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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 May 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 mai 2019

The House recessed from 1800 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GETTING ONTARIO MOVING ACT (TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR UN ONTARIO EN MOUVEMENT (MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et diverses autres lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: In this opening, I'll be speaking on Bill 107, the Getting Ontario Moving Act, 2019. I'm very pleased to see that my advocacy, going back a few years now into the last government, has borne fruit on the matters of a concrete barrier for Highway 401 in southwestern Ontario as well as updated measures to tackle the growing problem of school bus blow-bys and the threat of death on our young students they present. As such, Madam Speaker, I will begin my remarks today by going over the updates that this legislation brings to the Highway Traffic Act. Numerous amendments are made to the Highway Traffic Act respecting road safety and other matters. Some of the highlights are as follows:

Driving instructors are required to have a blood alcohol concentration of zero and to have no drugs in their body while providing driving instruction.

Section 21.1 of the act provides for a number of administrative penalties. Amendments are made in respect of the involvement in that system of municipalities or persons employed by municipalities. Currently, the act states that when a sentence is being imposed for careless driving, the court may consider as an aggravating factor whether bodily harm was caused to a person who was vulnerable, including a pedestrian or a cyclist. The act is amended to refer to persons working on the highway in addition to pedestrians and cyclists.

The fines for the contravention of certain provisions regarding unnecessary slow driving—slow vehicles failing to travel on the right side and overtaking and passing—

are increased to be not less than \$150 and not more than \$1,000.

Currently, the act allows regulations and municipal bylaws to be made permitting the operation of off-road vehicles. The act is amended to specify that such regulations and bylaws may also prohibit the operation of off-road vehicles.

Madam Speaker, we're investing \$1 billion to ensure concrete barriers come to the strip of the Highway 401 in southwestern Ontario known tragically as "Carnage Alley." That strip goes from roughly Lambeth, just west of London, to Tilbury, further west of Chatham: a stretch of approximately 127 kilometres. One death on that highway is one too many, and we're working to get this done as soon as possible. It's going to take time—127 kilometres of six lanes versus four lanes with a concrete barrier don't happen overnight, but we are working on it. And I would ask that the public be patient with us as we continue and we work towards that end.

That is why, Madam Speaker, we put the Highway 401 concrete barrier into our first budget: because it is a top priority. And we want to have some province-wide consultations: one to review speed limits and another to look at the rules of the road for bicycles, e-bikes and e-scooters. Certainly with bicycles, it's a big topic of conversation. Generally when you're on a bicycle, you see things from one perspective. When you're in a car, you see it from a totally different perspective—the same thing for pedestrians, obviously. I think it gets challenging when we have motorized bicycles. At what point do we decide a scooter is more of a bike or more of a motorcycle? It's a challenge, but I think that we need to hear from all aspects. There are a lot of people out there who come from other countries and have seen things done better than what we're doing here, for one thing. And there are a lot of people who just generally have an interest and have good ideas.

If we don't hear from people, we're not doing a service to the taxpayers of Ontario. If we're not getting all those ideas from the public, all the ideas that they have—well, we've got to get those ideas on the table. A lot of times, people do have great ideas, but they don't realize the liability issue or the complication—different weather conditions and things like that. That's understandable. But the experts will go through all those recommendations.

We are a government that listens when constituents say, "I'm sending you my thoughts and ideas. These are the concerns. These are the suggestions." Unlike the previous government, when we do a consultation—we've seen it in every file of this government—people's suggestions actually make it into the final product. Road safety is no different. A lot of times when we're here in the Legislature

and we're speaking on behalf of a bill or giving statements or whatever it is—when we're giving questions and comments on somebody else's debate—we draw upon what people have told us and have shared with us with these stories.

Madam Speaker, I also want to talk about the cameras mounted on the outside of school buses. Each day, more than 837,000 students travel on a school bus or in a school vehicle in Ontario. Injuries and fatalities, which are very rare, happen more often outside the school bus as students are boarding and leaving the bus or crossing the street. Their safety is so important.

We're taking several measures that I will briefly lay out before going into the issue of school bus safety that I advocated on.

We're making learning to drive safer and reaffirming to new drivers that it is never safe to drive under the influence by introducing a new offence for any driver instructor who violates a zero blood-alcohol or drug presence requirement. We are improving traffic flow and enhancing road safety on our highways by introducing tougher penalties for driving slower in the left-hand lane. We are allowing motorcyclists to use the high-occupancy-vehicle lanes, the HOV lanes, a much safer part of the road for them. And we're also strengthening laws that protect front-line roadside workers from careless drivers.

I want to go back to a private member's bill that I had, in fact, introduced back in 2017. At that time, it was called Bill 94. Again, unfortunately, the Liberals just kept putting it off and putting it off. It received unanimous consent at second reading, but there it sat and almost died—almost. We put so much pressure on the Liberals to take that bill, get it into committee, kick it around, come up with better amendments, make it a stronger, better bill—but make it legislation, and let's get it passed, and let's start educating the public so that the public is aware of the dangers of bypassing or blowing by school buses, and not only the dangers but also the penalties if, in fact, they're caught. Police can't be everywhere. For that reason, I'm very glad that the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Yurek, has included my bill in this legislation.

Here's the sad part. I remember seeing a YouTube video where a mother was actually—it happened just outside of my riding. It happened on Manning Road just south of the 401. A school bus was stopped and children were about to get off the bus—the lights were flashing, the stop arm extended. A mother was walking towards that bus, and to her horror, what she saw next was a vehicle passing on the inside of that school bus. Of course, you know that her heart just jumped up into her throat. They know who it was—well, they know the vehicle passing it: white, 300M. They know all of that information because it was captured on a home video camera. Again, we need to do something about those particular blow-bys.

What the government did, finally, before the last election was they took that Bill 94 and they included it in their cannabis bill. Imagine that: a school bus bill for safety of children included in a cannabis bill. My question was, what were the Liberals thinking? Or maybe it should have been, what were the Liberals smoking?

As you can tell, I'm very passionate about that addition into this bill. After the 2018 budget, the status of my proposal, be it in the cannabis legislation or in the highway traffic amendments—it was all uncertain. That's why myself and Minister Yurek made resolving this issue before the next school year a priority. If this bill is passed, then it is my hope that we start moving in a positive vein.

We need to start educating the public on the dangers of blow-bys. They did studies in North Bay, they did studies in Ottawa, in Kitchener, in Mississauga. They were absolutely dumbfounded by the number of blow-bys that occurred daily with school buses. There are issues with regard to two-lane highways. But do you know where some of the biggest problems are going to be?—and this is where education has to play a major part. It's those four-lane inner-city roads. What it really means is, when a school bus has to pull over to the side to pick up children, traffic following that bus in the two lanes and traffic driving towards that bus in the two lanes all must stop, because there may be children crossing four lanes of road to get to their school bus. The public needs to be educated on that and educated firmly, because the penalties—even though there will not be six demerit points if a police officer were, in fact, to spot and capture a motor vehicle driver blowing by a school bus, at least the camera will capture it, and the fines will be \$400, and then stiffer upon a second opportunity.

Again, included in this bill, what will happen is, the driver of the vehicle—we may not know who the driver is, but by capturing a licence plate, the penalty will then go back to the owner of the vehicle, and it will be up to the owner of the vehicle to decide what they're going to do. But that fine has to be paid because there will be supporting evidence showing lights flashing, stop arm extended, and their vehicle passing a school bus.

So those are some wonderful things.

Of course, the other thing that I hope gets carried through on this is the fact that any monies collected from fines on blow-bys go back to the municipality and they can distribute them. It's not going to come to us; it's going to go back to that municipality. Municipalities will also have an opportunity to decide whether or not they want to participate in this. I don't know why they wouldn't want to participate in it, as well.

Madam Speaker, our new regulation will allow for more efficient enforcement and prosecution by adding those cameras to all school buses. They will be allowed to be used in court without the requirement of an additional witness, who is usually the bus driver. I mentioned earlier the fact that municipalities will also get to target drivers with additional fines of about \$400. That money, as I mentioned, will go back to the municipalities. It will also go back to help fund those cameras. And we're looking at some other options down the road.

One nice thing that I was very pleased about was the fact that the president of the Independent School Bus Operators Association, Rob Murphy, said this: "We have been looking forward to this announcement for some years. This announcement will help ensure children across

our province will continue to be transported safely to and from school.” At the press conference when Minister Yurek made the announcement in London, Mr. Murphy was there, as well.

At the press conference, when we unveiled this component of the Getting Ontario Moving Act, I said that school bus drivers, who work very hard every day to keep our kids safe, are really and truly the unsung heroes and they deserve all the legal and institutional support possible in doing their job. When you think about it, in the past—a school bus driver is watching the children. First of all, they’re making sure that the road is clear. They’ve got all their lights on. Then they may have children walking in front of the school bus. They have to make sure the children get up and on to the school bus or off the school bus safely. At the same time, many of them are also looking to ensure that no vehicles are about to blow by. The way it is right now, if a school bus driver spots a blow-by, they have to try to get the make, model and number of the car, as well as the licence plate—almost an impossible task because they are also responsible for the safety of our children getting on and off school buses.

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Madam Speaker, safety on our roads is, in fact, a top priority. We’re going to target those who pose a serious risk to the safety of others on our roads and remain vigilant in our efforts to protect some of the most vulnerable road users. That’s why we’re proposing to increase the safety of children and drivers on school buses by introducing the new administrative monetary penalty framework for improperly passing a school bus.

Again, the bill also follows through on our government’s commitment to cut red tape and raise accountability. I might add that we’re proposing to simplify how businesses and people interact with the Ministry of Transportation, to transform the MTO functions in order to reduce costs, to reduce burdens, to save hard-working taxpayers time and money, to meet the needs of both industry and individuals, and to get rid of old, inefficient ways of doing business. We propose to do this by enabling digital delivery of some programs, while leveraging partnerships across government to deliver services more efficiently, and by embracing new, advanced technologies to keep Ontario open for business. For example, we’ll reduce the burden on the short-line railway industry through amendments to better monitor safety performance.

We’re also proposing to eliminate the inefficient, outdated Enhanced Driver’s Licence program because today we have more effective products with improved technology, providing greater flexibility for land, water and air travel: NEXUS, ePassport and FAST programs. In proposing this, we’ll also reduce government costs and cut off a potential deficit in 2021-22.

We’d also amend the vehicle weights and dimensions regulation to allow for the use of advanced technology like wide-based single tires, and the benefits of reduced fuel consumption, lower emissions and improved industry productivity.

We’ll also make it easier for charter buses to travel in Ontario through amendments that would align with requirements under the International Registration Plan, as well as make it easier for small commercial trucks travelling from the United States.

We’re also proposing to make life easier and expand consumer choice by exempting people with personal-use pickups from burdensome annual inspections and updating requirements for off-road vehicles. I might add that my office is usually inundated with phone calls from frustrated small business owners who drive small pickup trucks or cube vans. When the Ministry of Transportation used to come in, they would spread the word quickly and—guess what?—those people sometimes just wouldn’t go to work for fear that they would be ticketed for some very small, minor infraction. For example, having a broom not secured inside a cube van could, in fact, create a penalty for the owner.

Again, these changes are in response to requests from the sector to support the expansion of the off-road ATV tourism sector and industry in Ontario and allow motorcyclists to have high-styled handlebars. Back in my day, I had those high-styled handlebars. We called them butterfly handlebars. But I didn’t have motorcycles; I just had them on my two-wheeler.

We also want to improve customer service at car dealerships by launching a digital dealership registration project. This will allow businesses to apply for needed permits, plates and stickers online without having to attend at ServiceOntario. This would allow customers to drive away with their vehicles much sooner.

Speaker, I have so much to add to the debate this afternoon, but I’m just going cut to the chase. My bottom line here is that in addition to the benefits of putting more control in the hands of the province, rural and remote communities benefit from this province-wide approach as well, as we can also leverage the Ministry of Infrastructure’s agency, Infrastructure Ontario, alongside investments in rural housing and transit made by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, into modernization and transit for 405 smaller communities across Ontario. From infrastructure, there is the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, which will see \$10.2 billion spread across four streams, including public transit in rural and remote communities, while the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has given new funding this year to modernization and transit projects in 405 communities. My own riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington has received a total of \$1.5 million in that announcement—again, \$1.5 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington. He almost said “\$1.5 billion” for his riding, and I was going to be a little bit suspect when I’m in his neighbouring riding and I haven’t seen nearly that type of investment roll into Essex. But I will commend the member. He went through the bill quite extensively. There’s a lot in there. They’ve thrown as much, I think, as they could think of in there—the handlebars, the bill that is near and dear to the member’s heart,

the one that he introduced that was supported by all members. I do recall that bill. It had a lot of merit: one that I think parents and students and anybody concerned about student safety and school bus safety should see as having some merit.

Of course, New Democrats are concerned about the big-ticket item that is in that bill, the massive upload, \$28.5 billion for transit in Toronto. That raises some alarms back home, and I know the member knows that, because we aren't seeing nearly that investment where we need it back home. I would point to, pretty clearly, Highway 3—I've said it 7,000 times in this building. And the member knows; he shares half of that highway with me. I'm a little bit disappointed that he wasn't able to lobby the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Transportation for the money to get that thing done. He knows the importance of it. If you're actually going to get the people moving in Ontario, that's a vital link to the new Herb Gray Parkway and to the eventual border crossing at Detroit.

So you left a whole lot out, and it's funny, because when the Premier came to town, he said it was going to be done. He was committed to completing Highway 3 in the third and final phase—immediately. Immediately. That was the promise he made to our community.

Speaker, the folks back home in the coffee shops—and I'm hearing them every day—know that the Premier's word is not worth the paper it's written on these days because he isn't following through with any of the promises.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Calandra: At the outset, let me just congratulate the member for his passionate speech. He obviously touched on many of the things that he has worked on while he has been a member here, and it's obviously gratifying for him to see his hard work reflected in this bill.

More importantly, he also highlights some of the things that are very important to the people of southwestern Ontario, that he and the rest of the members of the Conservative caucus in southwestern Ontario have been fighting for. Improved safety on our roads is one of them, and we see that reflected not only in the budget, but in this bill as well. We saw it earlier when the Minister of Infrastructure joined with the Minister of Transportation to announce some massive improvements in the highway system in southwestern Ontario. That's because of the hard work of our members of Parliament on this side of the House and, of course, the Conservatives who join us on the other side of the House.

I also wanted to touch on a couple of things—I think we need to touch on the totality of the debate that we've heard today. We heard the member from Brampton North talk about the 407 and the tolls. What he forgot to tell the people of Ontario was that it was an NDP government that brought in tolls on the 407, just like the Liberals in this last government who brought in tolls on the 412. The only two parties to bring tolls to Ontarians are the NDP and the Liberals. And why? Because in both circumstances they

almost bankrupted the province and couldn't afford to continue the construction of a road, so they put tolls on it.

But when you look further down—you'll hear the members of the opposition, and particularly the NDP, talk about climate change. We had a debate earlier today about a climate change emergency. Here they have an opportunity to vote for a bill that will take hundreds of thousands of vehicles off our roads in the GTHA. Some five million people will have access to subways. They'll have access to better public transportation. They'll have access to better GO train service. And what's happening? The members opposite are going to vote against it. They're going to vote against it because they are proving today in this debate that they are nothing more than a protest party that could care less about getting the job done. That's why the people of Ontario put us on this side of the House, and that's why we will get the job done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

1910

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member. It's always fun debating in the afternoons and now the evenings.

I think that this legislation is just yet another example of Conservative legislative stinkery. I would like to discuss, actually, the 407, which was mentioned, because at the time it was sold rates per kilometre were seven cents a kilometre. Now, under private—mostly foreign—ownership, it's 50 cents in some stretches. Whatever happened to privatization improving things? When I think about how these maps are being drafted, I actually envision somewhere in the back of the Tory rooms, probably away from most of the caucus, developers are sitting there looking at where they own lands and saying, "You know where we would want a subway and what would maximize our profits the most?" I think this is how this government makes its policy moving forward. Look at the former Liberal transportation minister and all the trouble he got to with where he was placing GO stations.

I think if you want to understand the Tory transportation and transit plans, just follow the money. We're not going to be party to the conversations they are having at their golden spaghetti dinners with their ruby meatballs, but—but—we will soon find out. And I can tell you this: This is yet another example, this Bill 107 "stalling Ontario" legislation—we are seeing yet again more Toronto bashing. This upload is ridiculous. This is just about control, control, control, and that's what this government is about: control, controlling Toronto because the Premier couldn't be mayor. That's what this is about, and you see this time and time and time again—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: —with all of the legislation that comes forward. It's—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: —anyone living in Toronto. And we thank all those members that live outside Toronto for

visiting. It would be nice if you got out of the building every once in a while and listened to the people here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Stan Cho: It's an honour to rise here from mezzanine centre court, especially after the Raptors' win, to chat about a really awesome bill, Bill 107. The honourable member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington talked about some of the safety measures that are included in the bill and my colleague from Markham-Stouffville—happy birthday—rose to talk about some of the environmental benefits that this is going to have. But this is great for a lot of other reasons.

I remember studying for my 365 in 1993. I know a lot of members on both sides of the House probably weren't even born then, but the 365 talked about a lot of road safety measures, such as making sure that the left lane was reserved for faster traffic. This kept traffic flowing; this was good for commerce; this was good for safety. It's about time we caught up the speed limits to the 21st century and then followed some of the other jurisdictions around the world where we've proven that it's safe and it helps get traffic moving.

But I'm going to be selfish for a second and talk about Willowdale. It's the only neighbourhood that I know of in this entire country where two subway lines dead-end—dead-end—in that tiny little area. And it's so ridiculously overcrowded. There's been many a time, Madam Speaker, where I've had to take the subway north to Finch from Sheppard to get a seat to go down south during morning rush hour. This is the stuff that doesn't make sense. I referenced Albert Einstein before, the definition of insanity—I don't need a Boston Bruins reference—as doing the same thing again and again, expecting different results.

Well, what are we doing with the subway system here in Toronto, Madam Speaker? We've had decades upon decades and the map has barely grown. It's about time that we did something different, and that's what this government has the boldness to do, which is to say that it wasn't working before. We're going to get the city of Toronto moving because this is the economic engine, not just of Ontario but of the country, and we need to make sure that goods move, commerce continues. It's good for the province. It's good for Canada. Let's get it done. Bill 107 is awesome.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Essex, Markham-Stouffville, Humber River-Black Creek and, of course, Willowdale as well for their great comments and some of their insights and some of their lack of insights.

I have the highest regard for the member from Essex. He did talk about Highway 3 not being in the budget. We tried. But do you know what? We have to again remember that—I mean, wouldn't it be wonderful to have an NDP budget, where everybody gets everything all the time, every time? And where's that money going to come from?

We ended up with a \$15.1-billion deficit and we had to make some choices, in some cases tough choices. So it's not in this budget. Again let me emphasize: It's not in this budget.

We're also looking at some other options because there are great growth opportunities down in that Leamington area, as the member from Essex knows. Hopefully, we'll be able to come to—and I'd like to be able to include him in some of those discussions as well.

We talk about uploading and downloading and things of that nature. The NDP talk about privatization, and they talk about uploading and privatization. When the Liberals were in power, I agree—I agree with the NDP—that there was so much overrun, billions of dollars in overrun. That was because of Liberal mismanagement, financial mismanagement.

I understand that Mayor John Tory is upset about the fact that we're uploading. I'm not sure why he's upset about that. Maybe his name should be Mayor John Grits instead.

We also talk about the fact that the barriers are an important element and aspect of it, moving from four lanes to six lanes. It's absolutely critical, and with that cement barrier. But it's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take several years to have that completed.

Again, thank you very much for the time, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House tonight to speak to Bill 107. Transit is a critical issue in my downtown urban riding of Toronto Centre. It's an issue that affects many of my constituents, and they are really concerned that this government doesn't share their priorities for transit.

In my riding, while we are only seven square kilometres big, we're home to several subway stations, including Sherbourne, Wellesley, College, Dundas, Queen and King. They all fall within the boundary of my small but mighty riding. We're also home to several streetcar and bus routes. These are some of the key lines that keep our city moving. They move folks from other ridings into the economic engine of our province, here in the heart of downtown Toronto.

But Toronto Centre is predominantly a working-class riding, and it's one where many, many people are struggling to make ends meet. My riding is home to the highest concentration of community housing units in the city, and many of my constituents don't have the benefit of working in good-paying or stable jobs. In fact, many are bouncing around from contract to contract.

Almost every week, my community office hears from a constituent who is forced to choose between food or prescription medications or their transit fares. Our social system has been bled dry by Liberal neglect, and the current Conservative government certainly taking things from bad to worse in this province.

Last week I had a constituent who is a frequent visitor of my office. He came by to see if my staff could provide

him with a letter that suggested that his financial situation was too bad for him to be able to afford a transit fare. This is the kind of reality that we live in in our province: constituents who can't even afford the \$3.25 it takes to ride the bus or the subway.

Speaker, I come from that kind of poverty, where trying to find \$3 to get to where you need to go is heartbreakingly difficult.

When I was a university student, I attended the University of Guelph-Humber, which is located up in Rexdale, I believe, in the Premier's riding, if I'm not mistaken. I was working part-time while taking out OSAP loans, and living quite a distance off-campus because that was all that I could afford.

I was living in my first apartment by myself. It was a small, 400-square-foot bachelor apartment in the basement of a small walk-up at the 401 and Keele, which was about a 45-minute bus ride from campus along Wilson. My rent was only \$500 a month, but after tuition, rent, hydro and a very, very small amount on groceries—although I have to say I mostly relied on campus food banks—there certainly wasn't much left.

I remember that one year, my OSAP documents were quite late at the beginning of the winter semester. It was January, and we'd just had a substantial snowfall. I had to give my first presentation in one of my courses in the second week of classes, but my OSAP hadn't been processed and it hadn't been deposited into my bank account—which is, I'm sure, something that anyone who has ever taken out OSAP loans can commiserate with. So I woke up and it was a cold, snowy morning, with more than a foot of snow on the ground. I anxiously checked my bank account that morning and I didn't have, even then, the \$2.75 that I needed to get on a bus to get to campus and get to class that day. I couldn't miss my presentation—it would have hurt my grades—so I pulled my bicycle out, which wasn't tuned and certainly wasn't winter-worthy, and I tried to trudge my way to campus in a snowstorm on unplowed streets. When I showed up to class, soaked from the snow, shivering and exhausted, I certainly didn't perform as well as I knew I was able to.

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My OSAP arrived in my bank account later that afternoon. I remember trying to cram onto the packed Wilson bus home that evening with my bicycle in tow and tears in my eyes. I felt exhausted by both the bike ride and the depth of the poverty that I was living in. I was embarrassed. What woman in their right mind would haul a bicycle to campus in the middle of a snowstorm? I could feel eyes on me on the bus on the whole way home. When I got home, I curled up into bed and I cried.

Speaker, I can remember this story so vividly because I'll never forget how I felt that day—how little I felt, how incapable, how trapped, how much my life hinged on not having \$3 to my name to get on a bus. And so many of my constituents face those same challenges. They can't afford the rising costs of public transit. And what do they get for those rising costs? They certainly don't get a system that's well maintained or meets the demand that it faces.

Transit users are tired of waiting for late buses and squeezing into an overcrowded train from an equally overcrowded platform in rush hour. I know that sometimes in the morning or on the way back home it's impossible to actually get on the train because there simply isn't enough space. A member of my staff commutes by subway in the winter from the east end of Toronto here to Queen's Park. On any given day, her commute can be delayed on an overcrowded subway from 10 to 25 minutes. For folks coming from outside of the downtown core, those delays can add up quickly. It's unacceptable to not have a reliable, affordable and publicly funded system of transportation in a city the size of Toronto. Honestly, Speaker, it's embarrassing.

Interjections.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Members across the aisle—who I can tell aren't listening very patiently to me right now, as there is a lot of chatter going on in the room; it's a bit distracting.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): There are a lot of side conversations going on. It makes it very difficult for me to hear and for the person up speaking to concentrate. If you're going to have conversations, either turn your volume down, please, or take them outside the chamber. Thank you.

Back to the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker.

Members across the aisle who represent constituents in Etobicoke, Scarborough, Mississauga or other nearby municipalities should ask themselves whether their constituents deserve a system that truly works for them. But I can tell you, looking at Bill 107, that this is no way to go about the critical issues our constituents are facing with regard to transit. This government has little understanding of the fact that their actions will only cause further delays and more frustrations for commuters. If this hostile takeover of our transit commission carries on as intended, it will only delay fixing the root cause of the problem.

Here's an email I received from a constituent named Kim. It reads:

"I wish to add my name to the list of those completely opposed to any interference by the Premier and the province in the transit plans for Toronto now well under way."

"I think we remember well what happened when the former mayor of Toronto tried to alter the transit plans. The city has planned and is working on the current expansion of the TTC. Any disruption now will be extremely costly. Not just the money but time to revise plans and start over."

"We have been through that once. No more."

Another email from a constituent named Heather, who says:

"The cuts you have been making across Ontario are despicable and are having a hugely negative impact on millions of people, 'the people' you claim to be 'for.' Do better. Be better."

"I am writing to urge you to vote against legislation that uploads any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of any part

of the TTC. A fragmented transit system will mean higher fares, less accountability, and worse service. We can't afford more delays to new transit lines. The best way to deliver better transit is to fairly fund it, not break it apart."

Interjections.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Again, Speaker, I'm having a really hard time hearing myself because of all of the chatter in the room.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please.

I would agree with the member, whether the Minister of Education does or not. I just asked everybody to keep the side conservations to a minimum. I'm having difficulty hearing the speaker. If you want to have a conversation, please take it outside the chamber. Thank you.

Back to the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker.

My office has received hundreds of similar emails. They are aptly titled, "Don't Steal our Subway," "The TTC Belongs to Toronto" and "Hands Off Our Transit," among others.

This government is dragging transit back by decades by ripping apart existing plans and starting over, wasting millions of dollars in the process. Because let's be clear: This Conservative government is spending a lot of money. They're just not spending it on what matters most to the people of Ontario. They are cutting taxes for the wealthiest among us while cutting services, like transit, that everyday Ontarians rely on.

In line with their provincial budget for this fiscal year, they make a number of cuts similar to the transit cuts that affect some of the most vulnerable sectors in our province, whether that's the 30% cut to legal aid; the billion dollars that's coming out of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; the education cuts that are leaving hundreds of teachers and education workers laid off across the province; or the cuts to our health care system that are being funded to less than the rate of inflation.

Whether we're looking at cuts in transit, health care, education or services for children with autism, there seems to be no hesitation on the part of this government to balance the books on the backs of the most vulnerable folks in our province: on the backs of Indigenous people, women, Black and racialized folks and children. I have heard from many constituents about these and other cuts that have them losing sleep at night.

Yet I find it curious that in these times of self-imposed austerity the government is not hesitating to throw out years of transit plans and waste millions of dollars on this scheme. Speaker, it seems this government does not have its priorities straight. Instead of investing in health care, education, social services or legal representation for marginalized folks or, frankly, transit, it's choosing to waste millions of dollars reinventing the wheel. This bill also concerns me because it does nothing to address the long-standing accessibility issues in our transit system, something that requires a substantial investment in capital infrastructure for existing stations and transit lines.

Speaker, I grew up right here in downtown Toronto, and we never had a car growing up, largely because my mom has been in a wheelchair since I was 16. When my mom got her wheelchair, her whole world opened up. All of a sudden, we could go on long walks together; we could go window shopping through the Eaton Centre; we could come here—many times, we'd have picnics on the back lawns here at Queen's Park—and so many other adventures that weren't possible when her mobility had been so limited. But one thing that didn't get easier was transit. At the time—and I have to say it's not much better today—only a handful of stations on the subway line had elevators. While we were lucky enough to have our home station, Yonge and Bloor, have full accessibility, any time the hydraulic lift elevator that took us from the eastbound platform up to street level broke—which was often, because, I have to say, for folks who don't know this, hydraulic lifts aren't the same as elevators. The hydraulics can overheat when they're overused. When able-bodied folks choose to use the hydraulic lift that's right beside the escalator, the lifts overheat and then become out of service for the folks that actually need them.

The alternate accessibility route, which was posted on a sign, actually, right next to the elevator, told us how to get around the issue when the elevator was down, which was often. So what we had to do was, we had to get back on an eastbound train, go all the way from Yonge and Bloor out to Main Street station in the east end of the city and use the elevators there to transfer to the westbound platform, take that train all the way back to Yonge and Bloor and use the elevator on the westbound platform to take that elevator up to street level at the corner of Yonge and Bloor, where our apartment was. This whole adventure would usually take about an hour.

Don't even get me started on the damage that my mom's wheelchair would take when she had to jump the gap between the platform and the train itself. I remember watching in horror one day when the train operator started closing the door while my mom's front wheel was stuck in the gap between the train and the platform, but the platform was so overcrowded, the operator couldn't see far enough down that she was trapped. It was a truly terrifying moment. This was 15 years ago, Speaker, and things have only gotten worse, and in so, so many ways.

The contents of this bill concern a lot of people, not just myself, not just my mom; they concern transit activists, specialists and journalists who have made it their life's work to care for and advocate for public transit. I have a quote here from a Toronto Star article from April. It reads:

"The TTC subway carries about 215 million passengers annually, compared to roughly 60 million on Metrolinx's GO Transit rail network. Given the disparity between the size of the two agencies, the city manager said Metrolinx taking over the TTC subway network would be akin to 'the tail wagging the dog.'

"TTC and city staff have been working for years, in some cases in co-operation with Metrolinx, to advance planning and design for projects such as the Scarborough subway extension and relief line."

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The membership-driven group TTCriders goes on further to say, “The TTC belongs to us. We paid for it, we own it. If” the Premier “wants to fix our overcrowded transit system and make it more affordable, the province needs to provide a dedicated operating subsidy to the TTC, not break it apart. Breaking apart the TTC could create a two-tier system with premium subway rides and everyone else stuck on slow, overcrowded buses.”

Again, from a more detailed op-ed in the Star: “History teaches us that provincial government ‘uploads’ and ‘downloads’ are unlikely to benefit cities. Instead, the province takes the positive elements of the exchange for itself and leaves the city worse off than before. This happens even after task forces and municipal briefs and public meetings where advocates warn specifically of such outcomes.

“Who can forget that the last time” the “Conservative Party ruled Ontario, they dumped thousands of broken-down social housing units on Toronto, added welfare payment costs to the city and cut transit subsidies. All the time, they claimed it was good for us....

“Worse, history suggests Toronto will get shafted, the Premier’s motivations are not pure, and two decades hence commuters will be worse off than they are today—even with new transit lines....

“We’ve lost our politicians; the trains are not far behind. Only fools should applaud the destroying angel.”

There is so much to be concerned about in the bill that is in front of us. In schedule 3 in the subway upload, it amends the Metrolinx Act to allow for a rapid transit project to be prescribed that is not only the sole responsibility of Metrolinx, but prohibits the city of Toronto or the TTC from doing any work on that project. Projects may be prescribed in which the design, development or construction could entirely be up to the minister. Some of Toronto’s or the TTC’s assets could be transferred to the province, which, of course, could potentially include land for new development and possibly even existing stations.

The silence on the scope of this change is deafening. It could mean that this government could seize any existing TTC asset and upload it to the province, not to mention that provisions within this legislation include the ability of Metrolinx to privatize operations and maintenance of the TTC. All of this can happen with or without compensation to the city of Toronto.

Speaker, let’s call a spade a spade. This bill is a hostile takeover of Toronto’s public transit. Could you imagine for a second if someone could swoop in, take over years of work, and millions of dollars that were spent on that work, take over all the operations and the profit, and just start from zero, from nothing?

My husband is currently working on his post-doctoral research just down the street at SickKids. He frequently tells me about the research that he does in the lab, and the amount of time and money and resources it takes just to prove or disprove a small theory. Reasonably, scientists frequently borrow from each other, and cite and reference each other’s work. I can’t imagine if someone’s thesis

supervisor could just take over someone else’s work, get all the credit for it, and throw out years of labour that happened in the process. With this kind of approach, modern science and modern medicine would never have made the sorts of leaps that they have.

Throwing the baby out with the bathwater is not the right approach to building transit in our city or in this province. It looks like step 1 in a plan to hand over pieces of our subway system to private corporations and developers. The privatization of our public transit system will undoubtedly be a disaster for the city and for the province, just the way it was for the Liberals with Hydro One.

The experts, many of whom I quoted in earlier articles—I’m talking about the city staff, the TTC staff, the architects, the city councillors, the reporters, the transit riders and the transit advocates—are being squarely ignored by this government and by the Premier.

Last Friday, I had an opportunity to join transit riders and activists at the Wellesley subway station to speak to my constituents about this proposed legislation and its impact on their daily lives. I can tell you, Speaker, that people are concerned and they’re scared about the impact that this upload will have on them and their commute times.

At Wellesley station, the flow of people is never-ending, and it’s actually quite overwhelming. I was there on a rainy day at 8 o’clock in the morning, and even that did not slow down the constant stream of people. I shudder to think how all those people would be affected if the government delays the city of Toronto’s ability to plan their own transit projects.

The Relief Line in downtown Toronto is not optional. It’s a ticking deadline that requires us to act. And I’ll tell you, Speaker, that it should have been built a decade ago. When I canvass in the Corktown neighbourhood, the biggest issue that comes up at the doors is the downtown Relief Line. My constituents want access to transit in this rapidly developing neighbourhood, and they want it yesterday.

But let me be clear: The TTC belongs to Toronto—to the people who built it, who pay for it and who use it every single day—not to the Premier, who seems to have a personal vendetta against the city of Toronto, specifically for rejecting him when he ran for mayor. Because, quite frankly, why else would he have cut our city council in half? Why would he be coming after Toronto’s transit specifically and no other municipality’s? Why is Toronto facing the brunt of the public health cuts in this province, the way no other municipality is being asked to do?

To the Premier: You are the Premier of Ontario, not the king of Toronto. We didn’t vote for you, and we don’t want you meddling in our transit. Instead of throwing out plans and dooming the city of Toronto to years and years of delays, the government should be investing and making transit more affordable and more reliable now. And as I said when I told the story of my mom’s accessibility issues on transit, that includes needing to admit that we need substantial capital investments in our existing transit to address accessibility issues. It is not okay that people with

disabilities in this city, in 2019, cannot access our transit systems the way that everyone else in this province can.

So I'm asking the members opposite to do better, come back to the table with better investments that don't just punish Toronto because your leader, the Premier and the leader of the Conservative Party, has a personal vendetta against our city and our residents.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Roman Baber: I've been listening to the member from Toronto Centre. At this point, I'm going to have to ask her, respectfully, during her reply to consider withdrawing some of the contentions she has made during the debate.

First of all, when she says that the province is taking over the TTC subway network, that is absolutely not true. Please read the bill. The bill is very clear: We're not taking over any existing subways. Instead, what we're doing is assuming responsibility for new subway construction. That is it. Is it too much to ask for clarity and to avoid the temptation to not call it—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please.

I'm going to ask the Minister of Education to withdraw.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I didn't say anything.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask the member from Essex to come to order, please.

Okay. I heard an unparliamentary comment from one of the female members from the government side of the House. If it was not the Minister of Education, I will give the other member an opportunity to stand and withdraw. It's unfortunate that somebody will not stand up and take responsibility for what I heard.

I apologize. Back to the member for York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: We're assuming responsibility for new subway construction and nothing else, so please stop saying that we're taking over or we're stealing Toronto subways. That is, frankly, not accurate.

Second of all, when you say that we're going to put construction decades behind, that is just an outlandish proposition. The whole premise for the responsibility for new subway construction being taken over by the province is to enable speedy subway construction. For instance, if you have issues like easements or you have utilities that you've got to move, instead of multiple levels of government talking to each other, trying to work it through—like we've been doing with previous subway construction, which the city hasn't seen in decades—the province is able to manoeuvre through those issues quickly. So, on the contrary, we're going to expedite subway construction to levels that, previously, the province hasn't seen.

Finally, we haven't seen any serious subway construction in this city—

Interjection: For decades.

Mr. Roman Baber: —for decades. City council went back on the Scarborough subway 10 times already. Enough is enough.

Interjection.

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm sorry?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Through the Chair, please.

Mr. Roman Baber: I think we're at the point now where all of us agree that subways need to be built, and we're actually going to build it.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the thoughtful comments from the member from Toronto Centre. In the din of this space, I think that some of her unique perspective and points may have been missed. I'm glad that they are on the record for people to refer to, because I think it's important for us to recognize that transit in a community is part of the lived experience of that community. It isn't just a means to get from point A to point B. It can be, as we've heard, a significant struggle. And you can't get from point A to point B if it isn't maintained, if it isn't appropriately planned. To hear the stories of challenges when it comes to accessibility from 15 years ago—we look at it now and I don't know that we would argue that it has changed much.

The government is creating this picture for all of us of how rosy it's going to be once the government has the TTC and can make all of these new decisions. Seeing as how this is a foregone conclusion, I hope that we do see some kind of improvements moving forward.

The member from York Centre made the comments that we're painting a picture that it's not just new transportation, new transit. Okay. So the section in the bill where it says "with respect to a rapid transit project prescribed as Metrolinx's sole responsibility"—we're not clear on what "with respect to" means. What limitations does that place on it? You can say "new," but what constitutes new? How is that going to be defined? I don't know if I would agree with your definition. So make sure that it's clear that if you tweak existing projects, that doesn't make them new again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I listened intently to the member opposite. She spoke in detail about the affordability of travelling on public transit. I agree that the only way we can encourage people to get out of their cars is to have a world-class, affordable public transit system. By uploading new transit to the province, that allows us to do just that. We will get subways built. We will hold those who are constructing any form of transit accountable so that it is constructed on time and on budget.

Although a world-class transit system is important, not everyone can use transit. That's why our government is working to ensure that our roads and our highways are also safe.

When we learn to drive, part of the G1 licensing is to understand that the left lane is to be used to overtake other vehicles. That's not what is currently happening. Bill 107 states this fact clearly, and we will impose tougher penalties for those driving too slow in the left-hand lane.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all parties to support this bill. Let's get Ontario moving.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Toronto Centre for your insightful and thoughtful comments about the impact of this legislation on transit riders.

I am concerned about what is going to happen when or if the provincial government moves forward with taking over aspects of the TTC. I am concerned about what will happen when the Ford government gets to decide how, when, and what kind of transit gets built without properly consulting with all levels of government and Torontonians.

I do see the member for York Centre's point. What concerns me is that there are aspects of the legislation that make the definition of what will be uploaded unclear, and I encourage this government to introduce amendments to clarify that it is just about new transit projects.

I am also concerned about the use of the word "interim" in this legislation because it does imply—and it has been made clear by the Minister of Transportation—that this is just stage 1 in a plan to upload other aspects of the TTC. So I think it is genuine to say that we are concerned about the provincial government taking over the TTC even though it is the city of Toronto who built the TTC and it's Toronto taxpayers and transit riders who currently pay for the TTC, and in this legislation there is no requirement to pay any kind of compensation to Toronto for taking what are essentially our assets. So I do have some concerns about that.

I also have some genuine concerns about the provincial government and Metrolinx's track record in building transit, especially when it is done through using P3 projects. I do encourage you to take a good, hard look at the kind of projects that have been built and the cost overruns that have been associated with that, especially with the Eglinton Crosstown line and the disaster, quite frankly, that is Presto. They are two examples of the provincial government thinking that they knew best when it comes to transit in this city.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I urge you to reconsider that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Etobicoke Centre will come to order.

Back to the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the members from Oshawa and University–Rosedale for your thoughtful comments, as well as the members from York Centre and Mississauga–Streetsville.

This government has a poorly-thought-out plan for transit that will drag us backwards by decades and disadvantage Torontonians. While many have said that *Avengers: Infinity War* was the greatest crossover event in history, I might suggest that the Premier thinking that he can meddle in Toronto affairs is in fact more significant. Just like Thanos when he gathered the Infinity Stones in order to pursue his ideologically driven agenda to cut the

population of the universe in half, this summer the Premier snapped his fingers and all of a sudden the city of Toronto council disintegrated right in the middle of an election campaign. That was the beginning of what feels like a personal attack on the city of Toronto and its residents.

This transit bill feels like a continuation of that, exactly that: a poorly-thought-out and even worse planned hostile takeover of the TTC and the Toronto subways. This bill not only allows the government to take over and upload critical infrastructure pieces and projects from the TTC to Metrolinx with significant discretion to the minister, but it also opens up the door to privatization and the complete demise of our public transit system. From the experts in planning to the reporters who investigate news about the city to local city councillors and regular Torontonians, folks everywhere are concerned about this bill—and, frankly, Speaker, so am I. Torontonians deserve real investments and a provincial government that cares about them and shares their priorities, not one that's looking to specifically target a city that rejected this Premier for the office of mayor and instead makes cuts left, right and centre to the services that we need most. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Brantford–Brant this evening.

Today I have the honour to speak on the Getting Ontario Moving Act in this Legislature. I would like to thank the Minister of Transportation and his entire team for introducing this comprehensive bill for the people. The act includes measures to cut red tape and burdensome regulations, save businesses and taxpayers time and money, and help keep Ontario's roads among the safest in North America.

Our government is making life easier for people and businesses in the province by delivering simpler, faster and better government services. In less than a year, we have accomplished many great things for the people of Ontario. The bills and acts we have presented in this Legislature are a reflection of our promise: our promise to protect Ontarians and to get this province back on track. We want to continue to provide Ontarians with what they need, and we are doing this again through Bill 107. The Getting Ontario Moving Act will keep our roads safe and protect front-line workers, schoolchildren, motorcyclists and, ultimately, the great people of this province. The title of this bill speaks for itself. It will get Ontario moving in the right direction. This comprehensive piece of legislation will positively impact many individuals, local businesses and job creators in our province.

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Madam Speaker, many constituents in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville have raised their concerns about road safety. I'm proud to tell them that their government is listening. We are listening to the people. This bill is a stepping stone to ensuring safety for all.

Our government for the people is proposing legislative and regulatory amendments that would upload authority

for new subway projects to the province, cut red tape for our province's job creators, help make sure that Ontario's roads remain among the safest in North America, and find efficiencies within government to save taxpayer dollars so that the people of Ontario can keep more of their hard-earned tax dollars.

I know first-hand that we need to fix the issue at hand, and we can do this through Bill 107. One of the big things in this bill is uploading authority for new subway projects to the province. The people of Ontario have waited long enough for transit improvements and investments. I know that this may be an issue that does not affect everyone, but it is a big one for the GTHA. For this, we are amending the Metrolinx Act to upload responsibility for new subway projects from the city of Toronto to the province. This would mean new subways are built faster and on time for the people of Ontario. This will benefit so many, including my constituents who rely on our transit system and the subway to go where they need to.

Not to be a broken record, but I want to mention that we are cutting red tape. Our promise to reduce regulatory burdens to keep Ontario open for business plays a role in this great legislation.

Bill 107 provides the people of Ontario with greater choice. I remember, on a lobby day here at Queen's Park, there was a day when motorcyclists came with a few asks. One of the asks was for changing motorcycle handlebar height restrictions to allow for high-style handlebars. The other was to allow them to use high-occupancy vehicle, HOV, lanes. Guess what, Madam Speaker? We have listened to them. This bill is a reflection of our commitment to the people, and proves that we are listening to the people of Ontario. We are protecting single-occupant motorcycles by allowing them to use HOV lanes, a much safer part of the road for them.

Through this bill, we are amending the vehicle weights and dimensions regulation to allow for the use of advanced technologies, such as wide-base single tires. This will harmonize our rules with other jurisdictions to improve industry productivity, reduce fuel consumption and improve road safety, demonstrating that Ontario is open for business.

We are making life easier for people with personal-use pickup trucks and trailers by changing regulations to exempt them from burdensome annual inspections.

We are reducing the burden on the short-line railway industry through amendments to ensure better management and performance.

The most crucial part of this bill is how we are increasing the safety of every person who uses our roads, highways and bridges. That includes everyone. As a father of school-going children, I believe that no parent should have to worry about the safety of their children getting to and from school. There have been times when I've heard of horrific stories about drivers disobeying the law and not stopping when school buses are stopped and are loading and unloading children. To prevent this, and to protect our children, our government is giving municipalities the tools they need to target drivers who improperly pass a school

bus. We are keeping our children safe by allowing a new administrative monetary penalty framework that gives municipalities the tools they need to target drivers who blow by school buses and threaten the safety of children crossing roads on their way to school or home.

Through this bill, we will keep slow drivers out of the left-hand lane by improving the flow of traffic and enhancing road safety on our highways by introducing tougher penalties for driving slowly—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): No. I'm standing to remind all members that there is a debate happening and that the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville still does have the floor. I can't focus on him with all of the conversations on both sides of the House.

I will return to the member, with my apologies.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker—by improving the flow of traffic and enhancing road safety on our highways by introducing tougher penalties for driving slowly in the left-hand lane. One of the proposed changes in the act is to increase fines for slow-moving drivers that travel in the left-hand lane.

We are cutting down on the total number of lane changes passing cars need to do, while eliminating slowdowns and collisions. It is a big issue that can be seen on the roads. More specifically, on the highways, drivers are not understanding that left-hand lanes on the highways are meant for passing. I see this first-hand on the QEW-Gardiner Expressway when I'm driving to Queen's Park. Not only does this issue cause frustration on the road, but it can lead to aggressive driving, which is another safety issue in its own right.

If all the slow drivers were to keep in the right lane, then a faster driver could pass several of them at once instead of trying to do it by weaving through traffic at a higher speed. We are reducing the chance of accidents and improving overall road safety.

We are committed to road safety and we believe that our province's driving instructors, the ones who teach the rules of the road to our children, should set the best example for our new drivers. Our government is introducing a new offence for any driving instructor who violates a zero blood alcohol or drug presence requirement. Our instructors will reaffirm that alcohol, drugs and illegal substances never mix while driving.

The safety of our province's highways is the number one priority of our government, and our roads, highways and bridges must allow traffic to move efficiently so that we can get to work faster, to home sooner, and to family and friends quicker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Now I recognize the member from Brantford-Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House, and especially on this great bill to get Ontario moving again. I would like to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville. His continuous advocacy for his constituents, the fact that he has young children and that he cares about what happens in Ontario and their

future is just something that drives me and helps me to do better here in the House.

As I said, it's an honour to rise and speak about our government's plan to improve our province's transit and transportation network. This bill, the Getting Ontario Moving Act, will do just that. It will get millions of Ontarians moving, and not only that, but it will do so in a responsible way that respects the taxpayer to ensure that we get the most value out of each dollar spent.

These improvements will benefit everyone in Ontario. It will make our roads safer, will boost our economy and support our job-creating businesses. It will cut burdensome red tape that weighs down consumers, families and businesses. It will strengthen public transit, paving the way for a truly integrated regional transportation system.

Every one of the measures contained in this bill will serve to realize a vision of a connected province, one in which families can safely travel, in which goods and services can be transported freely, and in which the people of Ontario can be confident in having a modern transportation network. Our government was elected to make life easier for every Ontarian. This bill, if passed, will do just that. It will make life easier, more convenient and more connected.

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Madam Speaker, when we came into office last June, our government made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would make life more affordable but also more comfortable. This is exactly what we are doing with this bill. It will streamline the way that government does business, eliminate burdensome and duplicative red tape, and modernize transportation service delivery across the government.

The way that businesses and industry interact with the Ministry of Transportation is old and out of date. This bill will change that. By simplifying and streamlining interactions with the ministry, it will ensure that the MTO operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. This will save money, it will reduce administrative costs and it will modernize service delivery. These changes will be to the benefit of everyone, from individuals and their families to small businesses and all the way up to large firms and industry.

In addition to modernizing the current, out-of-date system of administration, this bill includes a number of red-tape measures that will make life easier and more convenient.

We will be amending the Highway Traffic Act such that it is in alignment with the requirements under the International Registration Plan. This will allow for easier travel for small commercial vehicles coming from the United States, as well as charter bus travel in Ontario.

We will simplify and streamline the rules surrounding off-road vehicles by allowing them on municipal roads, should those municipalities choose.

We will eliminate burdensome and unnecessary annual inspections of personal-use pickup trucks, as well as allow for motorcycles with high-styled handlebars. It sounds silly, but this is what people want, and what the consumers

want, in the province of Ontario, and those are simple steps that we're taking. Each of these actions will directly benefit consumers, by allowing them more freedom of choice, as well as job creators, especially those in the tourism industry.

In addition to all of this, we will amend the vehicle weights and dimensions regulation to permit technologies such as wide-base single tires. We see them on the roads today, and they actually take a lot less fuel. These advanced technologies have numerous benefits, such as reduced emissions and reduced fuel consumption, and will encourage industry productivity.

These proposed changes clearly show that we are listening to and supporting the job-creating businesses of Ontario. Since coming into office, we have made a commitment to support job creators and small business. You know what, Madam Speaker? We are doing just that. This is just one more way in which we are making Ontario open for business and open for jobs.

As I have just said, we will be modernizing service delivery, cutting burdensome red tape and increasing consumer choice. This is crucial as we move to create an environment in which job-creating businesses can grow, and in which the people of Ontario and their families can thrive.

But to create a truly modern and integrated transportation system—in other words, to get Ontario moving—we must address the issue of safety on our roads.

Every day, Ontarians use our roads to drive to work, to go to school, or to bring their kids to their soccer game or hockey game, and it's our responsibility to ensure that Ontario's roads are the safest that they can be. Our roads are already among the safest on the continent, but we must ensure that safety remains a top priority.

That is what the Getting Ontario Moving Act, if passed, will do. It will improve the safety of every single person who uses Ontario roads, highways and bridges. These actions will improve the safety for those who drive on the roads but also for those who work alongside them, such as the police officers, the paramedics, the maintenance workers, the tow truck drivers and operators, and many more who are especially vulnerable as they go about their important work. This will be done by enhancing applicable penalties for dangerous and careless drivers who put these recovery workers at risk. This is the responsible thing to do, and we will continue to support our front-line workers in every possible way.

Dangerous and careless drivers are an ever-present hazard on our roads, as I just stated. They threaten those who work alongside our roads, but they also threaten people going to and from work, and children as they go to and from school. It is crucial that we take steps to address this hazard as we work to make Ontario's transportation network one of the best and safest in the world—which it already is, but we're going to make it better.

That is why we are introducing a new administrative monetary penalty framework to keep our children safe as they go to and from school. It will give municipalities new tools to target drivers who illegally pass school buses and

needlessly put lives at risk. I know we've talked about that already this afternoon. The new framework will reduce the cost to put into place a school bus camera system. This will, firstly, improve the safety on our roads by allowing for video targeting of those who blow by school buses illegally. Secondly, it will allow municipalities, in partnership with school bus operators, to leverage the fines generated to further expand the use of school bus cameras. It's a win-win situation in every respect. The safety of our communities will be improved. Municipalities and school bus operators will have the tools and funds needed to add more school bus cameras. And dangerous drivers will be caught and dissuaded from passing by school buses and putting lives in harm's way.

Speaker, in addition to all of this, we will be working to improve the safety of our youngest and most inexperienced drivers by holding their driving instructors to the highest standards. This bill, if passed, will require driving instructors to have a zero blood alcohol and drug concentration. Not only will this give Ontario's novice drivers an extra layer of safety, but it is a message to them that it is never okay to drive while under the influence and that it will not be tolerated in the province of Ontario. Driving instructors are there to guide and teach but also to be an example. That is why we are creating a new offence for driving instructors who violate the requirement to have a zero blood alcohol and drug concentration.

We will also be taking action to improve the safety and improve the flow of traffic on our highways. Highways are a vital component of our economy and are critical to the well-being of our province. In fact, the highway network underlies and supports much of the prosperity in Ontario. Families and businesses use it every day to move people, to move goods, to move services to their destinations. But as our province and its economy have grown, we've also seen corresponding pressures being put on our highway network. We see this through increasing gridlock, congestion and accidents. We must take steps to ensure that Ontario's highway system, the lifeblood of our economy, is safe and uncongested, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Madam Speaker, I have a lot more paper here, and I could go through a whole lot more, but I just want to finish up.

We are taking steps to build a smart, integrated and interconnected transportation and transit network, one that encourages business growth, reduces congestion, links communities and gets people where they need to go. This is a bill that I think everyone can support because everyone will benefit.

Speaking as someone who uses public transit almost every single day, I am excited to see what these investments will bring. They will improve the quality of life for so many people in this province and will bring our transit network into the 21st century.

In conclusion, the Getting Ontario Moving Act will do just that: It will get Ontario moving. By cutting red tape, we are decreasing the burden on consumers, families and job creators. We will improve the safety of the roads for

our children going to school, for novice drivers, for recovery workers and for all Ontarians. We'll improve traffic flow. And as we move forward into the 21st century, having a modern and interconnected transportation network will be—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I do believe history teaches us a lot of lessons. I've been around the park a couple of times—

Hon. Bill Walker: Four.

Mr. Paul Miller: Four times—and if I recall, if you really want to modernize transit and save the environment, you might want to think about getting rid of diesel trains and replacing them with high-speed electric trains in the GTA and beyond. It helps the environment. It's more efficient. If you look at Europe, if you look at Japan, if you look at the high-speed rail and how successful it has been—and they travel at 170 or 180 kilometres an hour—very successful and very few accidents. They have a wonderful, modernized transit system there.

If I recall, the Conservatives did fill in the Eglinton line because it was going to cost too much at the time and they wanted to save money and look good, like they do now. It was a bad mistake. Now we're going to pay 15 times more.

Increasing speed limits: One of the areas where you're increasing the speed limit just happens to be running through my riding. You're going to increase it to 110 kilometres per hour. We have a number of accidents there now. So I would assume—at 110, usually people go 120 now, so if you raise it from 100—they go 120 now on the QEW on a regular basis, and some go 130. I've seen guys go by me at 140. So I'm assuming you're going to go at least 125 or 130 now, if you raise it to 110. I think you're going to have a rash of fatalities in my area because of that, especially in the winter. A lot of people aren't the best drivers in the world, and sometimes things happen, so be prepared for a lot of outcry about the fatalities.

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I could go on for hours about the bad investments. The Skyway Bridge: When they should have twinned the Skyway Bridge, under a Conservative government, they didn't. They put one up. It cost us 20 times more to twin the Skyway Bridge. I remember that, back in the 1960s.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Still thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to speak here tonight. Congratulations to the members from Mississauga East—Cooksville and Brantford—Brant. I think they summed it up very well.

There's a lot to talk about in this bill. I would certainly like to highlight a few of the key points, and the first is public transportation.

Toronto is a world-class city. I think we all agree with that. We have an incredible city here; it's a world-class city. If you take the subway of this city and you compare

it to London, Paris and Tokyo, it's a joke. We're so far behind these other world-class cities. If we're going to be in the league of world-class cities, we need to have a proper transportation network. Nothing has happened in decades in transportation. Finally, with Bill 107, we're taking some action.

I take the subway every day; I take the GO train and the subway. I can tell you that the number of people cramming on those subway cars today is unacceptable. We need to get some relief lines built.

I might also add that I find that some of the Toronto people tend to be very arrogant in terms of thinking that it's only Toronto people that should have a say in terms of the subways. Most of the people, or many of the people, on the subways are actually from outside of Toronto. I think we need to be aware of that. Toronto is a world-class city. It attracts people, suburban people, people from outside of Toronto.

For transportation, we're certainly making some progress.

In terms of the environment, I can tell you I'm a little surprised that the NDP wouldn't support this particular bill. I know we had a climate emergency debate today which talked about the environment and the climate emergency, and they're not voting in favour of this bill. I can tell you, this bill here is going to help—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry. Stop the clock. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the member from Etobicoke Centre: We're in the middle of questions and comments.

Please, let's continue. I apologize for interrupting the member.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: If the NDP really cared about the environment—and I think you do—I think you should be supporting this bill. This is going to take so many cars off the road. You wouldn't believe how many cars this is going to take off.

I think you'd better reconsider your position on this bill and understand that a lot of people support it. Come on board and join us, because I can tell you that the majority of the population are with us on this. I hope you'll join us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I listened very carefully to some of the comments that were made about the road safety aspects of this bill. I do want to suggest three additional concerns and amendments that I do encourage this government to move forward on.

The first one is changing the rules to make it easier to install cameras on school buses and to more properly enforce that. I do encourage you to allocate funding to that. Many school bus companies have a lot of difficulty paying their workers minimum wage, and they're really struggling to keep those margins, so allocating funding to that would make a lot of sense.

I also encourage you to expand that and consider looking at allowing cameras on TTC vehicles, or other

vehicles in other transit agencies if the municipality also wants to move forward on them.

The second piece is around photo radar. Many residents' associations, school boards and parents have approached me, asking me to ask you to do the final thing that you need to do to allow municipalities to move forward on photo radar, so that when drivers are speeding by a school zone or a community zone, there is proper enforcement there so we can keep our kids safe. That really is important, and I do encourage you to look at that. It is a non-partisan issue.

Finally, I do want to commend the government for expanding the definition of "vulnerable road user" to include road workers. An element of this that I would like you to further expand is to have tougher penalties for drivers who are breaking the law when they injure or kill a vulnerable road user, and that could include a paramedic or a road worker. That would mean requiring them to go to court to hear a victim impact statement and requiring them to reapply for their driver's licence and do a re-education course.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member from Brantford-Brant and the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for walking us through some of the great measures that are in this bill. As a member from Durham—outside the Toronto area—the safety measures are an aspect of this bill that really apply to the whole province, so I'm really proud, as the member for Durham, to support those measures.

But I must say, on this narrative of waiting decades for transit to be built, I can relate a lot to the member from Etobicoke Centre when she talks about waiting for subways to be built for decades. I can relate a lot to the people of Scarborough, who have been waiting for decades for a subway station to be built there.

In Durham, we've been waiting for decades for the GO train to come to Bowmanville. They were talking about the GO train to Bowmanville when the federal member for Durham, Erin O'Toole, was in high school. He now has a daughter who's almost in high school and we're still talking about getting the GO train to Bowmanville.

I think all over this province, we're sick of all the talk, all the empty announcements and no action. This bill is about getting transit built, and getting transit built in our mandate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, the member from Oakville, the member from Durham and the member from University-Rosedale for their comments and feedback.

I agree with my colleague from Durham region that it's all talk in the past, that we're going to be building subways, that this is the plan and that's the plan, but in reality, nothing has happened so far. What our government

is doing is: No talk; let's just do it. Do it and just make it happen. That's what our government is doing.

The member from Oakville mentioned climate, how we're talking about climate change and everything. Well, this plan is all about that, where we are saying, let's be part of this bill. Let's approve this bill. Let's pass this bill so that more subways can be built, and then when we talk about climate and everything, the solution is right here in Bill 107.

It is very unfortunate that we know our respected members from the opposite side are not going to be supporting this bill, but when we talk about climate, Bill 107 is right there: more subways, less cars on the road. And you know what? Climate, here we go.

I know the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek talked about Europe and electric stuff. Well, you know what? I think with our plan, we are definitely going to beat Europe pretty soon. So just—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Bill Walker: No further debate, Madam Speaker.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day.

MORE HOMES, MORE CHOICE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR PLUS DE LOGEMENTS ET PLUS DE CHOIX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing, other development and various other matters / Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement, les autres aménagements et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: It's a real pleasure for me to be here tonight to debate Bill 108. I'm happy to be here because I will be talking about different aspects of the bill and, more importantly, identifying aspects of it of which I approve and for which I will support the government, others where I have some suggestions for improvement and, finally, where I raise some concerns.

I will speak about three aspects of the bill: first, the changes to the planning process; secondly, I will speak a little bit about the changes to the Endangered Species Act; and finally, the small changes to the building code.

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First, on the planning process and the changes to the Planning Act: I really appreciate and I support the government's improvement to the ability of people to add secondary units to their house. As a former parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Housing, I remember the importance of this development to allow people, number one, to either stay in their house and add a tenant to be able to support themselves better or, secondly, to access rent in that format. I will be supporting and congratulate the government for facilitating that.

On the second aspect of the changes to the Planning Act, however, I have some concern. It's the changes to inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning is a very helpful tool for municipalities to be able to force a developer to build affordable housing. We currently have the possibility of municipalities to decide to impose on the developers the ability and the obligation to provide some aspect of the development for affordable housing. This is crucial because it allows us to not only have really nice shiny condos being built, but also rentals that do meet the needs of people who have less income. So I am a little disappointed to see that the government is now restricting the ability of inclusionary zoning only to a couple of places. They restrict it only where it's going to be around transit, major transit stations, and it appears that some of them will not be identified in the growth plan until 2022. That is a long time to wait to identify affordable housing and use the very helpful tool of inclusionary zoning.

The third aspect of the changes to the planning process relates to the changes to the LPAT. C'est une des plus grandes préoccupations que j'ai à l'égard du projet de loi parce que ça représente beaucoup de discussion avec mes commettants. Beaucoup de gens dans Ottawa-Vanier avaient célébré le changement qui avait été fait par le gouvernement libéral, et je veux en lire quelques-uns. The changes that we had put forward, which kind of validated and supported local decision-making, were actually met with lots of enthusiasm. What we're seeing here is a return to what the old OMB was, which is the ability of the OMB to bypass or ignore the municipality's choices that have been made.

Let me read some of the comments that mayors had put forward when we introduced the LPAT.

The Brampton mayor said, "We are making great strides in becoming a different city, and in a fast-growing city like Brampton we welcome the updated growth plan and the proposed reforms of the land use planning appeal system."

Mayor Watson from Ottawa had said, "We are very optimistic about what we have heard today and are supportive of measures that will help create a level playing field between communities and people who want to build in their communities."

Finally, Barrie mayor Jeff Lehman had said—and I want you to listen to this part, because I think it captures very much what I'm trying to say—"I think" the change we had brought forward "reinforces the democratic legitimacy of councils and reflects the basic premise that the

residents of a community should shape its future through their elected officials....”

So the concerns that people have expressed about the changes here are that it’s a reversal to what the old OMB was. The concern was that municipalities would decide something and then the developers would just bypass and go to the OMB and have it reversed. That raises a concern.

I understand that the government has been wanting to stop what they describe as not-in-my-backyard syndrome, where municipal electors are responsive to local residents who object to development. I think it is a mistake not to validate and to respect the local decision-making process. They should take their responsibility. It’s too easy not to take your decision and let the OMB take the place.

I think what we had tried to do is to reinforce the planning process. Good planning process should occur at the municipal level and it should be respected. So I hope that the government will consider this as being a way in which they could maybe not give too much to the developer, and recognize the importance of the partnership that they must have and that municipalities should have, in ensuring that good, affordable housing is built throughout Ontario.

The second part of the bill that I want to discuss is the Endangered Species Act. Let me say a few things about the Endangered Species Act and the reason why it is important not to undermine some of its characteristics. Many people make jokes about the Endangered Species Act, saying, “It’s good for plants. It’s good for animals. But is it good for humans?” Biodiversity is essential to the survival of the human race. When we protect plants and we prevent species from disappearing, we’re ensuring that we will continue to be able to grow the food that we eat; we’re ensuring that we continue to protect the ecological health of our environment. This is really precious. So I think the way in which we approach the Endangered Species Act must be to continue to reflect the three principles that were the cornerstone of that statute.

The Endangered Species Act is the first of its class. The Ontario Endangered Species Act is world-famous because it had three aspects that were very, very important. Number one, it really was based on scientific integrity; that is, the science would dictate which species should be protected, not the politicians. That was important because it created credibility in this system. The second principle was, it embodied what we call the precautionary principle. The precautionary principle, le principe de la précaution, is there to say, “Protect before you know.” If you’re not too sure, protect as opposed to prevent and develop without knowing what the consequences are. This was a big development in environmental law, to say, “If we’re not sure, if the science is not quite there, let’s go slowly and protect the environment as we know it.” The third principle was that it did recognize that the province had a responsibility to protect the endangered species that were on its territory. These three principles are now being threatened by the changes that are being made in Bill 108.

The first one, scientific integrity: In the bill, there is now the possibility of changing the membership of

COSSARO, the committee of experts who decide what is a species that’s on the list of protected species or not. It used to be that it was scientific and Aboriginal traditional knowledge that was reflected on COSSARO. Now the government has introduced a new way of inviting other community members to be on it. The danger here is that we may dilute the scientific integrity and the credibility of COSSARO.

The precautionary principle that is being threatened here is, now the government has decided that when there’s a new species that could be listed, there’s a possibility of delaying that listing for three years. That goes flat against the precautionary principle. It will prevent the ability of protecting the habitat and the species for as long as the government decides. That’s a major aspect that I think people will criticize.

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Finally, I have some suggestions of wording here. In schedule 5 under (5), the government now recognizes that if there are species elsewhere in the world that are doing well but they are at risk in Ontario, COSSARO must—“shall”—reflect a lower level of risk. So it’s saying if there are deer that are endangered in Ontario, but there are good and sufficient deer in Michigan or in Quebec, well, let’s not worry too much about protecting deer in Ontario. That’s a mistake.

I suggest that COSSARO should take into account the strength, the vitality and the health of the deer in Michigan or the deer in Quebec. If it does not, if it just takes into account the fact that there’s a lot of deer somewhere in the world, I think we may actually contribute to the disappearance of some species.

Many scientists who are looking at this have the same concerns that I have here. My suggestion is, as we move forward, the government should be wise to tighten up the wording a little bit to make sure that—maybe they want it to be one consideration, but not use the word “shall,” not use the words “shall reflect the lower” risk factor. I think it’s going too far, and I urge them to reconsider this as they move forward.

Finally, I wanted to talk a little about the changes to the building code. It is a small change, but I think it does reflect some of the concerns that have been expressed in my riding. Bill 108 eliminates the obligation to install in new houses the ability to connect electric vehicles. Le projet de loi supprime l’obligation pour les nouveaux logements d’inclure l’infrastructure nécessaire pour recharger les véhicules électriques. This, Speaker, is a bit disappointing and short-sighted. The move will end up costing people a lot of money in the long run. It’s much easier to install it now in a new house than much later.

Now, I understand that the government is saying, “Let’s make sure that building codes are all the same across Canada.” It is important that we lead on this issue because we are committed. We know that it’s a chicken-and-egg problem, the way in which we want to get more electric vehicles. We know that manufacturers want to build more electric vehicles. That was the reason why GM wanted to close the plant, because they wanted to build electric

vehicles. Let's make sure that we are ahead of the curve and not behind the curve. This is not necessary, but it's a small change that would actually be quite popular with many of the residents.

It was funny that, today, I actually got two emails from constituents who were complaining not only about this aspect, but the fact that the bill does not mandate current condos and apartment buildings that do not have the ability to recharge electric vehicles. They were wanting the government to go further than it is. I hope they will consider that, in light of what we discussed today, which is the importance of responding proactively to climate change.

Let me now move to some of the concerns generally that people have expressed over the changes to development charges. In Ottawa, some councillors are quite worried that the changes that have been made may prevent the city from actually doing development and creating the ability of having parks and community resources where they are needed. So there's a little bit of confusion, and I think we need more details on the part of the government to ensure that, indeed, municipalities continue to have the ability to do what they want to do, which is to allow good development but development that responds to the needs of communities.

This has been raised by many interveners. I know that one councillor in Ottawa has been quite concerned about that, and let me quote from him. He said, "I am concerned"; "This is pretty bad." Maybe he doesn't have all the answers, but he says "The provisions in the proposed legislation would 'destroy' the city's ability to quickly establish parks in new subdivisions."

This is a concern for the councillor for Orléans, and he is concerned about that: "The planning department's resources could be stretched if the province's proposal, as it stands today, becomes law."

The general manager of planning, infrastructure and economic development said that he is concerned as well that the property appraisals and a process for collecting community benefit money—so two different processes will need to be in place—may tax the municipality's resources a bit too much.

I have reflected here a vision, actually, that comes from talking to different residents who have expressed their concerns. That's the job that we're trying to do. The way in which I approach my job as an opposition member is to look at it and highlight the good things that are done—as I said, I believe that the secondary unit is going in the right direction. It builds on some of the changes that have been made in the past, and I salute the government continuing on this side and I hope that they will listen to some of the suggestions that I've made today, particularly the protection of the Endangered Species Act.

There may not be lots of votes in protecting the Endangered Species Act, but we're doing it to comply with our international obligations. We're doing it because we want to use the precautionary principle because it's easier to protect than try to revive a species that would

have disappeared from the earth. So I urge caution on the part of the government in this aspect.

Finally, on the planning process, let me say how much people are concerned about the changes to revert back to the OMB. When I was first going into politics, I had the opportunity to travel around the riding, and in Sandy Hill, which is a beautiful area of town, people are very concerned about reverting back to the OMB because they want to participate in protecting their heritage development and they want to be part of the process and be heard. If all the decisions are being made at the OMB when the developer appeals, they don't have the ability to be heard just the same way. They really want their municipality to put their big pants on and confront—

Interjection.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Yes, just like that—confront the difficulty of ensuring development.

I want to make sure that these voices are heard because they are constantly being heard in Ottawa–Vanier. I urge the government to reflect on this.

Evidemment, on veut tous plus de choix et on veut tous présenter la possibilité d'offrir à la population l'accès au logement. Défendre le droit au logement, ça veut dire certainement de favoriser l'accès à plus de logements, mais il faut s'assurer qu'on offre aussi un logement abordable. C'est une des questions qui est soulevée dans ce contexte-ci. Plusieurs personnes lisent ce projet de loi en disant que c'est une réponse partielle qui ne répond pas complètement aux besoins de logements abordables. J'espère que le gouvernement va continuer dans cette voie en nous informant davantage.

Also, I want to thank the minister because he did provide some briefing to the opposition. I went there with my list of questions. I had read the act and I had questions about subsections where I thought they were unclear. I'm still waiting to get confirmation of exactly what the scope is of regulatory power. I think it would be helpful to this House to continue, as a going concern, to offer briefings to opposition members, because I think we are better prepared to have some of our questions answered and then communicate some better suggestions if indeed we have some concerns or if our constituents have concerns.

Alors, en résumé, je vous remercie beaucoup, madame la Présidente, de m'avoir permis de parler ce soir. Ça me fait grand plaisir de continuer de travailler sur l'exercice d'un droit véritable au logement, un droit au logement abordable qui répond bien à la diversité des besoins qui existent en Ontario.

Je vous remercie.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: No questions; I'll just add some comments on this night sitting with Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act. Some of this direction comes from our recent budget. We talk about adding 10,000 housing starts a year. When you're building houses, it bodes well for the economy. In fact, the prediction is it would provide an increase of 0.3% of gross domestic product and something like 15,000 new jobs over three years.

Across the province of Ontario—I'm not a northerner, but again, we know there's a very short building season in the north. When you have a plethora of rules and regulations and red tape and forms to fill out and time barriers, it can be a real challenge.

I can speak for rural Ontario, and some of the red tape—the excessive red tape, the administrative burden—is really a problem to try and get things done. I contrast that to how I built a house on my farm. This is 35 years ago. I brought in an excavator, and we started. I laid things out. We started digging a basement, and then he stopped for a minute. I was paying him a dollar an hour back then; it's a lot more now. He said, "Did everything go okay with the permits?" I'm starting my house. I'd forgotten to get all of the permits. He said, "I'll keep digging. You go get your permits." I got the septic and the building permit; I'm not sure what else. I got everything in two hours in one afternoon. It cost me a couple of hundred dollars. I came back, we went at it and built the house. Things have changed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I was listening intently to the member from Ottawa—Vanier during her comments. She spoke about a number of things. She spoke about the importance of local decision-making, and that's exactly something that Bill 108 erodes. It erodes the power of municipalities to protect inclusionary zoning. It limits a municipality's ability to fund soft services through their development charges. It returns the powers of the old OMB back into the current Local Planning Appeals Tribunal, or the LPAT. This is incredibly dangerous, because what this signals to local communities is that their local elected representatives, their democratically elected representatives, don't have the authority anymore to make critical decisions about planning and about city building.

Again, it gives that power back to an appeals body that, as it was structured under the old OMB, was largely in the back pocket of developers and allowed the interests of private companies, of developers, to run roughshod, to overrule the planning decisions of democratically elected people that community members put into power. I think that that's an incredibly dangerous move from this government.

She also spoke quite passionately about the Endangered Species Act. She said some really interesting things. She said that there are not a lot of votes in endangered species, and she's right—actually, maybe, I think there are some votes in endangered species. I think a lot of people care about the environment and about endangered species. But we don't just do environmental protection work and protecting endangered species because there are votes in it; we do it because it's the right thing to do, the same way that we protect our climate: because it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure, again, to rise and just talk briefly on Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act.

I had an opportunity to listen to the member from Ottawa—Orléans, I believe it is—

Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers: No, Vanier—Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, Ottawa—Vanier; excuse me. Actually, I was quite pleasantly surprised that right off the bat she said that she agrees with our bill. She'll be voting in favour of it. That was a switch, because normally on the other side, I always hear the opposition. She realizes that a good idea doesn't care who owns it. Now, having said that, she did identify some concerns, but I believe she understands the spirit of the bill.

Whenever I talk to people about implementing change, I always listen to the concerned parties, and I ask them to always bring their concerns forward by telling us three things: What's the issue? What's the impact that the issue is having on you or your people? And thirdly, give us some solutions to it. So what's the issue, what's the impact and what are the solutions that you would bring forward?

I think, as a government, we know that we need to positively listen to not just people within our ridings, but also to the opposition as well, in fairness. Because, again, and I've said this before in this House, a good idea doesn't care who owns it. That should be what it is. I agree that they may have some concerns, but this, again—when I think about the cost of housing here in Toronto and I look at rent, it's just ridiculous. For example, now, a single one-bedroom, one-bath is renting for around \$2,100 a month. That's crazy. That's several months back in my riding of Chatham-Kent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's a pleasure to rise here at almost 9 o'clock at night.

I think if the Liberals are supporting this, it's because they want their share of the developer fundraising pie.

Hon. Bill Walker: They've already got more pieces.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay, but I won't go there.

I can tell you, this—

Hon. Bill Walker: You already did.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I already did, actually.

A couple of nights back, I was at a planning meeting hosted by city planners and the fabulous ward 7 councillor and former MPP Anthony Perruzza in my riding. It was to discuss a development application. When I got up to tell people a little bit about the fact that we are looking at legislation that would restore the OMB's powers, I could tell you if a pin dropped there. We had almost 100 people. This is in a suburban Toronto area riding and ward. When they heard that the OMB would be back in the way that it was, there was incredible concern.

People in Toronto are very cynical of the board. Much in the same way that we look and know that Tarion offers no protection to new homebuyers, the OMB has always been slated on the side of the developers, and developers know that. When a development issue goes to them—and this is why I thought the legislation was changed under the former government and that it was advocated for by an NDP MPP and former member Rosario Marchese. He

pushed for OMB to be reformed for many years. When they see decisions that come before them, they make decisions almost exclusively as to what they believe the developers want to see. We always see higher levels of density, we always see contributions to the communities eroded when developments go through the OMB and come out of that process.

I have huge concerns about this. I have huge fears, and so do communities everywhere and so do communities in Conservative ridings. I urge you to consider this as you move this legislation through, because restoring the OMB to what it is is a very, very dangerous thing and we shouldn't be doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I want to thank the members for Haldimand–Norfolk, from Toronto Centre, from Chatham-Kent–Leamington and from Humber River–Black Creek. First of all, I'm not sure that I said that I was going to vote in favour of it. I said that certainly I like the secondary-unit aspect of the bill and if I was speaking on this, I would certainly vote for that. The rest of it, though, I have some concerns.

I want to say, particularly, it's interesting that the reaction that we have about the OMB is about overriding the elected officials by the power of people who are appointed. That reminded me of many concerns that people here had said where they were elected and they did not like the fact that someone appointed was overriding their decision. That's why people are concerned. They're concerned that local decision-makers should be respected. That's the concern that we've heard about the changes to the OMB.

I want to also talk about—I want to thank and, really, I hope that some of the suggestions I made about the Endangered Species Act will be looked at because it's an important act that we should be proud of as Ontarians. We really want to have an act that is not perfect but, really, was leading the way. It would be too bad to sacrifice it just because we don't really want to respect the key principles that support this action.

Again, merci beaucoup. I know it's late, and I welcome the ability to participate in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

I'm excited to be joining the debate on Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act. For decades a family in Ontario knew they had joined the middle class when they secured their first home. We can all share our own parents' or grandparents' stories of punching in long hours and making the necessary sacrifices to put a down payment on a new home. For years, the road to the middle class in Ontario began and ended with home ownership. The road is a lot less easy to navigate today in Ontario.

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Since 2005, the price of home sales has increased by 181% in Oakville, 157% in Hamilton and 153% in

Toronto. In rural areas, the lack of housing construction has restricted the development for affordable homes. Renters are also feeling the pain of our unsustainable market. In Simcoe county, 41% of renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent, the agreed maximum percentage for affordability.

These realities of our modern housing market place barrier after barrier in front of those wishing to join the middle class and buy a home. The More Homes, More Choice Act, the act before this assembly, targets the red tape and the structural disincentives to construction that have limited choice in Ontario. Today I will speak to how these reforms will aid those in our rural communities and small towns.

The More Homes, More Choice Act takes specific aim at housing challenges unique to communities like those in my riding—issues like keeping young families in our communities, giving seniors an affordable place to live, addressing the long-neglected small-town social housing issue and meeting the demands of our growing population. Our government is laying the foundation for individuals and families to construct their lives and future success. We are creating an environment where homes could be built more easily and without delay, where families can invest in their future.

We are doing all this without removing protections for the greenbelt, our heritage sites and residents of stable communities.

Home ownership and affordable housing is the foundation for our province's progress. It is time we took the structural barriers to home ownership and affordable living seriously and provide stability for families in need. This legislation clears a road for thousands of families to pursue their goal of joining Ontario's middle class.

Figures released by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing estimate that 83% of households in Ontario cannot afford the average price of a resale home. In regard to rentals, over the last two decades, less than 7% of all housing built in Ontario was purpose-built rentals and 56% of renters in our province cannot afford a standard two-bedroom apartment. This crisis is most salient for our young families. In a recent study, 91% of young Ontarians indicated that home ownership is important to them, but only 56% of those surveyed believe that ownership is within their grasp. This is a concern for rural communities such as those in Simcoe North.

Christine Pacini, Simcoe county's social housing project director, framed this issue aptly in stating, "Lack of affordable housing for youth is a particular concern, especially if the county wants to ensure youth remain in their communities."

Our senior citizens are also in precarious housing situations due to the crisis. As Andrea Abbott-Kokosin, executive director of Wendat Community Programs in Penetanguishene, noted, "It became evident that one of the greatest needs was an affordable housing alternative for frail seniors requiring some support services who do not yet need long-term care."

Between 2006 and 2016, Canada's senior population grew by 21.7%, more than double the rate of the adequate

supply increase. Thousands of seniors in Ontario are not given the housing choices that best meet their needs.

Another group negatively affected by Ontario's housing crisis are citizens who require social housing. Waiting lists, especially those in rural and isolated communities, are decades long for housing. This is unacceptable for our families most in need.

The one question media reporters, experts and everyday Ontarians have all been asking for over a decade is, "How did we get here?" To put it plainly, the former government choked the supply of housing to the market with endless regulation and red tape. These structural barriers starved an ever-hungrier housing market and created a crisis that all of our constituents have had to deal with. By refusing to take bold action, previous administrations kept pulling the prospect of a home away from more and more Ontarians. In doing so, they withheld a key to the middle class for millions of Ontarians.

Last week, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced a plan to lead thousands of Ontarians to the middle class. More Homes, More Choice establishes sweeping regulatory and policy changes to facilitate the construction of more homes to meet the needs of families in every part of our province. This legislation takes great effort to support those most hurt and constrained by our years-long housing crisis. Measures are included that directly benefit our seniors, our economically vulnerable citizens, our youth, and Ontario's growing communities.

First, our seniors: Bill 108 proposes to amend the Planning Act to allow homeowners to create an additional residential unit in their main residence; in other words, build secondary suites. This will allow families to house a parent or aging relative who is looking to downsize but is not ready to enter a long-term-care facility. Alternatively, seniors in this position can decide to live with one another in shared homes. These sorts of housing arrangements can lower monthly costs, reduce the required income for a mortgage, and increase the affordability of home ownership. Under More Homes, More Choice, our government commits itself to developing guides for residents and municipalities to cover topics such as co-ownership and second units.

Second, More Homes, More Choice encourages the development of new apartments, allowing development charges for not-for-profit housing to be paid over a five-year period rather than up front. By effect, this plan will increase housing options and reduce financial burdens for our most economically vulnerable citizens.

Last autumn, our government exempted new units from rent controls while also protecting existing tenants. When rent controls were expanded under the previous government, there were numerous reports of planned rental units that were cancelled due to this expansion. Our exemption ensures the construction of new rental units that increases the mix of properties available to Ontarians. Tony Irwin, president and CEO of the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario, remarked that these updates will "go a long way" towards filling rental deficits, and that any effort by the government to fast-track the rental process was welcome.

Additionally, our government is introducing a Community Housing Renewal Strategy which aids Ontarians with low and moderate incomes who are unable to afford high rents. This strategy transforms an ineffective system into one that is efficient, sustainable and ready to help residents who need support the most.

Third, in reducing the barriers to construction and making it easier for municipalities, non-profits and private firms to build, we are boosting supply for young Ontarians looking to enter the market. In response to our plan, the president of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, Richard Lyall, remarked: "Minister Steve Clark is passionate about this issue. He is putting people first, including millennials and the generations to follow, so that they can achieve the dream of home ownership through the future success of More Homes, More Choice."

Finally, we are ending backlogs in the land use planning and appeal system which have slowed housing construction for years. In the past, it could take up to a decade to get the necessary approval to begin construction on a standard home. With every delayed month, Ontario's housing supply decreased by 3.7%. In Toronto alone, there are about 100,000 units that are delayed for construction due to the backlog. Going forward, we are ensuring that the tribunal has the adequate resources they need to make timely and effective decisions.

Our government's changes to the system will greatly benefit growing communities like those in my riding that are unable to keep up with inward migration of new residents.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It really is a pleasure to rise in tonight's debate of Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, and to follow the informed and great member from Simcoe North and her very interesting debate.

This bill is an important step in our Housing Supply Action Plan, that will address Ontario's housing crisis by helping to build more homes that are affordable. We want to put home ownership in reach of more Ontario families and provide more people with the opportunity to live closer to where they work.

The steps we are taking in this bill will address people's concerns about affordability by cutting red tape, reducing costs to building for homeowners; making it easier to build different types of housing; encouraging innovative approaches to housing design; and maintaining responsible environment stewardship, including respecting Ontario's agriculture sector.

This is a responsible and sustainable plan that we believe will reduce red tape and help get more homes built.

The land development process is difficult to navigate and has led to troublesome situations in Ontario. As the minister pointed out last week, prices are skyrocketing. It takes approximately 10 years to complete a low-rise or high-rise development project in the greater Toronto area, and this is not acceptable. Over the past 20 years, less than 7% of all housing built in Ontario was purpose-built

rentals. The province's overall rental vacancy rate in 2018 was 1.8%, close to historical lows. As most members know, 3% is considered a healthy market.

Since our election last June, we have heard loud and clear that the current housing development system is broken and desperately needs to be fixed. We inherited this mess and we are intent on cleaning it up.

The impact of the housing crisis is real. There is a low vacancy rate and a low housing supply, which drives prices up. We are determined to fix this problem. There is a housing crisis in this province. We know that the challenges are different in every region of the province, and this plan will address those challenges.

When my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing launched our housing consultation process, the response was overwhelming. The minister, along with the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, received over 2,000 submissions from right across the province. Those submissions made it pretty clear what matters most to people when they are looking for a new home.

We also heard from home builders regarding the challenges they face in trying to build new homes and apartments. We heard about the barriers that are adding years to the construction process. We heard about the 100,000 housing units currently tied up in the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. Those 100,000 housing units, if built, would give potential homeowners more options and put downward pressure on rents.

Our government's five-point plan was developed out of this consultation. We have five themes that we are addressing.

First, we will make it faster to build homes. As the minister rightly pointed out to this House last week, we know that a housing start today doesn't mean a new house tomorrow. Projects often take years. We need to move quickly to address the housing crisis. We cannot afford to wait. Under the previous government, projects became bogged down in red tape and paperwork. That needs to change.

The second theme we heard about was costs. The cost of building homes has gone up and up, making them more expensive than they need to be. The cost of permits, approvals and development charges just gets added to the costs of new homes, adding tens of thousands of dollars to costs. We heard from home builders that they need predictability when it comes to the cost of permits and approvals. If we can do that, it will encourage home builders to build more housing, which will make it more affordable for families.

We are proposing changes to the Development Charges Act which would, if passed, help increase housing options for Ontarians and make the upfront cost of building houses more predictable. These proposed changes will make it easier to create more rental housing.

As a bit of an aside, Madam Speaker, I don't think Ontarians appreciate how much development charges add to the price of a home. The C.D. Howe Institute estimates that development charges add approximately \$80,000 per single detached home in large cities. These costs are passed on to buyers in the form of higher house prices.

We also know we need to act to spur rental housing. Condo and new home builders can pay the up front charges by doing presales. That's an option that is not open for rental and non-profit houses. If passed, the development charges on rental units can be paid over a five-year period rather than up front. Deferring these charges will make it attractive to build rental housing. And it's not just Toronto that needs rental housing; it's every community in Ontario.

The third theme of our plan is about mix. Ontarians need a broad range of housing options and this plan will make it easier to build different types of homes to fit different needs. People all across the province, not just in the city of Toronto, need choice when it comes to housing.

The fourth theme is rent. We heard from many people concerned that the high cost of rent was making it impossible to find suitable housing. We believe that the key to reducing the cost of rent is to increase the supply of rental stock across Ontario.

We also know that we need to protect tenants, so the fifth theme is innovation. In order to meet the housing crisis head-on, we need to encourage innovation while still protecting what is important, namely health and safety, our agricultural economy and the greenbelt.

There is no doubt that this is a complex piece of legislation that we are debating tonight. As a former mayor and warden, I know the importance of land use planning. It affects nearly every aspect of our lives and is often misunderstood. It guides decisions on where to build homes and place factories. It attempts to balance the interests of property owners with the good of the community. I think we can all agree that good planning leads to complete communities.

The changes we have proposed will cut red tape and get new homes built quicker. If passed, this will speed up local planning decisions and put into place a more effective appeals process that still respects local decisions.

We want to encourage homeowners to build secondary units, whether they are in a basement or on top of a garage. We believe this is one way that we can increase the supply for Ontarians.

These changes will also make the cost of permitting and approvals more transparent and predictable. This will help builders and homebuyers know where they can build.

We are also proposing changes to Endangered Species Act that will streamline the development process while still protecting the environment. We are also improving the governance of conservation authorities to ensure everyone knows the role they play in the development process.

As a former councillor and mayor, I realize disagreements will come up through the planning process. Planning decisions are often difficult decisions for communities. The previous government created the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal as a replacement for the Ontario Municipal Board. It was created to hear the appeals, but it has a huge backlog of cases. As we said earlier, approximately 100,000 units in the city of Toronto alone are impacted by the backlog, so we need to fix this, and we need to do it soon.

We will ensure that the tribunal has the resources it needs and the powers it needs to make fair and timely decisions. It will help ensure that good planning is behind planning decisions.

Madam Speaker, as I have said, we didn't create this housing crisis, but we heard loud and clear that it needs to get fixed, and we intend to take the action to fix it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Simcoe North and the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for your comments.

I have a lot of concerns about this bill. As the member for University–Rosedale, a huge amount of the development is happening in my riding. In addition, the housing crisis that is affecting the entirety of Ontario is having a big impact on the affordability for renters and first-time homebuyers in my riding as well.

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If I had to summarize this bill, I would say that this bill is not a More Homes More Choice Act; it is the “Give Developers a Gift Act.” I’m concerned about going back to the OMB, because it does mean that residents—the city of Toronto has far less say over the kind of development that happens in the riding of University–Rosedale. I’m also concerned about the decision to reduce the development charges that developers pay to provide basic, important services, from daycares to transit, which are critical to accommodate the increase in the population in this riding.

What I’m most concerned about with this bill is what’s not in it. This bill doesn’t do very much at all to address the affordable housing crisis that we have because we cannot build our way out of the affordable housing crisis. It cannot be dealt with through supply alone. The evidence that we have to indicate that is the last 20 years in the city of Toronto, because in the city of Toronto we have had a record housing boom. We’ve got more cranes here than any other jurisdiction in North America, including Mexico City, and we’ve had no rent control on new builds for years, but nothing has been built, and we have an affordable housing crisis. Include affordability in this bill, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Our government believes that everyone deserves a place to call home, and I’m so proud of being part of a government that is making sure that the people of Ontario have a place they can call home.

Madam Speaker, it’s very simple. It’s all about demand and supply. We’re seeing out there that there is a shortage of homes, and that’s why the prices of homes are skyrocketing. Millennials are struggling to buy homes, and the reason is very simple. It’s just that there’s not enough supply of homes. I believe that what our government is doing is making sure that, at the end of the day, there are enough homes, there is enough supply, that we can actually start seeing prices come to a level where it’s all affordable.

I have so many constituents who come to my office, and they always talk about affordable housing. The previous government always talked—as we say, “talk, talk, talk”—and nothing got done, but our government is actually going to make sure that we keep our promise of making sure that there is affordable housing and that there is enough supply of homes. It’s an investment for a lot of people, and we want to make sure that people, at the end of the day, are able to afford homes.

A lot of constituents, especially the rentals—there are a lot of issues out there—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: As I’ve been sitting here tonight listening to the members from Simcoe North and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I’ve been sitting here wondering if I’ve been taken back in time to December. I’ve been looking all around and under my desk looking for my Christmas cards from the government members and for my Christmas presents, because this bill is really a gift. As the member from University–Rosedale so eloquently put it, it’s the “Give Developers a Gift Act.” I absolutely agree.

I’ve said it before: This is not a housing bill. There are more schedules in this bill that do everything possible to roll out the red carpet for developers in this province, and it does absolutely nothing to actually address the housing crisis that we find ourselves in. There are more schedules in this bill that rip apart environmental protections, that open up the ability for developers to pave over wetlands in this province, and that weaken protections for endangered species. It’s more of an environmental bill than a housing bill. It weakens the ability of municipalities to make local decisions and keep decision-making local in the communities. It takes power away from municipalities. Like I said, it erodes environmental protections.

But it’s not a housing bill. It does nothing to build new social housing units, to address the 15-year wait-list for community housing, to address the fact that the average person looking for a one-bedroom apartment here in Toronto can expect to be paying \$2,100 a month for that apartment. That’s outrageous, considering that the minimum wage in this province is still \$14 an hour.

I would ask the government members, if you really think it’s Christmastime here—again, I can’t find my Christmas cards anywhere around my desk. But if you think it’s Christmastime, how about a \$15-minimum wage for the people of this province, or a housing bill that’s actually a housing bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Speaker, I’m proud to speak today in support of Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act, introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. After many years of Liberal mismanagement, we have one of the least affordable housing markets in North America. Last year Mississauga’s real estate market ranked as the third most unaffordable in Canada after Vancouver and Toronto, and the 14th most unaffordable in North America.

With home prices of a million dollars or more, affordable housing is not just a problem for low-income families. Even middle-class families are struggling to find housing. Red tape and outdated and complex zoning policies have all combined to delay the construction of new homes. It's estimated our region has fallen short by 100,000 housing units in 2006, and we're falling short by another 10,000 more units every year.

The GTA is one of the fastest-growing regions in North America with about 115,000 new residents arriving every year. By 2041, our population will grow by 40%, yet it takes over a decade to build new homes in Mississauga and often much longer. Over 1,000 cases are stuck waiting to be heard at LPAT. Speaker, that's over 100,000 housing units every year.

Bill 108 will also encourage a mix of housing, from family-sized condos to starter homes to mid-sized rentals. This is the "missing middle" that is needed in the GTA.

Bill 108 will also encourage builders to convert old, vacant buildings into new, modern homes, and Bill 108 will help with fixing our housing crisis without developing in the greenbelt.

Speaker, I look forward to voting for the More Homes, More Choice Act and ask everybody to support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Simcoe North.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all my colleagues on both sides of the House for their comments.

Last year, our Premier spoke to the Ontario Real Estate Association and remarked, "It's almost never been more difficult or expensive to find a home to rent in Ontario. I promised the people of Ontario that our government would help create more housing—and more housing people can afford. We're keeping that promise."

After thorough public consultation with Ontarians, stakeholders and experts, we conceived a plan that delivers on the Premier's promise. More Homes, More Choice sets the optimal foundation for growth in Ontario. By cutting the restrictions and structural barriers to housing and rental construction in Ontario, we are allowing our private sector and municipal partners to put shovels in the ground right away. These are the people who are building our homes in Ontario.

We are taking aim at rural housing challenges neglected by previous administrations—challenges, such as keeping young families in communities, giving seniors an affordable place to live, addressing the long-neglected, small-town social housing crisis and meeting the demands of our growing populations.

We are opening the pathway to the middle class for thousands of Ontarians and their families.

No matter where you live in Ontario, in the downtown core or in rural communities like those found in Simcoe North, this plan delivers an optimistic future for you and your family.

We had quite the opportunity in Simcoe North back in December. The parliamentary assistant for municipal

affairs and housing came to my riding, and we had a round table. It was great to have all different stakeholders at the table representing our developers, our social housing, our landlords, our realtors, and have those people come together and have a great discussion on housing and some of their solutions, but for each one to hear the concerns of the others to better understand those. It's consultations like that across Ontario that have come together to put this bill together.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's an honour to speak in this House, particularly on matters of housing that are of grave importance. The need for more affordable housing is dire in my riding of Niagara Centre and across the province. However, Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, will not actually create more affordable housing.

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As a two-term councillor and budget chair, I know the pressure municipalities are under. This bill amends 15 acts. The acts were put in place to safeguard our environment, species at risk, our health and our history. They are now facing changes that strip them down in order to appease developers, under the guise of affordable housing.

Bill 108 states a vision of affordable housing that introduces measures that will only make housing less affordable. This is a bill for developers. The bill further alienates municipalities and forces them to be reactive instead of proactive.

This bill has a few interesting provisions that seemingly don't belong in a housing bill. I'm going to address those first. The bill is transparently a pro-development attempt at a market solution for housing availability, while simultaneously gutting provisions that help individuals and families find an affordable place to live.

I'll start, Speaker, with the Cannabis Control Act and those changes. Schedule 1 amends the Cannabis Control Act to give the police and courts more authority to crack down on illegal cannabis sales that take place in residences. As it currently stands, section 18 of the Cannabis Control Act gives the police the power to shut down and remove people from premises where they believe cannabis has been illegally sold or distributed. There is currently an exemption for residences. Bill 108 removes this exemption. This would allow the police to enforce the law where an unauthorized dispensary operator claims their store is their residence, but it would also seem to allow the police to expel a family from their home if they think a family member or a visitor sold cannabis.

Similarly, residences are currently exempted from provisions in the Cannabis Control Act allowing the court to order the closure of premises for up to two years if someone has been convicted of illegally selling or distributing cannabis on the premises. Bill 108 removes this exemption.

Since commercial landlords are currently subject to penalties if they knowingly allow their tenants to illegally sell or distribute cannabis, these penalties will now be

extended to residential landlords. Bill 108 also introduces new minimum penalties for landlords.

We have some concerns on what this will mean for families. Cannabis is currently legal, and while the illegal sale of cannabis should be prohibited, giving the ability for a family to be expelled from their home because a family member—or worse, a visitor—engages in an illegal activity is unthinkable.

Under schedule 10, the Occupational Health and Safety Act: This schedule amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to expand the Chief Prevention Officer's authority with respect to the certification of joint health and safety committee members, including the power to revoke or amend the requirements for certification. Schedule 13, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, is amended to allow the WSIB to establish an insurance rate for partners and executive officers of a construction company who do not themselves perform construction work. This rate can be different from that charged to the employers of the partners and executive officers.

My concern regarding sections 8, 10 and 13 is, what does this mean for the safety and protection of workers? If the Chief Prevention Officer has the authority to revoke or amend the requirements for certification, what are the ramifications of this? The bill is unclear.

Beyond the above, how these sections contribute to growing more affordable housing in this province is unclear to me. We are confused as to why these are included in this bill.

Speaker, this government is yet again taking aim at the environment. Schedule 2, the Conservation Authorities Act, amends the Conservation Authorities Act to set new standards of conduct and to limit what costs can be unilaterally imposed on member municipalities. Bill 108 will require conservation authority members to “act honestly and in good faith with a view to furthering the objects of the authority.” The act was amended in 2017 to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to prescribe mandatory programs for conservation authorities. Bill 108 restricts this regulatory authority to prescribed programs related to natural hazards, land conservation and management, and duties assigned under the Clean Water Act or another prescribed act—and in the case of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Oddly, there is no specific reference to the Great Lakes Protection Act, which envisions an important role for conservation authorities in protecting the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

Conservation authorities may continue to enter into agreements with municipalities to deliver other non-mandatory programs on their behalf, subject to periodic review. But after a prescribed date, conservation authorities will be prohibited from billing a municipality for any capital or operating costs related to a non-mandatory program, unless the conservation authority has entered into an agreement with that municipality. This, Speaker, drastically restricts the work that conservation authorities do.

The minister may appoint investigators to examine the conduct of an authority's operations. However, there is no provision to enable the appointment of a supervisor to take over a rogue conservation authority, as my predecessor, Cindy Forster, and myself have demanded, following a series of controversies involving the Niagara region conservation authority.

Conservation authorities provide a vital service of ensuring conservation, restoration and responsible management of hydrological features through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs. But occasionally, conservation authorities can be taken over by pro-development councillors or representatives who have a vested interest in ensuring that large developers get their way. We saw that in Niagara, Speaker, where my predecessor rallied for years for the provincial government to get involved in the conservation authority that was embroiled in controversy. They were advocating for the deeply controversial project of biodiversity offsetting, which I will talk about later. They brought in a series of human resource issues where staff reported abuse. They sued a private citizen who brought the concerns to light.

Cindy Forster, my predecessor, was able to secure an Auditor General audit into the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and, thankfully, the organization appears to be on the mend. But in a time of increased natural disasters, flooding, and cities across the province declaring climate emergencies, we must ensure that the conservation authorities on the ground are dedicated to maintain balance and ensure responsible development. It is a positive that now an investigator can be appointed, but I would suggest that a supervisor role should be an option that is provided.

With respect to the environment, Speaker, we would not be reviewing a bill from this government if it didn't have some provisions that would allow for the degradation of our environment. My colleague from Toronto–Danforth outlined in an earlier debate of this bill just how bizarre it is to add changes to the Endangered Species Act within a housing bill. He's never seen it. Yet here we are presented with schedule 5. It amends the Endangered Species Act to reflect proposed changes announced in April that gave the minister sweeping powers over the species listing process and more flexibility to suspend the application of the act, sometimes in exchange for payment.

Bill 108 extends the deadline for prescribing a species as threatened or endangered. Currently, regulation must be made within three months of the minister receiving a report from the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario, COSSARO. Bill 108 extends this timeline to 12 months, with the exception being if the minister sends back the report to COSSARO for reconsideration in which case the 12-month period begins after COSSARO submits a second report. Speaker, this extends the timeline significantly and allows for the government to delay the designation of endangered species.

Let's say there is a development in process that would severely damage the habitat of an endangered species.

With this newly extended process of prescribing a species endangered, what does that mean for a species not yet designated? The timeline has extended, the development starts, and that species is not protected by this legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I would like to thank the member from Niagara Centre. You will

have an opportunity to finish your time next time the bill is called for debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
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