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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 November 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 novembre 2021

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BUILD ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER
NOS PROGRÈS ET À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Continuation of debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / *Projet de loi 43, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.*

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

Ms. Sara Singh: It's always an honour to rise in the House and contribute to the debate. It's an honour as the member from Brampton Centre, and also as critic for long-term care and home care, as well as deputy leader for the official opposition. So I'm honoured to bring multiple perspectives to the table here today.

I want to thank my colleague for Waterloo for a very passionate one-hour lead. I think she highlighted a number of different concerns with Bill 43, which is titled the Build Ontario Act. What is concerning is that this really, I think, signals to the people of Ontario what the government's true priorities are. This isn't really about building Ontario back; this is really about rewarding the Conservative government's friends and insiders by plowing ahead with infrastructure projects that haven't even been completely vetted—environmental impact assessments haven't been completed. But this government thinks that these are the priorities of everyday Ontarians, despite what we hear and what we have all gone through, through the pandemic. In this fall economic statement and this act, there's very little to actually help Ontarians recover from what we experienced.

Speaker, I want to start off by talking a little bit about Highway 413. I'm a member from Brampton, and congestion on our 400-series highways, and in particular the 410, is a major issue for residents of Brampton and the surrounding area. However, when I speak to people in my community, they aren't asking for another highway; they still have questions about why the 407 was sold off to private interests, when they were promised another highway years ago by Conservative governments.

These are the questions that I'm hearing. They want real solutions to tackle the congestion and gridlock that we face: investing in two-way, all-day GO, improving rail transit options, looking at building our bus infrastructure. These are the types of investments that communities like mine are looking for, investments in helping us improve active transportation. These are just some of the innovative ideas that residents in my community put forward, but this government doesn't seem to be listening.

When I speak to folks, they're very concerned that the government is plowing ahead with this project and they're not even sure what the costs are going to be, Speaker. I mean, there have been some estimates that this may cost \$6 billion; it may cost \$10 billion. Expert panels have already indicated that the project itself will not save time for commuters, despite the government claiming it will shave 30 minutes off a commuter's commute one way. Experts have said it's not even going to take 30 seconds off someone's commute—but it's going to cost folks \$6 billion to \$10 billion worth of taxpayers' money.

Speaker, there's a lot we could do with \$6 billion right now, like actually getting Brampton a full-service hospital. This is what I hear from our community. These are the types of infrastructure projects they want to see happening. They want to see money being spent on maybe, perhaps, easing the congestion and gridlock in our hallways in the hospital, where we have stretcher after stretcher piled up with patients who haven't been able to get the health care that they need. But yet we don't see any firm commitments to building another hospital here in our community.

Now, in connecting with our residents, I understand that there is a lot of frustration around the commuter congestion issue and that some folks are looking for ways to ensure that our trucking and logistics industries are not stuck on our highways. But this is where we can invest in looking at rail transportation options, ensuring that perhaps we look at incentives for the industry to utilize the 407, an underutilized piece of infrastructure—again, because of previous governments' failures—that is still costing taxpayers billions of dollars.

These are some of the things that I hear from young people in our community. And I want to highlight one person in particular, Divya Arora. I'm just going to find a little bit more about what Divya had to say from this CBC article that really highlights the division in our community around the 413 and its intended impacts here. Divya Arora is also a part of the Peel Community Climate Council. She is a youth, and this is a youth-led organization, a non-profit environmental organization, that actually pushed the region of Peel to call for a federal environmental impact

assessment on the highway. Divya feels that it may actually in some ways make her commute worse, not better, because more people will be using the highway in order to connect at the 410 and the 413.

I'm a commuter myself, and so I know that in Brampton, the 410 ends and then turns back into Hurontario. So parts of this project will connect these two routes. What Divya is concerned about is that there is going to be increased traffic using these routes once they are created—not reducing the traffic; actually increasing the amount of people who are on our highways and roadways, which I think is a really important consideration to think about. We already have a hyper-developed community that is struggling to keep up with the urban sprawl and the growing demand. Something like this is going to make the situation much worse, not better, for those drivers, especially in the northern parts of Brampton and into Caledon, where people will be flooding those other routes in order to get on the highways, who aren't currently using those routes that way.

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So Divya is concerned that Highway 413 will have grave impacts to our greenbelt and will result in the loss of farmland, unchecked sprawl from upcoming developments, leading to a lack of livability and a lack of affordable housing, which are already problems that our community is grappling with.

I think young people like Divya show so much leadership in our community, raising these concerns and highlighting what that impact is going to look like to the next generation, something that I think—as legislators, we often don't think ahead the way young people are about their future. I commend Divya and her colleagues at the Peel Community Climate Council for their tenacity in opposing this project and continuing their advocacy as they move forward.

As I said earlier, what Divya and so many others in the community feel are better options for investment are things like investing in Brampton transit and offering incentives for green vehicles—something your government has said no to time and time again. Reducing our carbon emissions requires that we invest in alternative solutions, so we could be providing incentives for people to move towards electric vehicles. But this is something your government does not want to invest in or provide tax credits for to incentivize people, to encourage that demand and encourage people to purchase a more environmentally friendly option.

I think there's a lot that we can continue to talk about around the 413, but it's no surprise that, as New Democrats, we're certainly going to oppose this project, because it didn't effectively consult with the community. It didn't complete an environmental impact assessment. In fact, there has not even been a real economic study of this project and what its long-term impacts are going to be. For that reason, we'll have a very difficult time supporting a project that isn't fully costed, isn't fully consulted on with the community and the stakeholders that are going to be impacted.

Despite the very clear opposition to this project, you're still plowing ahead with it. And it's not just members of the opposition; in fact, members of local council also have a lot to say about this project.

The mayor of Mississauga, Bonnie Crombie, for example—here's what she had to say in an article with the Record here: "The proposed GTA West highway will have a disastrous impact on the environment, encourage residential sprawl and increase our dependence on cars," she said back in February.

And then we have the mayor of Halton Hills, Rick Bonnette. I'll quote what he had to say: "This will lead to more urban sprawl, as developers will be building houses along the new route. Adding a highway is like Homer Simpson loosening his belt buckle at a buffet, thinking he is not gaining weight." Not my words; this is the mayor of Halton Hills.

As I said, it's not just the opposition that feels that this project is not what the community needs. Again, because you haven't done your due diligence in consulting the community, it's not something that should be moving ahead without that consultation and a real, I think, engagement with the community.

What we don't need is handing over the keys to developers for these infrastructure projects. We need governments to consult with people who are going to be impacted before moving ahead, and to ensure that it's actually going to be economically viable and have the impacts that you continue to tout they will. Like I've said, expert panels have indicated that not even 30 seconds will be shaved off of commuters' commutes.

We see in the fall economic statement a commitment to building highways. There is the Bradford Bypass and the 413, but again, we don't see a commitment to making sure that Brampton gets a third health care facility, like it desperately needs. We don't even see a full commitment to the city's ask of 850 beds; we get a pale 250 beds over seven years, which I'm sure is appreciated, of course. But when we actually look at what this community needs, and when you have an opportunity to invest and help us build the infrastructure that we need in our community, time and time again governments have failed the people of Brampton and the people of this community by not making the investments that we need to get people out of our hallways and get them the health care that they deserve.

It's not just about the hospital. I want to also highlight that across the region of Peel, we have never received our fair share of per capita health care dollars. I know that my colleagues across the way from the region of Peel are well aware of the fact that our community has been neglected when it comes to housing, when it comes to mental health care services. When it comes to investments in the supports that our community needs, we have been short-changed time and time again. But when the government of the day has the opportunity, especially with such a large number of members from the Peel region, to actually ensure that we're going to get the health care we need, but also the mental health services that our young people desperately need, the housing that our seniors and people with

disabilities are waiting and languishing on wait-lists for—those investments and commitments are not here in the fall economic statement. It doesn't seem to be very clear that this is a priority for this government.

As the critic for long-term care, what I think is just shocking, after all that we have learned through this pandemic, all that we have learned about for-profit operators and the quality of long-term care in those homes where profit has been the motive—those operators in particular have failed to provide the quality of care with dignity that residents in those long-term care homes deserve. Speaker, what this government has done instead is rewarded those bad actors with even more contracts, rather than using this as an opportunity to invest in not-for-profit care, to help the system transition over to the not-for-profit sector and ensure that municipal homes have the resources they need. This government chose to go in the opposite direction, in fact, and has chosen to invest billions of dollars of taxpayers' money into the for-profit corporations that we know neglected seniors, failed to provide the necessities of life in many instances, did not take care of their staff, unsafe working conditions—did not want to provide their staff PPE as they treated residents with garbage bags as PPE. What this government's response was, despite all we learned through the pandemic, was to provide those for-profit operators more contracts, more licences. In fact, over half of the new construction projects that are going to be allocated are to the for-profit sector.

More beds are desperately needed, but it doesn't mean that we're going to hand the keys over to the for-profit sector to continue this cycle of neglectful care that is not providing dignity and respect to the residents or the workers in those long-term care homes. Why would this government not use this as an opportunity to invest in not-for-profit care, invest in transitioning those homes, in building up that sector?

This was an opportunity to do that, to help to build up the not-for-profit sector, to invest in them, help get them the capacity, the resources that they need—because we know, as studies have shown, that in the not-for-profit sector the quality of care is far greater, the outcomes for patients much better. In municipal homes in the Peel region, we have, for example, the Butterfly program. We have homes like Peel Manor that are looking and begging for infrastructure dollars from the government for some of their capital projects. There's no real commitment from this government to invest in them. But when it came to rewarding folks like Orchard Villa, which we know, as the member from Oshawa has highlighted on behalf of those families time and time again, neglected residents, those folks are handed contracts to build more warehouses for seniors, rather than investing in assisted living in our communities, in village-type home settings. This is housing that the government can help create and invest in, but it chooses not to.

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When it comes to paying our PSWs, our front-line heroes, our health care workers a fair and decent wage, what the government has done through Bill 124 is cap

public sector wages. That means folks like our health care workers, like our nurses—their wages are stagnant, not keeping up with the rising cost of inflation.

They talk about wanting to build Ontario. How are we going to build Ontario when we have droves of health care workers leaving the sector because they aren't being paid fairly and they're being forced into unsafe working conditions, because the government is failing to address the underlying issue in the staffing crisis?

How are we going to build Ontario when folks are still living in poverty? A \$15 minimum wage is the bare minimum that is being provided here, and the government has done this three years later, after cancelling the minimum wage. You know who is being impacted: It's our front-line workers, essential workers. Those folks could have really benefited from a minimum wage increase two years ago, three years ago. At the start of the pandemic, in the middle of the pandemic, this could have been done for them.

As we know, the \$15 minimum wage isn't even keeping up with inflation or the rising cost of living. So I find it extremely concerning that when the government has an opportunity to do something beneficial here for the people of Ontario, it continues to just miss the mark, to really miss the mark on seizing the opportunities that are in front of it to help people, to help us build the infrastructure that we need, to help us grow the economy by maybe, perhaps, investing in innovative green technology.

We talk about getting folks off the highways. In Brampton, for example, we have an electrified bus fleet, something that we could be investing more in—

Interjection.

Ms. Sara Singh: I see the member from Mississauga-Lakeshore laughing through the accessible mask. It seems like quite a wild concept until you actually see it playing out in communities across the province, where they have transitioned their bus fleets and other forms of public transportation to electric modes. These are investments that the government can be supporting local municipalities with, and unfortunately, they aren't doing that.

I want to encourage the government, in the last few moments I have, to really think about the point in history that we are in right now, the state of our economy, the needs of people in our communities across the province, not just mine in Brampton Centre. What they really need to see from this government in terms of leadership and priorities—it's not about building highways; it's about investing in our schools. It's about building the health care capacity we need. It's about hiring health care workers and paying them fairly so that they will stay in our province. Not related to this, we have optometrists I speak to who are leaving Ontario because this government doesn't want to come to a deal with them.

But we have an opportunity here. I urge this government to do better, as always. It's a pleasure to rise and to share some thoughts, Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thank the member for Brampton Centre for her presentation, and we'll now do questions with respect to her speech. Questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: I always enjoy debating the member opposite. I would consider her a friend.

I was curious. She mentioned in her speech that we should be investing in green technologies. I would say that the investments we're making in the Ring of Fire, where we can do green resource development instead of taking those rare earths in developing countries, where we completely destroy the environment, to get those technologies over here—we can do that right here. So I would like to ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, if she is fully supportive of what we're doing to open up the Ring of Fire.

Ms. Sara Singh: I want to thank the member from Brantford–Brant—I'm always trying to test my own memory with members' ridings—for the question. Yes, I do consider him a friend. We have had some very lengthy and in-depth conversations, but none really about the Ring of Fire.

Speaker, it's hard for me to say whether we could support a project that perhaps isn't consulting with local communities, isn't taking into consideration the needs of First Nations. This is something that I think we do need to have further dialogue around how we can invest in our communities but do it in a way that is respectful and meets the needs of the local communities as well. Thank you very much for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good evening, Speaker. I listened very closely to what my friend had to say, and I watched the members opposite, who were listening intently as well. Brampton has tens of thousands of hard-working people facing lengthy daily commutes. But my understanding is that the number one priority in Brampton is a long-promised hospital. I'm just wondering if the member could tell us why this government doesn't get that. Why aren't they putting money on the table to build a long-promised hospital in Brampton?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member for the question; I think it's Windsor–Tecumseh. As you know, and people across the province know, this is the number one issue in Brampton: a hospital. Our community has desperately needed one. Speaker, I often joke that I was born in 1985 in Brampton at the one and only hospital, Peel Memorial, that we had back in the day. Fast-forward, we're in 2022 here and we still only have one hospital for a growing city of over 600,000 people. It's not clear why government after government has failed to deliver on their promise of a new health care facility, a fully functioning hospital, to our community. I don't know why this government made some empty promises. I know it's an election year, but I really hope that they will actually get shovels in the ground and deliver on that. But the details are thin, and I'm not holding my breath.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Brampton Centre; I think you're a friend, as well. You were talking about developing green vehicles, green everything, and I agree with you totally. When looking at the 413, the 413 will be built in approximately 10 years. In

10 years' time, pretty much 80% of our vehicles will be green, so that will become a green highway. Are you against having green highways and supporting green vehicles moving forward?

Ms. Sara Singh: I guess you can always count on your friends to make you laugh there. To the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore, I'm sorry to say I think that logic, respectfully, is a little flawed. I think that what we don't want to see is you plowing through the greenbelt and parts of the greenbelt. What you need to do is actually incentivize people to purchase greener technology and purchase electric vehicles so we can get electric vehicles on the roads and reduce our emissions. But the reality is that your government cut those incentives and isn't helping people change their pattern of behaviour. While you can anecdotally suggest that that may be the reality, if folks can't actually purchase those vehicles, we're not going to see the greening of those vehicles happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This government has had countless opportunities to show leadership on the insurance file. I want you to tell us a little bit about auto insurance rates in Brampton. Do the people of Brampton need relief and leadership from the government in this area?

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Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek for a really important question, because actually, next to the hospital, when I'm out door-knocking and chatting with folks in our community, auto insurance rates are a top-of-mind issue for folks. Unfortunately, this government—yet another promise they failed to deliver on for the people of this province and the people of Brampton: lowering their auto insurance rates. We talk about congestion. Folks in Brampton pay some of the highest auto insurance premiums in the province. When we, as opposition members, have brought forward thoughtful bills to help change postal code discrimination, to help cap people's auto insurance premiums throughout this pandemic, this government did not choose to support those bills and motions and, unfortunately, they haven't even been able to deliver on reducing people's auto insurance premiums.

Thanks to the member from Humber River–Black Creek, because yes, that is top of mind and a number one issue for us in our local community.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I just want to correct the record and say that we are putting money on the table for Brampton; that's \$1 billion. I think Mayor Brown also was on record agreeing that it's great news for the people of Brampton that this investment is coming. I know it's 250 new beds, which is a significant increase. Prior to that, we also put in an 87-bed allocation to the William Osler Health System.

In addition to that, we are investing in mental health. We had a really great announcement made in the region of Peel, in Brampton, on supporting mental health care services for our front-line workers, who have been working so hard during the pandemic. I wanted to ask the

member if she will be voting yes for this fall economic statement, which is bringing \$1 billion to her community in Brampton.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from Mississauga Centre for the question. Unfortunately, these empty promises that the government continues to make will not deliver a new hospital to our city. In fact, all they are doing is expanding the Peel Memorial William Osler urgent care centre. That doesn't mean that we're getting the 850 beds that our city desperately needs. And while I know that members opposite want to quote our local mayor, I think they should read the quote in its entirety, where the mayor does very clearly indicate that this is not far enough. These investments will not help make a dent in the growing demand that we need. I encourage them to actually fulfill their promises and bring a third hospital to our community, because that is what you said you were going to do and the shovels are not in the ground yet.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the member opposite for her contributions. I've been listening this afternoon to a number of colleagues from the NDP speak about induced demand and the 413 and their concerns about this induced demand. I have to make a deduction based on that induction, which is that if there are other highways in this province—which I'm sure we all use, whether it's the QEW or various 400-series highways—the opposition would have opposed those highways as well, and they wouldn't want to have seen any highways built in this province. So my question is, will the NDP government rip those roads up and make sure that this induced demand doesn't become a reduced demand?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thanks for the question. It's just entertaining to listen to some of these questions, Speaker, to say the least. I think what's important here is that the NDP supports good infrastructure projects that have been fully costed, where environmental impact assessments have been done, where consultations with those communities have been conducted. Unfortunately, what this government likes to do is just plow ahead with ill-advised projects that haven't taken into consideration the needs of the local community or their voices either. That's not something that New Democrats can support.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question. The member for Oshawa, if she wishes to ask a question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Indeed she does, Speaker. I have an article here from Oshawa This Week. I know that the member works very hard as our critic on long-term care and delves into home care. There aren't any seniors that are looking forward to long-term care. We don't see what we should in this mini-budget: investing in home care. Is it a strategic investment to put into these agencies and organizations that look after our seniors in the communities, or is it fine for this government to turn a blind eye to them?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for the question—also a staunch advocate for

seniors in her community. I think, as I said earlier, what is important is that we need to be investing in home care and community-based services in the not-for-profit sector. Unfortunately, what this government has done is hand over millions of dollars of taxpayers' money through these lucrative contracts to the for-profit sector, which we know were some of the worse actors through the pandemic. This is not what this province needs at this critical juncture. We need to be investing in community-based care, and we have the opportunity to do that. The government has failed yet again.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good evening, Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 43.

Ontario is facing a climate and housing affordability crisis as we deal with an unprecedented pandemic. But you would never know it reading the fall economic statement. It mentions "climate change" four times, "highways" 58 times and "affordable housing" once.

I've heard the Premier say, over and over again, yes to building highways. But let's be clear: The fall economic statement says no to affordable child care, no to affordable housing, no to increasing funding for education, no to paying nurses and PSWs like the heroes they are, no to increasing supports for people with disabilities, no to solving the eye care crisis, no to more funding support for small businesses, no to community-based land use planning under the Far North Act, no to cleaner air and better regional transit, no to protecting the farmland that feeds us, no to protecting the wetlands that clean our drinking water and protect us from flooding and no to climate solutions.

Speaker, if the Premier truly cared about reducing gridlock, he would not bury his head in the concrete of highway projects that primarily benefit wealthy land speculators and PC donors. We have 75 years of history that show that building more highways leads to more sprawl, more gridlock and more climate pollution. We simply can't afford to continue to make the same mistakes over and over again, Speaker.

It doesn't have to be this way. Budgets are about priorities, and the Ontario Greens would say yes to building a greener and more caring Ontario; yes to building better, more livable and affordable communities, where people can live close to where they shop, play and work; yes to better health care, better education and better access to mental health services; yes to protecting farmland that feeds us, the wetlands that protect us, the greenbelt and the places that we love in this province; yes to climate solutions that attract global investment in the fastest-emerging markets, where we can create new businesses, better jobs and new careers for people, ensuring our prosperity for future generations and leaving them a livable planet.

But it will be hard to say yes to all these good things if the Premier continues to waste \$10 billion on a highway that will save commuters 30 seconds and that people in the region are clearly saying they do not want. Speaker, we can do better; we must do better.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions to the member for Guelph?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for the presentation. One of the parts of this bill—here is a quote from Virginia Hackson, who is the mayor of East Gwillimbury. I want to read it: “The Bradford Bypass is greatly needed to service the growing population of our community, provide a more efficient east-west connection, attract more businesses and reduce congestion on our local roads. Ultimately this new highway will contribute to a safer community and a stronger local economy and for that we are grateful to our provincial and municipal partners.”

Speaker, you heard me say here earlier that there is an absolute need, as our population grows across the province, for us to address that, to make sure that families see each other faster and sooner, that workers are able to get to work and spend less time on the road, that our businesses spend less time—having those trucks sitting idling isn’t good for the environment. We’ve all talked about that.

I’m wondering, with highway projects like the 413 and the Bradford Bypass—the member and I have had conversations about this—why the member isn’t supporting this bill.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I’m not supporting this bill because these highway schemes are a climate, economic and financial disaster. Both the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413 will significantly increase climate pollution at a time when we need to reduce climate pollution, according to independent studies. Years of history have shown us that the more highways you build, the more gridlock it creates, the more congestion it creates and the more sprawl it creates.

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A 2014 master transportation study showed that there were alternatives to the Bradford Bypass that had less ecological damage, particularly to Lake Simcoe, which so many people in this province love and want to protect. A 2018 transportation study showed that building Highway 413 made absolutely no sense financially, environmentally, economically, because why would you spend \$10 billion to save commuters 30 seconds? Speaker, we have more fiscally responsible, environmentally responsible and economically beneficial alternatives to these highway projects.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I do have a question for the member from Guelph. I heard him say, I don’t know, 10 or 20 things that the government has said no to that he would say yes to. My softball question to the member from Guelph: How would you pay for all of those “yes” things?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member’s question—and I do like softballs every now and then. The bottom line is, if you’re going to spend \$10 billion, possibly more, on Highway 413, \$1.5 billion, possibly more, on the Bradford Bypass, there are a lot of things that you can buy that will benefit the people of Ontario: better health care, better education, affordable housing, better regional transit and climate solutions that will set our economy up to be successful moving forward into the

future. Speaker, we have better solutions than the gridlock-and-sprawl-supercharging highways that this government wants to make. The fiscally responsible approach is to prioritize that money on the things that the people of Ontario want and need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, through you to the member, I always appreciate his perspective on so many of these things. I’d like to ask him, because it kind of came up, if we want to invest in the future green economy, does he agree that we need to invest in opening up the Ring of Fire so that we can harness not just the economic potential, but the fact that the minerals that are there, the rare earth metals that are there, will be able to drive our economy forward?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member opposite’s question. Yes, we absolutely need a mining and manufacturing strategy in Ontario for electric vehicle manufacturing and battery storage, but we have to do it in the right way. I’m deeply concerned about schedule 10 in the fall economic statement because it completely undermines community land use planning processes in the Far North. If the Ring of Fire is going to be successful, Speaker, we have to have community-based land use planning, agreements that benefit Indigenous communities. We need to make sure we have grid connections to electrify it using renewable energy. We have to do this right, Speaker, if it’s truly going to be green.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good evening, Speaker. I’m pleased to be able to speak on second reading of Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act, 2021. What’s striking about this particular legislation is that it lays out how the government will build the foundation for Ontario’s recovery and prosperity by getting shovels in the ground on critical infrastructure, attracting increased investment, restoring leadership in auto manufacturing and other industries. The plan also, importantly, protects Ontario’s progress against the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, constituents in my Whitby riding are supportive of the investments in continuing to fight the pandemic and promote economic recovery.

I’ll turn to some of the highlights from Bill 43, which include: \$345 million in 2021 and 2022 to support municipal transit systems, like Durham Region Transit, as they recover from the pandemic and continue to serve our broad community in the region; \$200 million in annual funding over the next five years to increase support for municipal infrastructure—Speaker, I’ve participated in many Association of Municipalities of Ontario conferences, and as you would expect at these conferences, the region of Durham, as an upper-tier government, made dispositions on this particular aspect; and \$61 million to expand home and community care services to enable the transition of patients recovering from surgeries or living with complex health conditions from hospitals back into their homes. We’ve heard from our constituents that that’s where they want to be. In the region of Durham, where my riding is and my colleague from Oshawa’s riding is, that

process is led by the Ontario health team Lakeridge Health.

Speaker, these are just some of the ways in which our government is demonstrating its resolve to protect and support people—protect and support people in the region of Durham and all across other parts of Ontario. As we continue to protect the hard-won progress against the pandemic, our government is looking forward with our plan to build a better and brighter future for families, hard-working families, workers and businesses in Whitby and other parts of Ontario. By unlocking critical minerals in the north, harnessing our manufacturing capacity, which diminished with the previous government, and building critical infrastructure, Bill 43 will drive our economic recovery and prosperity for every region of our province, including the region of Durham.

Speaker, as an upper-tier government, Durham regional council approved, as you would expect, the Regional Recovery Framework and Action Plan. This plan is built on four pillars: social recovery, built recovery, economic recovery and, not surprising, municipal recovery. The proposed legislation before us will support the region's implementation of this action plan and, in the process, enhance the well-being and prosperity of eight municipalities, including the town of Whitby.

We also have a plan to build a health and long-term care system that delivers the quality of care our loved ones deserve. Some of the features of that include hiring more staff and improving the quality of long-term care that residents receive and the quality of life they experience. And I know, Speaker, that we all agree they deserve no less. We all agree that we would want to say yes, not no.

To address decades of neglect and help those waiting to get into long-term care, we plan to invest an additional \$3.7 billion, beginning in 2024-25, to build an additional 10,000 net new long-term-care beds and upgrade 12,000 existing beds to modern design standards. This would bring total investment to \$6.4 billion since the spring of 2019, an investment that will lead to more than 30,000 net new beds by 2028 and approximately 28,000 upgraded long-term-care beds across the province.

Now, a sign of this long-awaited progress in Durham region is the new long-term care home at Lakeridge Health in Ajax, the home of our Minister of Long-Term Care. It will be part of a campus of care, to better ensure residents have access to the complex and specialized care they need. And the addition of 169 beds at Glen Hill Terrace in Whitby is also welcome news.

Speaker, you'll know that the Liberals only built 611 net beds during their time in government. And let's just stay with that figure: 611 net beds during their time in government—15 years. How many beds did residents in the region of Durham receive, Speaker, in that period? Zero, not one bed. The largest region in the province of Ontario, with close to a million people in it—how many beds did it receive? Zero—absolutely shameful.

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To strengthen the health and long-term care workforce, Ontario is investing \$342 million, beginning in 2021-22,

to add over 5,000 new and upskilled registered nurses and registered practical nurses, as well as 8,000 personal support workers.

I want to bring it back to the town of Whitby that I have the privilege of representing. In Whitby, Fairview Lodge will receive \$705,000 for additional staff. By the year 2024-25, this long-term care home will receive over \$4 million annually more than their current funding.

Lakeridge Health in Oshawa, as I mentioned earlier, is a health care facility and has two other hospitals as part of that facility to lead the Ontario health team. It is comprised of 17 or 18 other organizations. But Lakeridge Health in Oshawa will receive up to \$242,000 for additional staffing. By the year 2024-25, the home will receive \$1.5 million annually more than their current funding, as they should.

In addition, the Village of Taunton Mills in my riding of Whitby will receive up to \$427,000 for additional staffing. By the year 2024-25, the home will receive close to \$3 million annually more than their current funding.

To ensure long-term care residents' safety, the government is providing an additional \$72.3 million over three years to increase enforcement capacity, including doubling the number of inspectors across the province by 2022-23. Now, why is this significant, beyond the safety features and care of the residents living in these homes? This will make Ontario's inspector to long-term care homes ratio the highest in Canada, Speaker. That's the highest in Canada.

When the Minister of Finance spoke earlier today, he underscored an important lesson from the pandemic—and I don't want to lose the thrust of that particular statement—that our health care system is linked: public health, ICU capacity, mental health, and surgical wait times. And we must continue to build our capacity in all four aspects together. He knows that from his own experience working with Lakeridge Health in Oshawa in their capacity as the lead for the Ontario health team. He understands the intrinsic value of that. He understands the outcomes of that.

To help hospitalized patients continue their recovery and rehabilitation at home, where they're most comfortable, our government is investing an additional \$548 million over three years to expand home and community care. This funding will support up to 28,000 post-acute surgical patients and 21,000 patients with complex health conditions every year. This government and our finance minister have demonstrated once again the level of our consultation and engagement, and how well we listen to the role that Lakeridge Health plays in leading our Ontario health team.

Now, Speaker, to support the mental health and well-being of health and long-term care workers across the province, the government is investing \$12.4 million over two years, starting in 2021-22, to continue rapid access to existing and expanded mental health and addiction supports through organizations, once again, like Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences in my riding. But this particular facility serves all of the region of Durham and the province of Ontario.

Meanwhile, unlike the opposition, the government has a plan to build Ontario's future, with shovels in the ground for hospitals, housing and high-speed Internet. We've listened once again. Our finance minister, our Premier and other cabinet ministers have listened well to the input and feedback we've received from, for example, Durham regional council and our regional chair, John Henry.

In this legislation, Ontario is responding to the need expressed by the eight municipalities in the region of Durham and other municipalities in other parts of Ontario, through the doubling of its annual investment in the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund program. This request came up repeatedly in deputations at the AMO conference. It came up in deputations that Durham regional council made through Regional Chair Henry.

This additional multi-year investment of \$1 billion will bring the total investment to nearly \$2 billion over the next five years, beginning in 2021-22, to provide certainty and predictability—and that's what municipalities told us—to the 424 small, rural and northern communities so that they can build and repair roads, bridges, and water and wastewater infrastructure.

To provide all regions of Ontario, like Durham, with access to affordable, reliable high-speed Internet by the end of 2025, the province has made a historic commitment of nearly \$4 billion over six years.

I want to move back to health care. To support growing demands on the health care system, Ontario is investing \$30.2 billion over the next 10 years to build, expand and enhance hospitals like the Lakeridge Health complex in the region of Durham, a historic commitment to ensure that hard-working families can get the care they need in communities like Whitby, Ajax, Pickering and the other municipalities that form the region of Durham.

Speaker, I'd like to now turn to workers, as we are truly working for workers. The government wants workers, as our finance minister said, in a race to the top, not a race to the bottom. That's why the government has a plan to build up Ontario workers, by providing funding so that workers can learn new skills and attracting investment in critical

minerals, automotive manufacturing and other industries to create good-paying jobs.

On learning new skills, in the region of Durham we have a skilled trade centre at Durham College, situated in both Whitby and Oshawa. Many of these workers who are retraining are going to that skilled trades centre going forward.

I have a quote that I want to read into the record tonight. It's from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, responding in support of the fall economic statement, noting our government's focus on recovery. The quote is from OPSEU president Warren "Smokey" Thomas. He said, "Our economy really is a machine. And the public sector is a key part of it, and our province's economic recovery. We're pleased to see today's commitment to continue investing in job training and in our health and long-term care systems; it's a rejection of austerity, and that's great news." It is great news.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our finance minister and other members of cabinet, our government is grateful for the support of OPSEU. Make no mistake: We will continue fighting for the hard-working families and workers in Whitby, Durham region and across Ontario.

Our government has a responsible and prudent plan that creates the conditions for an economic and fiscal recovery driven by growth. It is a plan to protect the progress we've made and to build for the future. It's a plan that all members should stand in their place and support. Stand with us and say yes, not no.

Speaker, at this juncture, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Coe has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

Mr. Michael Parsa: No further business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1901.

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Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Donna Skelly, Sara Singh
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