay dividends and care for people.

The homes that generally aren't on people's list of choices are the for-profit homes. The lists for non-profit homes are very long.

What this bill is going to do right now is, it's going to send people where they don't want to go. It's not right. This is kind of a continuation of that legacy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. John Jordan: My question to the member opposite is regarding things that are in the bill. The things that have been mentioned, the language that has been used—“coercion,” “forced to move away from friends and family,” “move to the worst homes in the province”—are all things that this bill protects our fragile seniors in ALC from. What does the member think language like that means to a fragile person sitting in ALC?

I encourage all of us to speak positively to our seniors and not put this fear forward.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member for his question.

I think we all care about seniors here—people in our families, people in other people's families. But I kind of feel like I'm in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There's a bill that says you can move people without their consent, and the government continually says, “You can't do that”—but it's in the bill.

Then, nobody says how far people are going to move—“Well, just leave that for regulations. We'll find out later.” No one says anything about how it's going to cost you more money if you decide not to go.

I think it would be easier to have a reasonable, positive debate if we could actually debate, if we could actually put it to committee, if we could actually let people come and tell us what was going to happen. That's why we have

committees—because we don't all work in that sector; we don't all know that sector. But I've been doing this for 20 years in a community office. I know what happens when couples get separated.

What I'm saying is, this bill is going to create more problems. It's going to hurt more than it helps.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his comments. I just want to tag on to the discussion that was being exchanged between the person who asked the question and his answer.

Often, when you look at a bill, it's not exactly what's in the bill—because there are a lot of significant actions that are going to be taken out of this piece of legislation that you cannot read in this bill right now. Some of it is going to be in regulations.

But there are certainly some things that are left for people, and their perception is that—yes, “coercion” is not in here; yes, “force” is not in in this bill. However, what's going to happen is the actions that are going to push people out of those homes—because there are going to be financial penalties if they don't make those decisions. No, they're going to be forced to take those decisions—it's not going to be coerced. But they are going to be put into those positions—and if you don't, you will be penalized financially. Those are the things that are not in this bill. I would like the member to talk a little bit more about that and about how important it would be to put this out to the public, to engage them and hear from them, as far as their discussions and what their concerns are with the interpretation of what's not in this bill that will affect their families.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member for his question. He's exactly right. It's really the how—how far can people go; how much money could it cost you? If we take a look at the legislation and what the OHA says about managing transitions—their guidelines—it's obvious that people who are discharged can be charged. How many? How many staff do we have in long-term care?

I think we answered the question about how long—this is being put out as a temporary measure, but it's permanent. There's no sunset clause in here.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes. So we're changing this forever. I don't think any of us are going to want this for ourselves. So I'm glad that they disclosed that.

I'm sorry I missed the member's press conference, but I think Ontarians deserve these answers. That's why we should be debating it and putting it to committee. The government should be forthright about it. It's obviously something that they're proud of.

I think that your question is spot-on.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Over the last four years, in my riding, our hospitals have had \$21 million of investment in redevelopments that are long overdue and did not occur for 15 years prior to that.

I want to know what the member opposite has to say to those who lie in hallways on gurneys waiting for care.

I had a senior resident in my community who was in septic shock, was on a gurney for three days in the emergency ward before being admitted to a hospital bed, and spent three weeks there. That constituent was my father.

What does the member opposite have to say to those residents, those Ontarians, who lie in wait in emergency rooms, waiting for rooms that they can't get because there's an alternate-level-of-care patient who has been discharged, who's ready to be moved and can't be moved?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very sorry that that happened to your father.

What I would say, respectfully, is, Bill 124 has done more damage to our health care human resources—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, if you want to talk about the nursing shortage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, clearly Bill 124 is hitting a chord—because that's when they pipe up the most.

Respectfully, if you don't have a nurse, it's pretty hard to get someone off a gurney into a bed. But I would also say to the person who's in that bed, who's 80 or 90, who has a spouse—the farther you move that person away, the harder it is for that spouse. It's about their quality of life. Just because they're old doesn't mean they don't have rights. Just because they're old doesn't mean they don't deserve a quality of life. So that shouldn't happen.

I would, respectfully, submit that actually repealing Bill 124 about 18 months ago would have made a difference in this province, and actually respecting nurses and front-line health care workers, and not saying wonderful things and then not following it up with action.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: The members across love to speak about history, as long as it's not their own history. They love to ignore the fact that they caused a mass exodus of health care workers. They love to ignore the fact that they created a backlog of 22 million services. They love to ignore the fact that the ALC beds ballooned under their administration.

So, to the member across, what would you have preferred—what should the throne speech have said in order for this government to have addressed its own failures?

Mr. John Fraser: Repeal Bill 124. Actually get serious about foreign-trained professionals. That would be very helpful. I didn't hear that, didn't see any action—until the minister said, “Come up with a plan in two weeks.”

Do you know what? When they engrave this Ford government in granite, it is going to say, “Here lies the Ford government—I need a plan in two weeks.”

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's an absolute honour for me to be able to rise in the House today as the member for Brampton East.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all newly elected and re-elected members on their election to this House. Each of us has taken a different path to get here, but all with a common goal regardless of our political stripes: That is our shared belief in the values of democracy, service to our community and doing the best we can for the great people of Ontario. I look forward to serving this term with all of you here today.

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Comprised of a population of just over 121,000, the great riding of Brampton East is one of the most diverse, vibrant and fast-growing areas in the country. I would like to thank the residents of Brampton East for putting their trust in me and giving me the honour of representing them in this House. I would like to thank all the hard-working volunteers and supporters who worked tirelessly to send me here to Queen's Park and for the time they took out making phone calls, knocking on doors and putting up signs across the riding. I'm especially grateful to everyone who hosted meet-and-greet events in their backyards. Speaker, we had just over 60 backyard get-togethers in the span of 28 days. Every day, when I take my seat in this Legislature, I always appreciate them and remember the tremendous amount of hard work it took to make history here in Brampton East. It is with their time, love and support that this is a reality. To my friends, to my volunteers and family who sacrificed many long nights and many long days, thank you. Thank you for taking a chance in a riding where no one ever once thought the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario stood a chance. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Without you, this victory would not have been possible. I would also like to give a special shout-out to the hundreds of youth volunteers who helped our team break records knocking on doors. It was with their support that we were able to deliver our party's message of "Yes" to building Ontario's and Brampton's infrastructure, from hospitals to highways, to universities and so much more. They helped us deliver this message to each and every household in this riding many times over.

To me, community is everything. From my early childhood onwards, I was shaped by my community, and I will never forget my roots. That is why I will always be a strong advocate for the residents of Brampton East and Brampton, and that is my promise to all the constituents of Brampton East and Brampton.

Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank two very important individuals to whom I owe everything: my mother, Parminder Kaur Grewal, and my father, Jagdish Singh Grewal. Without their hard work, sacrifice and commitment, I would not be who I am today.

My parents came to Canada at a very young age in search of a new life full of opportunity, with nothing in their pockets but a strong work ethic and a dream to succeed, just like a lot of other immigrant parents that have come to this great country over a number of many years. My mother worked multiple jobs, most prominently in my memory working as a window and glass factory assembly line worker, standing up for countless hours with aching

hands and feet, to come home and then take care of my brother, my sister and myself. She always made us feel loved, and no matter the hardships, always made sure that we had everything that we could ever ask for.

My father also worked multiple jobs. In fact, just one day after landing in Abbotsford, BC, in 1989, he started his first job the very next day picking blueberries, and then later to move to Toronto to start a career in heavy-duty mechanics and later join the Canadian Armed Forces here in Toronto. With that said, Speaker, in 1994, I was born, and the forces had different plans for him. He had papers to move from Toronto to be stationed in Petawawa. At the request of my mother, he decided to make Etobicoke North our home and worked as an automotive technician at Chrysler for many years.

Before immigrating to Canada, he was studying to be a lawyer and was a passionate writer and poet, and after years of community involvement in various broadcast media, charitable, sports, writing and poetry organizations, in 2002 he left Chrysler and started the first daily Punjabi-language newspaper in the world outside of India, the Canadian Punjabi Post. As his list of professions continues to evolve and grow, I consider this his most notable achievement, none of which would have been possible without the steadfast support of my mother. I'm extremely sure that, in 1989, when my father landed in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and started his first job in Canada picking blueberries, the last thing he imagined was that his son would be a member in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This is one of Canada's greatest beauties: No matter where you come from, who you worship, if you work hard enough, the sky is the limit.

My parents worked hard, persevered. They never gave up. No matter the financial struggles they went through to establish themselves, they remained positive and hopeful. They are my inspiration. They are the reason why I want to fight for Ontarians and the people of Brampton and ensure that our future generations have the same opportunities of success and the same opportunities to succeed.

I would also like to thank my grandmother, Surjit Kaur Grewal, and my grandfather, Kirpal Singh Grewal, who also served in the Indian Army, retired, then immigrated to Canada. I have been fortunate to spend a lot of my early childhood with my grandparents. I love them both, and I would like to thank them for instilling great values, taking care of me and always being my biggest supporters in any endeavor that I've chosen to take in my life. I know there is no one prouder than my grandfather, who watches every time I speak in the House at home on his iPad, and then has his remarks ready as soon as I walk in the door.

As both my father and grandfather served in the military, you can just imagine the discipline in our household and the early wakeup calls, and that is one thing that I've never been fond of.

I would also like to thank my younger brother, Chetan Singh Grewal, and my sister, Harleen Kaur Grewal, for always being so supportive and always being there by my side. No matter how big or small of a task, they were always ready to help, and especially during the course of

the campaign and in everyday life, they are my backbone. They're the ones I rely on to get the job done because they work tirelessly, day and night, to ensure things run smoothly, and the success of this campaign would not have been possible without them by my side each and every day. I'm truly blessed to have siblings like the both of you.

Speaker, one thing most people might not understand is the kind of stress it puts on family members of a person who puts their name forward for public office and the sacrifices they must make in their lives. I'm so blessed and beyond grateful for an extended family, close friends and relatives, all of whom played an important role in getting me where I am here today.

I would like to talk a little bit about my own personal journey into public service and politics. I was born and raised in Etobicoke North, and I started my journey into politics and community service when I was super young, between 12 and 15 years old.

As I mentioned before, my father was a journalist, and I would passionately spend most of my days with him, attending local community events, press conferences and meetings, and those that knew me at the time knew that I was most notable for my photojournalism, taking pictures at events, going to press conferences, taking pictures of leaders, and then being very excited when they were published in my father's very own newspaper and various other outlets, including the national media, depending on the circumstances.

So what this did is, it allowed me to have a lot of face time with government officials, such as Prime Ministers, Premiers, mayors, and it's through these interactions that my personal interest in politics began. I had the opportunity to meet with some of Canada's most influential leaders and learn first-hand what had inspired them to run and serve our great country.

One of my most memorable visits was when I was just 14 years old and I was attending a garden party at the Right Honourable Prime Minister Stephen Harper's residence. And just being there, being able to take in that aura and being able to speak to whomever I pleased, whether it was a minister, whether it was an MP, whether it was a government relations stakeholder, and being able to discuss the various things that mattered most to them really helped inspire me to get here where I am today. At first-hand, I got to build individual relationships and then they encouraged me to get involved further.

It was then when I met the immigration minister and now Premier of Alberta, Jason Kenney, who I'm proud to call a good friend, someone who's always encouraged me to pursue my dreams. And as I met Premier Kenney, I met so many other ministers, MPs, and they all had the same level of encouragement to help support my dreams of one day being in the public sector, whether it was through service as staff or through service as a volunteer or through service today as, I'm so proud to be, the MPP from Brampton East.

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At every opportunity available to me, I volunteered with many campaigns in various levels of government,

from putting up signs to managing campaigns and virtually everything in between, no matter how big or small. At the young age of 18, I became the local riding president of Etobicoke North, a position I held for approximately eight years, to later move on as an elected regional director on the PC Ontario Fund.

And fast-forward—after a couple of nomination attempts which didn't go my way—to today, to being the candidate in Brampton East and to being the MPP in Brampton East. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Premier Doug Ford for the role that he played in shaping me into who I am today. I still remember the meetings he used to have with me in Perkins, a famous restaurant in Etobicoke, many, many years ago. I still remember his guidance and words of wisdom over the years. It is truly an honour to be a part of this government today and serve under his leadership.

I would also like to thank two more individuals, MPP Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria and MPP Amarjot Sandhu, who over the last four years have kept me involved and informed in the process. Through their offices, I've been able to volunteer and continuously help the residents of Brampton East. It's a great feeling when you have two brothers in the House which you can continuously turn to for support and guidance. I, alongside my newly elected colleagues MPP McGregor and MPP Williams, hope to amplify the great work that they've been doing advocating for Brampton over the last four years.

I'm extremely thankful to all of those who have supported me in my endeavours throughout my entire life. I'm especially grateful to the residents of Brampton East and I'm extremely humbled, grateful and excited to be here and serve in the 43rd Parliament of Ontario.

Speaker, when I think about Brampton, not only do I think about the numerous amounts of young entrepreneurs that we have, because their average median age is 35, we also have a very vibrant social community which continues to thrive and which continues to hold social events and strengthen our community. On many occasions, I've had the opportunity of meeting with various seniors' clubs, and the seniors' clubs in our area are extremely active and involved in the every day—whether it's politics, sports, you name it. They continue to promote social inclusiveness and harmony. Not only are the seniors present at these large gatherings, they gather with their grandkids and family members where they engage in various activities like poetry, singing, sports and discussions on current affairs. These gatherings are essential for building communities together and improving mental health, and I'm always grateful for their support. I look forward to working with them over the next coming years.

Speaker, let's talk about the reasons why we're all here and what we're going to do for the people of Ontario as a PC government. Our plan was clearly communicated with Ontarians during this election. I'm glad they voted for a plan that will build Ontario's infrastructure, from housing to hospitals to universities and highways and so much more.

Over the last four years, our Progressive Conservative government has worked hard to ensure Brampton would

no longer be left behind as it was with the previous Liberal government. It is because of these efforts Brampton residents unanimously supported our party's vision to build more long-term-care beds that better fit the community's needs. For decades, residents have been asking for care homes which provide service to the people in their own native languages. This is the government that said yes.

Bramptonians have been asking for a second hospital, and unlike the previous government, this government said yes.

Brampton residents asked for a new university, and it is this government that said yes to delivering a new medical school that Brampton residents have been so tirelessly asking for over many years.

Brampton residents were also tired of being stuck in traffic and have been asking for more highway infrastructure for years and, unlike the previous government, this government said yes to building Highway 413.

I'm so proud to be working under Premier Ford's leadership, a leader that wants to get it done not only just for Brampton, but for all of Ontario.

Our constituents were tired. They were tired of the status quo and wanted change, change that would build the infrastructure that the city so desperately needed, and with our Premier's vision and the support of Bramptonians, we made history in Brampton East and across the city.

Speaker, as I was going around campaigning during the election, I got to speak to many, many residents in my riding, all looking for Ontario's plan to grow for the future. Over the next four years, I look forward to taking on the difficult challenges that our province is currently facing, but I am confident that, under Premier Ford's leadership, our government will deliver a balanced plan to build Ontario up, by growing Ontario's economy, investing in education, building and renovating schools, strengthening our health care system, investing in roads, transit, modern infrastructure, while cutting red tape and creating good-paying jobs for everyone in the province.

It's time that we, together, build Ontario: a strong, vibrant and successful province and economy. Let's keep our taxes low. Let's continue to create a competitive business environment that attracts investments and creates good jobs. Let's build roads, highways, and other critical infrastructure that helps get goods and services to market sooner. Let's build livable and safe communities with good schools and high-quality hospitals and long-term-care homes, as well as convenient transit options. Let's grow our auto manufacturing sector and become leaders in North America's electric-vehicle battery manufacturing industry. Together, let's build a health care system that better cares for patients and keeps our province open.

Again, I'm so proud to be working under Premier Ford's leadership, a leadership that puts people first. I'm proud to be a part of the government that is making the largest investment in the province's history to build and expand hospitals across Ontario, especially in communities like Brampton, places that have been advocating for better health care infrastructure for years.

Speaker: promises made, promises kept. We will soon see shovels in the ground across Ontario and see our province grow.

As the time is coming close to an end, I would like to thank the House for allowing me this opportunity to speak about our government's exciting plans today. Over the next four years, I look forward to taking on the difficult challenges our province is currently facing, but I'm extremely confident that our government will build a stronger province for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Brampton East?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a joy being in this House for the maiden speeches. I want to thank the member from Brampton East. His frame of his maiden speech, when he's talking about family, then talks about his support network, talks about his drive that got him here. And then the last moments of his speech—I don't agree with a lot of what he said, but it was good; it was good, I tell you.

The part that I really enjoyed is your family. That was awesome. That was beautiful. My mom, unfortunately, didn't see me come to the House or be elected, but she would have loved it, because she tried to get me involved in politics, and I just hated it with a passion. It's funny. It took me 43 years to find out what my calling was, and I'm supposed to be here. I love being here, and I have always remembered that it's a privilege and an honour to be here. Don't forget that, you know? Your family, your loved ones, don't forget them behind. Don't let this place overwhelm you. Don't forget that it's your constituents—you knocked on their doors—that have given you that honour and privilege to be here.

Having said that, my question to you is: What can your constituents expect from you over the course of your term?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: During the course of this election, we promised Bramptonians that we would never leave them behind, that we would be their strong voice in Parliament and be here every day to advocate on their behalf. That's why our government is building Brampton's second hospital. That's why our government is investing in a lot of long-term-care homes for our beautiful city of Brampton, which I may highlight again. It is an extreme honour to say that the communities have been asking for this for decades on decades on decades, and this is the government that delivered long-term-care homes, that will have nurse practitioners speak in their own native languages and provide food that is native to their home country. That makes a huge difference for seniors, who are used to living at home with family or with other relatives, that they have those same services and that those services continue, and they feel like they're at home. These are the things that we're delivering.

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In my campaign, I also talked a lot about strengthening our police services and—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Sorry, Speaker, have I hit the clock? I apologize.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to congratulate the member from Brampton East for an excellent presentation. He made a couple of really important points. He talked about the historic level of investment in health care and the effect it had with new hospitals coming to Brampton and a new medical school coming to Brampton. He also talked about the global effect, because we're building new facilities in Niagara, we're building new facilities in Windsor and also Ottawa—and, taken together, what the effect of that is in lifting people up and providing more care, and better care, across the province.

To the member from Brampton East: Take a little bit more time and talk about the effect in Brampton East with this historic investment, led by our finance minister and Premier Ford, to better health care in Brampton East.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: As I said before, this government has finally delivered on the promises that other governments have made. They made these promises during the election campaign, and they came through with their promises. Premier Ford came through with his promises of building another hospital in Brampton and building a medical school in Brampton.

Not only when we talk about the global effect—we talk about creating a manufacturing hub in Ontario. It is only with the new highway infrastructure investments that we're going to get goods moving faster and provide better service at a faster speed, while having a solid, quality transportation network throughout the entire Peel region.

I know the residents of Peel, especially Brampton, thank the government for supporting their new highway, Highway 413.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton East for his inaugural speech. I thought it was excellent—hearing about how you came to this place, your history, and what your vision is.

It was also interesting, in your comments, when you were talking about all the backyard barbecues, which reminds us all that we are elected by the grassroots, we are elected by the people in our community.

I was also especially pleased with your recognition of your parents, your siblings and your grandparents. It makes me think: Who's the tougher questioner, the official opposition or your grandfather?

In all seriousness, family is the glue that holds us all together, that makes it possible for us to have this political life.

My question is: Since you've been elected, what is the thing that surprises your family the most?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: If I am to be brutally honest, during the course of my previous employment as a real estate agent and a real estate broker, and being successful at it, my hours and timing have always been extremely variable, have been based on what I felt like during the day, so waking up at 10, 11, 12, 1, was completely up to me.

The biggest surprise that has come to my family is that I'm out the door every single day at 6 a.m. and I'm not home till 7, and on the couple of days that I do have off, I'm attending events from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. at night. They're just astonished at the level of commitment that I have put into this job. I will continue that commitment for the remainder of my time here. That commitment stands for the residents of Brampton East. I'll always be there, and I'll always be their strong voice in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Congratulations on your win, and welcome to the Legislature.

You're from Brampton East. During the campaign, we had the Liberals talking about highways: "No more highways" and "We're going to cancel those highways." We had the NDP, especially in my riding—"We are going to cancel the highways. We do not need any more highways." It came from the party of no from the Liberals and the party of no from the NDP—although, oddly enough, this morning they're asking for more highways, but maybe only in their specific area.

Can you tell me, member from Brampton East, why the 413 is important to the residents in Brampton?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you so much for that question. That question is a very interesting one, because it also made it on the national news. The pushback from our community to build Highway 413 was so strong that we had our own Liberal candidate go on various TV shows and actually support the highway. Then we did see that in the debate coming forward.

When you're stuck in traffic all day and all that time is spent in your car, when that time could have been spent with your loved ones at home or that time could have been spent doing something productive—the residents spoke up loud and clear that they need new transit and new highway infrastructure.

When it comes to, especially, Highway 413—if you ever try to travel from Brampton East to Brampton West, due to the lack of transportation, you'll see us take between 45 to 50 minutes to get from one end to the other end, which isn't even a very long distance when it comes to kilometres. Highway 413 will increase travel within the city, and not only connect us further to the east and west corridor—when it comes to travelling towards Barrie or driving towards the Detroit border—but also intercity travel for the residents. It's going to be an amazing thing, not only for transportation, goods and services, but for the residents locally to get around a lot easier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the member from Brampton East to Queen's Park. I actually had done door-knocking for your father. Not many people know, but we actually ran for the same riding at the same time as well.

He's young; he's going to be coming many, many times again.

After all these years of being an MPP—hopefully, you'll never retire, but if you do retire at some point—

what kind of legacy do you want to leave for Brampton East?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member for Mississauga–Malton for that amazing question.

Yes, it is true; we did run a nomination against each other. But I'm also proud of the fact that we've been able to maintain a very healthy and friendly relationship with each other, and I'm proud to call the member from Mississauga–Malton a very good friend. It is true, in fact, that we campaigned alongside each other for my father in 2015, when he ran for the Conservative Party in Mississauga–Malton. I do thank him for helping our family during that time.

The legacy that I want to leave behind is a legacy of hard work, a legacy of somebody who has always been there for the community, always answers their phone; is always at their events, is always listening to their concerns; and not only just listening to those concerns, but delivering on those concerns. When it comes to issues like community safety, health care, infrastructure, I want to be their number one advocate on providing those supports, working with our municipal partners and federal partners to help deliver those changes—because those are non-partisan changes. Those are things that we need to do collectively to serve the great people of Brampton and Ontario, and that's what I'm looking forward to doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I don't believe there's time for another question.

Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak on behalf of the people I represent in London West. I'm pleased to contribute to the debate that has unfolded in this Legislature over the past four weeks on the address from the Lieutenant Governor in the government's throne speech.

A throne speech is what opens a session of a new Parliament. It is a big picture of you, of the government's priorities, and the issues that it is planning to focus on in this session of government.

It's interesting; as I've said, four weeks ago we all gathered here to listen to the address from the speech from the throne, and now, in the waning days, we understand, of this very rare summer session, we are continuing to debate that speech.

Speaker, the context in which this debate is taking place is certainly of huge concern to all of us in this place, and, in particular, for the people we represent.

Our health care system is crumbling around us, and we hear this all the time in the stories that constituents bring to our offices. Some of us have had personal experiences with family members who have also encountered the fraying of that health care system that we need to be able to rely on.

Housing is a major concern for every Ontarian in this province, every constituent who is represented by MPPs in this chamber. In London, our wait-list for subsidized housing has grown to over 6,000 people; it's an increase of over 1,000 in just the last four years.

1450

We also have a climate emergency that has never been more apparent and more frightening, when we consider the implications of not taking action to address climate change.

Unfortunately, this throne speech is not a document that gives Ontarians hope that any of those issues will be addressed.

It doesn't give Ontarians hope, who are grappling with the reality of an 8.1% inflation rate—unprecedented. I read a petition just earlier today that referred to the first-ever 4.5%, I think, inflation rate. That petition was written just a year ago, and now we are looking at inflation of over 8%.

The affordability challenges that people in this province are facing are very real, and they are having an incredibly difficult impact on people's lives. People need to feel hopeful that the government, the people they have elected to govern in the best interest of all of the citizens in this province—they need to feel hopeful that the decisions that are made are going to be ones that help them in their daily lives, that help them with the health care system, that help them with housing, that help them with affordability, and that take bold action to address the climate crisis.

I want to get back to health care. I'm going to spend a significant amount of time, during my remarks, on what is happening in our health care system and what I am seeing in London and the surrounding areas.

As you are probably aware, Speaker, there are about 25 hospitals across the province that have closed or reduced hours in their emergency rooms and other areas of the hospital. This includes many of the small hospitals surrounding the city of London.

We had St. Marys, Seaforth, Clinton, Listowel, Wingham, Walkerton, Chesley—all of those are small hospitals in southwestern Ontario, in the immediate vicinity of London, that had to either close their ERs or cut back services.

The reality is, in these small hospitals they only have, typically, a very small number of staff. So when you have staff who are on leave or who are sick with COVID, it can have a dramatic effect on the hospital's ability to operate.

So, in the case of those small hospitals, the pressure that's being experienced is directly related to the health care worker staffing pressures, and how that has manifested in London, at London Health Sciences Centre, are some cutbacks in some hospital programs. We heard that the maternity ward at LHSC was preparing pregnant women that they should be ready for the possibility that they may not be able to get a scheduled induction if they need one. The epilepsy unit announced a temporary closure because of the staffing shortage.

In addition to these cutbacks in hospital services, we're also seeing a growing list of people in our communities who don't have access to family doctors, and we know what happens when people don't want have access to primary care. They can't get access to the preventive screening tests that they need to prevent a visit to the emergency room. They are not able to get things looked at

before they become acute and lead them into a crisis situation in the hospital. This is a problem that I certainly encountered from the very beginning, when I was elected in 2013, but I have never seen it as bad as it has been. Every day, we hear from two or three constituents, at least, who can't get access to a family doctor.

I want to give you an example of one of the recent calls that we took. A 90-year-old man had a heart problem and called his family doctor, but his family doctor was fully booked and ready to leave on vacation. They had someone to cover, but there was a gap of three or four days until that coverage was going to be in place. He tried to go to urgent care in the city, but it was closed. He was going to try to go to emergency, but he was concerned about how hard it was to be seen and was reluctant to go to emergency, and with good reason. We just saw, over the weekend, in London, the emergency room posted a sign that prepared people in that room to be ready to wait 20 hours. That was the number that was written on the sign. People are looking at a 20-hour wait to have their health issue looked at.

Speaker, I want to get back to what I said initially—that this is very directly related to the shortage of health care workers that we are experiencing across the system.

I want to read a quote from one of the CEOs of one of these small hospitals, Michael Barrett. He is the CEO for the South Bruce Grey Health Centre hospitals, and he talked about the fact that the hospital corporation is using private agency nurses to fill the gaps and help maintain some coverage of the ERs. He told a reporter, "It is concerning that a considerable amount of money is being spent on agency nurses and we're not in a position because of the collective agreement to be able to do the same for our own staff.

"We pay agency nurses considerably more than what we pay our staff."

He said he wants to do everything he can to entice his staff to work these difficult shifts. But other than raising the concern, as he said he and others like him have—he was unaware of the government doing anything to help hospitals like his deal with this staffing pressure.

We know what the government needs to do. The government needs to repeal Bill 124. That has been the universal refrain of health sector workers and public sector workers since that unconstitutional—as we will find out—legislation was brought forward in this place.

The government needs to take some action on the violence that health care workers are experiencing in the workplace. I want to commend my colleague the member for Nickel Belt on her perseverance in trying to get legislation passed that will address the escalating violence that health care workers are facing on a daily basis.

We saw that a physician in London, actually, in the spring, was attacked by somebody with a knife and a hammer. Somehow, that person got into the hospital and assaulted the doctor.

We just recently saw an incident in Goderich where an armed man came in and threatened health care workers.

So, clearly, there is a need to take action on the violence that health care workers are facing.

But to get back to Bill 124 and the urgency of repealing that bill: We know that what that legislation does is cap any wage increases for public sector workers at 1%, and when you have a period in which inflation is 8.1%, a 1% increase is very clearly a loss of pay. It's a cut in pay. It is not a wage increase at all. And it is just so disrespectful to these front-line workers who have been there for us throughout the pandemic, all through every single wave and I know will be there for us in the fall as that inevitable new wave materializes.

1500

This is good for me to share, Speaker. I want to just read from an email I received from a nurse in London West. Her name is Lindsay Smale. She says, "Many of my co-workers chose to leave. They retired early or they moved to a position in a much less stressful environment"—she counts herself among them. "Many have left the profession entirely." She says, "We are no longer able to provide the same level of care. Patients are suffering...."

"Bill 124 is the biggest slap in the face to the very people who stepped up in a time of uncertainty, when we didn't know if we were going to get sick at work or bring it home to our families." She says she's currently looking at obtaining an American nursing licence so she can go practise in the US, and she's not the only health care worker who is looking to relocate because of the disrespect that they feel from this government, the inadequacy of the compensation and benefit packages that are offered and just the challenges working in such a high-stress environment.

Speaker, in the face of these issues with our health care workforce, one would have hoped that the throne speech would have offered some solutions. The Premier—the throne speech claimed that they would implement whatever measures are needed to deal with the health care pressures, and yet they didn't. They did not repeal Bill 124. That should have been the very first bill that we were dealing with in this place. Instead, we saw this government bring forward legislation that is going to force—through financial coercion, if nothing else, but it's going to force vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities who are in alternative-level-of-care beds in hospitals to move to a long-term-care home that is not of their choice and where they will very likely end their days. It could be miles away from their family, and this legislation shows no regard for the actual needs of those patients, those frail people, to have family members around them.

But worse than that is this government has pushed through that bill with no opportunity for public consultation whatsoever—no opportunity for experts to propose amendments that could possibly improve this bill; no opportunity to hear from people who have loved ones in long-term care and could talk about what it would mean to them if their loved one was forced or coerced—pressured to move from a hospital or else face a big bill, but pressured to move into a long-term-care home that was not of their choice.

The other thing that we have seen this fall is messages, signals from this government that they see privatization as the solution to Ontario's health care woes. The research has confirmed what happens when you introduce a profit motive into the health care system: equity suffers; access suffers. Health care providers, who are treating patients—when there is money involved, they may be less likely to say that's not actually a treatment you need, because they know they get a profit for providing that treatment.

The minister has talked about how Ontarians will get health care with their OHIP card and not their credit card, but the reality is, when you go to a for-profit clinic, that for-profit provider can charge you for a wide gamut of services that you will receive. From the food or the pain medication, there are lots of ways that for-profit providers can make a buck off services that are covered by OHIP but are delivered in a private for-profit system. The people I have heard from in London West are vigorously opposed to any privatization of our health care system.

Speaker, I want to just close by saying that this government, as we have seen so often over the last four years, missed another opportunity to actually engage with Ontarians, to actually put forward positive solutions that would address the pressures that people feel every day in their daily lives.

One thing I didn't address yet when talking about affordability is the issue of ODSP. We saw, again, a budget that was rammed through without any opportunity for public input, a budget that includes only a paltry 5% increase to ODSP. That's \$58 more a month. That's \$14.50 more a week. For someone who is struggling to try to get by on \$1,169 a month, when you can't find housing for less than \$1,200 a month in my community and many communities across the province, that is insulting. It is legislated poverty, as many people have pointed out, when this government uses the social assistance programs to keep people in a condition of poverty which they will never be able to get out of. We have heard from many people that a 5% increase is not enough. What we need to do is to double social assistance rates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for the presentation. Questions or comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Just for those people who might be tuning in now or have been listening, what we're debating is the motion in reply to the speech from the throne.

An important aspect in that particular speech, Speaker, and you'll remember this—I'll put my glasses on so I can quote it correctly. This is an investment of "more than \$1 billion in a skilled trades strategy to reduce the harmful stigma around the trades, particularly for women and young people, while expanding training opportunities to help build the most highly skilled workforce in North America." That's been led and led well by our Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. It also includes a partnership of several unions who, yes, supported us during the election, but who have been a key part of the success that we've had thus far.

From time to time when we're debating this particular motion or other important motions or subsets coming out

of what we're debating today, all we hear is no. More stalling. More of the status quo. Are we going to hear that again? Skills development, opportunities for young men and young women in this province they haven't had before—because of the leadership of that minister, the leadership of our Premier and of our cabinet. Is the member from London West going to stand in her place again and say no?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I can assure the member from Whitby that the NDP would never say yes to privatization. The NDP would never say yes to watering down climate targets. The NDP would never support some of the initiatives that this government has brought forward that are going to make people's lives worse, not better.

1510

What we have heard from the labour movement consistently is a campaign for paid sick days. For goodness' sake, workers in this province need access to 10 permanent employer-paid sick days. Instead, we have a government that cancelled the paid sick days that were available to workers before they were elected and has now brought in three inadequate paid sick days to cover three years of the pandemic, when we're looking at a seventh wave. Workers who had to access those three paid sick days in an earlier wave have no recourse if they get COVID. They're going to have to make that choice: "Do I go into work infected—tested positive for COVID—so I don't risk losing my paycheque? Or do I stay home and possibly not be able to pay the rent?"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Questions? Member from Oshawa—no, Windsor.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I like to think I'm taller than the member from Oshawa and younger, but that's not accurate.

To my colleague from London West, I appreciate your presentation, your remarks. I was listening intently. What I did notice, though, is that the member from Whitby just got up and talked about training, especially for women, skills development for women. Yet when my colleague was talking about nurses, when she was talking about the wage suppression bill, Bill 124, and their working conditions, when she was talking about how nurses—again, a largely women-led career—the Minister of Labour was heckling her. She's talking about women in the workplace and violence in the workplace and the Minister of Labour was heckling her.

So I'm wondering if the member for London West could take another opportunity—maybe this time the gentleman on the other side of the House won't heckle and won't yell over her—to talk about what we can actually do for the front-line workers in our health care system; what is it that we can do to actually honour the skills that they have, to ensure that they are having a career that they want to stay in, so that the people who need health care have those front-line workers there to support them when they need it.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank my colleague for the question. And certainly I think that the most important thing, the thing that would have the most meaning

for front-line health care workers, is to repeal Bill 124, because not only does it suppress wages, as the member said, but it also conveys a message to front-line health workers from this government as to what the government thinks of the contributions that these vital workers provide. That would make a powerful statement, if the government moved forward with that repeal.

They could bring in paid sick days for workers. We know lots of workers in our health care system—PSWs, nurses—don't even have access to paid sick days, even in their collective agreements. We could bring in unlimited mental health supports for health care workers. When you think of what they have gone through in this pandemic, the violence in the workplace, that would make a big difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Niagara West.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Order. The member is not in his seat and the mic is not turned on.

The member from Mississauga.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, I was listening and I just want to talk about the government—when there was a pandemic, we were the government who were here to bring the job-protected leave. We did not want any worker in the province to choose between their health and their job, and that's what we did, thanks to the leadership of Premier Ford and the best-ever labour minister we have who's delivered this.

Interjections.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Yes, we can clap—yes, absolutely, a champion for workers. That is why we've seen so many of these unions coming together and supporting the work we've done.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we've seen there are 370,000 jobs going unfilled. The question to the member opposite for London West is simple: Do you think we need to support these workers so we can fill these jobs?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The kind of support that workers need is paid sick days. I spoke about this in an earlier question. Instead, we saw a government that, pretty much immediately after it was elected, cancelled the paid sick days that workers in Ontario had fought so hard to achieve. It cancelled the planned increase to the minimum wage. They rolled back occupational health and safety protections.

This is a government that is not working for workers, and the program that the minister is so proud of is a program that is set to expire. It does nothing to help workers who are getting reinfected by COVID, and we know with Omicron that reinfection rates are growing.

Workers need to be able to access paid sick days. If they have COVID, if they have any illness in the workplace, they should be able to stay home and recover without risking losing their paycheque.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): There's not sufficient time for another question, so we will go to further debate. The member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise and today to participate in the debate in responding to the speech from the throne. Before I get into the meat of my remarks, I just want to once again take an opportunity—I know I've privately congratulated most of you, if not all of you, on your election. I just want to publicly congratulate every MPP in this House on your election.

I want to take a moment to thank the people who supported me to be here for a second term. I especially want to thank my family: my wife, Sandy; my daughters, Isabelle and Beata; as well as my parents, my mom and my late father, Ron. I grew up on a farm, and both of them gave me the values that have led me to be here today.

Most of all, I want to thank the people of Guelph who have had the confidence in me, the trust in me, to send me back to this House for a second term. I will work hard to be your voice, I will work hard to deliver solutions for our community and I will work hard to be the best MPP I can be.

Speaker, Guelph is a caring, politically engaged and entrepreneurially oriented community. I can tell you, first-hand, as someone who started two food-related businesses in and around Guelph, that's why food and farming and the protection of farmland will always be a top priority for me in this Legislature.

I asked my constituents, and I asked people across the province what kind of Guelph, what kind of Ontario you want us to build. People said affordable, caring, connected and climate-ready communities. So I'm here in this House as an opposition member to hold government accountable and to work across party lines to deliver the solutions for the kind of Guelph and the kind of Ontario people want.

I think there are four key issues that lack the urgency of the moment in the throne speech that I want to bring forward today. The first is addressing the health care crisis. It's been interesting to see the evolution of the government's speaking points on this too: "there is no crisis," to the actual words in the throne speech, "it's going to be very complicated to address it," to subsequently saying that we need to explore privatization.

1520

I think we need to increase investment in publicly funded, publicly delivered health care, and drive innovation through a publicly delivered system. That starts by investing in the people who deliver care, by repealing Bill 124 and allowing front-line health care workers to negotiate fair wages, fair benefits and better working conditions. It's about fast-tracking the accreditation of internationally trained health care workers. It's about spending the budget you've actually allocated for health care and doing it strategically by investing in primary health care, expanding access to mental health care and home and community care, and addressing the social and environmental determinants of health, which I'll elaborate on more in my remarks.

Secondly, on education: We need a firm commitment that students will have stability in their educational year this year and that we'll hire the staff we need to deliver the education our students need in our schools.

Speaker, on social supports: Poverty costs this province \$33 billion a year. The government has an opportunity to double social assistance rates so that people on disabilities no longer live in legislated poverty. It will take stress off of our health care system and it will strengthen our communities.

On housing: The government has an opportunity to follow recommendations that the opposition has been putting forward and that their own housing task force has recommended, things like ending exclusionary zoning so we can rapidly build homes in our existing communities without paving over the farmland that feeds us and the nature that protects us; and investing in permanent supportive and deeply affordable housing, so that everyone in our communities has an affordable place to call home.

Finally, on the climate crisis: I did not even hear the words “climate change” in the throne speech. This is the biggest crisis our generation has ever faced. Scientists are clear that if emissions don’t peak in 2025, we will unleash irreversible climate catastrophes. We’re already feeling it: the floods, the droughts, the extreme heat. The bottom line is, we can solve this crisis while also addressing people’s affordability concerns—lowering their transportation costs by electrifying, lowering their home heating bills by investing in retrofitting homes and buildings to help people save money by saving energy, and investing in nature-based solutions, saying, “We’re not going to build billion-dollar highways, but we’re actually going to protect the farmland that feeds us and the wetlands that protect us.” Those are the issues I wanted to hear—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. We’re now at questions and comments.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member for his great remarks. I almost heard an endorsement of both managing the economy and the environment, something this government has done, steadfast, all along, whether it’s investing in our critical minerals strategy, whether it’s building electric vehicles.

But also, about affordability, we have the Minister of Energy here, who helped stabilize our electricity rates here in Ontario. As we know, when the previous government was here, they signed a terrible deal for electricity rates for all Ontarians. This member must be quite aware of it, because he must hear it from his constituents.

I want him to speak to how we can really manage our great, clean electricity grid; it’s the cleanest in North America. But in addition to that, it’s about affordability, which is exactly what our throne speech outlined. If we can produce more electric vehicles here, we can create high-paying jobs. And do you know what high-paying jobs give to people? An affordable living.

I’m asking the member opposite if he does support our great strategy that’s going to create high-paying jobs and really lift people up in this province.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member for Barrie–Innisfil’s question. I do want to address the energy issue head-on, because this government’s plans to ramp up gas plants will increase climate pollution by 300% in the next decade and up to 400% over the next two decades. At

a time when the International Energy Agency—a relatively historically conservative and pro-fossil fuel organization—has said that if we have any hope—any hope—of addressing the climate crisis and leaving our children and grandchildren a stable, livable future that can have a healthy economy, we cannot expand fossil fuel use anywhere in the world.

Speaker, 10 years ago the Liberal government paid high prices—I would argue too-high prices—for renewable energy. But since then, the price of solar has dropped by 90% and is now the lowest-cost source of electricity generation in the world. Wind has dropped 80%. Yet this government cancelled renewable energy contracts and is now doubling down on gas plants that generate electricity at twice the cost. So, yes, I would say to the member: Let’s create good green jobs by investing in low-cost renewable energy, which will also set the province of Ontario up to be a global leader in green hydrogen. We just had Germany here saying, “Hey, we need more green hydrogen.” Let’s double down on low-cost clean energy and reverse the government’s plans to ramp up gas plants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I think the member from Guelph would agree with the following analogy. This government has been in power for the last four years, and prior to them, we’ve seen the boondoggle of what the Liberals had done to our energy system. We’ve seen when the Conservative government was actually sitting here fighting with the Liberal government in regard to, “No, you should privatize hydro this way.” And they’re saying, “No, no, you should privatize it this way.” They disagreed on how to privatize it, but they agreed on the privatization.

The result of that was the deregulation and the high cost of hydro. I’ve got a couple of bills, and I’ll be talking to it hopefully today, over my opportunity to bring in the statements. But here’s a bill from someone where their consumption—their actual usage was \$1,600. Their actual bill, after delivery charges are added to this, was \$3,800. Is that saving dollars for Ontarians? Is that bringing the hydro cost across this province in line with the actualities of what people are facing when they’re opening up their hydro bills? Everybody is opening up their hydro bills and they’re, “No, no, no.” But those are the facts that are happening.

Has this government, in your knowledge—have they actually brought down the price of hydro?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member from Algoma–Manitoulin’s question. And the answer is no. Now, I will say—and I know the Minister of Finance is here, and I know he knows good investment strategy. You want to buy low and sell high. But when it comes to renewable energy in this province, we’re doing exactly the opposite. The Liberals bought high, and now the Conservatives are selling low by getting out of renewable energy. So why don’t we invest in low-cost renewable energy? If you want to talk about the cheapest way to lower people’s electricity bills: Reverse the government’s

cuts to conservation programs, so people can afford to retrofit their—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time for the member and the questions and comments.

Further debate?

Ms. Laura Smith: Let me begin by saying that it is truly an honour to stand here with my colleagues in this House. I want to extend my deep-hearted thanks to the people of my riding for their trust and support in electing me as Thornhill's member of provincial Parliament. I also want to congratulate my colleagues on both sides of the floor. It is important to respect all opinions, as their position demonstrates democracy and fair order in our province.

My journey into politics, and my role, was truly a group effort. I want to take this opportunity to extend my very deep appreciation to my campaign team, who tirelessly worked on my behalf, especially my campaign manager, Nikita Drakokhrust, and the co-chairs of the campaign, Eleanor Millar and Rick Ekstein. I have said this once and I will say it again: Rick Ekstein is the reason why Thornhill is blue and I am proud to be his friend.

I would also be remiss if I did not recognize members of my team: Justin Mihaly, Andrew Hall, Brandon Crandall, Shir Barzilay, Tay Rubman and a very dear friend of mine, Cynthianna Mills. These people selflessly gave up so much of their time to see me in the position I am today, and I am forever grateful for their dedication, skill set and their determination.

1530

With respect to my colleagues: I've grown to truly appreciate the dynamics and the commonality of each one of us.

Like many, I began my journey into politics via volunteerism within my community, this vital work that contributes to the fibre of our neighbourhoods, schools and sporting organizations at the grassroots level. I think most of us in this chamber, on all sides, can completely relate to this. Like many of my colleagues, I believe that public office is another form of community service, and, like many, sometimes this work is done at the expense of my time with my friends and family.

To this end, I want to thank my family for their support, specifically my husband Larry, who was my rock throughout my campaign journey and presently in my new role as the elected member. He's behind there.

My previous day job centred within the child protection act. That work ensured that adopted or newly placed children within our community had a legal right to a continued relationship with their biological family members and the culture they were born into. This includes First Nations, Métis and a plethora of others that enrich and provide a touchstone to our diverse spectrum of peoples, not only within Ontario but throughout Canada. This meaningful work strengthened the value of community and the ties that keep us linked as a society.

Like most of my colleagues, I have a deep affinity for my riding and province. Many of you have expressed the

awe of entering the Legislature for the first time, and although I share that feeling, I was truly introduced to this building many years ago through another source.

My father loved architecture. Modern, gothic, neo-classical—the list is literally endless. This love also includes that of Toronto-based architect Edward Lennox, who designed several of the city's most notable landmarks, including Casa Loma, Old City Hall and the west section of this very legislature. I recall my father advising on the caricature stone carvings on the west entrance. Those wood ones in this very room are very similar and were rumoured to be mimicked after politicians and possibly the people constructing that area of the Legislature. I find it quite comforting that I presently park my car just steps away from that entrance, and I think of the little girl that stood at that very place so many years ago every time I walk up the stairs.

My father, like so many, arrived in Canada in the 1950s, a member of the British air force who was looking for a new life. He arrived at the east coast of Canada and made passage to Toronto via train. Travel documents provided information that he was planning to continue further west, but after arriving at Union Station, my father watched as a streetcar cleaner stopped to light a cigar. At that time, my father only knew of regal, wealthy statesmen types—the types of Winston Churchill—to be smoking a cigar, and he decided this was the place he was going to stop and plant his roots. And that's why I'm here today. He was a newcomer to Canada and decided that Ontario would be his home, knowing that it was full of opportunity and a fresh start.

At that time, my father had already been through quite a bit in his then-young life. A few years earlier, my father had ever so slightly exaggerated his age so that he could serve his country and become part of the clean-up crew serving with the British air force following the Second World War. They, by the way, had me at a very late stage, and I don't want to add any more numbers to my age. Nobody do any quick math, please. He was then a young man with several missions and tours under his belt. He was weathered but still so very excited to come to this country.

When freshly in Ontario, he took whatever jobs were available. He would set pins at local bowling alleys. This is a time before they had machinery in place to set the fallen pins. How my father would laugh as he spoke of the patrons who sometimes, if he did not move quickly enough, would aim for his ankles instead of the pins.

My father, after taking some technical training, went on to become a photographer, and then an architectural commercial photographer. Because my father was truly born fearless, much of his work was done hundreds of feet in the air. He was a fly boy and very comfortable in the front seat of a small aircraft, with the passenger door of the airplane strategically removed. And yes, I'm saying that we removed the door of the small aircraft. He would lean out onto the wing, holding his strap, to get just the perfect shot. He was fearless, or as my mother would say, not smart enough to recognize fear.

My father photographed Ontario from top to bottom, and I mean this absolutely literally. He worked alongside

city planners, architects and engineers during the construction of some of Toronto's subway lines, and he also became the chief architectural photographer for the CN Tower. I spent many an afternoon strapped to the back of a small Cessna aircraft—that's the aircraft that had no doors, Mr. Speaker—in the back seat as my father insisted the pilot circle around one last time so he could get just that right shot. The evenings following one of my father's shoots always made for interesting dinner conversation.

My father loved taking pictures of this province, and Ontario provided that safe haven and a chance to start over. He then, like so many, created a life, a career, and a family—a newcomer to this province who created something from nothing, which is the story of so many people in my riding of Thornhill.

This is the thing: When I knocked on local doors, I was constantly meeting those who arrived from another country, built a business from nothing—countless origin stories.

Thornhill is home to the largest Jewish community in Canada. Historically, Jewish people were limited in the jobs they could take, many creating their own businesses because it was simply the only viable option they had. People who arrived here with very little, who came with so few resources, they started a business. They were able to employ, expand and so on.

Thornhill is presently a multi-ethnic riding, and I am proud to represent constituents with origins identifying as East Asian, Persian, Chinese, Korean, Italian, Filipino, Spanish, Russian and countless others, but the story remains the same: They too created something from nothing.

Thornhill ingenuity lives and prospers. Our hard-working residents have created businesses and employed countless people. Our businesses include historically significant places of trade like the York Farmers Market, located in the heart of historic Thornhill. York Farmers Market first opened in the spring of 1953. The market provided a central location for local farmers to sell their produce grown on farms all around York region and to showcase homemade baked goods, preserves, crafts and a wonderful assortment of fresh, natural delights. I have fond memories of walking into this market with my uncle and my grandmother as a child. I loved coming to the market because I knew the visit would result in baked good treats like a butter tart or a freshly baked sweet sticky bun. I have never stopped going to this iconic market. I still purchase my fresh eggs and produce within this historic location, and I am happy to report that you can get some pretty good sushi there too.

The farmers' market is just steps away from historic Thornhill Village, dating back to 1796. The name Thornhill did not come into existence until 1829, when Benjamin Thorne, a local merchant, was successful in having a post office established. By then, it was the largest milling centre north of York, now known as the area of Toronto. This area is the origin story of our humble beginnings, and if you ever have the opportunity, I strongly encourage you to visit Colborne Street. Almost perfectly preserved in time, it's actually used as a movie

set quite often. To that end, we have an outstanding historical society that provides walking tours and promotes the history of our cherished past.

Thornhill is also the home to Normac Kitchens, Toromont Cat, TACC Developments and countless tile and other businesses that support the construction industry that employs thousands of people.

And then we have businesses that, despite the odds in opening in the midst of a pandemic, have flourished. Yosef Mokir Shabbos is a new food takeout business that is owned by a newcomer to Thornhill, who, like so many, came here with nothing and created a livelihood for his family and many others, as well as creating strong ties to the community.

We are also the home to FCAV, also known as the Filipino Canadian Association of Vaughan. This organization is led by a tireless, dedicated leader, Erlinda Insigne. FCAV provides a welcoming sense of community as well as a safe haven for newly landed immigrants.

Thornhill is also the home of DANI. DANI is a not-for-profit organization that was created to support people with disabilities, founded 15 years ago by two parents of adults with disabilities in the GTA. Their programs include seven social enterprise businesses, two locations, and an online learning academy.

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Then there is Reena, an inclusive, not-for-profit organization that promotes dignity, individuality, independence and personal growth for people with developmental disabilities. Since 1973, Reena has provided residential support, respite programs, employment, community participation programs, and advocacy for individuals with diverse abilities.

Then there's Kayla's Children Centre, an organization that uses cutting-edge educational, therapeutic and recreational programs for infants, children and teens with special needs, and to assist their families by offering support and respite. The centre embraces children of all abilities and needs.

Then we have Beit Halochem Canada, which provides aid to disabled veterans of Israel. Their organization is committed to rehabilitating, rebuilding and enhancing the lives of over 50,000 Israelis disabled in the line of duty or through acts of terror. A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of meeting some of the children of these veterans through a program called Kids of Courage. In this unique program, children of the disabled veterans came to Thornhill and also attended a summer camp in the Muskokas, during which Israeli and Canadian campers bonded, providing an invaluable experience for all. Peaceful yet vibrant, the camp environment allowed the Israeli children to relax, away from the pressures of their lives at home.

We are also the home of the new Niagara University. I had the pleasure of meeting many of their educators and students, both newly graduated and freshly accepted. This new university has a multitude of programs that are feeding the framework of Ontario's future—these include areas in science and education. Niagara University is providing the much-needed training for our future educators.

I was so pleased to have met the students and professors. It was inspirational to listen to their passion and dedication.

We thrive and support our businesses and not-for-profits because they support us and provide a future for our children. We choose progress not only for our generation, but for many to come.

As a mother of two, like any, I worry about the future of my children regarding housing and employment.

Gridlock is a constant issue. We value time with our families.

Thornhill looks forward to the new Yonge Street subway extension that will link our community with the much-needed homes, employment and infrastructure that are so desperately required to sustain and build for the future. Getting shovels in the ground on these projects is key for not only ourselves but for our children, our children's children and the newcomers to Ontario. This new subway system will extend beyond Finch for the first time since 1973—1973. A plan to build will help get people where they have to go in a timely fashion, provide an estimated 1,600 jobs just in that area alone, reduce gridlock and set a course forward for new homes and businesses.

Although the dynamics of my community are diverse, one theme seems to be prevalent: We are a group of self-starters who navigate through obstacles and do not accept no as an answer. We are constantly setting a course forward—in so many circumstances, just like my father, arriving and building from nothing.

Sadly, these businesses and my community have been victims of unfair attacks of anti-Semitism. Last month, the owner of a store, Taste of Israel, fell victim, along with the other owners of businesses at a local strip mall. This closed down traffic on their busiest day and right before Sabbath. As Ontarians, we have to be vigilant in opposing these acts. The owner of this business's only crime was that he carried the name "Israel" in his store's name.

We must continue to help our businesses thrive, Mr. Speaker, and continue so that they can expand and plan for the future.

We must continue to cut red tape and continue to build on key infrastructure like the Yonge Street north extension, creating homes and jobs while eliminating gridlock and reducing the need for so many buses. We are building for the future.

My father, who deeply treasured our historic architecture, was also a cog in the wheel of progress and infrastructure. He worked alongside engineers, architects and construction workers, building for the future.

My father always said that you had to understand the past, with a plan to build for the future. He respected vision and courage, working alongside those architects and engineers, working in unity to build for the next generation. He believed in the necessity of infrastructure.

Simply put, there would not be food on the table of our household if new builds and infrastructure did not happen. Progress depends upon it.

Mr. Speaker, on June 2, the people of Thornhill, along with the rest of this province, sent a clear message to

Queen's Park. We are saying yes to building homes. We are saying yes to building hospitals. We are saying yes to building long-term-care facilities and beds. We are saying yes to educating and hiring health care workers and the Learn and Stay program. We are saying yes to cutting the red tape and barriers that stifle our business growth. We are saying yes to cutting costs and putting dollars back into the hard-working men and women of our province. We are saying yes to investing in our children with the new STEM programs in education. We are saying yes to investing in the future of our environment by reinstating Ontario as the flagship province in the auto sector and in the building of e-vehicles.

I will leave you with this one final thought: I love this province, and the pride I hold for my community is unwavering. I am still that same little girl who stood on the west side of that entrance admiring the carvings in stone embedded in the entrance of our historic building.

I am my father's daughter. I was fortunate to receive and inherit this gift of passion for my province. My father, that same man who arrived at Union Station, just a 20-minute walk down the street, who arrived so many years ago, who went on to become the CN Tower's chief architectural photographer during its construction, along with his colleagues, on a bitter, cold March day in 1975, ran out on the tarmac to sign my name and my brother's on the 335-foot antenna before it was lifted by the giant Sikorsky S-64E helicopter, known as Olga, high into the sky and attached to the tallest level of the CN Tower. My name is on the top of the largest piece of infrastructure in Canada. I think about him every day, especially as I look at the skyline. I recall him singing in his thick British accent, "This is a place to stand, a place to grow." I wrote those words before hearing our Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, speak the same words. My family and I—this is a fun story—would actually sing that song into a tape recorder and we would send those cassettes to our cousin in England, because we thought the song was so fantastic. He loved Ontario because it offered so many opportunities.

And I stand before you as a faithful servant of Ontario with the best of intentions: to build for the future, to serve my community and keep that vision alive.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Questions or comments? The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Thornhill. I haven't had a chance to meet her in person, so it was great to hear her inaugural speech. It's probably my favourite debate—inaugural speeches—because you get to learn so much about people. She really did speak about her father a lot, and I want to thank her dad for his service in the air force.

My grandparents were in the air force as well, and so was my father, who, I often joke, jumped out of perfectly good airplanes for some reason.

Something I have found is that from your parents, you get great advice. You talked about volunteers working on your campaign. Is there anything that you learned from

your dad that you would pass along to young volunteers—something that stuck with you that you thought was very valuable, that you could share with volunteers?

Ms. Laura Smith: That's a very good question.

I think in my family, it was literally, you learn by seeing, and action is far louder than words. I think everything that I am today has quite a bit to do with that. I would see my father doing things; I wouldn't necessarily see him talk about things. He would instigate things in the community and he would do those things. Everybody in this room thinks their father is Superman—and my father was that individual who would do all of these fantastic things. So that gave me, I think, a touchstone to my community.

When my children came along, there was literally no choice; I had to be that person who probably embarrassed my children more than I should have by being a part of everything there was, involved in the community.

I hope that answers your question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

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Mr. Rob Flack: I loved your story.

I've gotten to know the member here a little bit over the last little, while being seatmates.

As everyone has said, it's great to hear everybody's story and the journey you made to get here.

Farmers' markets: We have a great farmers' market in London, a fantastic farmers' market in St. Thomas—and throughout my own riding.

Your particular farmers' market, the York Farmers Market—as you said, from 1953—is a very famous market. As the city grew around it, it still kept its iconic brand.

I know it's a very important part of our community and many communities throughout this province. It's part of our culture.

Can you tell us a little bit more about the York Farmers Market?

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes, I will. The one thing that I love about the farmers' market is the way it has evolved. The fact of the matter is, it has become something completely different, very much like our community. It began as a local farmers' market, and it still remains a farmers' market, but all of the flavours and the tastes of our neighbourhood are also there. You can go there and pick up sushi. You can go there and pick up pasta. You can go there and literally absorb a multitude of different ethnicities, and I really enjoy that.

I think that bringing our kids to these places allows them to really understand where food comes from. That's why I appreciate everything that you've done over the course of 20-odd—how many years have you been involved in this? Countless years—

Mr. Rob Flack: A few.

Ms. Laura Smith: —a few years—to make sure there's food in our mouths, because that's very important and key for progress.

Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Member from St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I thank the member from Thornhill for her wonderful inaugural speech. I listened attentively.

I'd like to thank your father for his service in the air force. My great-grandfathers were both in the Canadian air force, actually. My father was in the navy, and my son now serves in the Canadian navy as well. I'm sure that your pride comes right through when you speak about your father, how proud—and how he made you very strong, and how your journey became of you coming to Queen's Park and being able to sit in this wonderful Legislature.

I've taught my granddaughter as well, "Give us a place to stand, and a place to grow, and I call this land, Ontari-ari-ari-o"—but I tell her that she's visiting Ontari-ari-ari-o, so enjoy it.

I've never had the chance to visit Thornhill. What would you recommend to the residents of Ontario, if they were to come to your riding—what would you call the number one bragging point of Thornhill?

Ms. Laura Smith: Speaker, I thank her for the question. This is a very difficult question because we have an abundance of fantastic food in Thornhill.

The one thing I told my campaign manager when he arrived in Thornhill, who advised that he lived on Twizzlers and beef jerky, was that he was going to eat very well when he came to Thornhill.

So it has to do with food—it's actually all about food. If you sit at a dinner table in Thornhill, there might be some discussions on the day about politics, but it will very quickly move to food, and that's an assumed fact.

I would say the best bagel in Thornhill is a huge argument, and that is iconic—and I will not get into that argument because that would be very troublesome.

Interjection.

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes, that would probably be. Finding the right bagel joint is probably the most iconic, singular thing I can think of, and, as I said, I will not describe one, because then I will get into a lot of trouble.

I personally prefer Montreal chewy bagels; my husband prefers a more doughy kind. We'll leave it at that. He's in the chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The next question.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I really want to congratulate the member from Thornhill, someone who I got to know as a candidate through this recent election. Her story is very important.

One of the questions I'd like to ask you is, when we look at the diversities of our many ridings all over Ontario, what would you say is a common thread that binds a community, one to another—something that we can learn from your community about?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank my friend for the valuable question.

I think the commonality is something that I touched upon. It's building something from nothing, and we do a lot of that in Thornhill.

Aside from that issue, I think I'd have to talk about the welcoming nature of our people. I know everyone has wonderful ridings and everything is fantastic in everyone's riding—and I feel no different. The truth of the matter is, when I first started my role in politics I was welcomed by so many people. One example of that is FCAV, the Vaughan Filipino association. Erlinda, who runs that association, opened her heart to me very warmly. I walked into her gym to give a speech, and they still had a Zumba class going. I immediately pulled off my shoes, my high heels, and I went into the Zumba class, because that's what you do—because it's a welcoming, inviting environment. Just the friendliness of it is kind of plastered across Thornhill, not just in that one location. So that's probably the best example of what I could set out.

Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member from Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Congratulations to the member from Thornhill on her wonderful, fine inaugural speech and her resounding election victory.

I was actually listening very intently when you were speaking about your passion for the Yonge North subway extension. Of course, certainly, being able to build those extra eight kilometres and five stations is so critical.

I'm very curious with respect to trip generation and where people will start their journeys to the subway station. Some people may have the opportunity to take a bus or perhaps a carpool.

Will those subway stations connect to those very fine bagel establishments? You're guarding that secret, but I'm just curious to know: Can we get off at one of those five subway stations and get access to those bagels?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the question.

Everything is within walking distance of a bagel place. I think it's very safe to say that whether it's Royal Orchard or Steeles, you will always have an opportunity to find a pretty decent bagel place; if not, it will be there. They will build it, and they will come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time for questions and comments.

Further debate?

Mr. Jamie West: I'm happy to be here to speak about the throne speech.

First, let me congratulate everyone who is here on their re-election, or their election if it's the first time. It's not easy to do. I haven't had the opportunity to speak with a lot of you yet this year. It's always good, in the hallway, when we do the congratulations and the quick, little handshakes and stuff. We're on different sides of the House, but we're all doing the best we can for our ridings. I'm very thankful for that.

I'm also thankful for everyone who volunteered, especially those who weren't successful. I've worked on some campaigns where you put your heart and soul into it and you don't win. I remember taking down signs in the rain after not winning an election, after volunteering in it. It's hard—not just in my riding, but in all ridings. That's

how democracy works. Only one person gets to win. It's great that all these people put the effort in.

The first time I heard a throne speech as an MPP, I wasn't sure what to expect from it. I didn't really understand the format of it. But it's the idea of sort of explaining what's happening—there's hope on the horizon; there's relief coming; there's a direction to follow. I really took that to heart, and this time I was listening for that hope and opportunity.

I've always been a glass-half-full guy—my mom generally is, as well. One day she was in a bad mood, and I said, "Mom, you're kind of glass-half-empty." She said, "What's that supposed to mean?" I said, "You know that expression: The glass is half full or the glass is half empty." And she said, "It doesn't matter if it's full or empty. Sooner or later, that glass will be broken."

I feel like the glass is about to break. There is a lot of stress and a lot of frustration in the province, and you can feel it. As we all went to the doors and we spoke to people—man, there was a sense of frustration. There was tension out there, primarily in my riding. I ventured into everyone else's riding as well. It had to do with just—things were so unaffordable. People I talked to who are more affluent were talking about feeling the squeeze—but really worried about their neighbours and wondering how their neighbours, who made a lot less money than them, were going to make ends meet and how difficult it was.

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People are very stressed out because of health care. Not just because the pandemic has really—during the election, the sun was out and we were taking our masks off and there was a bit of hope. The idea of Bill 124, it's slowly, slowly crushing our health care workers; it's grinding them down. There's a lot of stress out there. I'll go on about health care. Earlier, I was listening to my colleague talking about emergency room closures. It really got to the point where, if you heard in the news that an emergency room was closed, it didn't feel like news anymore. I remember the first time I heard it, I was shocked. I think the number she said was 25. When you get to 25 emergency rooms closing, it's no longer news, right? It just becomes the normal.

I remember in 2018, when I was running, hallway medicine was normal—that we were talking about hallway medicine. It's underfunding, it's showing up every year with the same size cheque and ignoring the cost of living, and so our hospital wasn't provided with enough money to make ends meet. In the beginning of the election, we talked about hallway medicine; it was a major story, and people were in shower rooms. And near the end of the election, we went to talk about it and the press wouldn't show up because they said, "That is normal now." I feel like, right now, hospital emergency room closures have become normal for people. They're angry about it, and they want it fixed, but it doesn't seem odd anymore, and that's a dangerous thing to have.

The other thing that is becoming more and more normalized is the privatization. I cannot understand—and I can't get anyone to explain it to me—why it's okay that

we can pay a private agency more money than we can pay public sector nurses. It just boggles the mind. I had met with a long-term-care facility who needed PSWs and wanted to hire PSWs, and the way their budget was set up, was they had a max budget for employees and they had an overflow budget they could get into for a private contractor. They wanted to hire these people from the private contracting place, which they weren't allowed to do because of the contract that excludes them from doing that, which is a whole other matter we should take apart one day. But they wanted to hire somebody because they were hiring contractors on a regular basis. Imagine every day you show up somewhere, but you don't work for the store like the name on the front—you work for a third party. But every single day you're there and you want to work there and you're getting to know the residents, but you're making more while the agency is making more than the people you work with. And the place that is hiring the contractor? They can't hire you because their budget excludes it. That's a broken system. That isn't a system—when we're talking about financial responsibility, having public organizations say, "It's okay to spend extra money as long as some of it slides over to a private contractor" doesn't make sense. That's not the most fiscally responsible thing that we can do.

The other thing when it comes to health care, Speaker—and this is near and dear to my heart; I've talked about this a lot over the last four years—is the opioid epidemic, the pandemic within the pandemic. We are losing a generation of people on a regular basis. And I know in Sudbury, we're getting hit extra hard. I read recently that I think Thunder Bay may be overtaking us, but that's nothing to brag about either way. People are dying from overdoses. People are struggling with addiction with no hope out there, and this is something we really need to tackle. I know that COVID sucked all the air out of the room and we had to focus there, but we really have to do something with the opioid epidemic. It is ravaging all of our communities.

The Minister of Labour is here and he's aware of this. Sometimes when you mention someone, it sounds like you're going to make a jab, but it's not. It's something when it comes to skilled trades that we need to help people, because often in the skilled trades, you get sore from doing work, you end up on painkillers, you want to go back to work and you could end up addicted on opioids. And it's easy to hide when you have a decent income. It's easy to go into the washroom or your car or truck or go home, but the risk of overdose is there. We really need to supplement and bring up the number of skilled trade workers that we have, and we need to provide the resources for people to get help to get away from addictions. I don't believe I heard anything about that in the throne speech.

Bill 124 I mentioned before. I've actually mentioned Bill 124 a lot, and I think on this side of the House, we mentioned it a lot. We've talked about Bill 124. This is not a good bill; it's not at all. We've gone over how it's unconstitutional. We have the blueprint for it. Bill 115 that the Liberals tabled was basically the same bill but just aimed at education workers only. This one was all public

sector workers. At the end of the day, you know what the courts are going to do. If I was a betting person, I would say they're going to rule it as unconstitutional. It cost the Liberal government—it cost us; the Liberal government took the fall for it, but it cost us \$100 million in penalties. We could do a lot of stuff with \$100 million. We could four-lane Highway 69 with that kind of money. Why do this?

The other thing too is, as politicians, the leaders of our communities, we stand up all the time—everyone in our community, really; it doesn't have to be a leader—and talk about health care workers and that they're our heroes, and we're sincere, all of us, on both sides of the House, that they are heroes. They are giving their all. If you think back to the beginning of the pandemic when we weren't quite sure how it was spreading or how it was happening, they were really going above and beyond. To tell these people, "You only deserve 1% at the max, if you can negotiate the 1%," what a slap in the face that is. It really, really is. It's a dangerous precedent. We talk about nurses a lot, but these education workers, snow plow drivers, these are all public sector workers. When you tell people you're not worth that much—it's not just the financial model; you're literally telling them, "You're not worth that much to us."

I talked last week about education workers. A lot of people think of teachers, but education workers also includes the faculty that clean the building, support staff, EAs, the people in the offices. I talked last week about Charity who works full time and goes to the food bank to feed her children. We're from different parties, but I think we can all agree that if someone works full time, they shouldn't go to a food bank. We have to address that, and Bill 124 prevents that from happening. You need much more than 1%, especially with our cost of living going up 8.5%. We really need to do that.

We're seeing that result because as the government makes inroads to attract more PSWs, to attract more health care workers, more nurses, what we're seeing at the same time is that they're exiting. What we're doing, as much as possible, is turning on the taps to the bathtub, but we left the plug out of the drain. So they're leaving maybe even quicker than we can fill them. We have 5,400 fewer health care and social service workers today than one year ago. We're just burning money trying to attract people but not understanding why they're leaving. And I don't mean casually leaving; they're running for the door. We have to be realistic about this. If you want to keep nurses, if you want to support things, a major thing you can do is just repeal Bill 124. We've been calling for it for a long time. Maybe there was a reason in the past; I would disagree that there was, but maybe there was. But it's time to re-look at it and repeal it. If you want to come in on the weekend or the evening or any time to repeal Bill 124, we'll come in to do it. We'll pass it with no objection. You've got to get rid of this bill. It is bad for everybody. It is bad for those workers it's affecting; it's bad for all of Ontario.

I know that Bill 7 wasn't part of the throne speech, but I want to talk about Bill 7. My colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay brought this up. He's our

francophone critic, Speaker. He was talking about what happens with Bill 7. It's about making room in health care. The idea, basically, is that there are people who need to go into long-term care, who are better served in long-term care, but there are no beds. And so the idea is, we'll make up room in the hospitals by putting people into long-term care that maybe they don't want to go to. In northern ridings, that's up to 300 kilometres away. That's a three-hour drive. My colleague, the francophone critic, said: What happens if the only language you speak is French and you're put into a long-term-care facility where they don't speak French? What happens if you've got dementia and you don't understand what's going on, and when they explain it to you in a language you don't speak, you still don't understand what's going on?

Let's be honest about long-term care—and I want to say this without blame because this did not start four years ago; this started a long time ago. Nobody in Ontario is excited to go to long-term care. We need to all put the moose head on the table and just be honest about the elephant in the room. It is not a good system. There are some good providers out there, but by and large, nobody is waiting for their kids to have the conversation with them about going to long-term care and thinking, "Yes." Right? It needs a lot of work. It's broken.

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I'd venture that if you're sending someone to a long-term-care facility that doesn't have a waiting list, that has open beds, it may not be the cream of the crop long-term-care facility. It might be the one that you would see on 60 Minutes. We are going to take people, our seniors, our grandparents—I know it's not just seniors, but by and large it is—the people who built the country, who supported their children and grandchildren, and we are going to repay them by pulling them out of their community and parking them somewhere they don't want to be. And let's be honest, it's probably not the best facility out there.

The other part as well, while we're talking about it being broken, is that we all know, in this room, that long-term care is broken to the point where the family supplements and fills in those gaps. I remember running as a candidate. I was in North Bay listening to a consultation about long-term care, and there was a lady there talking about having to go every day to get her mom ready in the morning and to give her breakfast, that she'd brush her mom's hair and she'd feed her mom—all these things. And she was proud of that, because her mom took care of her for a long time. But the part that she found frustrating was that she has to go, that if she's sick or on Christmas morning, if she doesn't go, they don't have the resources. The PSWs are stretched so thin that her mom might not eat. Her mom might not get dressed. Her hair might not get brushed.

So that system that, let's be honest, governments over the years—different parties—have been looking the other way about, we all know it exists, but we haven't really acknowledged it out loud. We haven't said that we need to fix this. As a group, we haven't taken that step forward. We are going to pull that away from these people. And we

know, from COVID-19, when family was prevented from visiting, that the seniors that were in long-term care did a lot worse. In some cases, they died. And I don't mean from COVID-19; they just deteriorated really quickly because they didn't have family around. If you have to travel three hours, you're not going on a weekday. You're just not. And you're not going in the winter because, in the north, the roads kind of suck in the winter.

So we really need to think more beyond "we need to free up some beds." We need to understand how this is going forward. And frankly, this bill, there's no consultation on this. There's no committee on this. It's being rammed through, and that's probably a hint that it's not the best thing to do, that it's not a popular thing to do. Sometimes when you're in a leadership role you have to do stuff that's not popular, because it's the right thing to do, but I would argue that this is not one of those times. This isn't one of those times where you're doing something unpopular for the right reasons. This is something that's going to come back and not turn out very well.

The other thing was, talking about the budget and cost—time flies when you're speaking—the number one thing that I heard talking to people is that they were saying that the cost of living is just too high. At the time it was gas. Gas was two-something. And people were telling me how they were skipping meals; they weren't having lunch because they were home-care workers, and "I can't get out to all the different homes if I have lunch, because I can't put gas in my car." But the cost of food has gone through the roof. The cost of everything has climbed so much, and wages haven't kept up with it at all, not even close.

I think that there's discussion about the budget, and the budget is important, but really, Speaker, the budget is a bit of a brag. What's important is what you actually spend, because a lot of times in the budget, there are all these really high numbers, and then at the end of the year they review and those numbers weren't spent. And we've got to start looking at what we're actually putting into the expenses.

You know, I talked earlier about mental health and addictions. Very minimal investments have come to mental health and addictions, and we need to invest that money. When inflation is over 8% and people are worried about buying food, there is something very, very wrong. When full-time workers—this is a startling fact, and some of the newer members are going to realize this when they meet with food banks in Canada: In the last 10 years we've gone from generally the largest users of food banks being single men, and we have gone now to the largest users being workers who work 40 hours or more a week, and then it's families. That is a broken system that we—I and all of us—need to come together to solve. We cannot have people working full-time and not making enough money to buy food. I think we can all agree on that. People need to be able to put food in their mouths.

The price of gas, I talked about. I was reading on Hansard—I want to thank our interim leader for bringing this forward. He was saying, "ExxonMobil earned US\$18 billion in the second quarter of this year." Chevron made

\$15 billion. Shell made \$22 billion. BP oil just saw its “biggest profits in 14 years.” All of those companies “more than tripled their profit from a year ago.”

Good for them, but do you have a sense we’re being gouged? Let’s be honest, right? Sudbury always has been. In Sudbury, you drive less than an hour away, it’s always 10 cents less. I don’t know how expensive this is in transportation. I don’t know how expensive it is to drive less than an hour. But it’s always 10 cents less. But we’re really feeling like these prices are spiking us.

I think it’s great that people are going to electric vehicles, but that isn’t an option for everybody in the north. And also, the government ripped out a bunch of charging stations, so there are not a lot of places to charge your car. I know they have changed that stance and they’re building some more, but there’s a time before we get to electric vehicles and until we get there, we have to make sure that the consumer isn’t getting gouged. I didn’t hear anything about this.

I didn’t hear anything about helping consumers make ends meet, or putting more money in their pockets, or ensuring they’re being effective or ensuring that grocery stores aren’t raising prices simply because they can. Because in the shareholder meetings, they’re saying, “We raised a lot of money because we could.” And we as government—all of us together, opposition and party—we’ve got to hold them to account on this.

I’ve got about a minute. I want to talk about ODSP. They raised ODSP—they’re going to raise ODSP by \$50. So for a month, someone on ODSP is going to have \$1,227. That’s poverty. All of these things that we’re talking about, all of these struggles to make ends meet, if you are in legislated poverty when the government is saying, “You don’t deserve enough money to pay your bills”—that has to change. That has to change immediately.

We can’t have people in legislated poverty. We can’t because of the mental health, the stress it causes, the reality that you just cannot get back on your feet and you feel the world closing in on you. Poverty is crushing for people.

I wish I could go on. I only have about eight seconds, so I’ll stop there, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I thank the member for his statement. I know, certainly, it was mentioned about the rising costs and feeling the pinch. Rising costs have certainly hit lower-income families and workers in my riding the hardest. Could the member explain why there’s opposition to the proposal to enhance and expand the low-income individuals and families tax credit, which provides \$300 in additional tax relief, on average, to 1.1 million workers?

Mr. Jamie West: Sometimes what happens in a budget is the government will cherry-pick certain lines about it and say, “Hey, you don’t support the whole budget. How come you don’t support this one part?” And that is fruitless.

The reality, though, is that when you’re living in poverty, when you’re living on OW or ODSP, and you tell

somebody, “You are going to get a tax credit,” you’re ignoring the fact that most people who live in poverty don’t file their taxes. They don’t. And so, most people, they use their taxes as a bank account, as a savings account—sorry, through the Speaker. So what they do is they don’t file because they wait for their fridge to break down, because every penny you have, you spend. So telling somebody that, “You’re going to live in poverty for 12 months out of the year, but three months after that, you’re going to get tax relief,” is not hope for them.

What they need is food on the table today, money in their pockets today. They need to make ends meet today. So it’s not that it’s a bad idea, but it’s a “yes and” conversation. Let’s give them the tax relief and let’s put money in their pockets today.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much for your remarks. I couldn’t help but really feel that as you were talking about your constituents, they really could have been my constituents. Food bank usage in Toronto Centre for new users has gone up by 60%. We’re seeing students now living in youth shelters because there’s no adequate housing.

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With respect to what’s happening within the throne speech and what’s contained in the throne speech: Clearly, there isn’t enough to meet the needs of Ontarians today, but what is actually missing in there? You’ve identified some things. But what are the solutions, and how can we get there with the support of this government? Do you think they would be able to allow us to make those amendments and work collaboratively so we can end the lineups at the food banks, so we can put an end to poverty, so we can put an end to homelessness once and for all?

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the member for Toronto Centre.

Over the last four years, one of the things I was surprised by, as an MPP, was how little consultation we have with the public, that many things we discuss—and, I would argue, maybe everything we discuss—become time-allocated; that when we have public consultation, it is always five hours, the minimum allowed.

My background is in health and safety—there’s a bunch of different stuff, but health and safety is really my passion. I’ve learned over the last 17 years of doing that job that you don’t have to have all the answers. What you need to do is, you need to sit down with the people who are being affected, and they’ll give you the answers—and some of the answers we know already. Do you know how you solve housing? You build houses, affordable ones—not giant ones—public housing. That’s how you solve that.

Do you know how you get food to people? You give them affordable food. You give them enough money so they can make ends meet.

Those are the solutions.

But really, what we need to do is what we’re elected to do: to listen to our constituents, to tour, to talk to them and make good decisions, even if they don’t agree with what

we thought we believed before we came there—to make decisions based on what people are telling us is the best thing to do.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for Sudbury for his contributions this afternoon to debate. I do appreciate the member's unique perspective, coming from northern Ontario.

Of course, we recognize that one of the things we hear about a lot from our colleagues in the north is the importance of investing in our infrastructure, including road infrastructure. We hear about the importance of broadening highways and ensuring there's adequate shoulders. We hear about the importance of investing in good road surfaces in the north. I completely agree with all these investments. I understand the importance of building new highways and building good roads in northern Ontario. And yet, the member opposite and so many of his colleagues seem completely opposed to building any new roads in the south.

I'm wondering why the member opposite and all of his colleagues from the north, on the one hand, rightly advocate for more and better roads in the north and yet refuse to support investments in building up more roads here in southern Ontario?

Mr. Jamie West: Thanks to my colleague for his question about infrastructure.

It's a weird thing, because it's a yes/and conversation—it isn't Highway 69 or Highway 413. I've looked at the data for Highway 413 because I was the northern infrastructure critic, and it doesn't bear fruit; you can say that it does, and the Liberals tried saying it did before, but it doesn't. It doesn't reduce commute times. Really, if you want to go forward with that, if that's what the constituents want in southern Ontario, more power to you. I would disagree about the strength of it. What I am saying is, don't do it instead of Highway 69. On Highway 69, people are dying. People are being killed. Someone was killed in the last 15 days. I've been here before several times talking about people who were killed on Highway 69. So if we're going to do either/or, let's stop where people are being killed and let's then do the next one—and if it's going to be a yes/and, then let's do both. But at the end of the day, let's get Highway 69 done. If you really, really, really want 413, you have the power to drive that through. We can disagree about it—but what I'm talking about is that we have an area where people are being killed on the highway, and we need to support them and ensure that stops happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to ask the member who serves very, very well as the critic for labour—and I want to ask the member from Sudbury about the staffing shortage in the hospitals and what we've been talking about a lot in this room, but certainly talking about it in our communities, about nurses leaving good union jobs that used to be well-paying, that have benefits and protections, full-time hours. They are leaving those jobs in droves to go to private, sometimes fly-by-night agencies.

I guess I don't understand that, because obviously the protections in good union jobs—that's something people aspire to. Can you talk to me maybe about the working conditions, or what the conditions are that would make them consider that or maybe even make them feel forced to do that?

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Oshawa.

I talked a lot about Bill 124 in the debate, and my colleagues have talked about Bill 124. It's a bad bill, and it's punishing. The result of it, really, at the end of the day, is, even though the Conservative government stands up and says that these are heroes and role models and stuff, they're not being treated like heroes; they're not being treated like the best. There's a quality of life that you want. You want to feel fulfilled about your job.

Let's be honest. If somebody were to tell you to explain what it's like to be an MPP—there are long hours, and we work hard; there are a lot of people who think that we don't, but we do, and I know my colleagues opposite do as well. Why do we do it? Because we're inspired and we enjoy it and it fulfills us.

As health care workers, when you're being treated by the government as if you're not valuable and not important, you exit those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Any other questions?

Mr. Michael Mantha: The member spoke quite passionately about another crisis that is going on in this province, and that's the opioid crisis. I've seen, and I know the member has seen, so many crosses—the white crosses that we see in many of our communities across northern Ontario. Actually, in a couple of weeks I'll be participating in a community walk—where we have another beautiful young person who succumbed to the opioid crisis. Week after week, those numbers keep getting elevated.

We have these buildings where individuals go and get the treatment they need, but it's the aftercare that is not being provided to them. They're being subjected to going back to the environment that they were in, and they slip back into that routine. That aftercare, that continuum of care is so needed, and we need to make those investments if we're going to get on top of the opioid crisis.

I'd like to hear from the member: What do you see, as far as the Sudbury area, northern Ontario, that is absolutely needed to battle the opioid crisis?

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin.

In Sudbury, we have a supervised consumption site that we are waiting for an announcement of the provincial funding for—which, fingers crossed, is happening this week; I've heard a rumor, but to be honest, at the same time, I wouldn't be surprised if it's just a visit to evaluate it.

For four years, I've been talking about the opioid crisis in Sudbury—across northern Ontario, but in Sudbury in particular, because it's my riding and where I see it the most. There's a major intersection in Sudbury with a sea of white crosses, and it is sad that I have to count them to

see how many there are on a regular basis. The number continues to grow. That only signifies the people who agree to put crosses up.

We need to inject money into people to be successful. The idea of quitting on your own and just magically overcoming this doesn't make sense. The government can really, really help by an investment into mental health and addictions to help with aftercare, to help with beds, to help with addiction recovery.

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

Ms. Jess Dixon: I hail from the riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler, which is, as they will all agree, a somewhat uneasy political union of the south part of Kitchener and Hespeler. Kitchener South contains a variety of residential neighbourhoods as well as a wonderful museum and gallery and the village of Doon. Hespeler, if you ask Hespeler, contains the entire world, and it more or less ends there. I know anybody watching from home from Hespeler will agree with me that they are certainly not part of Kitchener South, nor are they part of Cambridge, and frankly, I love them for that attitude.

The people of Kitchener South–Hespeler are the first ones I have to thank because they are the ones who put me here. Without all of you voting for me—I know I do have some of you watching from home, thank you, including my arborist, who just messaged me to say he's in a tree; I hope he is. We won't tell the Minister of Labour. The people of Kitchener South–Hespeler are the ones who voted for me. They are the ones who put me here. Without all of them, I would not have the ability to be saying anything that I'm saying; I wouldn't have the ability to do anything for these people. I will never take lightly the trust that they put in me. I am eternally grateful to the people of Kitchener South–Hespeler.

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I also have to say thank you to Amy Fee. Amy Fee was the MPP for Kitchener South–Hespeler before me, and she is a thoroughly lovely person. Amy has four kids and three service dogs, and two of her children are on the autism spectrum. She has been and always will be an absolute champion for the autism cause. While I was campaigning, she was never more than a phone call away. I could always be assured of a response from her—“Jess, you've got this.”

A parliamentarian's inaugural speech—of course, I did look it up; I looked in the legislative library—is an opportunity to say thank you, to introduce yourself etc. I thought a lot about how best to structure this speech. I thought about what I wanted to say and who I wanted to thank. I thought about which section should go where. Ultimately, I thought so much about my speech that I never really quite got around to writing it and it's mostly just notes. So if I ramble, my apologies in advance.

Standing here at the moment, I've decided to start with what I think is the most important part and introduce two of the best people in the world—two people who are, quite literally, the only reason I'm here; two people who have supported me through everything; and, coincidentally, two people who, just yesterday, marked their 40th anniversary together: my parents, Ruth Dixon and Eric Dyke.

There's a Jann Arden song—it's actually not one of my favourites, but it's one that Mom always talks about. It's called Good Mother, and it has the lines in it, “I like the colour of my hair / I've got a friend who loves me / Got a house, I've got a car”—but it says “I've got a good mother” and “I've got a good father.” That is absolutely what I have. I'm an only child, so I was blessed to never have to share them with absolutely anybody else, which I love.

My mom, Ruth, was born in Deep River. She was one of six kids. Her mom, my granny, was a nurse in labour and delivery, and an Irish immigrant. She certainly carried on the nursing tradition because, out of all of her kids, we have four nurses. My mom was an orthopedic and operating room nurse. My auntie Deb is a cardiac nurse. My auntie Moe is an RNFA, a registered nurse first assistant. My auntie Sheila, who we've lost, was a geriatric nurse. My auntie Fif did not become a nurse, but she became a registered massage therapist and a practitioner of eastern medicine. My uncle Dave was the black sheep and went off and became an engineer or something like that.

Dad was born in Vancouver, one of three brothers. Both of his brothers became skilled mechanics. My dad also was the black sheep and went off and became an engineer or something like that.

My parents met when my dad was a summer student at Chalk River. Admittedly, I get a little bit confused about the chronology after that, because they met at Chalk River, and then there was a period when mom was on a kibbutz and she was an au pair in Paris. My dad ended up on a sheep farm, either in New Zealand or Australia, and has the kangaroo whip to prove it. But somehow or other, they did get back together—luckily for me, or I wouldn't be here.

I'm known for having a stubborn streak a mile wide and being very into DIY, and I came by that honestly. Barely a month before I was born, my parents bought a lovely arts and crafts bungalow in Victoria, BC—which came very cheap because it was scheduled for imminent demolition—which they cut in half and put on two giant flatbed moving trucks and took through downtown Victoria, just in time to welcome me home to a massive construction site, in a laundry basket with a sheepskin in it. We more or less put the final stitch in that house before picking up everything and moving to Ontario, due to the death of the manufacturing sector in Victoria.

My dad got a job at Babcock, now known as BWXT, and Mom started to work at McMaster hospital. My dad went on to Aecon, becoming the project manager for their N-Stamp project, which is attaining safety certification to produce nuclear components—which I never thought would be relevant, because I never thought I'd be a politician, and I never thought I would be the parliamentary assistant for energy, but here we are.

Mom went back to school and became a manager at Cambridge Memorial Hospital—same-day surgery, the OR, the ER, the fracture clinic etc. She retired and then came out of retirement to be a coordinator for CCAC. She

retired again, and then she came out of retirement again when COVID hit, and she brought her nursing skills back to Ontario.

Why did I get involved in politics? I never wanted to be a politician. It never occurred to me that I'd be here. If you had told me two or three years ago that I would be here, I'd be very startled. It begins with a house and a job, as well as a day at work that was both good and bad, and, surprisingly, a bag of milk.

I'll just begin: I'm a crown attorney. I've been a crown attorney both federally and provincially. My mom has a report card from preschool where my preschool teacher wrote, "Jess has a very clearly defined sense of right and wrong"—and that seems to have stuck with me. I articulated with the crown attorney in Ottawa, and I loved my job as a crown ever since I first walked into the halls.

In 2015, in Cambridge, I bought a foreclosure that I'm still working on at a rate that appalls my project manager father, because the projects that get done are the only ones that seem interesting at the time. At any rate, in the course of working on that house, I met my neighbour.

My house is in an area that has a large swath of geared-to-income single-family housing in it. As I would be working on my house, I would notice my neighbour Laura walking by. She was a single mom with, at the time, a 13-year-old and a one-year-old. We eventually got to chatting. Basically, she's somebody who doesn't have a lot, and she was just loving living vicariously through me making this very, very ugly house, day by day, a little bit more attractive. We started to talk more, and her older daughter, Lauryn, would come over. One day Lauryn was helping me in the garden, and we started talking about school, and I realized that Lauryn, even though she had just graduated grade eight in Ontario—she was born in Ontario—had no conception that college or university was something that applied to her. I went to a private school; I didn't know about the applied versus academic streaming. Lauryn had been put into applied, and I was absolutely appalled that somebody would make that decision for her and limit her in that fashion. I ended up marching into her school, tailing Laura behind me, and having her moved into academic and into a different school entirely. I'm proud to say that she has just finished her first year of occupational therapy at Georgian College.

As the little one, Caprea, Laura's other daughter, got older, she—again, Laura is not somebody who has a lot. She is somebody who should have been on ODSP but wasn't. I ended up helping her with that application and going through the Byzantine process—particularly for somebody who deals with brain injury, when you have an invisible disability. As Caprea, the little one, got older, I started realizing her language development skills were falling behind a little bit, but I always knew that she was a really smart little girl. At school, they seem to have just written her off. The idea seemed to be that if she acted up in class, they would just take her to a different room. Frankly, she's smart as a whip. She figured out very quickly that if she acted up, she didn't have to do the work, and she immediately left the room. So I ended up putting

Caprea into Kumon, into math and English tutoring, and, ultimately, into swimming and into karate. She is a very smart little girl. She's doing wonderfully in Kumon; she has been in it for probably three years now. This is a little girl who is never going to fall through the cracks. She has been given a start that she wouldn't have had otherwise.

When I was a crown, I would talk to a lot of accused people. When you're a crown, you're supposed to want to be up in the glamorous courts, the Superior Court. I always loved being in the workhorse courts where you're dealing one on one with accused people. As time went on, I started pursuing more and more of my own alternative justice measures. I would have some pretty good successes. I have a lot of different stories. One of the ones that always comes to mind was when I was in St. Thomas, and I ended up talking to a man, a boy—I'll change his name; I think he's 20—named Matthew. At the time, he was living in his car. He had been charged with two counts of driving without insurance because he was sleeping in his uninsured car. His family had kicked him out because he had a cocaine addiction. He had managed to finish high school, but that was about it. So he was facing a drug charge; he was facing a property crime charge; he was facing two counts of driving without insurance, which is a \$10,000 minimum fine. This is somebody who was on the precipice of a downward spiral.

I talked to him and I said, "Look, I'm the prosecutor, you don't have to talk to me, but I'm interested in hearing how you got here." He talked to me and he told me about some of his struggles from home. This is all happening over the phone; it's still COVID. And so I said, "Okay, you've got yourself in a lot of trouble here, but I am most interested in seeing about how we can make it that you never come back here again."

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I told him to go off and to start seeing—I was like, "Okay, the first thing is, let's see if you can get back in with your parents." So I set him up with some counselling options, which I had to look around to find. Over the months that I adjourned his case, he moved back in with his parents. He met a girl. Because he'd finished high school, I'd started talking to him—technically I knew I was probably going to run, but I still wasn't thinking about it that much—and I told him a lot about the trades. By the end of my time with him—a lot of the time, being a crown is sort of being somebody's cheerleader and their mom at the same time. And by the end, he had moved into his own apartment with his girlfriend, and he was officially signed up as an apprentice at Fanshawe.

I told him at the end, "I'm withdrawing your charges, because you've done what I wanted you to do to never be back here," and he sobbed on the phone to me and said that I was the only person that had ever really believed in him or taken the time to speak to him—

Interjections.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Thank you. And the thing is that he was just one of many. I have had that experience over and over and over again, of being a person that took the unconventional approach, the person that listened.

The thing with him or the thing with my neighbour and my neighbour's daughters is that they're not going to fall through the cracks. They are protected. But what increasingly bothered me more and more was that the only common element in that—this is not to pat myself on the back; this is why I became involved—was me. If they hadn't come across me as the crown or me as their busy-body, interfering neighbour, that wouldn't have happened. And I felt that in a province like Ontario, that simply wasn't good enough.

I firmly believe that a rising tide lifts all boats. I believe that that is what this party stands for. It stands for investing in people early on, in giving people the tools that they need to build themselves up. But I wanted to be able to be here and tell stories like the story that I just told so that you understand what it's like for people that live in this different world, in this far more disorganized world, and know that they're not past hope. They're not past help. And we can absolutely do a great deal for them. And that is, in large part, why I ran: in order to be here.

To finish this off, in my last few days—I'll get to the bag of milk, actually. I had had both a good day and a bad day at work. It was a good day because I'd had yet another full-grown man sobbing, in happiness, on the phone to me, and I had made a really, really big difference in his life. I was happy about it, but I was also frustrated because I thought, I know that there's not very many people that are doing what I'm doing, so I'm having an incredibly small impact right now, even though I've had major impact on this one man.

My mother was over, and I was saying, "I don't know. What do you do if you want to make things better? If I have influence, but it's very small, do you go into politics?" And she said, "Well, you know, it could be something to consider." And then she left, and she went to the grocery store to get a bag of milk. And while she was at the grocery store, she saw a gentleman, John Wright, who is sort of a local businessman, and she distantly recalled seeing him on Facebook, in perhaps a Conservative Party function locally. So she went up to John and asked him if he had any party involvement and said, "Jess just wants to talk to somebody about it."

John is the type of person that does everything at just 100 miles an hour. So before the next day was even finished, he had two people that were involved locally, Mike Dearden and Peter Tudisco, and had arm-wrestled them into calling his random friend's daughter who had a slight interest in politics.

They were really the originators. Peter Tudisco and Mike Dearden were the ones that took this away. If it weren't for them, I absolutely would not be here. They made this happen. I was working full-time as a crown attorney, caring for a very, very ill dog at that point, and they were the ones that absolutely did this, while also having a wonderful sense of humour about it.

Mike will be watching this, and I feel entitled—because I have 20 minutes to talk—I have a phone full of text messages from Mike with no response from me, of us being at events with him sending me a message that says,

"Wrap it up, Jess. Wrap it up. Okay, you've talked too much."

I also want to thank Jim Schmidt. Jim was the candidate for Kitchener Centre. He unfortunately did not win but is just an absolutely stand-up guy. He was one of my main touchstones during the entire campaign process. We'd meet for lunch regularly. He was always the one who actually knew what date things were due, how to get the phone and who's email I was supposed to have, and then he would also comment that he would really appreciate it if he could see me eat a vegetable once in a while—he still hasn't.

I also want to thank Brandon Lukach, who's another one of my neighbours. Actually he's another part of that neighbourhood. Brandon is somebody that dropped out of school when he was in grade 10 due to a combination of circumstances, and I'm proud to say that we got him to successfully write his GED back in March and now he will be on to bigger and brighter things. I'm very proud of him for that.

I also want to talk about Joe and Corey Kimpson. When I started doing social media for my campaign, I came across this business, a paintball field called Flag Raiders that I remembered was closed down. I reached out to them to say, "Look, I've got about as much power as a goldfish in an empty bowl, but I'm happy to come talk to you and see what's happening."

I went out to the field and I just had this immediate—I don't know—connection with the two of them, but particularly with Corey Kimpson. We talked about paintball, we talked about local businesses. I think maybe one week later, she sent me a package about Flag Raiders and then not even a week after that, our next connection was me sending her a panicked message, asking if she knew anybody at the Rotary because I had just been asked to go to a Rotary gala that started in two hours. She wrote back, "I think I know some people." Then I wrote back, "Will you go with me?" So she was my date at a Rotary gala with two hours' notice, having only ever spoken to me once before. Her and Joe put up signs. They managed my social media. They were just incredible.

I also want to talk about—I call them my Holy Trinity. I know that some of them are watching. Angie, Monica and Marie are three wonderful ladies. I met Angie through Facebook. Monica was one of the only people that responded to one of our riding-wide emails, and Marie was a person who came out to one of our events. I remember being so incredibly touched, the first time we had a super canvass when Marie came out and gave her time to me because I was never expecting somebody I didn't know that didn't owe me anything would turn up. But those three did and they turned up over and over and over again, and I absolutely owe them.

My aunts, my nurse aunts, Auntie Deb and Auntie Moe, would come out as well. Carl—reliable Carl and Tyler, who, when they came, I knew with a breath of relief that we would at least probably finish this canvass. And Rob Elliott—Rob was a regional organizer, and he came in in the last 10 days of the campaign to get us over the finish

line—just an absolute ray of sunshine. He came on after, again, to help me set up the office, and if it weren't for him, all of my phones would still be tin cans on strings.

Anyway I owe so many people: Megan, TJ, Alide, Bill, David, Lauryn, Jenn, Max and Chris, but I want to end this again by saying thank you to my parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to tell the member, your inaugural speech was amazing. You say you ramble—you can ramble all you want in this House. It's going to be welcome.

You would have shamed the previous member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He used to go, go, go, but you would just put him in his place today. For those that have listened to Bill Walker when he was in this House—he would always have a good time with us in this House.

Listen, you've demonstrated that your experience through getting here, you have heart and compassion. That's something that many of us have in this Legislature—all of us have in this Legislature. We've all have those stories. I remember meeting up with Januzhe Pochwalowski. He was an immigrant who came to Canada. He was having so many problems raising his two boys—nobody would listen to him. He kept saying, "Listen, there's something wrong with my pension. There's something wrong with my pension." I listened to him. I heard him. We looked at his pension and managed to deal with WSIB. We found out that he had not been indexed. I called him into the office and said, "I have some bad news for you. You know those years of pension you were entitled to that didn't come? They're coming. You're going to be getting \$186,000." And it was just something that we do.

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As an opposition, we are critical of this government. We will criticize the government. We will oppose. That's our job. My question to you will be, will you be hearing to respond to the opposition or will you be listening to understand the points that we're bringing across?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I'm a philosophy major—again, courtesy of my mother. I credit being an open-minded person to having the experience of being in a Nietzsche 101 class when you're 18 years old and you think you have all the right opinions. You put your hand up and you're immediately torn apart by a bunch of philosophy students that are, frankly, much better informed than you are.

What that taught me was the value of intellectual humility, and it's something that we would do well to have more of, and certainly of politicians, which is the courage to be wrong, the courage to even look for the reasons why we are wrong. And that is something that I feel unashamed to commit to. I'm not scared to be wrong. I'm not scared to look for the reasons I'm wrong. But if I'm right, I will be right.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question?

Mr. Rob Flack: Having gotten to know my colleague a little bit over the last while—obviously, energy galore, very talented. Eight years as crown prosecutor, both federally and provincially, alternative justice—you've shared

some really interesting stories. You're compassionate about it and you've shown results. But family first—that's obviously important to you. Tell us a little more about your dad.

Ms. Jess Dixon: When you mentioned energy, my dad was the reason I had a campaign frankly. I'm not known for my organization, and like some of us, I found getting out door-knocking, particularly on the days where you were just tired, a little tough. But my dad had an entire Excel spreadsheet of all of our volunteers, the shifts that we were doing, and there was no way that I could ever say that I was tired to go out volunteering because my dad, who is in his seventies, was there every single day, three shifts a day, ready to drag me off of the couch. I'm here because my dad just absolutely doesn't know how to stop.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Congratulations to the member opposite on an excellent inaugural speech. I actually listened with a lot of interest, especially as you were describing your background as a crown prosecutor. I can only imagine some of the situations that you've been in, especially in those courtrooms trying to do right by the person that you're representing or the situation that you're in.

I was actually just quickly doing some calculations based on things that I've learned in my community of Toronto Centre. And what I've learned in Toronto Centre is that there's a disproportionate number of Indigenous people who are incarcerated or perhaps held in correctional facilities, and yet their actual population size in Ontario is actually pretty small. And I'll just give you a quick example: 31% of Indigenous adults are in custody, yet they only represent 4.5% of the population. Indigenous youth are 43% held in correctional facilities, and yet they only represent 8.8% of the population.

I think that if I was to drill down a little bit deeper into, basically, what you said, you were talking about your individual efforts of working within the system to help people. I'm curious to know your position and your values on how it would translate to changing the system, the structural deficiencies that we see in the system, so we can actually help people by changing the systemic problems that are here, that keep the Indigenous population in correctional facilities or incarcerated. How would you bring that type of thinking to the House?

Ms. Jess Dixon: Thank you for that question. One of the things that I experienced as a prosecutor was exactly that, hearing criticisms of the justice system. In my opinion, the justice system, when all it's left to do is administer justice, actually does just fine. What we don't do very well is deal with the mentally ill, the addicted, the abused, the people who are suffering from family breakdown. Again, one of the reasons I ran was that I would stand there feeling like we were being criticized as the justice system, thinking, "No, all of these people were broken long before they ever arrived in court." What I believe is very much "an ounce of prevention." I'm very supportive of family support programs, youth mental health, youth programs giving kids something to do that isn't being on the street,

because really, building healthy people starts much, much earlier than when they show up in my court.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The honourable member from Kitchener South–Hespeler obviously, in eight years as a crown prosecutor, was not just prosecuting people, but was working with people. She obviously understood the clarion call of former Chief Justice Brian Dickson, who said we must have both law and compassion, because a prosecutor is not just prosecuting, but listening to people, an officer of the court serving the people.

Now, in this new role of being a member of provincial Parliament and having gone through a campaign, what would the honourable member say would be her top highlights of dealing with people, both on the campaign trail and since her election on June 2?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I would say that simply interacting with people as a human being has been what I have practised as a crown and what I continued to do on the campaign trail. I went out with a fairly clear idea of who I am as a person, and I didn't try to change that while I was at doors. I tried to answer the questions that I was given to the best of my ability, and I intend to continue to do so.

I have a number of memories of times where I have been very certain that I was right about something, but in taking the time to listen I realized that I was either wrong or simply coming at it from the wrong direction. I rarely ever regretted asking somebody to expand further on their story.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you as well to my colleague from across the aisle, who had a

really great speech. I liked that you started and ended it with your mom and dad, and I liked the phrase you said about mostly just notes. I'm going to ask you a question, but if you prefer, if there's something in your notes you didn't get to speak about, just say, "I wanted to bring this up," because sometimes you have that feeling when you sit down, when you wanted to mention someone's name.

I was just wondering if, newly elected, anything stood out to you—it's been about two months now—from the time of your election to today that you didn't really expect, or that surprised you, or that you found interesting after being elected.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I wish he were here—Minister Tibollo—but the thing that has surprised me the most is that before I came here, I thought there would be far more layers of formality between myself as sort of a backbencher and the ministers. This is coming as somebody who was never interested in politics. I never watched any of us on television, so it was all very new to me. But I think on one of the very first days, the day that the mikes stopped working for about 20 minutes, I went and plunked myself down on the floor next to Minister Tibollo, and started talking to him about the Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge and North Dumfries, which does really, really good work in Cambridge but with very little funding. I'm quite passionate about the work they do. It has only been a couple of weeks, but I've already been able to get a briefing letter to Minister Tibollo, as well as to get him to agree to come to a meeting in Cambridge. So really it has been the accessibility and compassion of our ministers—I mean that very, very honestly—that has been the most surprising and the most wonderful thing about this.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

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

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

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

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
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	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	