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Mardi
30 novembre 2021

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 30 November 2021 / Mardi 30 novembre 2021

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021, Bill 13, Mrs. Tangri / Loi de 2021 visant à soutenir la population et les entreprises, projet de loi 13, Mme Tangri

Hon. Nina Tangri	1331
Hon. Todd Smith	1337
Ms. Catherine Fife	1339
Ms. Donna Skelly	1340
Mr. Jeff Burch	1340
Mr. Will Bouma	1340
Ms. Suze Morrison	1341
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	1341

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Insurance rates

Mr. Tom Rakocevic	1341
-------------------------	------

Warton Willie

Mr. Bill Walker	1341
-----------------------	------

Affordable housing

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	1342
-------------------------------	------

Long-term care

Mr. Billy Pang	1342
----------------------	------

Injured workers

Ms. Jessica Bell	1342
------------------------	------

Explosion in Chatham-Kent–Leamington

Mr. Rick Nicholls	1343
-------------------------	------

Flooding in British Columbia

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu	1343
--------------------------	------

Season's greetings

Mr. Percy Hatfield	1343
--------------------------	------

Road safety

Mr. John Yakabuski	1344
--------------------------	------

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	1344
-------------------------------------	------

Harry Craig Parrott

Mr. Percy Hatfield	1344
Mr. Stephen Blais	1345
Mr. Mike Schreiner	1346
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	1346

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

COVID-19 response

Ms. Sara Singh	1347
Hon. Christine Elliott	1347
Hon. Paul Calandra	1348

Minimum wage

Ms. Sara Singh	1348
Hon. Paul Calandra	1348
Hon. Doug Ford	1349

Government's record

Ms. Marit Stiles	1349
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	1349

Nurses

Ms. Laurie Scott	1350
Hon. Jill Dunlop	1350

Autism treatment

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	1350
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton	1351

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. Rick Nicholls	1351
Hon. Christine Elliott	1351

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. John Yakabuski	1352
Hon. Christine Elliott	1352

Mental health and addiction services / Homelessness

Ms. Jessica Bell	1352
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo	1353

Land use planning

Mme Lucille Collard	1353
Hon. Steve Clark	1353

Affordable housing

Mr. Dave Smith	1354
Hon. Steve Clark	1354

Winter highway maintenance

Mr. Michael Mantha	1354
Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam	1355

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. Rick Nicholls	1355
Hon. Christine Elliott	1355

Paramedic services

Mr. Jeff Burch	1356
Hon. Christine Elliott	1356

Employment standards / Public safety

Mr. John Fraser	1356
Hon. Paul Calandra	1357

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Working for Workers Act, 2021, Bill 27, Mr. McNaughton / Loi de 2021 visant à oeuvrer pour les travailleurs, projet de loi 27, M. McNaughton	
Third reading agreed to	1357
Throne speech debate	
Motion agreed to	1358

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	1358
Report deemed adopted.....	1358
Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly	
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	1358
Ms. Sara Singh.....	1358
Mr. John Fraser	1360
Hon. Paul Calandra	1361
Hon. David Piccini.....	1362
Report adopted	1363
Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills	
Mr. John Fraser	1363
Report adopted	1363
Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills	
Mr. John Fraser	1363
Report adopted	1363

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Endometriosis Awareness Month Act, 2021, Bill 58, Ms. Stiles / Loi de 2021 sur le mois de	
--	--

sensibilisation à l'endométriose, projet de loi 58, Mme Stiles	
First reading agreed to.....	1363
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	1363

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Services d'optométrie	
M. Guy Bourgouin	1363
Community planning	
Ms. Marit Stiles	1364
Nurses	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	1364

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021, Bill 13, Mrs. Tangri / Loi de 2021 visant à soutenir la population et les entreprises, projet de loi 13, Mme Tangri	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1365
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	1372
Ms. Peggy Sattler	1373
Mr. John Yakabuski	1373
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	1373
Hon. Todd Smith.....	1374
Mr. Dave Smith.....	1374
Mr. Paul Miller.....	1377
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	1377
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	1377
Mr. Bill Walker	1378
Ms. Sara Singh	1378
Mr. Michael Parsa	1378

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 November 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 novembre 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING PEOPLE
AND BUSINESSES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT
À SOUTENIR LA POPULATION
ET LES ENTREPRISES

Mrs. Tangri moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 13, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi
13, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to lead off the debate.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Good morning, Speaker, and everyone in the House today. I'm honoured to rise today to speak to third reading of the proposed Supporting People and Businesses Act.

Today, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Energy, the member for Bay of Quinte, Todd Smith. I'd like to thank him in advance for his ministry's pieces in this important legislation.

In 2018, one of the most important promises our government made to the people of Ontario was to work hard every day to cut red tape, and that's what we have been doing. When we took office, it cost Ontario companies an average of \$33,000 per year to comply with regulations. That was the highest of any province or territory in the country. Since then, we've been working hard to bring that cost down.

Speaker, first, I'd like to provide some context for this proposed legislation. The pandemic has shown us that our work to reduce unnecessary red tape and regulatory burdens is more important than ever. Ontario is the manufacturing engine of Canada, and the pandemic has made it very clear that we are a supply chain economy. Ontario supplies components to businesses across Canada and right across North America, and it's for that reason we must keep operating costs for Ontario businesses as low as possible while strengthening standards that are essential in keeping people healthy and protecting the environment.

The biggest single lever we have to support Ontario businesses is to make regulations easier, faster and less costly to comply with, and that's exactly what we're doing. As we confront COVID-19 for the second straight

year, people and businesses continue to be faced with new and ongoing pandemic-related challenges. But we've learned along the way. We've gained some valuable lessons about how government can work better for communities, for people and for businesses, and we are working diligently to ensure the people of Ontario have continued access to critical services while we are discovering new ways to connect people to them. Some of the most promising solutions are coming from secure digital technology, which will meet the public's needs with unprecedented speed and convenience.

While much of the work is under way, there is still more to do, which brings us here today, Speaker. The bill we're discussing is designed to further meet the needs of people and businesses in forward-thinking and responsible ways, ones that would maintain or enhance health, safety and environmental protections.

We know you can't have a strong economy without strong people. Through sensible red tape reduction, this bill would lighten the load for people and businesses weighed down by the pandemic's demands. That's why we are working to make Ontario's programs and front-line services more convenient, reliable and accessible. With hard work, we'll achieve a modern, efficient and customer-focused government.

We are a people who want to get going, get moving and not waste our time and energy with unnecessary, outdated and repetitive compliance measures. It's hard to manage a business, advance your work or simply get through the day when you are spending countless hours filling out paper forms, repeating the same requirements that have to be fulfilled multiple times or completing other time-intensive administrative work.

The same could be said if you are trying to update important information like your address, bring your pet on the patio with you at a restaurant in the summer or get a police record check done to volunteer. That's how regulatory burden takes up our time and money today, while making it less attractive for people and businesses to invest their energy right here in the long-term.

Cutting red tape frees people and businesses from spending unproductive energy complying with rules that go beyond what's necessary to achieve desired regulatory outcomes. Less red tape will minimize frustration, save money and give us more time—things we could all use more of right now.

But we are making progress. For example, as documented in this year's burden reduction report, we're automating and introducing electronic submissions to get life-saving drugs and devices to Ontarians faster. We're

deploying state-of-the-art technology, including drones, to transform inspections. And we're switching to a digital reporting service to ensure hazardous waste is properly stored, transported, processed and managed.

These actions are strengthening our province's status as one of the pillars of the North American supply chain, and we're helping communities, businesses and workers as we continue to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course, this bill proposes to do more than eliminate needless regulatory compliance requirements. It also goes a long way to modernizing Ontario's regulatory system. Through this bill, we would introduce changes to digitize, streamline and expedite how people and business interact with government. Smarter, modern regulations that use digital pathways where possible are easier and faster to adhere to, so people and business owners can focus on what matters most: our families, our communities and our economy.

Modernizing Ontario's regulatory system to keep pace with current challenges is, in fact, a strategic way we can help more people and businesses get back on track. There's proof in what we've already achieved. Since 2020, we've passed four high-impact regulatory modernization bills and their corresponding packages of regulatory changes and policy announcements.

While our government has been working to reduce red tape since 2018, the pandemic has made this work even more critical. We need to do all we can to support economic recovery and growth. There is neither time nor money to waste.

0910

Through the following acts, we've intensified our work to modernize regulations so businesses can stay open and grow. The acts are: the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act; the Main Street Recovery Act; the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act; and the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act.

I want to commend and thank the President of the Treasury Board, former Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and member for Brampton South for bringing these bills forward. The bill before us today is a continuation of the incredible work done before us. I would like to now review some of the tangible changes introduced by those acts.

Speaker, it is clear that we have an infrastructure deficit and need to get many important projects built—projects to build the much-needed homes and the transit around them. With the province growing each year, we need to have proper housing, transit and roads for these individuals. We also need better access to broadband so everyone can access the Internet in an ever-increasing digital world, and I would like to commend the Minister of Infrastructure for the great work that she is doing to ensure everyone across this province will have great broadband.

That's why the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act focused on speeding up the ability to fund this critical infrastructure. This act was the first step in our plan for growth, renewal and recovery. It was designed to get infrastructure projects built faster while positioning

Ontario as a modern regulator in response to an evolving pandemic.

To help address infrastructure backlogs for businesses and communities, the act has modernized and streamlined environmental assessment processes. This was accomplished by updating the almost 50-year-old environmental assessment program to focus resources on projects with the highest impact on the environment. Through this change, the approval timelines for some projects have been reduced from six years to three. By matching the level of assessment requirements with the environmental impact of a proposed project, important infrastructure projects can move forward without unnecessary delays. And as mentioned in the recent fall economic statement, our government is ready to rebuild.

One way we are speeding up timelines is by providing a single consolidated environmental compliance approvals process for low-impact municipal sewage collection and stormwater management projects. This gets rid of separate approvals for each project, especially for simple routine changes by municipalities, including alterations, extensions, enlargements or replacement projects. It's about making sensible changes that make doing business easier without compromising the strong standards currently in place.

Finally, to help people and businesses in the construction sector, this act is making it easier and faster to update the building code. Streamlining the building code development process, supporting harmonization with national construction codes and allowing Ontario to respond faster to the needs of the construction sector is helping to keep more people working and communities operating smoothly across the province while reducing interprovincial trade barriers. One thing we can all agree on is the need to speed up construction projects so people can get back to work safely in the province. As mentioned earlier, we have an infrastructure deficit and we need to use the tools available to us to build as quickly as we can. Infrastructure deficits slow down the economy and make investors look elsewhere.

We followed up this bill with the Main Street Recovery Act in November 2020. The purpose of this bill was to support the small and main-street businesses that fuel our economy and bring life to our communities. Small and main-street businesses all over Ontario have dealt with urgent and unexpected pressures related to cash-flow problems, customer limits and physical distancing since the onset of the pandemic. The last thing they need as they navigate a profoundly disruptive time are outdated and unnecessary rules that slow them down and cost them money.

Consider, Speaker, the impact of flexible delivery options on stressed retailers, suppliers and consumers. The changes we made to the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act paved the way to enable off-peak deliveries to retailers, restaurants and distribution centres to keep store shelves full through the first wave of the pandemic while many retailers were experiencing low supplies.

As part of the fall 2020 red tape reduction package, we have made these changes permanent. This will support

main-street rebuilding efforts by helping much-needed goods reach businesses as efficiently as possible. Off-peak delivery helps build consumer confidence and alleviates business owners' concerns. And it also helps keep supply chains moving by getting goods delivered when they are needed and where they are needed. The changes also have the potential to reduce rush-hour traffic, lower fuel costs for businesses and reduce greenhouse gas and other emissions.

Another example from the Main Street Recovery Act was increasing the diversity of products sold at the Ontario Food Terminal. This change helped support main-street retailers, restaurants and shoppers by giving them greater access to the products they need. Thousands of small businesses, including independent shops and restaurants, rely on the terminal for their supplies. Amendments to the act expanded the terminal's mandate, allowing it to promote local food. This not only helps support the growth of Ontario's agri-food economy, it also gives the terminal a hand up to compete in a crowded marketplace. These changes allow buyers and small businesses to keep existing customers coming back while attracting new ones. I do want to thank the Minister of Agriculture for all the work that she put in to make sure that that happened.

This legislation, together with its comprehensive package of financial and wraparound supports, contains amendments that are modernizing regulations and making smart changes to help us to continue to enjoy vibrant main streets. This includes helping to offset personal protective equipment for employers with two to 19 employees, with a one-time grant of up to \$1,000; creating single-window access for small businesses supports online; and providing mental health supports for families, front-line workers, young people, children and Indigenous communities. I would like to take the opportunity to thank our Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for the immense work that he has been doing to support employers and employees, workers and people across the province.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, passed in December 2020. Changes in this act, along with other measures, included:

- requiring gas and electric utilities to adopt Green Button technology. This new capability allows utility consumers to automate the secure transfer of their energy uses so they can understand their energy consumption and reduce costs;

- supporting renewable and alternative fuels and emissions-reduction technology;

- allowing single-traffic studies for an entire specified highway corridor or area to reduce duplication and enable developers to get shovels in the ground faster;

- protecting the environment and the health of Ontarians by improving hazardous waste tracking;

- making it easier for property developers to get the environmental information they need by moving from a manual, paper-based process to a much faster digital delivery platform;

- requiring water bottling companies to receive support from the host municipality prior to applying for a new or increased permit to take groundwater; and

- cutting red tape for intercommunity bus carriers to improve transportation options in rural and northern Ontario, making it easier for workers and families to access more transportation options.

The focal point of the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act that passed in June 2021 was about laying the foundation for a strong recovery and an even stronger future in the years ahead. This comprehensive package of 90 legislative and regulatory actions and announcements is helping to position businesses for new opportunities as vaccinations rise and the competition ramps back up.

Changes in this act, along with other measures in the package, include:

- helping to ensure Ontario remains a global leader in the connected- and automated-vehicle industry by supporting innovative pilot programs;

- modernizing Ontario by bringing more processes and services online, like sticker renewal for heavy commercial vehicle licence plates;

- enhancing protections for workers by strengthening policies that keep them safe, like reviewing the working at heights training program to improve standards for training content and delivery;

- supporting the not-for-profit sector and other corporations by allowing them to continue to hold virtual meetings during the pandemic.

0920

Speaker, consider how this act is helping to strengthen Ontario's mining industry while supporting electric-vehicle and battery manufacturing to promote sustainable growth. Northern Ontario's rich mineral resources position our province to become an international supplier, producer and manufacturer of critical minerals that facilitate electric-vehicle and battery manufacturing. That's why our Critical Minerals Strategy lays out a bold vision, one where we can generate increased investment while supporting the transition to a low-carbon global economy.

By amending the Mining Act, this legislation is supporting Ontario's growing critical minerals sector. The amendment allows claim holders to sell the end product of a bulk sample and keep the proceeds without the province's permission. This helps create business certainty and improves timelines for mining projects, making Ontario companies more competitive on the world stage. Speaker, we're so proud to support these Ontario job creators and their work to strengthen next-generation industries, and we want to assure the House that, through these proposals, the government is committed to balancing a competitive mining sector with environmental protection and sustainability.

Speaker, we're proud to report that, thanks in large part to the aforementioned acts and packages, Ontario has reduced needless regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5% over the three years ending in June 2021. This rate of burden reduction compares favourably with other leading jurisdictions and is a significant achievement, and it's getting quantifiable results. Since June 2018, businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, universities and colleges,

school boards and hospitals have benefited from \$373 million in net annual compliance cost savings. This is money Ontario businesses and public-serving organizations can put to better use, year after year. Doing this amid a pandemic was not easy. However, it demonstrates our commitment to minimizing burdens and doing whatever it takes to protect people's health and safety during a global pandemic.

Speaker, although the 2021 Burden Reduction Report quantified compliance cost savings for businesses and organizations, it's important to note that these changes have also had an impact on our number one priority: people. Smart, modern regulations can improve how people go about their lives, making it easier for them to interact with important public services. That's why we continue to update regulations and reduce burdens in ways that save people time and money, like removing the requirement for high school students to submit paper-based forms on community involvement activities. By allowing students to submit this important diploma requirement online, we're saving time and frustration for students and administrators alike. It's a simple fix that makes sense, and it shows how regulatory modernization and burden reduction can benefit Ontarians from all walks of life.

Speaker, we've taken a team Ontario approach to larger pieces of legislation, working across ministries to identify opportunities to ease burdens while prioritizing fundamental protections. Part of that team approach, as reflected in the legislation being reviewed today, involves protecting what Ontarians value most. The proposed regulatory modernization initiatives in the Supporting People and Businesses Act have been designed to uphold these protections, and in many cases improve them.

A few weeks ago, the Minister of Finance stood in this House and delivered the fall economic statement. Outlined in that statement were the three pillars on which Ontario's plan is based:

- building Ontario by getting shovels in the ground for highways, hospitals, housing and high-speed Internet;
- protecting Ontario's progress and the hard-fought gains Ontario has made in fighting COVID-19 by continuing to build a health and long-term-care system that delivers the quality of care that our loved ones deserve, while continuing to protect communities and families; and
- working for workers by focusing on the workers of Ontario, because Ontario workers should be in a race to the top, not a race to the bottom.

Speaker, these pillars are just what we are supporting with this proposed legislation and the full fall package.

As I stated earlier, the pandemic has shone a light on red tape and burdens that previously we may never have noticed. This has included the delivery of alcohol with the purchase of food, off-peak delivery for businesses to keep the supply chain moving and more.

Another important change we are proposing is to make permanent the delivery and curbside pickup of cannabis across the province. This change was introduced during the pandemic to allow individuals, including those in need of medical cannabis, to purchase and receive their orders

in a safe and quick manner. This helped reduce mobility when COVID cases were high and everyone was encouraged to stay home. It was also a huge step in combatting the illicit market, where delivery is a common feature.

Omar Khan, senior vice-president for corporate and public affairs with High Tide Inc., had this to say about the change: "The ability for legal retailers to permanently offer delivery, in particular, will eliminate a competitive advantage which illicit retailers previously enjoyed." This "drew some consumers to remain committed to purchasing from the illicit market."

He went on further to state that, according to research from Deloitte, location and convenience are amongst the most important factors which can keep consumers attached to the illicit market, unless legal retailers have the necessary tools to compete on these measures. The same research has also found that the ability to order cannabis products online and have them delivered to a customer's home is one of the top reasons why consumers who currently purchase from the illicit market would choose to convert to the legal regulated market.

Here's another quote, from Chris Beals, CEO of WM Technology: "If you're not sold on the potential of the licensed industry, know that there are a number of unlicensed alternatives waiting to fill the gap. Ontario, like most jurisdictions that have legalized cannabis, has struggled to displace the illicit market and replace it with legal alternatives. But according to Ontario Cannabis Store's last quarterly report, legal cannabis sales make up 47% of the recreational market as of June 2021. There are some who would say this percentage is even lower. While this represents meaningful progress year over year, it's not enough."

Legislators and policy-makers have to ask themselves why consumers are choosing to purchase cannabis from unlicensed sources. One of the main factors is a lack of reliable access to delivery services on the licensed market. This isn't just an anecdote. Public polling provided by Navigator this past January reveals that Canadians and Ontarians are not only receptive to retail delivery, but see it as the single most important step that could be taken to combat the unlicensed, illegal market.

By passing Bill 13, Ontario's legislators can permanently remove this structural imbalance between licensed and non-licensed retailers and create a fair playing field that compels consumers to move to licensed channels.

One of the favoured items in this legislation would permanently allow licensed restaurants, bars and other hospitality businesses to extend their licensed outdoor patio spaces. We made this temporary change earlier in the pandemic to help businesses adapt to restrictions due to COVID-19. Since then, I've had countless conversations with restaurant and bar owners while touring the province, and I've heard from so many of them about how this change has had a positive impact on their establishments. To make this temporary measure permanent is a step in the right direction for these hard-hit businesses. I'm so happy we were able to make good use of this temporary measure,

and I'm pleased it's being proposed as a permanent change.

0930

I'm also grateful to the municipalities, such as the city of Toronto, which has already stated they would keep up CaféTO. This initiative would create new opportunities for how restaurants and bars serve patrons beyond the pandemic and well into the future. And just last week, Speaker, the city of Mississauga has chosen to extend that to the end of 2023. So it's a great addition.

Another proposal in this legislation would help streamline the planning system, with the ability to shorten approval timelines. This item would give municipal councils greater authority to determine which decisions could be made by committees of council or staff.

Beyond shortening approval timelines and streamlining the planning system, this change would provide municipal councils with additional flexibility to focus their time on strategic items for the benefit of their communities. This is critical, especially given the housing crisis we are experiencing right across the province. By allowing councils to give decision-making authority to staff on minor planning changes, housing could be built that much quicker and more affordably, instead of getting caught up in time-consuming approvals. The benefit for businesses could include lower costs, an incentive to move forward with innovative plans, and reduced frustration thanks to shorter approval timelines.

In fact, we heard at committee from Mike Collins-Williams, CEO of the West End Home Builders' Association, that, "On an issue-by-issue basis, those items could save months in the approvals process for individual applications. Municipalities across Ontario have professional planning staff in place who are well situated and knowledgeable to deliver on these measures and free up council's focus for more significant decisions, instead of being overwhelmed with minor administrative ones."

With the need for more housing growing every year, saving any length of time can be game-changing, because two months on one issue and another four months on another can end up saving half a year in timelines.

The following proposal, Speaker, puts the emphasis on consumer protections for electrical safety. It would introduce legislative amendments to broadly enable the Electrical Safety Authority to issue administrative monetary penalties. These changes would equip the authority with a more efficient and effective compliance framework, allowing the organization to redirect resources to public safety and education efforts.

In addition, it would help address the underground economy of unlicensed contractors and boost the competitiveness of licensed contractors who are compliant with the regulations. Minimizing the prevalence of illegal electrical installations is a strategic step we can take to improve public safety all over Ontario.

Our next item, Speaker, is intended to modernize courtroom proceedings. We propose to repeal a section of the Barristers Act to remove an outdated courtroom procedure that prioritizes the cases of senior lawyers and does not

recognize licensed paralegals. By doing so, we would eliminate a provision that is inconsistently applied. This change is intended to help improve efficiency in the courtroom.

As the Attorney General stated when we debated this legislation in second reading, this section of the act inadvertently discriminates against our youngest lawyers and our more diverse lawyers, since many of them would not have the seniority to go first.

We also heard at committee from Marian Lippa of Fleet Street Law. Marian is a paralegal and has been advocating for this change for many years. As many in this House would have heard, she explained how this section creates an access-to-justice issue as it impacts the cost of representation. Because paralegals act as advocates, they're a great alternative to lawyer representation. By making the changes proposed today, it will allow paralegals to do more advocacy work for their clients and get through their workload faster. This is a great initiative and just one of the many fantastic changes that the Attorney General has brought forward to accelerate our justice system and modernize an important government service.

I really want to thank our Attorney General for the immense work that he has put into making these changes to keep our courtrooms open throughout the pandemic and beyond.

As part of Ontario's ongoing work to modernize the environmental assessment, or EA, program, our government is proposing a minor amendment to the Environmental Assessment Act. The idea is to clarify the minister's authority to make changes to the types of projects that can follow a class EA, helping to increase transparency. In fact, projects that follow the class EA process would still require consultation with the public, stakeholders and Indigenous communities to develop mitigation measures and document findings in a report, as we remain committed to seeking input before allowing other project types to begin following this new process.

Our next two proposals would benefit Ontarians by helping to keep public lands for public use. Amendments to both the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act and the Public Lands Act would prevent people from claiming ownership of public lands by unlawfully occupying a space in a provincial park or conservation reserve. This would help ensure that lands remain available for public use and outdoor recreation. It would support our ongoing work to safeguard the environment—and provide Ontarians with more opportunity to enjoy our provincial parks, get outside and boost their health and wellness.

In addition, through changes to the Public Lands Act, we would remove barriers to transferring lands to First Nations and other levels of government. The goal is to help ensure public lands can be used for future resource-based economic development opportunities, especially in northern Ontario.

Speaker, to continue boosting northern Ontario's communities and economy, our next item would amend the Northern Services Boards Act to keep pace with our times. The amendment would allow local services boards to post

public notices of meetings and minutes online, allowing them more flexibility and autonomy to communicate with their residents the best way that they see fit.

The physical distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced the urgency with which Ontario is digitizing public services. Accordingly, this proposal is aligned with Ontario's Digital First Strategy, making it easier for people and companies to do business in these communities and meet the demands of the future.

The following proposal I'd like to discuss would further Ontario's Critical Minerals Strategy and, at the same time, minimize its environmental impact. It's a great way and a great example of how regulatory modernization and red tape reduction can create sustainable economic growth that serves or, in this case, enhances the public interest.

Through proposed changes to the Mining Act, we would make it easier for mining companies to recover minerals at mine sites while creating economic opportunities through the extraction of critical minerals. Reprocessing mine waste and tailings to extract minerals will help strengthen the mining industry and our environment by providing companies with an economic alternative to opening a new mine. Rest assured, Speaker, we continue to be committed to the rehabilitation of closed and abandoned mine sites to protect public health, safety and the environment. We see this proposed amendment as an innovative way to increase Ontario's competitiveness in our global market, attract investment, create jobs and build much stronger communities.

This bill would help rebuild our economy by better supporting the workers behind it. With the following proposal, we would make changes to the Professional Foresters Act to improve the delivery of professional forestry in Ontario. Amendments would modify the act's scope of practice to more clearly define professional forestry and reduce overlap with other natural resource professionals, like arborists. The goal is to support professional foresters in the province with improved oversight by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association.

We also want to thank the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects for their support of this proposed legislation.

0940

Speaker, to help keep more workers safe and more employers aware of their responsibilities, our next item would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Changes would clarify and streamline employers' obligations, as well as the processes for when a serious injury occurs in the workplace. The government is also proposing changes to the act to provide for future opportunities to tailor elements of workplace programs, such as responding to serious injuries in the workplace. This proposal would help support businesses and enhance the role of workplace parties following injuries at work by modernizing rules, obligations and processes.

Our next item would help keep a major Ontario economic hub running and a vibrant community moving faster. We know that investing in better, faster transit can unlock sustainable growth, so we're working in partnership with York region to expand the subway network

in keeping with our commitment to build the Yonge North subway extension. Through this bill, we're proposing changes to the Development Charges Act to help York region funds its portion of the subway. These changes would enable York region to recover more of the eligible growth-related costs of the extension through development charges while also protecting taxpayers' best interests.

The next item would save people time while improving government services. Currently, people who wish to harvest trees on crown land for personal use, like firewood, must undergo the same process as businesses applying for industrial or commercial use, like a logging operation. The government would change the Crown Forest Sustainability Act to distinguish authorization requirements for wood harvested from crown lands for personal use from those harvested for industrial or commercial use. This proposal would scale the approval process to fit the request, saving time and effort for people and government, and it's another way that we're cutting red tape in line with appropriate requirements.

Speaker, our final item would save people money, reduce administrative burdens and promote richer, stronger communities across Ontario. We're proposing to reduce barriers to police record checks for volunteers to boost a valuable source of talent for our communities and to save money for people looking to volunteer. This change means that volunteers requesting certain types of police record checks will no longer have to pay for them, reducing administrative time for police services and costs for prospective volunteers.

The desire to volunteer in Ontario is great. It's part of what we call our Ontario spirit. This spirit is one of Ontario's greatest resources. That's why in the fall economic statement we've committed a \$1.6-million investment over three years to create a database of diverse, skilled volunteers that can be called upon to better assist in times of need.

What I've outlined are just some of the proposals in the Supporting People and Businesses Act. Through the 25 schedules, the act, if passed, will modernize significant statutes to remove unnecessary, outdated and duplicative regulations that get in the way of people and businesses in their everyday lives, and they'll deliver clear and effective rules that will protect public health and safety and the environment—without sacrificing innovation, growth and economic opportunity.

By modernizing and streamlining rules and moving more processes and services online, we can help people and businesses while they manage this next phase of the pandemic. We look forward to working together with members of this House to make life easier for people and businesses while upholding what Ontarians value most and prepare them for brighter days ahead.

I would now like to turn over the remainder of my time to the Minister of Energy to speak about some of the incredible initiatives he has proposed in this legislation and how they will help Ontarians far and wide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The associate minister did say at the beginning that she would

be sharing her time with the Minister of Energy, and I see he is in his chair and has risen, so we turn the floor over to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: He is risen, Speaker, yes. It's great to be with you all this morning and great to continue on the comments made by my colleague who has worked so hard on Bill 13. I want to congratulate her on bringing that bill to the floor of the Legislature here at third reading.

As a former Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, I had the opportunity to marshal a couple of these red tape bills through the Legislature back in 2018-19. I know how difficult it can be, but I know how easy it can be to do a one-hour leadoff, because they're packed full of all kinds of great things to talk about.

There are a lot of people that do a lot of work to make these types of bills happen. It's an all-of-government approach. I want to congratulate, first of all, Minister Tangri for this bill, Bill 13, but her predecessor, who is the President of the Treasury Board, the member from Brampton South, who did a great job as well, and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Minister Fedeli. The parliamentary assistants, Parsa and Skelly, did a great job of hosting all kinds of round tables across the province, just hearing from businesses on how we could reduce red tape in their business and make the cost of doing business a little less oppressive for them.

So I had the opportunity to bring in a couple of bills in the past, Bill 47 and Bill 66, all aimed at restoring Ontario's competitiveness after years of decline under the previous Liberal government that saw 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario for other jurisdictions. Part of that was because of the high cost of electricity, which I'm happy to talk about now, but also the red tape that became so abundant during the Wynne-Del Duca-McGuinty years.

I don't know if you caught this this morning. I was driving in, listening to Newstalk 1010, Moore in the Morning. Sabrina Nanji, who does a great job reporting here from Queen's Park every day, had a little "baby scoop," as she called it on the radio this morning, talking about the fact that Del Duca is out there today, about to introduce more red tape if he was ever to become the Premier of the province. You know what they say: A leopard never changes its spots, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, we know that now, especially with this Premier.

Hon. Todd Smith: Hear, hear.

All right, so let's get to down business here. I'm going to be speaking particularly about the energy pieces in Bill 13, as outlined a bit by my colleague. As the Minister of Energy and a former energy critic here in the Legislature, I can tell you that before we came to government—and I know you know this well, Mr. Speaker—I constantly heard from families about the skyrocketing hydro prices under the Liberal government.

Under their long-term energy plan, the Liberals' electricity rates were set to rise 7%, year over year, until the end of this decade. We've been able to hold those

increases flat, and we're going to talk about why in the bill. I'm not going to get to that part first.

Our first order of business was addressing the skyrocketing electricity prices here in the province in a manner that improved transparency and accountability. We implemented the Ontario Electricity Rebate, which now provides a 17% rebate for residential and small business customers. We also provided essential support to ratepayers that needed assistance during the COVID pandemic, up to three quarters of a billion dollars in relief.

Just over a year ago, we introduced customer choice. In just that short amount of time, almost 300,000 families and businesses have taken advantage of that choice and switched their pricing plan to one that better fits their energy usage, helping them save money, from time-of-use to tiered pricing. We're not done there; there's more to come.

We also took specific actions to assist commercial and industrial electricity consumers. Through the comprehensive electricity plan, we've reduced prices for these businesses by up to 17%, making Ontario's industrial electricity rates comparable to or lower than US competitor states and making our province more attractive for new investment, including those in electric-vehicle assembly and parts manufacturing. You've seen this over the last number of months, where some of the OEMs, those automakers in our province, have made investments here, all as a result of the driving prosperity plan that was put forward through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, but also the fact that we're starting to get our electricity prices, our energy prices, under control here, making it a more desirable and predictable place to do business.

Bill 13 represents the next steps in our work to make Ontario the best place to live and do business, and I'm pleased to be able to speak to three key parts of the plan.

We'll start with providing more certainty to families and businesses, and we're updating the way that the regulated price plan—RPP—rates are set in Ontario.

0950

Second, we're providing more choice. We're enabling competition in electricity suite metering so condo boards and landlords can change providers and reduce costs that would otherwise be passed on to consumers.

And, finally, we're increasing transparency. We've introduced the Green Button standard across Ontario so consumers can access their hourly energy-use data and save money on their electricity bills—up to 18%.

With respect to increasing certainty, I think many of my colleagues would be aware that under the current practice the Ontario Energy Board has historically adjusted its rates under the RPP twice annually—November and May—to reflect changes in the cost of electricity generation. This has been the practice in the past. I think we can all agree that when it comes to household bills, we want as much certainty as possible on what we're going to have to pay. That's why, beginning November 1, about a month ago, the Ontario Energy Board has said that they'll be setting RPP prices only once per year instead of twice, if the

necessary regulatory amendments are approved. That's what we're here talking about today. I think that's really, really important because, as I mentioned, we're holding the rates flat, and the rates will remain flat right through until November 2022, which is important for people across the province to do their own planning and take control of their bills. It's a big step forward in providing the additional certainty that families and small businesses in our province are looking for.

Next, I want to talk about how we're making further enhancements to customer choice by enabling more competition in electricity suite metering in Ontario. Our government has launched a regulatory registry consultation to explore opportunities to make it easier for multi-unit buildings to choose among suite-metering services, allowing residents to benefit from potential cost savings on their electricity bills. It's good news for some 325,000 individual residential and business customers who pay for their electricity through a unit sub-metering company.

Prior to sub-metering, which was introduced during the 1990s, condos and apartments were bulk-metered by local distribution companies. This often meant higher condo fees or higher rent because there was no accountability for energy use. In other words, there was no way to tell how much electricity was used, and higher-energy users were being subsidized by lower-energy users.

In contrast, sub-metering allows unit owners or tenants to install suite meters in their homes which allow them to track how much electricity they consume and to control how much they spend on electricity. It also gives them more reasons to conserve and save on their monthly bills. That's the key. We're always looking at new opportunities for consumer choice in the energy and electricity sector.

Right now, we're looking for feedback from stakeholders on cutting red tape to allow these condo buildings to choose their energy provider. Our efforts have the support of those in the industry, including the Sub-metering Council of Ontario, who have said to us that we're doing the right thing: "It is estimated that there are 155,000 families in condos and apartment units in Ontario that are caught by this issue which is forcing them to pay \$1.5 million in higher costs for every month that this red tape remains in place. Cutting this red tape is the right thing to do, and would allow all impacted buildings to save as much as \$18.5 million a year for residents, at no cost to taxpayers, or the province. Fast provincial action to cut this red tape will allow buildings to choose their metering providers, and save money for residents." That's from Christopher Holtz of the Sub-metering Council of Ontario. So great news is on the way.

As well, the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, or FRPO, as we call them here in the Legislature, also support our efforts to reduce red tape and help residents save more money on their monthly bills. I'll quote Tony Irwin from FRPO: "Cutting red tape will allow apartment buildings across Ontario to choose among licensed electricity metering providers and save money for residents. Once implemented, rental housing providers will be able to choose the metering arrangement that meets

their needs, and residents will be able to save about \$120 per year, on average, in electricity costs. That's good news for Ontarians."

Suneel Gupta, senior director with FirstService Residential, also agrees: "The current red tape basically overrides the authority of condo boards to make decisions around electricity metering, and is inconsistent with long-standing policy enshrined in the province's Condominium Act. The Ford government's decision to cut this red tape ensures that condo boards and property managers across Ontario can fulfill our duties, manage the affairs of our buildings and make decisions that will save residents money."

Through our consultations, we aim to enhance the competitive utility metering market, lower costs for consumers, encourage ongoing investment in new technology and deliver conservation benefits across Ontario. As part of these consultations, we want to hear back from all stakeholders about the implications of making it easier for multi-unit buildings to choose among suite-metering services. We'll explore options to remove barriers and harmonize rules so they are the same for switches between all suite-meter providers.

This has been our focus since day one: cutting red tape, reducing the cost of electricity and empowering Ontario's families and businesses. We're making sure everybody in this province can take control of their energy bills, of their electricity consumption, and save money.

We watched the Liberals squander Ontario's energy advantage by burdening customers and businesses with out-of-control energy rates, and knew we had to take a different approach. Since coming to government, we've put customers first. Building on our introduction of the customer choice initiative that I mentioned earlier, at the beginning of this November I announced that our government is implementing the Green Button standard province-wide. I had a great event about six weeks ago down in London, at London Hydro, and made the announcement that Green Button is going to be required at local distribution companies across Ontario.

Simply put, Green Button is a data standard that lets customers download information about their energy usage from their utility. It means that customers can access real-time data in a user-friendly format on their computer or their smart phone. It doesn't matter if you're at the office, if you're sitting in the Speaker's chair or if you're on a GO train, or maybe you're on a beach in Mexico—you can actually take control of your energy bills from the palm of your hand in your smart phone. You can see what your energy usage is going to be hour by hour by using the apps that will be created as a result of Green Button being the standard right across the province of Ontario. It puts customers in the driver's seat and empowers them to make decisions that can help them save on their energy bills, and it stands to benefit both electricity and natural gas customers.

Speaker, I want to thank the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for recognizing the importance of the Green Button standard and including

it in this bill. We know Ontarians are glad to see this government introducing yet another way that we can reduce burdensome red tape.

I'd like to share a quote from Katherine Hamilton. Katherine is the executive director of the Advanced Energy Management Alliance. She said, "The Advanced Energy Management Alliance is delighted that the Ministry of Energy has included the Green Button initiative in this legislation. When customers and their solutions providers are able to see the energy they use, everyone benefits by enabling reduced costs, increased efficiency and a more stable and flexible grid."

I want to take a moment here to acknowledge the hard work of our local distribution companies, Speaker, right across Ontario. Since becoming the Minister of Energy, I've had the opportunity to get out there and meet a lot of our LDCs. I think of people like Jenny at Westario, and the great folks up at Lakeland Power in MPP Norm Miller's riding in the Muskoka region, and the good work that they're doing up there. Our local utilities really are the face of the energy sector to so many customers across the province. Depending on which community you're in, you would probably have a different LDC.

With electricity and natural gas utilities across the province working to implement the Green Button standard by November 1, 2023, I'd also like to recognize some of the first adopters of Green Button technology: London Hydro, where I made the announcement; Festival Hydro in Stratford; and ENWIN Utilities in the Windsor region—I know you know them well, Mr. Speaker; you probably pay them a bill every month—and I know that other utilities like Newmarket-Tay Power Distribution are already making great progress towards implementing Green Button.

I'd like to quote from my friend Vinay Sharma, who's the CEO of London Hydro, again, where we made this announcement. Vinay says, "The Green Button standard ushers utilities into the modern technology era of open utilities, increased customer choice and uniform energy management services for the benefit of customers. Indeed, Green Button will manifest the true benefits of smart meter systems for customers." That comes from Vinay Sharma at London Hydro.

1000

By working hand in hand with our LDCs and giving them the time and support needed to provide access to this cost-saving technology to their customers, Ontario is becoming the first province in Canada to implement Green Button across the board. This is putting customers first. Green Button technology enables customers to have quick and easy access to their energy use data through their smart phone or computer apps, and studies have found that easy access to energy data, along with smart home devices, can help consumers make informed decisions, achieving energy savings up to 18%. This means that customers can pinpoint opportunities to reduce unnecessary energy consumption, saving them money over time.

One more quote for you: This one comes from Aaron Berndt, head of energy industry partnerships. Aaron says,

"Green Button will make it easier for Ontario residential customers to access information about their energy consumption. The program will also allow partners to help consumers be mindful of and ultimately decrease their energy usage."

Speaker, our policies are carefully considered and integrated. For instance, upon reviewing energy consumption data through a Green Button app, a customer may decide that it's more cost-effective to switch from time-of-use to tiered pricing or vice versa. Knowledge really is power in this scenario, and we're making sure that customers have that power in their hands to make these critical cost-saving decisions.

I mentioned earlier that Green Button puts the customer in the driver's seat. In addition to driving cost savings, Green Button also allows customers to drive conservation and environmental benefits, which we know are important. Green Button apps can analyze energy data and provide customers with helpful energy savings tips to reduce their energy bills, and personalized retrofit options to achieve long-lasting savings. Green Button is quite literally a piece of the clean-tech innovation that's happening right here in Ontario, and it has the ability to show users in real time how their choices help reduce their bills and reduce emissions.

One more quote, Speaker: Julia Langer is CEO of the Atmospheric Fund. She says, "Secure and automated access to energy data through Ontario's Green Button program will empower consumers to make affordable, climate-friendly decisions for their homes and businesses."

A critical part of Ontario's energy mission is achieving low costs, more customer choice and a cleaner grid. The Green Button standard is one way that our government is achieving all three objectives. As we consider new policies, we're always going to put customers first, and this proposed legislation, the Supporting People and Businesses Act, does just that. I encourage all members of the House to support this bill, and again, I want to thank the minister for bringing this comprehensive bill forward, with all that it contains, and thank those who have worked so hard on it, including my old friend the deputy minister, Giles Gherson. It can be a bit like herding cats when you're trying to put a bill like this together, so congratulations to my colleague for herding all the cats and bringing forward a substantial piece of legislation to the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions and responses.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We went through delegations on this bill, and I want to quote Karen Littlewood, who's the president of OSSTF. She had issues with Schedule 17 in particular. She said:

"But one of the most concerning features is the fact that members who are actively involved in the federation will be barred from representing on the College of Teachers. I want people to just consider the fact that, as a federation, we have people who are involved in many different aspects, who might be involved on human rights committees, who might be involved in excellence in education

committees. Because of the virtue of their involvement in those federation activities, they would not be able to be part of the College of Teachers or that governing body. It seems to me to be quite restrictive—it actually creates red tape—“If we’re looking at an act that is going to reduce red tape, I think we’re actually causing more problems than anything here, and it makes me just question why this change has been done.”

Hon. Nina Tangri: I would like to thank the member for the question. The primary purpose of the Ontario College of Teachers is to protect and promote the public interest by governing and regulating members registered with the college in accordance with the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996. The OCT protects the public interest by assuring that only individuals with the necessary qualifications can register with and be certified by the college; that the members comply with the highest professional and ethical standards set by the college—I don’t think we want anything less anywhere in this House; and that complaints against members are dealt with in an objective, transparent and timely manner.

We’re proud to recognize Ontario certified teachers by allowing them to use the OCT designation. At the same time, we must protect the integrity of that designation by ensuring only members in good standing are permitted to use it. And it’s important; this change was requested by the Ontario College of Teachers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to commend the Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for all the work she has done on this file, but my question is actually for the Minister of Energy.

Speaker, as you know, when we were first elected, we inherited an absolute mess from the previous Liberal Del Duca government, especially when it comes to the Green Energy Act. It was disastrous, it drove up prices and it rewarded Liberal-friendly companies with billion-dollar contracts and left the homeowner, the ratepayer, the business owner paying these exorbitant rates.

Can the Minister of Energy speak to what our government is doing to address this mess that we inherited and how ratepayers and small businesses can benefit?

Hon. Todd Smith: As a matter of fact, I can, Mr. Speaker. I’m not sure I can do it in a minute, but I’ll do my best.

It was a Liberal hydro mess—we all know that—so the first thing that the previous minister did was to stop the madness, to stop putting up the over-market generators of electricity that we didn’t need when we already had an oversupply, which were driving up the cost of electricity by 7% year over year over year. We had to stop that madness.

We brought in the Ontario Electricity Rebate, which is saving small businesses and residential customers 17% on their electricity bills. We’ve made the change in this bill, when it comes to the RPP, the rate protection plan, to make sure that we’re holding rates flat over the next year, which is going to give those businesses the certainty that they

need, and taking those over-market renewable costs in our comprehensive energy/electricity plan and moving them to the tax base, so they’re no longer on the backs of businesses. I had a meeting the other day where a business said that it’s saving them \$2.2 million a year by making that change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Energy: It’s a fact that it was the Conservatives who set up the sale of hydro by changing the regulations, around the same time that they were selling Highway 407, and the Liberals followed through with those plans and actually sold Hydro. I realize he wasn’t there at the time, but I’d like to know his opinion: Has the sale and privatization of public utilities and infrastructure like Highway 407 and our publicly owned hydro been a success? And if so, why are customers paying so much more?

Hon. Todd Smith: It was the previous Liberal government, under the former Premier, who still sits in this House today, that sold Hydro One. I was actually the critic for the Hydro One sale before I became the critic for energy, so I’ve been on this file for about three years.

Mr. Speaker, what’s driving up the cost of electricity in Ontario and what continues to drive up the cost of electricity wasn’t the fact that there were private entities in the electricity sector; it was the fact that this government gave over-market prices to generation that was unreliable and was creating an oversupply of electricity, particularly at times when we didn’t need it. So we’ve taken those costs off of the rate base, off of those electricity customers, and moved them to the tax base, because those were political decisions. Those weren’t good energy decisions that were being made, and anybody that works in the energy or electricity sector will back me up on that one. Those were political decisions, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brantford–Brant has a question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, through you to the minister: I’ve been so constantly amazed by the good work being done by the Ministry of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. I believe that they’re just a powerhouse, and their consistent bills coming through year over year, spring and fall, are just making such a difference to the people of Ontario.

I was wondering if I could ask the minister: As she looked over this bill, what was something that stuck out to her, that was just like, “Wow, that’s a really good idea that’s going to make a big difference for the people of Ontario”?

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Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member from Brantford–Brant for the question.

If I had to choose one thing, it would be extremely difficult. This piece of legislation crosses 13 ministries, and I want to thank all of the ministers, the parliamentary assistants and our entire caucus for the work that they put in.

I think if I had to speak about one particular piece, it would be extending the patios. Throughout the pandemic,

we had to look for ways to support our businesses. The restaurant industry had suffered significantly, and it was something that we could do—to allow them to extend or have an outdoor patio for licensed restaurants, and to be able to do that through the pandemic, and to hear from the owners on how well it worked and how it saved their businesses. I think that one thing alone has had a massive impact on consumers and business owners.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto Centre has a question.

Ms. Suze Morrison: When we look at this bill, we see that there are some amendments to the cannabis act that affect how folks can purchase cannabis in our communities. Unfortunately, the real issue that we're seeing with cannabis stores in my community, in Toronto Centre, is actually the proliferation of them. We don't see anything in this bill to address the fact that municipalities can't currently limit the location and number of cannabis shops in their cities.

What we are seeing in communities like Toronto Centre, in neighbourhoods like the Church-Wellesley Village and in Corktown, is four, five, six, seven pot shops on a block completely eliminating the diversity of a healthy local economy on our main streets.

And worse, I heard from a constituent in my community, Nelson, who has serious concerns about how close some of these shops are to schools and about the blatant advertising that is present right in front of our schools for young children.

So what commitment is your government willing to make today to ensure that municipalities have more local control over the proliferation of cannabis retail locations in our municipalities to ensure the viability of our main streets?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the member for the question.

I think everyone in this House understands our government is very committed to protecting children and keeping our communities safe by combatting the illegal market through a tightly regulated retail market that provides choice and provides convenience.

Just a few days ago, we heard about fentanyl-laced drugs that are being sold on the illegal market.

What we need to do here—when we announce statutory amendments to include it in Bill 13, the Supporting People and Businesses Act, it allows authorized cannabis retailers to provide curbside pickup and delivery on a permanent basis.

Just imagine, Speaker, that we have somebody at home who potentially could already be smoking or having cannabis and they want more. Isn't it better that they purchase it online and have it delivered, as opposed to getting in a car, driving to a facility and picking it up, potentially endangering many lives on the way? This is one of the reasons that we have stepped up with this legislation.

We are saying yes to supporting the people of this province, and we are making sure that we have safe cannabis stores, and we are getting rid of the illicit market.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There really isn't enough time to kick off further debate, so I

think it's time that we just move into members' statements.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INSURANCE RATES

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Do you know what has been missing from this government's throne speech? Any leadership on the growing crisis in insurance in Ontario. Cars were parked during the lockdown and accidents were down over 70% across the province, but rather than making sure to share their savings with Ontario drivers—who, by the way, pay the highest rates in North America—this government allowed them to keep all \$3.6 billion in profits they made in 2020 while everyone else struggled. Even worse, auto insurance rates continue to climb. Any leadership by the government here? No. They were busy doing PR for the insurers. While restaurants and other small businesses had their doors closed and struggled to keep their businesses afloat, insurers jacked up premiums by 200% or 300%.

Think about it. Businesses were closed and nobody was there, but their rates tripled, further adding to insurer profits. After all our small businesses have gone through, was there any leadership from the government on rising commercial insurance? No, just silence.

Condominium insurance continues to rise, affecting the cost of housing, but is the government taking any action? No.

Entire industries are on the point of collapse, because insurers, after all the profits they are making, are pulling out of some sectors.

After 50 years of service, Burlington Taxi has closed its doors forever because of insurance costs. Truck drivers are facing similar treatment. Music venues are facing a whopping 4,000% increase, meaning live music could go silent, just like this government when it comes to holding insurers to account.

Speaker, day after day during the afternoons in this chamber, I raise the issue of insurance to government members, and all I get is dodgeball or silence. There is a growing crisis in insurance, and this government needs to step up or step aside.

WIARTON WILLIE

Mr. Bill Walker: Without a shadow of a doubt, I rise today in this House to acknowledge the unfortunate passing of world-famous weather prognosticator Wiarthon Willie. He passed away after almost five years of best-of-the-burrow service.

I want to extend my sincere condolences to the municipality of South Bruce Peninsula, the people of Wiarthon and people across the country for their loss of our Canadian icon.

I spent a lot of my life in Wiarton and have fond memories of Groundhog Day celebrations. I was even the event director in 1999, the year of the first official demise of Willie. For many years, community builder R. Keith Davidson has jokingly referred to me as Wiarton Billy, a name I wear, without a shadow of a doubt, with pride and honour.

Wiarion Willie is a beloved figure in my riding and across the globe. Every year, people across the world gather to celebrate Groundhog Day to see and hear Willie's prognostication: whether he will see his shadow, heralding six more weeks of winter, or if he does not, indicating an early spring. "Willie" or won't he, Mr. Speaker?

While there are other groundhog prognosticators, such as Punxsutawney Phil, Shubenacadie Sam, Jimmy the Groundhog, Dunkirk Dave, Staten Island Chuck and Balzac Billy, Wiarton Willie is a special one, because he is the world's only albino prognosticating groundhog.

Groundhog Day began in 1957 when a Wiarton local named Mac McKenzie decided that his community could use a winter wake-up, and Mac put us on the map. With a group of friends and a Toronto journalist, McKenzie went looking for a groundhog, but instead found a white fur hat and threw it into the hole. The rest, as they say, is history.

Today, more than 60 years later, Wiarton continues to celebrate with a live event that is broadcast around the world and has become one of Ontario's largest winter festivals. The event is a testament so the great people of Wiarton and the festive spirit of small-town Ontario.

Premier Ford has attended the festival twice—the only sitting Premier to ever attend—and I know he was impressed with people's friendliness, the community spirit and the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I look forward to attending the upcoming festivities, and I invite all members and everyone listening to visit our little piece of paradise on February 2 for Groundhog Day and to see if Willie won't or Willie will see his shadow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you, Wiarton Willie.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Londoners are finding it increasingly difficult to find somewhere they can afford to live. The average price of rent has increased by 7%, home ownership is out of reach for 80% of renters and homeless Londoners are dying at an unprecedented rate of one person per week this year. We are in a housing crisis. There are real-life consequences if we don't act quickly to address the unsustainable rising cost of housing.

One constituent wrote me, saying, "I am a senior, who collects OAS. I cannot afford the high cost of renting an apartment in London because I am collecting a monthly pension.

"Supportive housing is not applicable for me because of the long wait-lists.

"I am afraid I will be pushed into" homelessness "with no place to live."

It's not only renters but also homeowners on fixed incomes like pensions and ODSP and OW who can't keep up with home repairs or upgrades but also can't afford to sell or downsize, either, because the cost of both is too high. With a shortage of at least 3,000 affordable units, there are also few affordable places for the lowest-income Londoners to live. Recent Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. data shows that there are only 30 units per 1,000 renters earning less than \$36,000.

We need a provincial housing and homeless strategy. Housing is a human right. So I ask this government: What is this government's plan to help folks like my constituent keep a roof over their head?

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Billy Pang: Protecting our loved ones and ensuring our seniors receive the care they deserve is at the centre of everything our government does. In March, our government made an historic investment in 80 new long-term-care projects across Ontario, including one in my riding of Markham–Unionville.

1020

This month, I was pleased to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of Mon Sheong's Markham Senior Care Campus, alongside the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. Our government is proud to allocate and support the 160 new long-term-care spaces that this campus will offer to our seniors. In addition to a long-term-care centre, the senior care campus will also include a life-lease unit and a PSW training facility right at this location.

Mr. Speaker, we are getting shovels in the ground. Our government will continue to work towards our commitment to deliver 30,000 much-needed long-term-care spaces by 2028. After decades of inaction by previous governments, it will be this government, Mr. Speaker, that will be the one to fix long-term care and ensure our seniors get the quality of care they need and deserve, now and in the future.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jessica Bell: There are many injured workers who have spent many years fighting for their right to receive WSIB compensation. One of these people is Donald. Donald is a 64-year-old man who has laryngeal cancer, skin cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease—and these are illnesses he got on the job.

Donald was a hard-working and eager employee who began working in the concrete and construction industry at 15. At his job, he was exposed to silica dust, muriatic acid, asbestos and many other chemicals. In 2009, he was diagnosed with cancer and forced to stop working. He now uses a stoma and electric larynx to speak. It has taken WSIB 11 years to accept Donald's claim for benefits for an injury he clearly got on the job. During that time, he lost his home.

Still, the fight is not over. WSIB "deemed" Donald and cut his payments in half on the basis that he could have

been working as a school bus driver. If you're not familiar with the WSIB's practice of deeming, it is when the WSIB pretends a worker has a job that they actually do not have and oftentimes aren't able to get, in order to reduce or eliminate their benefits. This government has designed WSIB to protect the employer, and not to help injured workers. This government is making WSIB worse with Bill 27, by channelling money back to employers instead of providing it to injured workers who are eligible for the program.

I'm calling on this government to change that and to help people like Donald and injured workers across the province.

EXPLOSION IN CHATHAM-KENT- LEAMINGTON

Mr. Rick Nicholls: On August 26 in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington in the town of Wheatley, a gas explosion destroyed the downtown area and some residential homes. The explosion is believed to have been caused by the buildup of hydrogen sulfide, which could have been a buildup from the numerous abandoned wells in the community.

Some 2,800-plus residents of the community, now known as Wheatley Strong, had significant financial and emotional damages from the explosion. Fortunately, no one was killed. But 38 businesses and 68 residential homes were affected. Gas monitoring equipment has been installed to identify any future issues and has since discovered three additional gas leaks. This monitoring provides comfort to those remaining residents who have not yet had to be evacuated but are on standby. The government continues to apply a collaborative, multi-ministry approach to supporting the municipality of Chatham-Kent with the ongoing situation. Wheatley is a strong community, coming together, and has held fundraisers to help those businesses and residents currently displaced.

In times of tragedy and greater need, I am grateful for the reinforcement from Premier Ford, Minister Rickford and the helpful staff from the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. Premier Ford provided immediate assistance of \$2 million, and on a weekly basis remains in touch with the municipality. And, on November 17, Minister Rickford announced an additional \$3.8 million in financial support, bringing the total funding thus far to \$5.8 million.

FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to begin by sending my thoughts and prayers to the families impacted by the catastrophic flooding in the province of British Columbia. The province is currently dealing with an incredible amount of flooding and, just recently, there was an evacuation notice ordered in the Abbotsford area. The Canadian Armed Forces have been deployed to help thousands of stranded residents in the region. On November 17, BC declared a state of emergency in the

province due to mudslides, closures and crashes happening at an alarming rate. This is devastating news, and I pray for the safety and well-being of the many British Columbians impacted by the flooding.

During these unprecedented times, it is important that we stand together in solidarity to support our fellow Canadians. If you have friends or family living in the region, I recommend checking up on loved ones and, if possible, donating to charitable organizations that are providing relief for those affected.

Once again, this natural disaster has caused pain and suffering for so many Canadians, yet it is truly heart-warming to see humanity come together to help one another.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Twenty-six days until Christmas and the Speaker says to me

"How about a poem—yes, you, the member for Windsor-Tecumseh?"

"Well," I said, "Maybe a member's statement for you—I could do it, I reckon

"And all I'd need for that is just another 90 seconds."

"Oh, no," said the Clerk and officers at the table

"We have an agenda that's timed and keeps us on track and the Legislature stable

"So sorry, but we have absolutely no extra time

"For Christmas poems and Christmas rhymes."

"But," I say, "Why are we so punctilious?"

"Why not some time for fun and a bit of poetic silliness?"

"After all, we, in this chamber, introduced our first poet laureate, a young man named Randell

"So maybe, just maybe, more poetry we should always find time to handle."

"Hark!" the Hansard angels sing, "See, he snuck in a poem and the table didn't even seem to notice

"So perhaps if he had time to put it to music, it could have been a bit of a minor opus."

So, my friends, rewind that clock and try to remember
That magical time as children each and every December
When all of our Christmas dreams were possible
Our imaginations back then really were unstoppable.

Just a short trip back in time, and, if you listen now, you may hear it

Poetry may have just lifted our Christmas spirits.

See, Speaker, there are chuckles and smiles and, for a moment, we've laid down our verbal weapons

And, colleagues, we did it all in just about 90 seconds.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh / His statement, as always, was very Christmassy.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John Yakabuski: This past week has been a stark reminder that while fall was beautiful, winter weather is inevitable. Likely all across the province, but certainly in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, people will be navigating in winter conditions for the next several months.

I've been around long enough to remember when winter road maintenance was nowhere near the standard we enjoy today, when snowfalls meant that countless vehicles would be stuck, unable to move because the snowplows hadn't been there yet. While our maintenance continues to improve, there are far more vehicles on the road today than when I was a young boy. More vehicles means more opportunities for accidents.

One thing hasn't changed: the importance of preparation. The more prepared we are for winter weather, the safer we will be. Improvements in tire technology have allowed us to be safer than ever when the rubber meets the road, as they say. I would encourage everyone, as I have for many years, to make sure that your winter tires are in good shape and ready to face the elements.

In addition to properly equipping your vehicle, remember that there is no substitute for driving according to the conditions. The old adage of, "When it's winter, drive like it's winter," is advice that we all need to take very seriously. Also, keep an emergency kit on board, as breakdowns are more common in the winter months.

Let's all work together to make sure that we do everything possible to make our highways as safe as they can be this winter.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that one of today's page captains—page Athisha Sures from the riding of Markham–Unionville. We have with us at Queen's Park her grandmother, Padmini Nadarajah, and her grandfather, Nadarajah Thamotharampillai.

1030

We are also joined today by the mother of page captain Claire An, from the riding of Don Valley West, Miao Zhou.

Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here today.

HARRY CRAIG PARROTT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance for the late Mr. Harry Craig Parrott, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group and five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed. I'll recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I am honoured today, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and my NDP colleagues, to speak about Harry Parrott. He grew up in a modest home in the small town of Mitchell. He wasn't the only son of Mitchell to go on to become an MPP; Liberal Hugh Edighoffer, a former Speaker, came from there as well. While Harry grew up on a farm, Hugh's family was quite well off. They owned a clothing store in Mitchell. In fact, Harry's son, Craig, who lives in Windsor, told me Dr. Parrott could never have afforded to go to school and become a dentist and an orthodontist had it not been for a loan he received from the Edighoffer family. Harry once joked, "How Hugh got his politics mixed up, I'm not quite sure."

I'm jumping ahead of myself, Speaker. Harry Parrott and Hugh Edighoffer passed away on the same day: July 2, 2019.

Harry Parrott married Isobel, his high school sweetheart, and that marriage lasted 56 years, until she passed away in 2003.

I first met Harry when I was a reporter with CBC in Windsor. I interviewed him when he was the environment minister back in the days of Premier Bill Davis. His assistant at that time was Janet Ecker, who later would become a Conservative MPP and a very powerful cabinet minister. When Harry passed away, Janet wrote that he was one of the finest ministers of the crown she ever had the privilege to work for or serve with, saying "a finer gentleman and human being, I have yet to meet."

Ms. Ecker says many politicians pay lip service to the concept of public service, but Harry was the "real deal." She told me Bill Davis took notice of Harry's real potential when, as the Minister of Colleges and Universities, he stood up to a group of protesting students here on the grounds at Queen's Park. That's when Premier Davis decided that Harry had what it would take to handle the more demanding role of Minister of the Environment.

The environment was emerging as a very hot topic at the time. The government was trying to locate sites to dispose of liquid industrial waste. Former Liberal leader Dr. Stuart Smith was frequently lambasting the government in question period and in committee. Craig Parrott says no one could push his father's buttons more so than Stuart Smith.

Craig may not have known, but David Warner, Harry's NDP critic at colleges and universities, really got under his skin as well. One time—and David tells me he takes full blame for this—he needled him so much at a night sitting that Harry actually came around the back, came over and politely offered David the opportunity to step outside to settle their differences, an offer David very wisely declined.

In those days, as you know, Speaker, night sittings were commonplace, and if you finished your House duty, you might go up to the press lounge, put the politics aside, have a beer and watch a hockey game together.

Janet Ecker told me of the time when the Liberals called a late show, a debate on an environmental issue, and Harry Parrott questioned the value of even attending. He did, but he argued with Janet about the value of such debates for

the average citizen. He saw the late shows as little more than time-consuming political games. Afterwards, on his way to his apartment about 11 o'clock that night, Harry stopped passersby at Wellesley and Bay asking if they knew who the environment minister was, what environmental issues the Legislature had been debating and whether they even cared. No one did, Speaker; no one did.

Harry decided not to seek re-election in 1981, much to the disappointment of Bill Davis. When I asked Sean Conway, a former Liberal deputy leader, to describe Harry Parrott, he said he was distinguished, thoughtful, results-oriented and always well-briefed, but Mr. Conway says Harry did not enjoy the cut and thrust, the rough and tumble of politics where at times a minister had to defend the indefensible. Janet Ecker agrees, saying Harry got into politics for all the right reasons and remained true to his principles, knowing he wouldn't be able to serve another term with the passion and integrity that would be required of him.

Harry Parrott came here because he believed in good, ethical government, true public service and working for the best of his community and his province. He once told fellow dentists that he took a two-thirds pay cut to become an MPP. Members only earned \$18,000 a year back in those days, Speaker, as you know.

Harry Parrott was a principled man, and he never took himself too seriously. In fact, he was really quite touched back in 2017 when they named a pumping station in his honour back in his hometown of Mitchell. It wasn't glamorous by any means, but it meant a lot to him as it was a really important piece of municipal infrastructure.

Dennis Timbrell was elected in 1971 along with Harry and 27 other brand new PC members. He remembers Harry brushing his teeth six or seven times a day, as any good dentist was prone to do. Yes, Janet Ecker says, "Try prepping him for question period while he's more intent on brushing his teeth." Later in cabinet and in the House, Dennis and Harry sat alongside each other, and any time there was an election at any level, or a by-election, they would each put up \$2, make a bet, and they'd stash their betting money beneath the statuette of Sir John A. MacDonald in the cabinet meeting room.

When Harry retired, he started dabbling with standardbred horses, his brood mares, and nine years after Isobel died, he eventually moved from Woodstock to Clinton, remarried and bought racehorses with local trainer Jim Watt. One of those horses stands out, Speaker. Sportsline, or Sporty, is exceptional. They had really good offers to sell him, but Harry said, "Jim, it would change my life significantly if we sold him. Other than my family, it's the thing that keeps me going."

Four days after Harry died, Sporty was racing at Mohawk. He came from behind and he won his ninth race in a row, and that brought his total in purse winnings at that time to \$90,000. The racing gods were smiling on Harry Parrott that day, and they continue to do so. Since then, Sportsline has earned more than \$210,000 in prize money.

Harry Parrott died in his 94th year. He had three children, eight grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and

a host of nieces and nephews. Our thoughts are with his wife, Donna Wood, and the entire Parrott family. Speaker, I'm told they're all tuning in virtually today across Ontario and as far away as North Carolina.

When he passed, William Rowe wrote, "The world could use more Harry Parrotts." Who among us could disagree?

Speaker, thank you for this time today to remember an outstanding former Conservative MPP, Harry Parrott.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next we have the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm honoured to stand today to say a few words about Harry Parrott, member of provincial Parliament for Oxford.

Born on this day in 1925, Mr. Parrott spent his childhood in Mitchell, Ontario. After high school, he started a new chapter in life by attending the University of Toronto's faculty of dentistry where his passion for the profession would lead him to post-graduate studies in orthodontics.

Although Harry was an orthodontist by profession, he was always deeply rooted in community, volunteering on many boards and committees to help his neighbours. His love for his community ultimately fuelled his desire to run for public office. Harry was elected to the Woodstock Public Utility Commission, the Woodstock Board of Education, and served on Woodstock city council for five years. In 1971, Harry would be elected to this place for the constituency of Oxford in the newly formed Davis government.

1040

Early on, Harry would describe himself as an idealistic rookie, who occasionally liked to rebel. After sending some "really tough letters" to ministers, Harry said he learned how to temper his advocacy for his residents of Oxford: "Changes occur slowly," he said. "You need a lot of patience." And as a golfer, Harry would learn that lesson inside and outside of this place.

Harry would never stop advocating for the residents of Oxford, and within a few years of taking office, had written some 6,000 letters on behalf of his constituents. Despite his early rebellion, after being re-elected in 1975, Premier Davis would ask Harry to join the cabinet as Minister of Colleges and Universities. He would win again in 1977 and would later be named Minister of the Environment.

But Harry wasn't one to stay in one place too often; even a personal appeal from Premier Davis couldn't get Harry to run again in 1981. His loving wife and high school sweetheart, Isobel, was said to be beaming at the prospect of having Harry home more often. Upon his retirement, Harry was eager to return to his love of horses and intended to cultivate the life of a Kentucky colonel, he said.

In his 94th year, Harry passed away peacefully, in 2019. But even in his death, Harry continued to contribute to his community. In October of that year, led by his wife, Donna, the family presented a cheque for \$5,000 to the Clinton Public Hospital in memory of Harry. The donation

was used towards an accessible shower in the in-patient unit at the hospital. His son, Craig, explained how important the hospital had become to his dad because of the care and nurturing that he had received. He just felt comfortable there, Craig said.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, how much time it takes to represent one's neighbours here in this place: time away from family, away from friends, away from the hobbies and the passions of our lives. It has long been said that the most valuable gift you can give outside of your love is your time. And it's clear that Harry loved his community.

To his loving wife, Donna; his children, Craig, Nancy and Lori; his eight grandkids and 18 great-grandchildren, thank you for sharing Harry with us.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured today to rise and pay tribute to Harry Craig Parrott, former Conservative MPP and cabinet minister, for his distinguished public service. And I want to welcome his many family members tuning in today.

Harry was elected to the Legislature as an MPP from Oxford in 1971 and served until 1981. In 1975, he was appointed cabinet minister as Minister of Colleges and Universities, and in August 1978, he was appointed as Ontario's sixth Minister of the Environment.

As Minister of the Environment, he led the charge in helping tackle acid rain in the late 1970s, including imposing control orders on Inco as a result of acid rain from coal-fired plants in Sudbury. His waste bill was known as the spills bill and established one of the first principles of polluter pays from the Ministry of the Environment.

I was reading through the Hansard, and shortly after he was appointed Minister of the Environment, he reported back to the House on signing an update to the International Joint Commission protecting the Great Lakes. During debate, an opposition member interjected and said, "Oh, you all said this 10 years ago. Why are you still talking about pollution in the Great Lakes?" And like a great Canadian, Harry said, "It's all because of the United States and the pollution they're putting into the Great Lakes. We're doing great things here in Canada."

According to the London Free Press, they described him as someone who believed that one person can effect change in society. And without a doubt, Harry Parrott affected change in society. He's left a lasting legacy for Ontarians to be proud of, and I want to thank his family for sharing Harry with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I'll recognize the member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the public service of Dr. Harry C. Parrott. He represented Oxford here in the Ontario Legislature from 1971 to 1981. Harry passed away July 2, 2019, at the age of 93.

It's my pleasure to share a bit of the selfless contributions Harry made to his local community and our province.

It's my hope that members of Harry's family understand what an important role he played.

Every politician's family faces a period of adjustment when their loved one is elected to public office. They're often gone for periods of time, and when they are home, there are calls and correspondence, as we heard about the thousands of letters that Harry wrote. We want Harry's family to know that what they sacrificed in order that he might serve the public is not forgotten.

When he was elected, Harry committed to 10 years. He wanted to be in government long enough to be able to make a difference. Harry did make a difference, not only at Queen's Park but also in a variety of positions over the years.

After graduating from the University of Toronto in 1947, Harry married his high school sweetheart, Isobel Walker, from their hometown of Mitchell. They settled in Woodstock and together, through 56 years of marriage, they raised three children: Craig, Nancy and Lori. It was their hard work and support as a family at home that allowed Harry to give his full attention to his provincial duties. As their children had families of their own, Harry and Isobel were blessed with eight grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

Harry practised dentistry and later orthodontics in Woodstock. During this time, he was very involved in the community and began his legacy of public service. Harry was elected as a member of the Woodstock city council for five years, the Woodstock Board of Education for three years and the Woodstock Public Utility Commission for three years. He also served as president of Oxford county Red Cross and was campaign chair for the Woodstock United Appeal Association. He served on several local committees and supported many initiatives and charities. As busy as Harry was, Harry always made time to enjoy his family, play a round of golf and work his standardbred horses.

Harry was down-to-earth and well liked. I believe that's a large part of why the people elected him as MPP in the 1971 provincial election. He's been described as a thoroughly decent fellow who had a distinguished manner about him, and he certainly had a presence.

You could tell Harry was proud of Oxford and humbled to be a representative at Queen's Park. During one budget debate, he wandered a little bit off script and put in a word for the riding. He said, "It is an excellent county. It probably represents, as well as any riding, the backbone of the history of this province. It has a great heritage in the agricultural community and I think it has justifiably earned that reputation over these many years."

Harry was our MPP when the government passed the act to restructure Oxford county from 11 municipalities to eight in order to simplify the structure of local government. He held many roles during his time serving the province. He was a member of several committees and was appointed Minister of Colleges and Universities from 1975 to 1978.

Harry was also very pro-environment, so it was ideal that Harry was appointed Minister of the Environment

from 1978 to 1981. It was during that time that Harry's environmental policies guided Oxford county's search for a new municipal landfill site—not a popular thing at home. He was the driver of the development of the province's first liquid industrial waste treatment and disposal complex and felt that these projects were important parts of his contribution to the relatively new ministry.

His legacy as Minister of the Environment came up during the debate in 1983, when it was said that in 1978, Dr. Harry Parrott was very proud to release a small blue book under his name called Water Management. That booklet revised and expanded on guidelines and criteria for water quality management. This booklet is still available in digital form in the legislative library collection.

His hometown, Mitchell, recognized Harry in 2017 by naming a municipal pumping station after him. Harry was proud to attend that naming ceremony with the members of his family.

In the many wonderful tributes posted on Harry's obituary, Janet Ecker wrote that she worked on Harry's staff when he was the Minister of the Environment. She wrote, "A finer gentleman and human being I have yet to meet. I learned a great deal from him, not just about life, but about how to truly be a public servant."

1050

Former MPP Norm Sterling also left his remarks on Harry's obituary. He had the utmost respect for Harry, describing him as kind, intelligent and a pleasure to work with. Throughout Norm's 34 years in the Legislature, he often thought of Harry's honesty and his respect for others. Harry was an example that Norm tried to follow, as did many others in the Legislature.

I, myself, was fortunate to benefit from Harry's counsel. When I was preparing to run for the provincial election in 1995, I went to talk to Harry to get his advice. After all, he was the expert. Harry told me there were two women I had to meet that would be able to help me win the election, and he even offered to introduce me to them. That's when Harry introduced his two daughters, Nancy and Lori, who helped me in my first campaign, or you might say they directed my first campaign. Their hard work and the experience they had in getting their father elected was much appreciated as I started my career in provincial government. Harry was always supportive and could be counted on to provide sound advice when asked.

When Isobel passed away in 2003, Harry moved on. He moved on so far that he ended up in Clinton, where he married Donna Wood. They met through their shared interest in horse racing and continued to enjoy the sport for many years.

Shortly after Harry's death, his family made a donation in his name to the Clinton Public Hospital. They were all on hand for the presentation, which was a cause dear to Donna, who was very involved in keeping the hospital in the community, and to Harry, because of the great care he received there.

He was raised in Perth–Wellington and retired in Huron–Bruce, but we are proud to have had Dr. Harry

Parrott serve Oxford for as long as he did. We thank his family for supporting him along the way. Oxford is a better place because Harry Parrott made it that way.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We give thanks to the family of Harry Parrott. We're grateful for his life and his public service.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Sara Singh: Good morning. My question is to the Premier. Health experts confirmed more cases of the Omicron variant yesterday here in Ontario, and four public health units have new restrictions to prevent further COVID-19 spread in their communities.

This government has promised to use every tool to help contain the spread of this virus, but that simply hasn't happened. We need better testing, tracing and isolation of cases. But the government must also mandate vaccinations for health and education workers so that our hospitals and schools are safer for patients, students and staff.

Why won't the Premier do what's right to keep people safe, starting with mandatory vaccinations for health and education workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We have taken every precaution possible. We are working with the federal government in order to prevent people from travelling from several south African countries right now. There may be other countries that will be added to this list.

We're also asking the federal government to initiate point-of-arrival testing for all people arriving in Canada, regardless of where they come from, because we know that there is some spread of the Omicron variant. However, we are ready for whatever might happen. We have a very robust testing strategy. We have expanded our locations. We have 230 assessment centres that are open and over 500 pharmacies, with more coming online.

We also have boots on the ground for case and contact management. There are 375 people that have been identified as having been in those south African countries within the last 14 days. We are following up with all of them and doing the proper gene sequencing to make sure that we understand what we're dealing with, whether it's Omicron or another variety, so Ontario is ready for whatever might happen.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: What we've learned from this pandemic is that being cautious has helped reduce the spread of the virus. The government should be adapting their plan and make paid sick days actually permanent instead of

taking them away from workers at the end of this year. That would give certainty to workers and workplaces in Brampton, for example, to know that if those workers get sick, the government has their back.

Most experts in this province, including the Premier's own science table, have called for permanent paid sick days. Why isn't the Premier doing what's right for Ontario and ensuring that workers in this province have paid sick days before they expire on December 31?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, the Premier has led on this issue, frankly, right from the very beginning. We knew how important it was to ensure that the people of the province of Ontario, especially those front-line workers, were supported. That's why the Premier negotiated with our federal partners an over \$1-billion program to bring 23 paid sick days to the people of the province of Ontario. We understand, of course, how important it is to continue to support Ontario front-line workers. That is why there continues to be a program in place for workers, and we will always be there for workers as we battle our way through this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work yet to do, but we are well on our way as a province, really, to doing fabulous things. We have 90% of our population with two vaccine doses, and I'm told that a significant number of those between five and 11 have registered for or are getting their vaccines. So we're well on our way, and it's because of the hard work of the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, in addition to taking away sick days, the government plans on stopping the use of vaccine certificates that Ontarians have been using to help support our local businesses. All of this comes to an end on January 17 because the government isn't taking the fourth wave and this new variant seriously enough.

The ICUs are filling up, public health units are bringing back restrictions and 10,000 people have lost their lives in Ontario due to COVID-19. People have suffered enough, and the last thing this province needs or anybody wants is another lockdown. We can prevent that. Why is the Premier scrapping vaccine certificates when we could use them to prevent another province-wide lockdown here in Ontario?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you again to the member for the question. The loss of any life is extremely sad, and our condolences go to the families of those who have lost family members. However, we are ready. We are taking this situation very seriously with this new sequence, this new variant.

When we first announced our plan to reopen Ontario, Dr. Moore, our Chief Medical Officer of Health, was very adamant in saying that this is the plan. However, if there is a dramatic change in circumstances, such as what might be presented by this new variant—we still don't know enough about it to be able to make that determination, even

though we are proceeding very cautiously. We don't know what we're dealing with, but we will be ready for it. Dr. Moore did indicate that if there is that change in circumstances, we will have to modify that plan. But it's too soon to say right now. We are taking the necessary precautions, but if we have to move those dates out again, we will certainly do that to protect the health and safety of all Ontarians.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Sara Singh: My question again is to the Premier. The Premier knows that \$15 an hour just doesn't cut it. Last week he said, "Let's face it. That's a beginning wage. It's tough for anyone to survive on \$15." But his own low-wage policies don't help. Ontarians know it's getting harder and harder to make ends meet. Housing costs have skyrocketed; hydro and gas and insurance are all up; and food banks are experiencing the highest usage since 2009 because people are struggling to put food on their table for their families. It doesn't have to be this way.

Will the Premier support our call to increase the minimum wage to \$20 by 2026?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, it is really difficult to know where the NDP is on this. They seem to, on a daily basis, change their position with respect to that. In fact, on the day that we made that announcement, if I'm not mistaken, members of the NDP were still presenting petitions to the House calling for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. So what we have done is we've made sure that the economy is in a position where we can support a \$15-an-hour minimum wage.

1100

The NDP will, of course, know the devastation that was left behind in the province of Ontario: 300,000 manufacturing jobs left the province. The member, in her own question, talked about the high hydro rates. The Minister of Education has talked about the over 400% increase in child care. There were so many things that were discouraging jobs and investments in the province of Ontario. We had to turn that around; we have, Mr. Speaker. The climate is there where we can support our workers, and this economy will begin to thrive like it has never done before, and it is thanks—

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

And the supplementary question?

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, I think it's important to note that the minimum wage would be actually higher than \$15 right now if the Premier hadn't cancelled the planned increase when it was slated to happen. But he made things even worse for workers and froze the minimum wage and kept it low for three years. The Premier himself has said that he and his family could not make ends meet on \$15 an hour. So why is he forcing working families in Ontario to live on \$15 an hour?

People shouldn't have to turn to the food banks or worry about how they're going to pay their bills. Will the

Premier do the right thing and support our plan to get workers a \$20 minimum wage in a stable, steady and predictable way?

Hon. Paul Calandra: There is so much to unpack in that question. We brought forward a \$15 minimum wage because the timing was right to do that, because we are starting to see the economy change, principally because of the policies of this Premier. The NDP could have helped us on that. When we were first brought into office, they could have voted for those tax reductions that we brought in place to help the lowest-income earners in the province of Ontario. They chose to vote against that. They could have helped us and voted with the initiatives brought forward by the Minister of Labour to ensure that there are more people in the trades—these are good, high-paying jobs that will lead to thousands of people having the dignity of a well-paying job. The NDP voted against that. They could have voted in favour of what the Minister of Education was doing to make child care more affordable after 15 years of supporting the Liberals which saw increases to child care of over 400%. They voted against that.

Affordability and making life affordable for Ontarians is something that we're proud—

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

The final supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: Whether a worker is stocking grocery store shelves, cleaning a hospital or any other important front-line work, they deserve respect. But as the Premier has admitted, \$15 an hour as a minimum wage simply isn't going to cut it. Respect is not just saying thank you to these workers at press conferences, but it's actually about paying these workers a wage that pays their bills.

Everyone is feeling the squeeze right now, Speaker. A steady, stable path to a \$20 minimum wage will help workers make ends meet and will help end the Premier's low-wage policies. Will the Premier do the right thing and support our plan that respects workers with a \$20-an-hour minimum wage increase and recognize them for their hard work?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you to my colleague across the aisle. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the people of Ontario that under their leadership or with their buddies, the Liberals, again, as my colleague said, we lost 300,000 jobs. That's 300,000 people that couldn't pay rent. That's 300,000 people that couldn't put food on the table because of their policies.

We took a different approach. We made sure we created an environment that companies can come here and thrive and grow. We saw 307,000 more people gain employment that they could put towards rent, that they could put down on a deposit to buy a home.

Under the NDP and the Liberals' policies, they destroyed this province for 15 years—for 15 years, Mr. Speaker. They always focus on how they want the people of Ontario to rely on the government. That's your policy:

Rely on the government and have a nanny state. We don't believe in that.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Premier.

A lot has been asked of Ontarians during this very long and lingering pandemic. People across the province have made enormous sacrifices to keep each other safe and our economy moving. There was an understanding, I think, that the government would have their back. In fact, I remember the Premier said he'd do whatever it takes to protect our communities and help us recover. Imagine, then, what a shock it was for Ontarians to learn, in the latest FAO report, that over the first two quarters of this year, this government spent \$4.3 billion less than it planned.

How can the Premier possibly justify short-changing Ontarians at such a fragile point in our province's recovery?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Since the beginning of this pandemic, the government has been committed to leveraging the province's fiscal firepower to support the people and businesses of this province. This was front and centre during the public estimates, where they showed that this province spent \$19.1 billion supporting the pandemic response to COVID in the province. In fact, this represented the largest year-over-year dollar increase in program spending on record.

In addition to this, this year, our government continues to invest in our critical health care infrastructure by supporting those investments through the fall economic statement, which was revealed this past month as well. That committed to supporting and expanding home and community care, committed to supporting and increasing our health care investments across the province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Fiscal firepower? That sure fizzled out.

I'm not sure the minister understands the seriousness of this. At a time when the success or failure of reopening depended on keeping transmission down, this government underspent on public health by \$600 million. While parents were preparing for their children's return to school and demanding a safe September, this government spent \$700 million less than planned on education. And while the government was making deals with their developer buddies to pave over the greenbelt, the budget for municipal transit projects was left untouched.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Why on earth would he withhold funding at a time when the people of this province need it most?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As the member opposite knows, the Expenditure Monitor is a point-in-time estimate based on specific data requested by the FAO. It

also doesn't take into full consideration the government's investments, as it excludes consolidated entities such as school boards, hospitals and agencies.

But our government committed to the largest expenditure in this province's history, and supporting our front-line health care workers, supporting our education sector, supporting our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. That was over \$16.7 million last year. That was the largest year-over-year dollar increase in program spending in the history books of this province. That included investing in mental health, included 3,100 new beds to support the province's response to COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to unleash the province's fiscal firepower to support people, our health care system and businesses across this province.

NURSES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of health care workers. Unfortunately, there is currently a shortage of nurses here in Ontario.

The combination of the pandemic and an aging population has increased the urgency to address health care shortages; and with such a clear shortage, we must work to fill the gaps. Can the minister tell us what substantial action she has taken to address the nursing shortage in Ontario? And will the minister pledge to create more nursing spots and programs by the 2022 academic year?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for highlighting such an important and key issue. This past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown all of us how critical nurses are to our health care system.

In fact, our government has gone above and beyond to address the nursing shortage in Ontario. Specifically, in my ministry, we have worked closely with colleges and universities to create programs in order to maintain excellence in nursing education while expanding choices for students.

This past month, our government said yes to new stand-alone four-year bachelor of science in nursing degree programs at Seneca College's King campus and York University. These new programs are in addition to the 16 universities and 23 colleges offering baccalaureate nursing programs in collaborative partnerships. Through allowing colleges and universities to have stand-alone degrees, our government is increasing choice and reducing barriers to accessing high-quality, local education for students.

1110

This is a bold and progressive move under our government that will provide students with more choices for nursing education, further strengthening our health care workforce as more Ontarians pursue this important career path.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I am delighted to hear that the government is currently taking steps to address the nursing shortage and respond to the needs of our current health care system.

When we consider a problem as important as the nursing shortage, we must also consider regional differences and needs of varying health care units. In a province as large as Ontario, different communities have drastically different local health care needs. Additionally, one problem that many students encounter when trying to get a nursing education is having a lack of local options. This causes barriers and further accentuates the gap between nursing shortages in communities across Ontario.

Can the minister please tell me what she has done to address the regional barriers that students face to access nursing education close to home in order to address nursing shortages across the province?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thanks again to the member for that question. I'm proud to say that our government understands that we must address the nursing shortage through increasing both spots and creating more accessible local programs.

We are a government for the students, and we have worked hard, increasing choices and reducing barriers to high-quality, local education for Ontario students. I believe that students in small towns and students in big cities should have the same opportunities and choice when starting post-secondary education.

That is why, in recent months, our announcements of new stand-alone nursing degree programs at Georgian College, St. Lawrence, York and Seneca will add to the existing 36 nursing programs at colleges and universities across Ontario, having nursing programs available in Kingston, Belleville, Barrie, Owen Sound and King City.

Ontario's nurses go above and beyond to provide exceptional care to patients, and it is my job to ensure we make life easier for students in all regions who choose such an important career path.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. By now, families and kids across the province are used to this government's doublespeak regarding the Ontario Autism Program—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on her use of language.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: By now, families and kids across this province are used to this government's confusing talk around the Ontario Autism Program. This is a Premier that promised to clear the wait-list on the campaign trail only to have it balloon to 50,000 kids after taking power. This is a government that dismantled an existing, functioning program to build one it calls a "gold standard." Nearly every parent and advocate will tell you that it is far from it. This is a government that repeatedly bragged about doubling the budget for the Ontario Autism Program, but yesterday's Financial Accountability Office's

report shows that you've actually underspent on the program by over \$100 million.

How do you think it feels to be a child who has been without necessary therapies for over 1,000 days? How do you think it feels to be a parent and find out that this government has been underspending on the program while you go further and further into debt to provide care for your kid? Can the Premier explain why they underspent on the budget and what they plan to do to rectify it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond on behalf of the government, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I appreciate the question from the member opposite and the opportunity to give the facts.

Our government has doubled the funding for the Ontario Autism Program from \$300 million to \$600 million. We have almost five times as many children receiving services right now—40,000 children are receiving services. That is, as I said, five times as many more children as previously.

The previous government promised a program and only delivered services to 25% of eligible children, leaving 23,000 children without care. Some 33,000 invitations have been put out for children to come into the program; 11,000 invitations have been put out for the childhood benefits.

This is a world-leading program. It is a continuum of care. It involves mental health services that were never provided before. This is by the community for the community—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, that's not the case. This government recently announced it would be enrolling a total of 8,000 kids in the OAP by the fall of 2022.

Remember, the wait-list is 50,000 kids long. It's that long because of this government's actions. The majority of kids on the wait-list have been waiting without service for over 1,000 days. Every day matters to these kids. Every parent worries about their child's future, but especially a parent whose child is growing up without the supports they need to thrive.

Cynthia, a parent in London whose son is waiting to be enrolled in the OAP, asked me, "How is this Ontario and this is how we're treating someone with a disability? The person that you're giving the short end of the stick to is a three-year-old kid."

Premier, what do you have to say to Cynthia and her son and the 50,000 kids who remain on the wait-list that you promised to clear?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the important work that has been done by the autism community for the autism community to make sure that those 50,000 children who are registered for this program are going to be receiving their care, of which 40,000 already are receiving services.

Back in 2018 when our government came in, there were 31,500 people registered for the program and only 8,500

were receiving support. Our government said we must do better for those children and for those families, and now there are five times as many children receiving services than ever before. This is a huge improvement.

We provided foundational family services. All children who have a diagnosis of autism have access to funded services. We provided the early intervention services to help young children receive the critical services that they need in their development, understanding this is a needs-based program, that it is evidence-based, that it is clinically informed and researched—

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

Next question?

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Health. Many people have succumbed to the pressures of getting vaccinated by their employers or be fired. Many aren't being given reasonable accommodation to have rapid antigen testing to save their jobs. They're in danger of losing their homes, providing for their families, and the downside results continue to climb. Vaccination should be about freedom of choice.

The Premier stated mandatory vaccines in health care have been dropped, yet many of the Ontario health teams are telling hospitals in their areas that mandatory vaccination will remain in place, so nothing changes and people continue to lose their jobs, creating a health care crisis.

Truthfully, Speaker, no one can tell me what changed from yesterday to today. Yesterday workers were safe using proper COVID protocols, providing for their families, going to arenas to watch their kids play hockey and frequenting restaurants. So, Minister, what has changed? We are now a two-tier society, splitting families, pitting neighbour against neighbour, and forcing businesses to turn away patrons. Is that what you and the government really want?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. I think the short answer to your question is because we're in a pandemic. We're in a pandemic and we need to save people's lives. That's my responsibility as Minister of Health; that's our responsibility as a government. That's why we've had to take these measures.

Nobody wants to do any of this, but we have to. We have to implement measures in order to save people's lives before the vaccine was available. Now that the vaccine is available, we're asking everyone—especially with this new variant of concern. We still need to know more about it, but it's all the more important for people to be vaccinated.

If you haven't made your appointment, I am urging all people to please go out and be vaccinated now. If you are ready to receive a booster shot, please go and get that. We are going to be looking at changing the age requirements for people to be eligible to receive the booster, and there

will be more information available about that later this week. And please consider having your children aged five to 11 vaccinated as well. That's the way that we prevent this virus from spreading and we can all return to our lives as they used to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: We know vaccine development, testing and regulation is a painstaking process that takes years of dedication and hard work to complete. COVID-19 products have not gone through the same process and rigour. Long-term safety and efficacy data that is crucial for assessment is not available.

What's worse, various injury-reporting databases show the immediate effects of vax-caused injuries and deaths has quickly reached unprecedented levels. Public Health Ontario, as of November 14, reported 537 cases of myocarditis and thousands of adverse events following immunization, and now parents can register their five-to-11-year-olds to be injected. Healthy children are at a minimal risk of severe outcomes, like hospitalizations, from COVID-19.

1120

Minister, considering the above points, will you provide the Legislature with better rationale for the decision to vaccinate children other than saying these vaccines are safe?

Hon. Christine Elliott: These vaccines are safe. I can assure the member of that. They've gone through rigorous testing protocols. We're very fortunate that we have the technology now that we are able to have these vaccines available for adults as well as for children.

We know that many parents still have questions about the concerns they have with respect to vaccinating their children aged five to 11, and that's why we have information available. We understand that there will be questions and that's why we have a partnership with the Hospital for Sick Children, for parents to call to ask those questions and then to have their children vaccinated. This is extremely important because, right now, we know that a third of the new cases of COVID are occurring amongst school-aged children. So it's all the more reason for parents to protect their children, to have them vaccinated, which protects their children, their loved ones and their community. This is absolutely important, and we urge everyone to please move forward, have your questions answered and please have your children vaccinated.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's been one week since five-to-11-year-olds became eligible for vaccinations in Ontario. I know many parents have been very happy to make appointments for their children this past week. I've heard from parents in my riding who have been eager to schedule appointments since news on childhood vaccines came out.

As COVID-19 continues to rise with Ontarians moving inside this holiday season, I know many parents would be glad to have an additional level of protection for their

children. Could the minister please tell the House how many parents have booked doses for their children, and when they can expect to receive their dose?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for the question. I am very proud of our success in the vaccine rollout, which has resulted in one of the highest vaccination rates in the world.

As of this week, we have reached almost 90% of the population 12 years and older having received their first dose. And as of last Tuesday, children aged five to 11 are eligible to book an appointment to receive the vaccine. Already, over 150,000 appointments have been successfully booked and over 86,000 children have already received their first vaccine. That's in one week, Speaker. I'm also pleased to advise that public health units, like Toronto, are continuing to add more locations to their rollout, including schools and community-based clinics.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to thank the minister for her response. Many parents in my riding are excited that their children are now able to benefit from the protection of the COVID-19 vaccine. This will ensure that they can continue to do the activities they love, whether it's at school or on the weekend.

I know some parents have reached out to myself and my colleagues with questions surrounding childhood vaccinations and would like more information before booking an appointment. Can the minister tell us where constituents who have questions or who are just not sure yet can go for more information?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you again to the member for your question and for your interest in this very important consideration. I'd like to start by saying that we know vaccines are safe and the most effective way of preventing COVID-19. But we also understand that many parents have questions, and it's okay to have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.

I've heard from many parents too, and I understand the importance of making sure your children have the best protection possible, which is why parents, caregivers and children are encouraged to call the provincial vaccine confidence line, which can be accessed by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900, or visit the COVID-19 vaccine consult service to book a confidential phone appointment with a SickKids clinician.

We look forward to getting one step closer to all Ontarians having safe and effective protection against COVID-19.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Health. In March 2019, the Ford government cut its

funding to Kensington Market's overdose prevention site run by St. Stephen's Community House. This decision has had real-life devastating consequences. In the last month alone, two people living near Kensington Market have died of suspected overdoses.

Through donations, St. Stephen's is doing everything they can to provide critical services to our community. But without provincial funding, many more people in Kensington are unable to connect with the services they need to stay alive, services like harm reduction, primary care, mental health care, supportive housing and supervised injection sites.

Minister of Health, can you help our community save lives by restoring funding to St. Stephen's overdose prevention site?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that important question. Our function since we first came to government was to ensure that we build continuums of care throughout the province of Ontario to help everyone where and when that help is needed. We've created and worked with police to build mobile intervention crisis teams. We've worked to build OATs to assist individuals. We've invested in consumption and treatment sites. We've built and are building continuums of care throughout the province of Ontario. We've made investments—just recently, \$32.7 million—for addiction supports for individuals in need of help throughout the province of Ontario, and we will continue making those investments as we've indicated we would through the investments of \$3.8 billion over 10 years, which now we've achieved \$525 million in annualized funding to support the mental health and addiction needs of the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Minister of Health: Opioid deaths in Ontario have risen by a staggering 79% since the start of our pandemic. If you are in the homeless population, dying of an overdose is the number one reason why you are going to die.

Minister, people in my riding are dying from preventable overdose deaths because they don't have access to supportive housing. In the midst of this crisis, instead of helping our community, this government is choosing to cut funding to municipalities and housing. Minister, we don't need cuts, we need help. The city of Toronto has requested \$48 million in funding to provide 2,000 new supportive housing units to help house people who have no homes. These are the people sleeping in parks. These are the people who need homes now.

Minister, can your government help Toronto address our homelessness crisis by providing more funding to supportive housing?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Once again, what I would like to begin with is explaining that a continuum of care is more than just providing the supports initially, such as the access points that I mentioned in the previous response. It's also to ensure that there are the wraparound services

for individuals. That's why our government has taken a multi-ministerial approach to looking at the issues that need to be resolved and is making investments through the \$525 million and will continue to make investments along with and supported by the Minister of Housing to ensure that individuals seek treatment and are able to access it, are able to come out of the treatment and then have the wraparound supports and services that are necessary to ensure that they will have success after that treatment.

Our government has made those investments, is continuing to make those investments and has laid the foundation through the Roadmap to Wellness to ensure that those systems are put in place to assist individuals, regardless of whether they're homeless or have construction jobs and need supports

LAND USE PLANNING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: To the Premier: In just over three years, this government has issued 57 ministerial zoning orders. This is more than triple the amount the previous government issued over 15 years. The MZOs issued by this government have been used to bypass environmental protections and reward politically connected developers. We should be building within the existing boundaries of cities, but the PCs are using MZOs to enable endless suburban sprawl into protected nature and farmland.

1130

The Auditor General's report has said that the government violated Ontarians' environmental rights by not consulting on projects. My question is, does the government think that they have shown accountability and due consultation in the use of MZOs?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Today, the leader of the Liberal Party announced that he would say no to 500 supportive housing units, he would say no to building housing for our homeless veterans, he would say no to expanding Sunnybrook Hospital and he would even say no to expanding 37 long-term-care homes in our province. The reason we're in a housing supply problem in this province and have problems in our long-term care is because of the 15 years that that government said no.

Under Premier Ford and our government, we're saying yes to building more homes, we're saying yes to building more long-term care and we're saying yes to building more transit. We're the only party that will say yes to Ontarians.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, according to the housing market information available, the use of MZOs has been a failure in terms of increasing housing supply. Less housing is being built under this government than there was under the previous one. MZOs are not a substitute for comprehensive reform to allow for more multi-family housing to be built.

Ontario Liberals have a plan to scrap the existing MZO process and replace it with a new rules-based approach.

Does the government have a plan—a real plan—to increase housing supply, or will they keep selectively allowing certain developers to build when it suits the Premier?

Hon. Steve Clark: All MZOs issued on non-provincially-owned land have come at the request of the local council and a supporting council resolution. They're not forced on municipalities.

Steven Del Duca will tell you that he's against MZOs, but what you'll hear is his plan is exactly like ours. In fact, the member opposite mentioned some MZOs that their government did. In 2009, they gave an MZO for a golf dome. In 2006 in Markham, they gave an MZO for an outdoor golf driving range. In 2008 in Pickering, they made an MZO for an outdoor golf driving range. In 2013 in Oakville, they made an MZO for an outdoor golf driving range.

Speaker, I like golf as much as the next guy, but we've got to build affordable housing. We've got to build long-term care. We're going to continue to say yes to those priorities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Restart the clock. The next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to thank the member for Ottawa–Vanier for setting the table for my question.

My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I hear from my constituents continuously about the housing market and the difficulty in entering it. The previous Liberal government sat on their hands for 15 years and did absolutely nothing to address the housing crisis, but they did fix the golfing crisis.

Young families, seniors and hard-working Ontarians are desperate for housing that meets their unique needs. I understand that the Premier and the minister intend on hosting a housing affordability summit with the province's big city mayors and chairs to discuss this critical issue. My constituents and many Ontarians are eager to know more.

Speaker, can the minister please inform this House on what steps he'll be taking over the coming months to address the lack of housing supply across Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for his tremendous advocacy on the housing file in his riding. He's right: Our government policies under the housing supply action plan are working. We're getting more supply, but there is much more that we can do.

The member notes that we're inviting municipalities to the table to discuss what we can do together to build more homes and make housing more affordable right across Ontario.

Last week, I was pleased to announce that on December 16, Premier Ford and I will be hosting a provincial-municipal summit for Ontario's big city mayors and for regional chairs to identify further opportunities to collaborate as we continue to work diligently on the housing crisis. Our goal for the summit is for everyone to leave with a collective understanding of what can be done to

tackle the issue of housing affordability, and we want to emerge with a renewed sense of commitment by the two levels of government.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for that response. We know that our government's housing policies under More Homes, More Choice are working to make housing more affordable by increasing the supply to a full range of housing options—and we need that full range of housing options, not just one just simple option.

To make home ownership more affordable for more people, more needs to be done. If we're serious about addressing the housing affordability crisis, we need all hands on deck. We must have our municipal partners at the table working with us.

Can the minister please let us know what tools he has provided municipalities with so they can unlock the much-needed housing in their own communities?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for that great question. We've already heard much positive feedback from municipalities who look forward to meeting with the Premier and I in December, and also the meeting we'll be having in January at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference.

But we do need our municipal partners to put to good use the tools that we've given them as a government. This includes measures such as the community benefits charge and allowing development charges for rental and non-profit housing to be spread out over a greater period of time. We need municipalities to work with us to increase the supply of all kinds of housing.

I look forward to joining the Premier and our municipal partners next month as we look for progress through continued partnership so that we can identify the new opportunities to collaborate and to get shovels in the ground. We need to build more housing, and we need to built it fast.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is for the Premier. Winter is upon us all. In northern Ontario, snowfall led to closures of Highways 17 and 11 recently, with it taking over 24 hours to reopen in some cases. Residents of Dubreuilville were dismayed to learn that sections of Highway 17 were closed from Sault Ste. Marie all the way to Terrace Bay because of the weather.

Winter road closures are nothing new in the north, but what really upset the people in Dubreuilville was that the Highway 17 closure was not posted anywhere on Highway 519. People drove out to Highway 17 in poor weather on uncleared roads only to find out the highway had been closed. The residents of Dubreuilville feel completely let down by the lack of proper road maintenance and road closure notices.

Will the Premier finally admit that this government is continuing to fail northern Ontario and commit to improving road winter maintenance on all our highways?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. All of us in this House share the goal of a safe and efficient highway network across our province, particularly in northern Ontario, where winter months pose significant challenges for drivers. Ontario has among the highest standards in the entire country to achieve bare pavement following a snowfall.

There will always be exceptional circumstances during a winter storm. That said, our review of winter maintenance operation on Highway 17 and Highway 11 in 2020 confirmed that we are meeting or exceeding all clearing standards for these highways. Last winter, we achieved bare pavement on Highway 17 and Highway 11 96% of the time within 12 hours following a snowfall. That service commitment is to meet the bare pavement standard 90% of all time, average, across the province. We have a high track record on—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Premier: Making sure that highways are clear of snow isn't just a matter of convenience for people living in the north. Poor winter road conditions cut people off from essential services, prevent us from getting our goods to market and lead to fatal highway accidents far too often.

All of last week people from my riding were contacting my office about the terrible driving conditions and road closures on Highway 17. People like Kathryn Leclair who told me her trip home from Thunder Bay to Wawa was one of the worst winter trips she has ever taken.

1140

People cannot wait days after a snowstorm to use the highway. Will the Premier ensure that the people in the north are able to travel safely this winter by making Highways 17 and 11 class 1 highways?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: More winter maintenance equipment has been added to all fleets. There are 1,100 pieces of winter maintenance equipment ready to be deployed to keep our highways clear, even during harsh winter storms, and we have increased the proactive application of anti-icing liquids in advance of winter storms and the number of winter maintenance equipment available for fighting winter weather.

In northern Ontario, particularly Highway 17 and Highway 11, MTO is installing 14 additional road weather information systems in stations, including along these two particular highways, Highways 17 and 11.

Over the last few years, we have hired over 20 new inspectors and coordinators, and provided them with the tools to effectively ensure our contractors are meeting our highest standards. Again, we will make sure that standards for clearing to help northerners get where they need to go, faster and more—

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

The next question.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Health. Late last year, my daughter was expecting her first child. Initially, doctors had recommended against expecting women getting vaccinated. As any dad should do, I told her not to get the vaccine and she complied. Thankfully, on Valentine's Day, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl, Shiloh. I shed tears of joy.

But a few months later, doctors said it was okay to get the vaccine while pregnant. What testing had been done to ensure the safety of both the mother and their unborn baby? But now, Minister, I shed tears of sorrow. In the Waterloo area, 86 stillbirths have occurred from January to July, and normally it's roughly one stillbirth every two months. But here's the kicker: Mothers of stillbirth babies were fully vaccinated, and you have clearly said on numerous occasions that the vaccines are safe.

Minister, what do you say to the doctors who told expecting women it was okay to get fully vaccinated, and what should they tell the mothers who deliver a stillborn baby?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First, congratulations to you on the birth of your grandchild. That is wonderful news.

But it is also safe. It has been tested. We are recommending that women who are pregnant do receive the vaccine for the protection of themselves and protection of their baby as well. That has been proven. It has been accepted by Health Canada, the World Health Organization and the FDA.

This is something that we want to make sure so that we can protect everyone. For women who are pregnant, it is entirely safe and recommended for them to receive the vaccine for their own protection, the safety of their loved ones and the safety of the community.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: Minister, look, I make no apology for continuing to ask you about reputable clinical trials and expose side effects seemingly occurring in more and more people. I've been asking you and the science table as far back as when I was in caucus. I often questioned the efficacy of the data, even their modelling as to expected COVID cases. But now we're hearing reports of yet another variant, Omicron, which is being brought in from South Africa. Don't you find it ironic that, since only double-vaxxed people can fly, they are the carriers, not the unvaxxed?

As usual, I'm certain mainstream media will see this as an opportunity to inflict fear back into the minds of Ontarians. Through you, Speaker, my question to the minister is: Are you planning another lockdown to contain this variant which seems to have affected only a very few people? Is this going to be déjà vu all over again?

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I would say to the member opposite is that we don't know enough about the Omicron variant right now. There's still much we need to learn. We don't know if it actually originated in South Africa right now. We don't know which countries have it.

But we are taking every step possible to protect Ontarians. We're working with the federal government to make sure that the borders are closed to people from seven south African countries, but there may be more countries that we need to add on since the cases that have been identified in Canada actually came from Nigeria. There's much more work that needs to be done, and we'll take the steps as we need to take them.

Dr. Moore has been very clear that we do have a plan to reopen Ontario, but if there is a major concern that is presented by this variant, then we'll have to reassess. We're taking every step now to do the necessary testing of the 375 people who have been identified as having travelled during that time period. We're going to test, trace, isolate and quarantine as we need to for the protection of all people in Ontario.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: Niagara is experiencing a crisis with EMS services. Members from the Niagara region emergency medical service are expressing grave concern that they are understaffed, under-resourced and burnt out as demand for emergency services continues to rise.

Jon Brunarski, president of CUPE 911 and an active paramedic, stated, "Patients who call 911 frequently have to wait for long durations to have us show up at their doorstep, because there are no ambulances available."

The Niagara region Public Health and Social Services Committee has stated that the current situation has reached a critical state. It has been reported that there are often not enough ambulances to provide emergency coverage for all of Niagara and to meet response times for critical patients.

Will this government support paramedics in their work and commit today to hiring more full-time paramedics, more full-time dispatchers and ensure that when the people of Niagara call 911, they get the timely care that they deserve?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. It is very important that people across the province of Ontario receive timely access to medical care through ambulance services, and we really appreciate the work that paramedics have been doing. We know that health human resources are stressed right now. That's why we're putting more money—hundreds of millions of dollars—into training for more nurses, registered practical nurses, personal support workers and paramedics.

Right now we have community paramedics who are working in health as well as in long-term care to make sure that seniors who are at home are going to be able to be supported if they're waiting for a long-term-care space or if they want to remain in their own home with the supports that they need around them. We are providing those paramedic services, and we are working to integrate that with the work that health is doing to provide the nursing and other services that people might need.

The work is continuing and we will make sure that everyone, including in Niagara, receives the services they need in a timely manner.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: In the last seven months, nearly 350 patients in Niagara were left stranded for four to six hours due to offload delays; 63 people spent more than six hours on EMS stretchers because there simply are not enough hospital beds. While the people of this province are laying on stretchers, this government spent nearly half a billion dollars less on health care than it originally planned. The money was available; this government chose not to use it. The Premier needs to explain to the people of Niagara why he chose not to spend on health care while our family members are stuck on EMS stretchers.

Will the minister commit today to fix the Niagara 911 crisis?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I believe I answered the first part of your question in my earlier response, but I think it's also really important to concentrate on what the actual situation is with health care spending. As we announced in the fall economic statement, our government has invested an additional \$5.1 billion this year and allocated an additional \$5.2 billion next year in dedicated COVID-19 health funding.

The Financial Accountability Office, which is what I expect you're referring to, reports on a quarterly basis the spending variances between planned and actual spending at a point in time. While the spending may not have happened in Q2, a lot of the spending is already happening now and will be reported later, because the FAO's point-in-time figures do not necessarily reflect the government's overall spending plan.

What I can say is that the \$974 million in lower-than-expected spending is going to be caught up as we move towards the end of the year because of the timing of when—

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

The next question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Families depend on their government to be ready, especially right now. The Premier's three temporary paid sick days are set to expire at the end of December, and we know that families are going to need those paid sick days to stay home if they're sick, take their children to be vaccinated, maybe get a booster shot themselves. British Columbia and the federal government have moved to make paid sick days permanent for their workers.

1150

We're not out of this pandemic yet and families need to know that we have their back. It shouldn't always have to be a fight to get what they need. So, Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing and make paid sick days permanent by passing Bill 7 today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, you'll find that the reasons why we did not support the proposal that were brought forward by the Liberal Party and by their leader, Mr. Del Duca, was that it sought to put the burden onto our small, medium and large job creators in the province at a time, of course, when they were having challenges because of the COVID pandemic.

So we went in a different direction. We worked with our federal partners to bring in a program that had 23 paid sick days for our essential workers. We went even further than that by bringing in an additional three days for our workers. These days allow our workers to get—whether it's vaccinated, whether they have to stay home with a loved one who has COVID. They really can be used for a number of factors, and we went even a step further than that. We ensured that we were the first government in the province of Ontario to protect all workers when it came to job security during the COVID crisis.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: If the minister read Bill 7, he knows that his assertion is incorrect.

In any event, families also depend on us to protect them, and since vaccinations for five-to-11-year-olds have started, we've seen a rise in anti-vax protests directed at our kids. Children and their families in Windsor, North Bay, Barrie, Ottawa and other communities have been intimidated when trying to get their vaccines, and our front-line health care workers continue to be harassed, just for trying to do their job.

The Premier's response to this has been to do nothing—zilch. He's always looking for somebody else to take action. Ignoring this issue is a failure of leadership and it's letting down our families and our kids and our health care workers. So, Speaker, will the Premier take action today by passing Bill 2 or introducing his own legislation to create safe zones around vaccination sites to protect our kids, our families and our health care workers?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, the member will know, because he served in government for a number of years and was part of a party that governed for 15 years that there are already resources and tools in place to protect individuals, in particular those, right now, who are seeking to get vaccines and want to be safe.

But he mentions in his question that his bill has changed. Well, how surprising, colleagues, the Liberals have changed their mind on something else. They flip-flop back and forth, Mr. Speaker. Now, yesterday he talked about the government taking some time to bring in sick days. I have to remind the member that he had 5,110 days to bring in paid sick days when he was a member of government. That's 5,110 days to bring in two paid sick days, Mr. Speaker.

Now, we've brought in three paid sick days as part of a \$1-billion program. We didn't put the burden on small businesses, like the Liberals and the NDP, frankly, wanted us to do. Instead, we ensured that our small, medium and large job creators and our essential front-line workers had access to paid sick days, that their jobs were protected. It didn't take us 5,000 days. It took us a lot less, and we'll—

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

DEFERRED VOTES

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

On November 25, 2021, Mr. McNaughton moved third reading of Bill 27. On November 29, 2021, Mr. Cuzzetto moved that the question be now put.

The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes on Mr. Cuzzetto's motion that the question be now put. I'll ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1225.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters, has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 47; the nays are 21.

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

Mr. McNaughton has moved third reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on government order number 1, the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

On October 19, 2021, Mr. Pettapiece moved, seconded by Ms. Skelly, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the

gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

I'll ask the Clerks to once again please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1228 to 1243.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on government order number 1, the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne, has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 49; the nays are 15.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Be it resolved that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

“To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

“We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.”

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1244 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 30, 2021, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 37, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2021 sur le redressement des soins de longue durée et à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? I heard some noes.

Twelve members having stood in their places, we will now have a 30-minute report-stage debate on the motion for the adoption of the report on the bill, as amended, pursuant to standing order 38(b). In this debate, each recognized party is allotted 12 minutes, and the independent members are allotted a total of six minutes.

I will recognize the member for Brampton Centre to start off debate.

Ms. Sara Singh: We are here today to discuss the report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly regarding Bill 37, the long-term care bill that the government has put in place. Speaker, what concerns us, and I think why we need to have further debate on this committee report, is the fact that we heard testimony from deputants from across the province, but that through the committee process, unfortunately, the government did not accept a single amendment by the NDP, despite what we heard from those delegations—some serious concerns with respect to Bill 37. What we heard from deputants, time and time again, was that they felt that the committee process was rushed, that they did not have adequate time to share the concerns that they had on Bill 37. Those concerns were numerous. They ranged from everything in the preamble, to the last few words on the Retirement Homes Act as well. I'll go through some of those concerns.

I think it's important to note that people at committee felt that the government wasn't even listening to the concerns they raised. Government members spent a considerable amount of time during questions just sharing government announcements, rather than actually listening to the concerns that people were raising in committee. They spent time outlining how much money they claimed they're spending on staffing strategies, when folks were saying very clearly that section 8 of the bill is not going to be able to deliver on the targets that are needed because government isn't making the investments they need.

Each of those deputants was given seven minutes to outline their concerns, to share the horrors that their family members experienced in long-term care. I'm thinking of people like Cathy Parkes, who shared the horrific conditions her father was subjected to in long-term care, at Orchard Villa, and who outlined why there was such a need, at this point in time, for the government to act decisively and to help transition our long-term-care system to one that relied not on profit, but on not-for-profit carer. The government chose not to implement those recommendations and help us move forward by transitioning our system. We heard from experts like Dr. Vivian Stamatopoulos, who said that seven minutes was not nearly enough, and that seven years would still not be able to account for what was needed to be shared on behalf of families—the trauma, the mental health anguish and the concerns that they raised with Bill 37, Speaker.

I would agree with Dr. Stamatopoulos, who very clearly outlined why this government's bill was not going to help us transition our long-term-care system and was, in fact,

not going to improve the quality of care of long-term care in the province for seniors living in long-term care right now, something that they deserve.

Frankly, I think what everyone expected this bill to achieve was transformational change, but unfortunately what we have before us is a bill that will not deliver on that promise, Speaker.

We heard concern after concern from folks like the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, AdvantAge Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Health Coalition, United Steelworkers, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the London Health Coalition, the family council from Mon Sheong Home for the Aged, Family Councils Ontario. We heard from northern family councils. We heard from the Ontario Nurses' Association, the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils, Home Care Ontario, Maureen McDermott, Hugh Armstrong—academics who had very important perspectives to share on how we could transition our long-term-care system to one that didn't have to favour private operators but in fact helped us move towards one that would provide municipally operated homes and not-for-profit homes the capacity they needed.

Unfortunately, when the NDP proposed over 30 amendments in committee, government members shot every single one of those down—reasonable amendments like, please, could we increase the number of hours for allied health professionals from 36 to 60 minutes for seniors in long-term care to get the care they need from their dietitians, for example, or other health care providers who aren't PSWs or registered nurses. The government didn't think it was important to do that. They didn't think it was important to ensure that we enshrine in legislation mandatory requirements around dementia or Alzheimer's training or ensuring that people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities are receiving the supports they need from their PSWs because, again, they're receiving adequate training. Speaker, these seem like reasonable amendments to present in committee to help strengthen a bill that is intended to deliver high-quality care. Why the government wouldn't support that is still something I think members of the committee are struggling with. Also, people across the province are wondering why the government would ignore the expert advice and testimony of all of these stakeholders I just mentioned, and others who sent in written submissions.

It's as if the committee process was a sham, just to ram through this piece of legislation for the government to say that they're doing something when in fact they're doing very little, if anything, to help reform long-term care. Not one home—not one home—has been held accountable for the actions and the inspections that were conducted throughout the pandemic. In fact, the government has renewed the licences of many of those operators, some who were the worst offenders through this pandemic, rather than hold them accountable, fine them, take away their licences so that they can't continue to operate and generate revenues for their stakeholders. What we heard

from testimony was that the government's plan actually expedites their licences and provides them more lucrative contracts, not less, and this is concerning.

The use of "mission-driven" in even the preamble, Speaker, was raised as a serious concern by each and every single one of those deputants. We heard from those delegations that the government should remove the reference to "mission-driven organizations." There's actually an amendment that the NDP proposed in committee that wasn't supported. Groups like ACE, L'Arche, Hugh Armstrong, the London Health Coalition, the Ontario Health Coalition, members from CUPE—we heard from Cathy Parkes, again Dr. Vivian Stamatopoulos, members of Unifor, United Steelworkers, who all said that "mission-driven organizations" needed to be removed, that language needed to be removed from the preamble, but government members thought it was okay to continue to leave this language in there. In fact, like I said, they voted against NDP amendments to help us remove that language.

Many also signalled a need for a clear commitment to not-for-profit long-term care and the fact that this bill does not outline a commitment towards transitioning our system to one that is not-for-profit. Members of CUPE, the Ontario Health Coalition, the Ontario Nurses' Association, Dr. Vivian Stamatopoulos—all saying that we need to see this government make a clear commitment to not-for-profit care and help us transition our system to not-for-profit delivery, but unfortunately, the government is continuing on the same trajectory that they think is important.

1510

Speaker, important amendments like clarifying what a palliative care philosophy will look like in Ontario—just making reference to it in the bill simply is not enough. Delegations and speakers made it very clear that the government needs to have a real strategy in place here and to clarify that the palliative care approach is not just about end of life, but about improving quality of life through prevention and relief of suffering. This includes the psychosocial and spiritual aspects of care—that's from Dr. Amit Arya, who is a palliative care specialist, saying that this bill simply didn't go far enough and didn't actually clarify what palliative care philosophies can look like in long-term care, not to mention the fact that there's no additional training or resources being provided to the sector to help train, recruit and attract palliative care specialists to our long-term-care homes.

There's a real gap here, Speaker, that every single one of those deputants identified in the targets that are outlined, the language in this bill and what's actually being delivered on the ground. When we tried to raise that, it was as if opposition members were just making this stuff up; well, we're not. We're actually listening to experts on the ground. We're listening to people in the community. We're listening to front-line health care workers who are telling this government that this bill is not good enough and it's not going to help resolve the problem.

When it comes to residents' rights and care and the services they receive, RAO, for example, recommended

that we amend to implement measures related to respecting sexually and gender-diverse communities, which is important. They also suggested that we include language to identify past behaviours of someone who may have violent behaviours or has engaged in violent sexual behaviours in the past, and that this language also be incorporated into the plan of care. Unfortunately, the government didn't think that an amendment that would help support that language being included in the bill, so that staff and other residents could feel protected and so that we find a balance to protect that resident's privacy and their health information, was important enough.

Speaker, again, the direct hours of hands-on care, section 8—I can't recall a presenter who did not raise issues and concerns with section 8 in this bill. Each and every one of them outlined that the government would not meet its intended targets of delivering four hours of hands-on care and, in fact, it was the average, as the bill was written, that was problematic, because it did not mean that there was a requirement per home to deliver on four hours of direct, hands-on care. This was an average across the province and across the sector, which meant that some homes could be providing up to five hours of care, while another home could be providing up to two hours of care. There was no mechanism in place to help address this issue.

This is why delegation after delegation recommended to the government that they amend the language and mandate in legislation a required minimum of four work hours of direct nursing and personal care per resident per day, rather than a targeted average. This is from Arch. This is from the coalition of family councils, as well. This is from the RAO, the Ontario Nurses' Association, the Ontario health council, the United Steelworkers—the list goes on and on—as well as others who indicated that four hours of direct, hands-on care is what residents in long-term care deserve.

Speaker, I know that my time is up, but I want to say that it's important to acknowledge that people in this province did not feel heard. They expected more from this government with respect to transforming long-term care here in the province, and unfortunately, the government has failed to deliver.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I do appreciate that we're having this vote on the report back, and that it's the first time it has been done here. I think it's important.

I was very disappointed when the government did not allow an independent member onto the committee. I think it was an opportunity that was missed. Luckily, I was able to participate in committee. I was able to view all the depositions—as many as I could—and I did participate, in a very limited way, in the clause-by-clause process. I appreciated the Chair's indulgence and participated in a non-obstructive way. What was clear from the deputations and what I saw in the clause-by-clause is, the government is going down the same path we have for 20 years, and we're expecting to get a different result. We're not going to get there.

The government inserted into the preamble the words "mission-driven"—that comes from the long-term-care commission, who have very specific definitions about what that means—but nowhere in this bill is it found, and it's a bit of a catch-all.

My colleague is right; this is just going to have us opening more for-profit long-term-care homes and not enough not-for-profit long-term-care homes.

There's nothing in here that actually leans into communities and says, "We're going to help you with things like access to capital, with things like access to construction expertise." We're not saying to municipalities, "We want to partner with you so you can build more of these things that are responsive to the community." We wouldn't build schools or hospitals or child care the way that we're building long-term care, because all of those things are connected to the community. The challenge that we've seen in long-term care is, there were so many for-profit homes that weren't connected to the community and not responding to the needs of the residents—acutely so in the pandemic.

Why do we have this legislation? Why do we have a piece of legislation that's three quarters of an inch thick and then the regulations are probably 10 times that amount? Do you know why? It's a franchise agreement—like McDonald's or Tim Hortons or many others—except it's a lot thicker. And why do we do that? Because there are two missions—and that's why the problem with "mission-driven" is wrong: One is to make a profit, and the other one is to care for people.

We have for-profit corporations that have been paying bonuses and dividends throughout this pandemic even with all the crappy stuff that has happened. Here's the thing—we don't talk about this much: Those same for-profit corporations back some of the biggest pension funds in this country, both public and private; we all know that. We'd be surprised at which pension plans have bought into it. But here's the kicker. Whose backs are those pension plans backed on? Mostly women, mostly racialized, not earning decent wages, probably don't have a pension—or not a great one. There's a word for that somewhere, but I'm not sure what the word is; we can all choose our own.

This is not about—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I agree with the member. I look back on that and I say we should have been in a different direction and on a different path. That's why I'm saying this right now. We've got to get on a different path. We're not on a different path.

The hours of care should be there. They're important, but the rules that you have around them are not going to be sufficient to get you what you need. It's clear. All the deputants said that. That's what happened in the clause-by-clause.

Licences, section 98 in the bill, a section that actually gave some directions to the director as to how they could refuse, some rules around how they could turn down the criteria for turning down a licensee—they disappeared. I know the government says we're going to put that in

regulation. Regulations take a long time. We passed MPP Martin's defibrillator bill a year and seven months ago, and it's still not enacted—to ensure that defibrillators are registered, that they're safe and they're working. We still don't have the regulations, and that's for a little bill.

I know what I'm going to hear from the government side, and that's fine; I'll take a hit for not doing enough. But I'm not going to take a hit and we're not going to take a hit for not saying we need to get on a different path. We have to work with communities. We have to give them access to capital. We have to give them access to expertise. We have to engage them.

1520

Caring for our seniors is the same as caring for our kids in child care, or in schools, or someone who's sick in hospital. We need to treat it the same way. We haven't been doing that for a long time, and we need to do it now.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the member, when we're referring to another member, we refer to them by their riding name or their ministerial title, as applicable.

Next, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: At the outset, I would be remiss if I didn't spend a moment or two just highlighting the fact that we're actually at our first report-stage debate in this House. It's a continuing series of reforms that the Premier had asked our government to put in place to ensure that members on all sides of the House have more opportunities to participate in debate, whether they're for or against initiatives that have been brought forward by the government. I am very grateful to the Premier for ensuring that this place modernizes itself and gives more members an opportunity to comment.

That's really what this report-stage debate is about, Mr. Speaker. I would say to my honourable friend in the Liberal Party, if it were not for a modification like this, the members opposite might not have had an opportunity to speak on this bill post-committee hearings at all, and I think that is also an important modification. It's not just for that member, but it is for future parliamentarians who get the honour of serving in this place and who might not be part of a party in the future.

I would also suggest to the member—and I know he would agree with me and probably might feel that, after June 2, he might have resolved some of this problem—that the best way to ensure that you have access to committees is to elect more members, and then you would have guaranteed access to committees. I don't say that as a criticism, to be honest with you, Speaker. That's just the way this place has worked for a long period of time.

I am, however, grateful for the fact, again, that the Premier, in pushing the democratization of this place, did instruct us to ensure that even our committees were more bipartisan. This is something, of course, that we have heard some criticism of. For the first time, I think, in Canada, in any parliamentary democracy, independents serve as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees. That has never happened before.

So there's a whole host of initiatives that we have brought in place to ensure that all members get the opportunity to participate in debate, whether they agree with the initiatives that we're bringing forward or not. That's what this place is about. And as much as I disagree with some of the assertions of the members opposite in the time that they have spoken, I am in fact grateful for the opportunity that we have to do this.

Let me just refocus on what we are debating today, on long-term care. The member for Ottawa South is correct: Obviously, I'm going to highlight some of the shortcomings of the party that led this province over 15 years and four separate mandates, Mr. Speaker. I think it is obvious, when you look at the challenges that we face in long-term care, challenges that we knew before we were elected and given the honour of serving the people of the province of Ontario—we knew that there were massive waiting lists; we knew that investments weren't being made.

I think a number of members on our side of the House have highlighted the fact that there are more long-term-care beds being built in their own ridings than there were province-wide—and that doesn't just stop in our ridings; it is in every community, in every part of the province. Mostly every single riding is seeing the development of new long-term-care beds for their residents, in a construction process that started swiftly after we were elected to office. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been using ministerial zoning orders to ensure that we get that done.

But it wasn't just about building new beds and additional beds and redeveloping those old beds. It wasn't just about getting rid of the ward rooms where there were four people in one unit. It's not just about improving infection prevention and control measures. It is also about the level and the standards of care that we expect to see in those homes, the inspections that we expect to happen in those homes. When you look at this piece of legislation, it does set us on that path. It sets us on a path not only of having thousands of new beds, but it also sets us on the path of moving towards the standard of care—a North America-leading standard of care—of four hours a day per resident. That is a huge shift in where the government is going on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. That is something that should have been done a long time ago. It wasn't done. It wasn't a priority, but this government made it a priority.

To ensure that we can have that happen, this legislation also highlights the fact that we're going to have to hire significant numbers of new PSWs. That is something that the Minister of Colleges and Universities had been working on even before some of the investments that we made to bring on new beds. We understood how important it was. That's why we're bringing on 27,000 additional PSWs. We need to train them. We need to get them prepared for the thousands of new beds that are happening across the province. We are increasing inspections in all of these homes.

The opposition, the NDP, are suggesting—and now we're hearing a shift from the Liberals as well—that we

should privatize homes, that we should spend billions of dollars—

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It causes them stress to hear what they're suggesting.

This is the funny part about the [*inaudible*] homes in the province of Ontario. And then we can't support them, so we'd have to close them down, lay off those workers and tell the people who are in those homes, "You have to find somewhere else to" [*inaudible*] workers into the system, as I said. We're going to ensure that there are inspections to keep these homes safe and to make sure that we respect those who helped build the province of Ontario. We are not going to do what the opposition would have us do.

I'm going to close by saying this, Speaker: The NDP have been talking about how they like to negotiate and do things, but can you think of the negotiation that must have taken place in 2011, when the Liberals had a minority government and they sat down with the NDP? What would they possibly have negotiated? Was it long-term care? No, they didn't negotiate for long-term care. They didn't negotiate for better health care. They didn't negotiate for better education. They didn't negotiate for lower taxes for people. In fact, I don't know what it was that they negotiated to ensure that they supported the Liberals from 2011 to 2014, which put us in the position where Ontario fell so far behind. And what is there to show for that support? Ontario has been left with the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the world. We have a health care system that we're having to rebuild; we have a long-term-care system that we're having to rebuild; we have an education system that we're having to rebuild—across every single measure. Thousands of people were left unemployed because manufacturing was being closed down. That is the legacy of the Liberals and the NDP. The NDP can't run away from that legacy. They had the option in 2011, as I said the other day, to put an end to the reign of terror that was the Liberal government. I call it a reign of terror because if you were in the province of Ontario at that time—the only time that might have been worse was 1990 to 1995, when Bob Rae was in charge, but the people never made that mistake ever again.

I would hope that the members opposite would think twice and support us and pass this bill for all those people who want better long-term care.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Continuing the debate, I recognize the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the opportunity to build on my colleague's remarks on long-term care, as someone who used to work in the health care sector—and how important this is to my riding and the people of Ontario. I want to build on the work that my colleague said we're doing as a government. We've spoken about the process. We've spoken, of course, about the 15 years, the reign of terror by the previous government, supported by the NDP.

I don't want to look at the past. I want to look at where we're going—\$1.75-billion investment into long-term

care. That's going to create over 30,000 new and safe spaces in long-term care. That will be supported and flanked by the men and women of this province who get up each and every day to care for our loved ones—27,000 new full-time jobs created to support drastic staffing levels that were depleted by the previous government, supported by the NDP. I think to some of the key measures this government is taking to supporting those educational pathways. Let's talk about 2,000 nurses, the first expansion in nursing seats in the province's history—in the last 20 years.

The member from Ottawa South spoke. Let's look at his mandate letters, which included—leading work that will help the minister ensure nurses, pharmacists and other health care professionals make a full contribution to the health care system. Was that done? No. They could have expanded nursing seats, but they didn't; this government did. They could have given colleges degree-granting authority in nursing, which we're seeing in rural Ontario—bachelor of science in nursing degrees. That is so critical.

Speaker, I know for your riding and ridings across Ontario that are rural, giving colleges in those rural settings the ability to harness the potential of the next generation of health care workers—the NDP and Liberals could have done that, but they didn't.

In fact, they could have harnessed the capability of talent creation in this province through our colleges, with PSW training. They could have done that, but they didn't; we did. We think to the largest training and recruitment initiative for PSWs in this province's history, something this government is doing with the challenge fund. We're seeing over 8,000 net new PSWs entering the system, something both those parties opposite could have done but didn't. They had 15 years in which to address this, but they didn't.

This government understands that it's going take an army to overturn the reign of darkness and to address in a compassionate way the systemic challenges of our long-term-care system.

Interjections.

Hon. David Piccini: And rather than work with us, I'm being heckled by member opposites. They don't want to work with us. They don't want to work with us to attract and retain the next generation of health care professionals.

The member opposite spoke about "the same path." This is a very different path—and we look to shovels in the ground in my riding, in Norwood, with Pleasant Meadow Manor, Streamway.

In fact, the member talked about not-for-profit. Three new not-for-profit beds for every one in the for-profit sector—that's the legacy of Premier Ford. That's the legacy of the latest announcement in long-term care.

We understand that it's not just about builds and beds; it's about the talent and attraction and retention of talent. We're doing that with nursing. We're doing that with PSW training. All of these things could have been done.

Speaker, we have incredible talent in this province. Those members opposite didn't want to harness that, but we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Scott has moved the adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts.

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

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, the bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

I will ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1534 to 1604.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The vote was held on the motion for the adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly on Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts, as amended.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 38; the nays are 15.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I declare the motion carried.

Report adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Fraser: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week / Projet de loi 9, Loi proclamant la Semaine de reconnaissance du secteur sans but lucratif.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Fraser: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 18, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Polish Heritage Month / Projet de loi 18, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine polonais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DE SENSIBILISATION À L'ENDOMÉTRIOSE

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to proclaim March as Endometriosis Awareness Month / Projet de loi 58, Loi proclamant le mois de mars Mois de sensibilisation à l'endométriose.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll now return to the member from Davenport for a brief summary of her bill.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I am very pleased to reintroduce this bill to proclaim March as Endometriosis Awareness Month. Endometriosis is a disease experienced by one in 10 women, trans or non-binary people—people who menstruate. It causes extreme pain, nausea and other symptoms but often goes undiagnosed because of stigma and shame, leaving those who experience it so suffer in silence.

Recognizing March as Endometriosis Awareness Month in Ontario will help to educate and inform the public about this disease and support those experiencing it.

PETITIONS

SERVICES D'OPTOMÉTRIE

M. Guy Bourgoin: Je voudrais remercier M^{me} Noella Lemieux de Kapuskasing pour la pétition intitulée « Les enfants et les aînés ont besoin de soins oculaires.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que le gouvernement Ford permet que le retrait des soins oculaires aux enfants de l'Ontario continue, ce qui nuit à leur capacité d'apprendre à l'école, de fonctionner librement dans leur vie quotidienne et les met à risque de troubles de vision permanents;

1610

« Alors que l'inaction du gouvernement Ford envers l'accès aux soins oculaires pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario nuit à leur capacité de maintenir un mode de vie autonome et actif; et a augmenté le risque de complications permanentes de problèmes oculaires...

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de demander au gouvernement Ford de s'engager à conclure une entente officielle équitable » pour « les optométristes de l'Ontario afin que les enfants et les personnes âgées de l'Ontario reçoivent les soins oculaires préventifs et diagnostiques essentiels qu'ils et elles méritent. »

Je suis fier de signer cette pétition. Je vais la donner à Ella pour qu'elle l'apporte à la table des greffiers.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm very pleased to present this petition on behalf of my constituent Gordon Moir. It reads as follows:

"Give Communities a Say on Cannabis Retail Licensing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cannabis is a legal, regulated product and should be available in a way that meets community needs; and

"Whereas the Ford government's licensing approach has led to communities with no retail stores at all while other neighbourhoods are seeing increasing concentrations of them at the expense of other shops and services; and

"Whereas municipalities have no authority to determine the location of cannabis retail shops in a given area or their proximity to one another; and

"Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has forced too many local businesses to be evicted or closed, further impacting the services available to local communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 29, the Cannabis Licence Amendment Act, to:

"—align the process for new cannabis retail licences with that used for liquor licences;

"—give municipalities and, through them, the local community, a greater say in the licensing process;

"—ensure access to legal cannabis is maintained without pushing out diverse businesses that make our local economies thrive."

I'm very happy to support this petition that supports my Bill 29. I'll be affixing my signature and passing it along to page Joel to table with the Clerks.

NURSES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to present 811 more signatures from Ontarians who are concerned about the quality of care in ICUs at Southlake hospital in Newmarket–Aurora, which of course is the health minister's riding. I want to thank the RNs, the registered respiratory therapists and members of the Ontario Nurses' Association for speaking out about these risks to patient care.

This is a "Petition to Stop Unsafe Patient Care and the Erosion of Quality Critical Care at Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas patients requiring critical care have complex and urgent care needs and their conditions are unstable, unpredictable, and can quickly change and deteriorate; and

"Whereas these patients need registered nurses with specialized education and training who are highly skilled and experienced, and anything less puts patient safety at risk; and

"Whereas Southlake's response to the RN staffing crisis in its intensive care unit is to hire RNs without providing full education and training in critical care nursing prior to these nurses working in the ICU; and

"Whereas existing expert RNs will be required to intervene to provide care to multiple patients when the appropriate level of care in an ICU is a 1-to-1 nurse-to-patient ratio; and

"Whereas while ICU RNs are exhausted from providing life-saving care during the COVID-19 pandemic, Southlake's plan puts patient and staff safety at risk and is driving away the expert and experienced ICU RNs this hospital can't afford to lose; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients can suffer from unnecessary complications or death because of unassessed care needs, delayed care, missed care, miscommunication, or errors which erode safe quality patient care;

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

"Stop the pre-mentorship program in the ICU at Southlake Regional Health Centre—a program that does not provide newly hired RNs with full education and training in critical care nursing prior to working in the ICU;

"Immediately transfer any RNs who were hired into the pre-mentorship program enrolment into the mentorship program—a comprehensive critical care education and training course, the successful completion of which is required prior to working in critical care at Southlake;

"Cease the plan to implement 'team nursing' in the ICU at Southlake—a model that does not provide the appropriate level of care for critically ill patients, which is a 1-to-1 nurse-to-patient ratio;

"Cease any subsequent plans to implement a team-based nursing model of care in the cardiac intensive care unit and the cardiovascular intensive care unit at Southlake;

"Create increased opportunities for funded full education and training of new critical care RNs at Southlake;

"Commit to fund initiatives that retain existing specialized, highly skilled, educated, and experienced critical care RNs at Southlake;" and finally

"Ensure this hospital recruits appropriately educated and trained critical care RNs to provide safe, quality care to patients who need life-saving care."

I support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Ella.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further filibuster—I'm sorry; further petitions?

Laughter.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À SOUTENIR LA POPULATION ET LES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure, as you know, Mr. Speaker, to stand in my place. I won't be able to recite poetry like you did this morning—full standing ovation for your orator's skills on full display this morning. But you do raise the bar in this place, and I just wanted to give you a small compliment in that regard. Hopefully you'll be a little lenient on me in this one-hour lead.

However, I was in the House this morning when the associate minister gave her one-hour, with the assistance of MPP Smith, and I have to say there were a couple of comments that caught my ear. She started off her lead on Bill 13 by saying that we don't want to waste any time and energy around compliance measures. This was a quote from this morning. This got me thinking about, what is the purpose of these so-called high-impact red tape bills?

You'll know, Mr. Speaker, that this is the seventh bill that the government has brought forward. They really are a hodgepodge of pieces of legislation that tinker around the edges and don't really delve into the real problems that the people of this province are facing, and this has been a consistent theme that I've brought to the House as the critic for finance and the Treasury Board. It's certainly, in my capacity as caucus chair, a consistent theme that I've heard from members of the Ontario New Democratic Party. We feel that your priorities are misplaced, that you've missed the stretch goal, if you will, to borrow an old saying from the Liberals. And I have to say, at the end of the day, is if the government does not have full comprehension at this point in our history of the connection between the well-being of Ontarians and our well-being as a province, then you have missed the boat entirely.

This piece of legislation is called the Supporting People and Businesses Act. We disagree. We think that this is a missed-opportunity piece of legislation, and I will argue quite successfully that delegations who came before us also shared that view. This is yet another missed opportunity to do the right thing. And why? Why, Mr. Speaker, at this stage in the pandemic, would we have a government craft a piece of legislation that just tinkers around the edges on supporting businesses, supporting people, supporting health care and the environment?

When I heard the minister this morning say that they don't want to waste time and energy around compliance

measures, I started thinking about this iPolitics article that came out soon after Bill 13 was tabled in the House. To be clear, this piece of legislation extends the ability for cannabis stores to continue with home delivery. This is something they have enjoyed during the pandemic. It will provide bigger restaurant patios, which, of course, we support. But parts of this omnibus bill—following in the Liberal lead, I guess, the Liberal pattern, the Liberal tradition of compartmentalizing little pieces of legislation and throwing them into a massive bill and not giving them the due process, due diligence that they deserve is something that this government is now well known for across the country.

1620

In this particular iPolitics article, which was written by Charlie Pinkerton, they go on to say that “Parts of this omnibus bill—which would affect about 15 provincial ministries and 32 existing acts—remove or weaken laws that exist to protect the environment.” Now, Mr. Speaker, we are in 2021, the end of this year. If you haven't been paying attention, global warming, climate change, is impacting our economy, our health and the well-being of our communities. Why would any government in their right mind bring forward a piece of legislation that gives greater leniency around what environmental assessments need to happen on certain projects?

This article goes on to say, “Effectively, ‘there are no measures in this bill that will benefit the environment.’” This is from Keith Brooks, who is Environmental Defence's programs director. Environmental Defence, as you know, advocates for a healthy climate and is funded both by private and public sectors. This is something that I want to bring to the attention of this government: that the private sector is becoming more and more concerned about decisions that governments are making which do not put that decision-making process through an environmental lens, because there is a cost.

One of the major private sectors that has raised the issue of being more progressive and thorough in their environmental assessment is the insurance industry. You want to know why the insurance industry is so concerned about climate change? Because it is impacting their bottom line and they want something done about it. Now, we want something done about insurance, but I'll save that for my finance component.

This is a trend, and I know that the government is aware of this, because I'm going to cite the Auditor General's report and your missed targets on almost everything related to the environment.

“Karen Wirsig, who manages the group's plastics program, said the government's proposal to allow tire producers to conduct their own internal audits, instead of third-party ones, of how many tires they supply in Ontario” is part of this pattern of behaviour that the government is displaying. If you have unaudited data, “there's no way to verify how many tires are actually put on the market.” This was used as an example, as a pattern of behaviour that is found in Bill 13.

The PCs—and you heard the minister say this morning that this particular schedule 10 of Bill 13 is a just minor

amendment. Essentially, they're just saying, "Just trust us. It's going to be okay. Just trust us." Well, I just want to inform the government benches that, at this stage in the game, with 174 days before the election, nobody trusts you on the environment.

I'm sure that the Auditor General's report should have been a wake-up call. I remember fondly, of course, when the government members used to like the Auditor General when they sat on this side of the bench. She has raised some serious concerns, particularly with the Ministry of the Environment. If the Ministry of the Environment isn't following their own processes, their own rules, their own guidelines, their own legislation according to the Environmental Bill of Rights, where would the confidence of this province be in anything that you've said about the environment?

Schedule 10 is problematic. For those of you who are just tuning in right now, schedule 10 gives the government more authority over the type of environmental assessments that projects are subjected to. We have many concerns as to who's making these decisions about which projects get an assessment or what kind of assessment will be happening, and we have good reason to be concerned.

Our critic, MPP Shaw, has said this is continuing a pattern of pro-development that the government has displayed. Another critic said that this is a government that has continued to endorse weaker environmental assessment measures to benefit a selective few, for instance, when it comes to Highway 413. And this is a bill that has no plans to prevent that from happening again.

This is a government that has their own agenda, I would argue a very transactional Premier around whose back is getting scratched, and it's concerning because it displays a lack of awareness of how crucial climate change is in Ontario and in this country. We only have to look at BC to see the negative impact of what is happening in that province, and they deserve more than thoughts and prayers. They deserve progressive policies that will share in that responsibility of our environment.

Schedule 10: There's also a comment from another member, who says, "Given the government's abysmal track record on consulting with Indigenous communities, protecting our forests, and (preserving) the integrity of the Environmental Assessment Act," Bill 13 is cause for concern.

This came up, obviously, in committee. It's been rare that I've seen a minister or an associate minister be so comprehensively dismissive of these changes. Certainly our democracy, especially at the committee component, deserves our full attention on the environment. There of course are good reasons for us to be concerned, because you can judge future actions by past actions, if you will, and this government has given us cause for concern.

I'm quoting from an opinion piece from November 24 by one Martin Regg Cohn, which doesn't happen a lot in this House, but he talks about the connection between highways and the environment. So schedule 10, which gives more leniency to the government around this oversight piece, gives us concern, as the official opposition,

because highways and the environment are connected. The government seems to think that highways are the answer, Mr. Speaker. There are so many ways to criticize this direction that the government is making in addition to being fiscally irresponsible, but Mr. Cohn goes on to say:

"The promise of new highways, byways and bypasses is a political perennial. The problem is when they are purpose-built for swing ridings while taking everyone else for a ride.

"We all pay the price for political expediency, at the expense of the environment"—which schedule 10 does—"at the very time most other politicians are moving in the opposite direction on global warming.

"The Premier's double-barrelled boasts" that he'll build both the 413 and the Bradford Bypass—and listen, there are serious concerns around the Bradford Bypass as well. But he goes on to say, "Missing from the equation are a coherent transportation strategy, environmental awareness, regional consultation and a growth plan for the greenbelt.

"Remember the Highway 407 boondoggle?" Now I do remember. I was actually in the House as a spectator during the Highway 407 boondoggle. I may have been escorted out a couple of times. "The proposed Highway 413 is not yet as notorious as the bungled toll road that Ontarians love to hate, but it is an echo of that past disaster."

There are good warnings, Mr. Speaker, about why the government is going in this direction. I'll just finish off on this because the 407 actually is very topical from a fiscal sense, and since this bill pretends to support businesses, businesses want more affordable access to that existing highway that the former Conservative government leased off.

He goes on to say, "Revisiting the 407 fire sale"—which it was—"technically a 99-year fire rental) by a previous Progressive Conservative government would be a good place to start before we get too far down the road of political dead ends. Yes, it would cost billions to undo the highway's fiscal fiasco"—which was at the time built by the NDP with public money—"only to be handed off for a pittance by the PCs to private operators who now charge extortionary tolls—but finding a way to lower the rates and reduce the need for another white elephant would permit" these "Tories to undo the errors of their predecessors."

Is this on the agenda for the government? Instead of \$10 billion on a parallel highway to 407, is this something they're considering from an environmental perspective, from a fiscally responsible perspective? Unfortunately, no.

Mr. Cohn goes on to say, "The political paradox is that the 413—a 60-km highway connecting Milton from Highway 401 to the 400 at Vaughan—may never get off the ground. No serious money has yet been budgeted for a project estimated at more than \$8 billion."

1630

I will remind the members in the House that even the Liberals decided not to build the 413. It was, as he goes on to say, "concluding that the costs were outweighed by any benefits"—in fact, seconds.

So the question remains, as Bill 13 introduces schedule 10, which reduces the environmental assessment lens: Why is this government lowering the environmental benchmark and still plowing ahead with a highway which will be detrimental to our long-term health and well-being as a province? I raise this because this government, as I said, has called this piece of legislation the Supporting People and Businesses Act.

It's fairly brash, I would think, to introduce a schedule like this in these times, especially when the Auditor General has said, "The public, businesses and stakeholders are in the dark on the overall state of Ontario's environment and how it is changing over time because the province does not publicly report on it." So there is no transparency and accountability, which the minister actually referenced this morning. She said this will make our dealings in the province of Ontario more transparent and open, and it does not, because the province does not publicly report on it: "While the three ministries publish reports and technical and scientific publications on some environmental topics, there is no regular reporting on the overall state of the environment."

The fact that ministries themselves are not always mandated to follow through on the Environmental Bill of Rights really undermines and compromises the confidence in anything this government does on the environment.

I'm going to move over to business. We heard a lot this morning about how much more efficient the government will be because of Bill 13. I found this particularly interesting, because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, last week I had the pleasure of asking the minister, MPP Romano, a question as it relates to the Ontario Business Registry. In case you missed it, the Ontario Business Registry is supposed to streamline, so it's supposed to do what this government is saying Bill 13 is supposed to do.

The exclusive, which was published in the Star, says: "Doug Ford's Glitchy Online Business Registry Has Major Law Firms Telling Clients to Avoid Ontario.

"Premier Ford's new online business registry is so rife with 'system shutdowns, technical glitches and substantive problems' that major law firms are advising clients to register out-of-province...."

So even as this government says that Bill 13 is going to streamline and fine-tune business operations for small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario, what is actually happening currently is the exact opposite.

Last Wednesday, I said to the minister, the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, "Some of the province's biggest business and law firms are warning that Ontario's new online business registry system is so broken that they're now advising their clients not to incorporate or register their businesses here in Ontario anymore." This does not instill a lot of confidence; I hope we can agree on that.

And it's more than a glitch. I'll tell you why it's more than a glitch.

After I asked this question, I spoke to the minister, the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, and said, "It's important to get this right. Can this be fixed?" He said to me, "What needs to be fixed? There isn't a problem."

Speaker, you and I both know that in order to address a problem, you have to admit the problem exists.

When every major law firm in Toronto and right down here on Bay Street writes the government and says, "You have a serious problem. We are now advising businesses not to register in Ontario," that requires some attention. Instead, what we got was essentially a pat on the head, saying, "Don't worry about it. It's all going to be okay."

In a scathing 12-page letter to the minister, they wrote that the Conservatives' new plan is so broken that it's "negatively impacting our firms, clients and service providers"; it's "having a chilling effect on doing business in general."

I asked at the time, "Does the Premier think that this all-star champion of a minister is actually doing the job, or is there some political will to address this ongoing issue?" I have to say that I did not get an answer on this.

Perhaps this is about priorities as well. As you know, Bill 13 pretends to support small businesses. We know that this government has a long-standing tradition of supporting large, corporate big box stores, and perhaps this is where the Premier's attention has been.

In their letter—I'll continue—it says, "The system shutdowns, technical glitches and substantive problems associated" with the Ontario Business Registry "are causing significant disruption, delaying transactions and adding ... costs for businesses."

Businesses having gone through a major global pandemic with very questionable supports from this government—certainly, small businesses were due a third round of funding so that they could recover after going through such a harsh shutdown.

To make matters worse, these law firms, every major law firm, said that they "have no confidence or assurances that year-end registrations and filings—the busiest time of the year for our law firms—can be completed without putting entire transactions at risk."

Aside from the obvious political embarrassment, because I will say that the former Liberal government started this process—they were a little slow, but it was sort of moving in a direction where at least people thought that things could be streamlined. And yet when they get to this government, now it's really—you're going to have to rethink your "open for business" model here, because your policies, particularly as they relate to the Ontario Business Registry, are actually driving businesses away from Ontario. I have to reference this, because it seems like there are two Ontarios here with regard to what the reality is for businesses in Ontario. I think that businesses, after going through this modernization process, require some assistance, and they also require the government to acknowledge that this is a problem. Bill 13 does nothing to address these serious concerns.

I will say that we had some interesting debates at committee around cannabis. And this is something that I also thought I would never say in this House, but we had very powerful delegations from the cannabis industry. In the context of this schedule, schedule 2, I asked the minister, when she came before committee, because it's a fun thing

to do, to have that kind of discourse with the associate minister—I said, “You understand, because you’ve heard from municipalities from across Ontario, that a cannabis clustering of stores in our main street is a massive issue.” It is a massive issue. It’s a massive issue in Hamilton. It’s a massive issue in Waterloo. We have seven cannabis stores in a three-block radius. That’s almost all of our uptown. In Toronto, it has become a massive issue—and I’m going to be quoting Jennifer Pagliaro, who is at the city hall bureau, from November 7. This was an opportunity for the government to acknowledge that this is an ongoing issue across Ontario that is impacting small businesses that aren’t even related to the cannabis industry. “Three years after” the legalization of cannabis “there are also few rules about where cannabis retail stores can set up shop in any municipality, raising questions about why city hall has no say in their growth.”

I would say that we have seen a steady almost undermining of municipal governments by this provincial government. It started, of course, with the whole circus around the city of Waterloo and cutting down the number of councillors who were elected for the city. It’s a very personal element, I think, that the Premier brings to this file. While municipalities are creatures of the province, municipalities get a say in where their LCBO stores go. Why would they not get a say about where a cannabis store goes, for instance? So they’re not happy about this, especially with the growth of cannabis stores.

Under provincial legislation, municipalities could opt out and not allow pot shops to open, but that would be it. But the province did not give municipalities that opted in any say in “the number, location, concentration, or manner of operation of private cannabis retail stores”—this came from a city of Toronto staff report—nor did the province impose any caps on the number of licences that could be issued in any municipality.

1640

The rules also forbid municipalities from passing by-laws that would treat cannabis retail stores differently from other retail, like, say, a shoe store. I don’t know; there’s a little difference between a shoe store and a cannabis store. The only restriction on distance is that pot shops can’t be within 150 metres of schools, but we heard this morning that those stores are very close to that 150-metre line.

Once the city opted to allow people to apply for a cannabis store licence, all responsibility for that process left city hall’s hands tied. That means there’s virtually nothing that the city can do about this clustering of stores or how the stores look, for instance. I know, as a former municipal councillor, this might affect you. I’ve certainly heard from municipal councillors who are hearing from concerned citizens, because there’s a quality to a main street in a small town, in a mid-sized town, in a big city. In the city of Toronto, for instance, there are little villages—there’s Riverdale, there’s Parkdale. They have their own sense of identity and their own autonomy. When you have seven cannabis stores in a two-block radius, that impacts how that community and that little village within the city feels.

This is what we heard from, for instance, the executive director of the Ottawa BIA. In fact, they went so far as to say that it is the Wild West out there with regard to cannabis stores.

We’re not just complaining about it. We actually brought forward an amendment at committee, because the member from Davenport heard very loud and clear from her community that this is an ongoing issue. Davenport has a plethora, a clustering of cannabis stores. Almost every Toronto member is hearing loud and clear from their BIAs or from the people in their communities that this is impacting the way their community feels.

You opened up Bill 13, you made it possible for cannabis to be delivered from home to home, and yet you didn’t acknowledge that this massive issue exists.

We brought forward an amendment, and the amendment reads as follows: “In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the registrar shall consider a resolution of the council of the municipality, in which are located the premises for which a person makes an application for a retail store authorization, as proof of the needs and wishes of the residents of the municipality for the purposes of paragraph 5 of subsection 6.”

So we tried to make this piece of legislation better. We tried to be respectful of the citizens of our communities who raised these concerns around the clustering of cannabis stores. We tried to be respectful of the municipalities that have articulated fairly clearly that they would like a say, they would like some autonomy, they would like to honour their duties as municipal councillors in determining where municipal stores go.

We also heard from actual cannabis small business owners. Those small business owners—and this is really interesting. What we’re seeing now—and perhaps this is an unintended consequence, but it’s not a consequence that you don’t know about; it’s one that you chose to ignore with Bill 13—is that where there is a clustering issue, who are really hurting particularly are independent retailers. You have a policy on the books that is hurting the small businesses, the small cannabis, the independent operators, but the chains are doing very well. The chains have more resilience. They can weather the ups and downs of this industry.

I do want to say that, of note, the city of Toronto has intervened in the past when one industry seemed detrimental to the whole community. This is the cannabis industry saying, “It’s actually not good for us to have a clustering of cannabis stores. It’s not good for business, it’s not good for the long-term sustainability of the sector and honestly, it’s benefiting the larger corporate models of cannabis stores.” This actually came from one of the vice-presidents of High Tide, which you have to admit is a really good name for a cannabis store. He’s the VP of a store that originally came out of Calgary. He said distancing rules would mean “neighbourhoods also get a comfort in knowing their streetscape is not just now going to be dominated by one industry.” This is the industry saying, let’s be more thoughtful and mindful about where cannabis stores go.

Finally, the policy that you say is supporting businesses, which now I've just confirmed is actually hurting businesses—one of the owners of Queen of Bud, which is another good name, Ashley Newman says, “Now it's become a race to the bottom.” That could mean that the large retail chains will end up dominating Ontario streets in the future. Any operator can only own up to 75 stores, under provincial rules. While distancing rules would help some, for some it's already too late. Ms. Newman is considering moving back to Calgary and taking her business with her.

She goes on to say, “All that the governments have done is they've wiped out the entrepreneurs that refinanced their house, that put all their money into this business because it was their passion.

“I think that's the saddest part.”

I raised this with the minister when I got a chance to question her. I raised it in the committee again, and there seems to be a reluctance, a resistance to acknowledge that the policies that you have on the books are quite detrimental to small businesses. There's an irony here, but there's also a pattern.

Our amendment, which is essentially the member from Davenport's private member's bill, was shot down with no good rationale, which is also another pattern that we're seeing from this government.

This lends itself to a bigger question. When you bring in these so-called low-impact red tape bills, who's making the decision about what is included and what is excluded?

If you were interested in strengthening our main streets, in supporting small businesses, in ensuring that you are respectful of municipalities, then you would have adopted our amendment, and that's just the truth of the matter.

One final piece is that I met with the Canadian Manufacturers' Association recently, and they're looking for real solutions from this government on advanced manufacturing. Advanced manufacturing matters to all of our communities, whether it's agriculture, whether it's processing, whether it's high tech. In Waterloo, there's a lot of high tech. They're looking for procurement policies which actually strengthen local economies. Bill 13 would have been a perfect opportunity for this government to acknowledge that in order for us to be a stronger province, in order for our economy to be more resilient, we must get diversified procurement policies in place. Bill 13 would have been the perfect place for a leadership position like procurement. One of the Canadian manufacturers actually said, “This bill wasn't really focused on us.” That is one of the reasons why we've said that this is yet again another missed opportunity for this government.

Moving on to schedule 17: There were short timelines, as you know, so once we developed the strategy, you could tell by the public record that there was only, like, three days for folks to register as a delegation. This has been a pretty consistent theme that this government has followed through. It makes you wonder if they even want to hear from people in Ontario; we would question that, to be quite honest. But we did have OSSTF, and Karen Littlewood came to speak specifically on schedule 17. She made the

point that schedule 17 would actually increase red tape for the Ontario College of Teachers. I found this really interesting, because we've heard a lot about red tape in this province and we've actually heard that some of the policies of this government are creating more red tape.

This is a direct quote from her: “One of the most concerning features is the fact that members who are actively involved in the federation will be barred from representing on the College of Teachers. I want people to just consider the fact that, as a federation, we have people who are involved in many different aspects, who might be involved on human rights committees, who might be involved in excellence in education committees. Because of the virtue of their involvement in those federation activities, they would not be able to be part of the College of Teachers or that governing body. It seems to me quite restrictive. If we're looking at an act that is going to reduce red tape, I think we're actually causing more problems than anything here, and it makes me just question why this change has been done.”

1650

As I mentioned, this government has brought forward a plethora of omnibus pieces of legislation, just like the Liberals did before them.

She went on to say, “It also makes me question why it has been presented as part of an omnibus bill which—really, there is very little in it to do with education. In fact, it's really just schedule 17. Why is it there and in the midst of an omnibus bill and not something that's stand-alone that could be debated, could be presented, could be questioned? There has been really very little information or rationale for why these changes have been proposed.

“You have to consider that we're in the midst of a bill here where we're talking about business and cutting red tape. Education is not a business, and we should not be treating it as a business. It certainly is an investment”—we certainly wish the government thought it was an investment as well, Mr. Speaker—“and we need to remember that for every \$1 you spend on education, you get \$1.30 back,” as a minimum. “But we are not a business, and we shouldn't be treated as such. We need to be recognized for the value that we bring as educational professionals across the province.”

She did raise, with regard to schedule 17, that this would potentially allow for conflicts of interest to occur in the teaching profession: “When we look at the fact that now a supervisory officer would be able to hold employment elsewhere—where else are they going to be working?” This is a legitimate question. “Textbook companies? Pearson, Nelson? Why do we have that?” And this is a direct quote from the president of OSSTF: “We have a really distinct fear of privatization of education in Ontario. Is this where we're headed? Are we looking at these types of collaboration, where this is”—where are we going, essentially? This fear completely falls on the shoulders of this government.

Of course, there was no consultation with teachers in Ontario on this piece of legislation. There has been very little consultation with anybody in the public service, particularly in education.

Beginning back in 2018, one of the first things this government did, just as teachers and educators were coming to Toronto, coming to the Ministry of Education to rewrite the Indigenous curriculum, was they cancelled it—mid-flight. Somebody was mid-flight on the way here, tickets had already been purchased, and that’s when this government cancelled the Indigenous curriculum-writing session.

So there is a pattern here, where you have undermined any trust that you might have with educators across Ontario. I think that Karen Littlewood actually raises this in a proactive way.

Finally, she went on to say, “I have to say, as I sat here and listened to the initial submission ... I’m jealous”—he government did meet with the home builders’ association—“there’s consultation there, there are talks, there are discussions. That doesn’t happen in education right now. We don’t have those conversations back and forth. As the people working in education, we know what should be done, we know what could be done to deliver the best possible education in a pandemic, out of a pandemic—all of those times—but we’re not being consulted, and it really is a big concern for us.”

That’s a sad state of affairs, Mr. Speaker, that in the height of a crisis, be it in health care, in long-term care or in education, this is a government that does not listen, that does not consult—as you’re crafting a piece of legislation, where the potential was huge for it to truly be a high-impact piece of legislation, particularly for small businesses.

On the education front, there is a lot of healing that has to happen in that regard—highly doubtful, given that we are so close to an election and we only have six more days in this fall session. But that’s the level of distrust that educators are experiencing. I’ll remind folks: OSSTF has members in all four publicly funded education systems, from the janitors to the librarians to the educational assistants to the front-line teachers in the classroom, and that is how they’re feeling.

The other missing component for Bill 13—which, once again, links to priorities—is around health, particularly the health of women. I try to say something good every once in a while about a piece of legislation, just to mix it up—

Interjection: Barely.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, you give me a lot of material to work with, so what can I say? One day I might not have to be a critic. One can dream. You ended up back there—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Through the Chair, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, they ended up there, so who knows? Anything can happen. We’ll have to come up with a buck-a-beer sort of policy, I guess.

On schedule 1, under the Barristers Act—I do want to send a special thank you to Marian Lippa, who has done a huge amount of advocacy for paralegals across Ontario. Paralegals were an underutilized resource in the court system. Anyone who is dealing with casework in your ridings will know that the court system is in chaos right now. The backlog is indisputable. I have one friend who

has waited four and a half years for her day in court—four and a half years, Mr. Speaker. But schedule 1 actually gives some greater advocacy to paralegals.

There is significant chaos, as I mentioned: senior counsel interrupting court proceedings, editing the shared document list online, escalating complaints to a senior level, instead of processing very quickly some of those instances where paralegals can actually move cases through the court system. That is exactly what we need, but it is not the be-all and end-all to save the justice system from the backlog. We all know that justice delayed is justice denied, and that is exactly what is happening right now in our court system in Ontario.

I really want to say a special thank you to Marian Lippa for her paralegal advocacy. She finally got a little piece of justice, in a little piece of the bill, for a little bit of action.

Schedule 1: I don’t understand why the government has not fast-tracked the sexual violence cases in Ontario. It’s a crisis in each and every one of our ridings. You dealt with this in schedule 1, but you’ve missed a huge opportunity to streamline the system as a whole.

I want to give you a few quotes here—there has been an increase of 27% in anti-human-trafficking requests for program support. Crisis centre calls have risen by 25%. For Family Court support calls—this has increased by 158%. Once again, Mr. Speaker, these stats are from the sexual assault centre in Waterloo region. Women are navigating trauma each day that many of us could not cope with, including the staff who are on the front lines helping as much as they can. There’s a wait-list of almost 200 survivors in Waterloo region alone, and the justice system has become an equal barrier to women who are seeking some kind of justice, having experienced great trauma. And yet, once again we have a government that sort of tinkers around the edges—that 55% increase for counselling, 27% for the anti-human-trafficking program. These are real people who require real action.

If you wanted to support people, then in Bill 13, you could have doubled down and really strengthened schedule 1 of Bill 13. The door closed on that in committee, as well, and it wasn’t for lack of trying.

Finally, I just want to talk about the comment that I heard from the minister this morning, when she said there’s no time or money to waste.

This leads me to the final chapter of my Bill 13 commentary: It really is very disturbing, I would have to say, where this government is deciding to invest and where not to invest.

1700

The Financial Accountability Officer’s report came out yesterday. As you know, as the finance critic, I try to follow these things. It’s becoming more difficult to do that, and I’ll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. It is the key programs that were below spending as of September 30, so just two months ago—and in the other program sector, the province did not spend any of the \$1.1-billion budget for municipal transit projects under the Ministry of Transportation, and yet we’ve heard from this government, “Transit, transit, highways, highways, highways.”

In the health sector, the province spent or reallocated \$441 million, or 16.6%, of the \$2.7-billion budget for the COVID-19 response program. That's a lot of money that they didn't spend on COVID-19 response. That's a huge amount of money.

In the children and social services sector, major programs with the lowest relative spending include autism, supportive services and Ontario Works financial assistance.

In the education sector, the province spent \$20 million, or 1.2%, of the \$1.7-billion budget for school board capital grants program. All of them are unconscionable in many regards, because there is such need out there for investment in education and health care and, yes, transit. But the piece that we've heard—and I know that some of the members sat on that original select committee to hear, at the beginning of the pandemic, of what was needed. The capital programming for our schools is so underfunded, and it has been compounded, truly, by 15 years of the Liberal government—but now doubled down by the Conservative government. We heard loud and clear from the HVAC systems, from tech systems, from air purification companies who wanted to be part of the solution of making sure that the internal air systems in our schools were upgraded, were modernized. What a missed opportunity to actually create good local jobs in those communities for the tradespeople. So you're addressing a long-standing issue; you're investing in the infrastructure of our education system, you're keeping students safe, and you're keeping those jobs all local. Not spending \$1.7 billion in those allocated monies for schools—what is your excuse? You clearly have no excuse.

On the finance piece—and our candidate, Irwin Elman; what a wonderful man. You will remember him; you fired him. He was the children's advocate. You used to like him when you sat over here. He calls it unconscionable, in particular because there are 50,000 children on the wait-list for autism services right now in Ontario—50,000.

The \$83-million cut or unspent money to ODSP—again, completely unconscionable.

The \$369-million less on Ontario Works: How poor do you want people to be, really, in a pandemic? We're still in a pandemic. The health science table said we are clearly in the fourth wave, and now we have a new variant. Why would you not flow money to keep people healthy, to ensure that people have enough food, to ensure people have enough shelter? There's a time to spend money. Do you know when it is? In a pandemic, I would say to you.

Children and social services spent \$0.6 billion, or 6.4%, less in their first quarter.

So it is really telling that this government is so very disconnected from the true experience that Ontarians are facing that they can bring a bill like Bill 13 to the floor, call it a high-impact red tape bill and then miss opportunity after opportunity to make things better and to support people and to support businesses.

Even when we came to the committee in good faith to try to amend some of these sections of the bill, they shot us down. This does not bode well for the outcomes of Bill 13.

There are lots of great words about this bill. If a press release was the answer, then people would be fine in Ontario, because you're very good at the press releases, definitely. In fact, you obviously believe your own press releases—and that is reminiscent of the Liberals, because they used to put out press releases if anybody got to work safely on any day.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They did, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, please don't take the bait. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm not fishing, so there's no bait, Speaker.

Finally, just to circle back here, on the environment: There are huge concerns about where this government is going, why you didn't address some of those concerns in Bill 13, and why you're being so selective about which projects and what kind of projects will actually get an environmental assessment. This is a concern for us, really.

The piece around education and not consulting with the very people who have been holding together educational school communities, and going that extra mile through these challenging times, and why you could not address that—it seems that when I did ask a question of the minister today, she was like, "It's a privilege to be part of the College of Teachers." Yes, it is. It's also a privilege to be in front of that classroom, and it's a privilege that the government should honour by being respectful enough to consult with our educators in Ontario.

And then, on the fact of finances, I'm just going to leave you with this: The whole issue right now of the 407, about whose corner this government is in, is truly alarming. I know that our leader raised a question about it. I know that a question came, also—and the member from the independents has also written to the Auditor General about this issue. When this government is picking and choosing who they're going to fight for, it seems very clear that they always choose their friends, and their friends apparently are not the 50,000 children who are on an autism wait-list. Their friends are not the folks who are on OW. Their friends are not the people who are on ODSP and are barely holding on to any kind of integrity, given the numbers that they receive across Ontario.

When the 407 failed to honour their contractual agreement, the Minister of Transportation "opted against pursuing approximately \$1 billion in penalties from the owner of the 407 Express Toll Route when traffic levels fell below a contractual target..." This obviously came through another exclusive, because there's an exposé every single day on this government, essentially, and I'm sure the Auditor General's report tomorrow will also give more material for some of us to work with.

"Months of negotiations between ministry officials and the private operator ended with the government not seeking compensation." So they had a case to be made, they went to the 407 executive, and then they made a conscious decision not to pursue compensation.

I'm going to tell you why this is so disappointing: In that room with the executives from the 407, they didn't

even request that tolls be lowered to increase traffic volumes on that road. The Ontario Trucking Association came to finance committee yesterday. I'm willing to bet a dollar that they would really love a reduced toll rate on the 407, because if you're looking for a quick solution—because the 413 is not the solution; the 413 is going to run parallel and, as I have already quoted, is likely not even going to get built. It runs parallel to the 407, and, obviously, now that you've lowered environmental assessments and environmental regulations, it could go right through the greenbelt. It could go through those 2,000 hectares of land. It could go through those 72 waterways. But at the end of the day, it's going to cost so much money and not address the congestion issues that you pretend to care so much about.

When the member from Oakville said, "Well, what are you going to say to those people who are sitting in those cars?," I said, "I will tell them the truth: Highway 413 is not the answer to the congestion issues in Ontario. We have the evidence. We have the research to prove it."

1710

But the 407, which you guys leased—you can make this right. You have an opportunity here to make this right. I don't know; it's certainly not going to be found in Bill 13 by any stretch of the imagination. But I just want to say, when the Minister of Transportation declined to answer specific questions—there was an FOI, but according to documents obtained through that process, the Ford government didn't pursue potential congestion penalty payments in the order of \$1 billion for 2020 and could decide not to do so again this year. If that window has closed, I'm just asking you, as the official opposition finance critic, if you get the opportunity to pursue \$1 billion in penalties, I would encourage you to pursue that. We need that \$1 billion.

Actually, if you were on this side again and we were there, you would not have kind words for us, I can guarantee you. You would not have kind words for us if we were not pursuing a \$1-billion penalty which was contractually available to us. You would not have kind words.

It doesn't sit well with many of the members there—I understand that—especially the fact that the 407 ETR posted a \$147.1-million profit in 2020, even while it sought billions in potential penalty forgiveness.

This, for us, speaks to the priorities of this government. This speaks to who you're willing to go to bat for and who you're not willing to go to bat for. The Minister of Transportation has said, "It's a private company. They make their own decisions." If you have a contract, a contractual agreement around penalties about not meeting those contracts—I mean, contract law is fairly straightforward. You have the right to pursue these penalties.

I can tell you, the 407 has been profitable ever since, though much less because of the pandemic. The company reported a net income of \$106 million for the third quarter of 2021. So listen, the 407 is doing okay. You know who's not doing okay? The families who have a child with autism on a wait-list—that number sits at 50,000—and the people who are waiting for some leadership around housing.

The 407 ETR also "initiated discussions with ministry staff and is seeking comfort that the government will exclude the pandemic period." So the 407 has come to you and—this is actually in the article; it's their language—they're "seeking comfort." You know who I would urge you to start thinking about who needs comfort in this province? It is families, the constituent I was just on the phone with, who is trying to get both of her parents into a long-term-care home together, because my bill, Till Death Do Us Part, was never called to committee, and when you prorogued, that bill died.

I would urge you to consider giving comfort to those students in our school system who require mental health supports, because this has been very hard on children across Ontario and because our school system was closed the longest in Canada. Ontario's school children were kept out of the school system for the longest period of time, given anywhere else in the country.

I would urge you to give comfort to seniors in Ontario who are relying on the not-for-profit sector just for a little bit of company for isolation respite.

I would urge you to give comfort to the workers who really are on the front lines, and you froze their minimum wage. As we heard through the OFL in the budget consultation yesterday, you owe them anywhere between \$6,000 and \$7,000. That's what you took out of their pocket by freezing the minimum wage.

There's a lot of work to be done, but I can tell you, when the minister says that she doesn't want to waste any time and energy around compliance measures, I feel like this is a cold approach to the very emotional and detrimental effects that the pandemic has had on the people of this province. I would just urge the government to pay attention and to listen. Then, when you have the opportunity to actually craft a piece of legislation, please, for the love of humanity, let it solve the problems that the people we are elected to serve are experiencing.

Every morning, we say a prayer. We say, "Help us to use the power that we have wisely and use it to benefit the people that we serve." That's a call to action for all of us. In our estimation, and based on the feedback that we've received from those who care about the environment, who care about education, who care about health care, the businesses that are still waiting for that last bit of support so that they can actually relaunch and be successful and get our economy going again—I would urge you to put those at the centre of your discussions. Next time you bring a red tape reduction bill to the floor of this Legislature, let's put the people we serve at the centre of it.

Hon. Todd Smith: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Energy has raised a point of order.

Hon. Todd Smith: I would just like to inform the House that there will be no night sitting tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It's always good to hear a valid point of order.

We have time for questions.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Speaker, through you, Ontario has a massive infrastructure deficit left to us by years and years of neglect, including the need to build more transit

and more housing. I believe that we should find every avenue possible to speed up the approval processes that allow us to tackle this shortage. This would allow for more affordable housing to be built in many cities in the province.

In Hamilton, the city of Hamilton requested an MZO, which was given to build affordable housing. In fact, every single MZO issued by the province of Ontario on non-government-owned land was at the request of a municipality. Does the member opposite agree and support the proposed changes to the Planning Act in Bill 13 that would give councils the ability to hand over some approval processes and speed up the building of this much-needed infrastructure?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm so happy that the member brought up the situation in Hamilton, because that council recently had to stand up to the provincial government with regard to future growth plans. This has had a chilling effect, actually, across all municipalities across Ontario, including Waterloo region.

We have a hard line. The responsible thing for a municipality to do is intensify that growth and to grow up with the current infrastructure. The city of Hamilton recently made the decision that that's the way that they're going to grow, notwithstanding—you get how I use that—the provincial pressure to go past the urban boundary line, which would actually cause irresponsible growth in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank my colleague the member for Waterloo for her very interesting and insightful presentation on Bill 13. She spent a fair bit of time at the beginning of her remarks raising concerns about schedule 10, the Environmental Assessment Act, and also the minister's dismissal of the changes that are proposed in schedule 10 as nothing to be worried about, very minor changes that are being considered.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on whether this government's track record does raise concerns about these changes that are proposed and the negative impact that these changes could have on the environment.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much to the member from London West for the questions. Specifically, what schedule 10 does is it further expands the minister's and/or the LG in C's powers to exempt types of projects from the full EA. This builds, of course, on the controversial changes to the Environmental Assessment Act enacted with schedule 6 of Bill 197, which is actually still before the courts.

This government, as I referenced the court system—you've done very well for the lawyers in Ontario because almost every decision that you've made has had to be challenged in the court system. And I suspect, to answer the member from London West's question, many of these decisions will be. So if your goal is to fast-track and streamline but override the rights of Indigenous communities, you will end up back in court. That defeats the whole of Bill 13.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has a question.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Waterloo for her one-hour speech.

Speaker, one of the things in my over 18 years here now that I hear most from people in my constituency of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is how government and red tape slows things down. So we're trying to streamline some things. One of the areas—anybody who has ever been involved in a court system in this province knows how congested it can be. Ontario has an outdated court system. It was made visible during the pandemic with cases being backlogged.

Our Attorney General has been making significant changes to bring our judicial system into the 21st century with court proceedings and removing or updating outdated regulations. One example of outdated legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): If you have a question, now is a good time to pose it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, it's coming—is the changes proposed in the bill to the Barristers Act. Does the member support modernizing things like Ontario's courts and judicial system?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question. I did reference this in my one-hour lead. Schedule 1 has one part of it that actually will ensure that paralegals have a greater role to play in the court system.

But I would counter your statement that you think the Attorney General is moving fast on these issues. I would say that the Attorney General is moving as slow as the justice system currently, and I would say that the system is in chaos. You should have a completely separate court for women and survivors of sexual violence, for instance, because the court is now 25% full of those cases. Have some empathy, have some compassion, and do the right thing. If you're going to build a piece of legislation, build it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin has a question.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to ask the member from Waterloo—and I thank her for her comments that she brought to the floor. I want to add to where she just left off. She talked a lot about it in her comments, about where the priorities of this government rest. There are practical amendments that are happening under the Barristers Act, but if you don't address the real issue, which is the insufficient amount of staffing that is there within the courts, that backlog is going to grow.

Also, where this government stood a chance to actually gain some credibility and really reach and help the priorities and individuals of this province is legal aid. Why didn't they return where they absolutely slashed the entire budget that legal aid had—according to Michael Shain, who is from the Manitoulin Legal Clinic—by \$60 million to \$70 million. Or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pose your question, please.

Mr. Michael Mantha: By Bill 61, they actually annihilated the representation and court opportunities that were there for those who are most vulnerable—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You ran out of time to pose it. We'll move back to the member from Waterloo to respond anyway.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm happy that the member raised this issue because this came up through delegations. I posed the question to Marian Lippa, who has done a lot of advocacy for paralegals. Paralegals can actually help streamline some of the lesser cases, if you will. They get bogged up in the bigger issues in the justice system.

However, at the end of the day, if your clients don't have representation, then they don't have a chance of making it through that justice system, which has never been designed to be navigated with some ease or dignity, Mr. Speaker. It's really a missed opportunity. I'm happy to see this in here, but in combination with the rest of the schedules, it's not supportable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Energy has a question.

Hon. Todd Smith: I listened intently to the member's one-hour leadoff. I had a 15-minute or 20-minute speech this morning in the leadoff for our minister. I know there were a lot of really interesting things that we're doing that are going to help the people across Ontario when it comes to the energy file in three of the sections, and I didn't hear the member speak to those items at all in her one-hour leadoff, Mr. Speaker. One of them is flattening rates with the Ontario Energy Board for one year. One is suite metering and giving customers more choice. Of course, the other is the introduction of Green Button, which will allow consumers right across the province to take control of their energy rates. I was surprised that the member opposite never mentioned any in her one-hour leadoff.

I know the member said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that she wasn't fishing. But I'm fishing for some comments right here, to find out what the member feels about those three great initiatives that are included in Bill 13 from the Ministry of Energy's side of things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll ask the member from Waterloo to respond to the disappointed minister.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, the minister is not going to catch any fish today. My focus and the theme has been what a missed opportunity Bill 13 was to address some of the emerging issues, especially when you look at the title of the bill: Supporting People and Businesses. Why craft a piece of legislation that misses the mark on so many fronts?

I would just like to say, I know that I didn't have the undivided attention of the member opposite because he was in a very in-depth conversation with the Minister of Agriculture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We really don't have time for a question and response within 40 seconds, so we'll just call for further debate.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope you'll indulge me for a couple of minutes at the very

beginning. I want to give a big shout-out to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry because today is the first official Scottish Heritage Day here in Ontario, hence me wearing my family's tartan.

Speaker, Bill 13 today is our discussion topic and it's about red tape reduction. I was going through it and I thought: What can I talk about that nobody else is probably going to talk about? Because when we're sitting in here and we've got a couple of hours, six and a half at minimum, as a debate, sometimes it gets a little bit monotonous when we're discussing different things. So what I want to talk about first is some of the modernization things that we're doing to clear up some of that red tape. Now, this one might not sound like red tape, but it truly is.

Way back in 1843, Alexander Bain created the very first fax machine. It is true. He referred to it as the electric printing telegraph machine, and then Xerox commercialized it in 1964 and the fax technology has been out since then—1964. What do we have that we're still using in government now that was technology that came out in 1964? I can't think of anything off the top of my head.

Interjection: The Speaker.

Mr. Dave Smith: The Speaker, yes—technology from 1964. I've got a 1965 Corvair, but I don't use that in government.

Really, when you take a step back and you look at it, what has happened? Well, the Internet was truly invented in 1995. Fax machines came out—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Invented by Al Gore.

Mr. Dave Smith: It was invented by Al Gore, according to some things, yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: According to Al Gore.

Mr. Dave Smith: According to Al Gore. The fax technology came out 31 years before that. Surely we have come to a point where we can get if not into the 21st century at least the 20th century, because fax technology started in 1843.

That may sound like something that really doesn't make a big difference. We're eliminating fax machines and we're going to something that is better technology. There is e-faxing that you can do. You can send it across the Internet; you can send it as an email. There are a lot of different things that you can do with it instead of having that physical device sitting there. I know I'm rambling on about it, because it baffles me why, in today's day and age, we would still be using fax machines as a way of sending information across from one ministry to another or from consumers to a ministry.

I recall once a conversation I had with somebody, and I was being a little bit sarcastic at the time. I admit, I am that way sometimes. He said to me that he would send me a fax. I told him that fax machines didn't work where I lived. He said, "Where do you live?" And I said, "The 21st century." Because it's true. It is technology that is well past its due date. If it was a bottle of milk, we would have thrown it out long ago because it would have been curdled.

We need to make sure that government can do things at the speed of business. We're never going to get to that

point where we move at the speed of business because government just doesn't function that way. But to have something that is technology that really was past 25 or 30 years ago and still be relying on that as one of the ways that we send information back and forth is absolutely ridiculous. This bill helps get rid of that.

1730

The opposition has said a number of times that this is an omnibus bill. They talk about omnibus bills being bad and that we put too much stuff together. Then, in that last hour-long speech that we had, we heard the member from Waterloo talking about things that weren't in there that should be in there. Sometimes I get confused on what it is they think an omnibus bill should be because, on one hand, they say to us that we shouldn't put anything in, that it should just be one thing that we're debating and that's it; and then, at other times they say we should have a whole bunch of things in there because there were things they wanted to see that aren't in there.

The fact of the matter is, this is a red tape reduction bill. This is all about changing procedures, this is about changing processes so that you have an improvement, because you don't need to be at technology from the 1800s.

Another thing that we're doing—and I know the member brought this up and was complaining about it. But this is something that really does make an awful lot of sense. We're bringing into force something so that not-for-profit corporations will be able to reduce the burden that's placed on them. Think about this: Previously if you wanted to create a not-for-profit association, if you wanted to create a corporation, you'd hire a lawyer and spend a few thousand dollars to get it done, or you'd have all of this paper that you would carry around—I think the Minister of Government and Consumer Affairs referred to it as “that box of paper” that you'd have to take—you had to go down to the ServiceOntario location, or if you weren't in one of the areas that had a ServiceOntario location, you had to go some other place to do this. You'd take your box in there with all that paper you'd filled out and drop it on the desk, and you'd have to wait weeks on end to get this done. You had to do it between 9 o'clock and 5 o'clock because that is when business is open, that is when government is open—9 to 5, Monday to Friday. Most of the not-for-profits that I work with, that I talk to and deal with on a regular basis, don't just work 9 to 5. They do a lot of good things in our community, and they do it seven days a week and, in a lot of cases, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Like an MPP.

Mr. Dave Smith: It sounds like an MPP; that's right—I'm not allowed to refer to him by name, and I almost did.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Dave Smith: The member from Sarnia–Lambton is right. MPPs do spend a lot of time doing stuff.

Where I'm getting at with this, though, is that we live in a world where banker's hours of 9 to 5 are not realistic for everyone else. A lot of times those who are running the not-for-profit have another job and they're volunteering their time for the not-for-profit.

I'll go back to my time with minor hockey, a perfect example of something like this. When we amalgamated the Peterborough Community Church Hockey League and the Peterborough minor hockey association, every single person was a volunteer. We had to hire somebody to create the entity of the Peterborough Hockey Association because we all worked 9 to 5, Monday to Friday—some of us worked longer than that as well—and didn't have time to do this.

Now what we've got is an opportunity where if you're working 9 to 5 and you're volunteering with this not-for-profit association—and you're not a lawyer, but you've got some free time at 6:30, before the Leafs game comes on at 7—you can sit down at your computer, you can pull out your cellphone, you can log onto the system, and you can do everything that you need to do right then, from the convenience of your home, without having to hire a lawyer.

What a novel concept: taking the technology that we all use, that a three-year-old can use, and saying that this is how you can do business as you move forward when you're working with the Ontario government. It's something that probably should have been done years ago but wasn't, because nobody thought this was something that we should do. Nobody thought about how to make it easier for the average person to interact with the government.

We've been stuck in this mode since 1867—that government is Monday to Friday from 9 to 5, and if you live your life outside of that, I'm sorry, that's too bad; you shouldn't be there, you shouldn't be doing it, and we can't serve you.

We've made tremendous strides to make that change. There are more than 30 different things now that you can do online as to renewals, as to applications, and you can do them when it's convenient for you, using the technology that you use every day. As I said, a three-year-old now is well versed in how to use a tablet, so why are we still stuck in 1867, forcing people to do things in a manual process, in a paper process, in a slow process, from this defined time period to this defined time period—not when it's convenient and easy for you; only when it's convenient and easy for somebody in government?

Another thing that we've changed, which I'm actually surprised has taken this long as well: During the pandemic, we made things a bit more flexible for restaurants and for bars by extending patios. Ontario had some of the most archaic regulations and laws when it came to alcohol. We've wanted, over time, to say that the average person is responsible and can consume responsibly. But we have also been stuck back in that Prohibition era for a very long time, restricting things. What we're doing here is we're making some of the changes that were put in the Main Street Recovery Act of 2020 permanent.

I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I will freely admit that there are times in the summer when I like to sit outside with some friends and enjoy an adult beverage, perhaps a plate of nachos, perhaps some sandwiches. We've made it restrictive for years, decades, generations—that no, that was a bad thing and you've got to keep

that hidden inside, you can't watch somebody having a drink, you can't have people sitting outside on the patio enjoying themselves, enjoying some music, listening to a local band and enjoying some food; but what the pandemic showed us is that we can. We made those changes so that they benefited our hospitality industry, and now we're making those kinds of things permanent. Is it groundbreaking? Is it something that we're going to change the world with as a result? No. If we hadn't done it, the grass was still going to grow, the sun was still going to rise. But it's a little bit nicer, when the sun has risen and it's a nice day outside, and you're able to sit on the patio at a bar with a few friends and enjoy it. It's a small, simple thing like that. It didn't just help the average person enjoy their time, but it made it easier for those small business owners to pay their bills, to make a little bit of money and to keep their businesses open when the pandemic was here, when we were in the throes of the pandemic. Now we're in a position where, as we move forward, we've seen that the sky didn't fall and it was something that was beneficial to people.

1740

Another proposal that's in this bill—and I know there's going to be some pushback on this one; there are going to be some people who say, “No, I don't like it,” but it's actually something that I think is very, very beneficial to us—is the automated speed enforcement, photo radar. I know that it's kind of a bad phrase to talk about, “photo radar”—because you could be driving along, minding your own business, and get a speeding ticket because you were going too fast.

The flip side to that—and I'm going to talk about one area in particular in my riding: Highway 28 going up to north Kawartha, up to Apsley. The highway is properly engineered for 80 kilometres an hour. I did mention that I've got a 1965 Corvair, and when that road was built—it was built long before that car was ever built. It has been upgraded. It is designed wonderfully for 80 kilometres an hour. There aren't an awful lot of houses directly off of it, so we don't have a lot of traffic coming off that way. But there are sections of the road where there are blind corners, where there are intersections with other streets. During the summer, we have times on a Friday night or on a Sunday night when we have cottagers, we have trailers being pulled behind cars, recreational users going up there.

The reason I mentioned my 1965 Corvair: That was considered a sports car. It's the 1965 Corvair Corsa convertible. I love the car. Rear engine—it was considered a sports car in 1965. It tops out at about 120 kilometres an hour, so I have a little bit of difficulty sometimes on the 401 with it; I will admit that. But that's what a sports car was in 1965. You can get a Chevy Spark or a Pontiac Spark and they do faster than that, but that's not a sports car. You can get a Smart Fortwo; that's definitely not a sports car, and it will go faster than that.

What we see now on Highway 28 is BMWs and Mercedes and Volvos and Cadillac Escalades and Dodge Ram trucks all travelling significantly more than 80 kilometres an hour, where it's a winding road, where it's a

county road, where we have about 5,000 people in total in that township, and they share policing service with other townships. It is not physically possible to have the OPP there to make sure that people are driving the way they're supposed to be driving.

We have seen an increase in the number of deaths, and the reason we have seen the increase in the number of deaths is not because the highway isn't designed for 80 kilometres an hour; it is. The challenge that we have is that we have so many people now who are travelling at more than 100 kilometres an hour. They'll be pulling a 30-foot camper trailer behind them, and they'll pull out to pass on a blind corner, with Canadian Shield on either side of them, so there's no place to go, and then an oncoming car comes, and it results in death.

Photo radar, automated speed enforcement, is one of those things that can be implemented that will make a difference. We actually have a proposal put forward to the Ministry of Transportation on it right now. We've got thousands of people who have signed petitions to install photo radar.

What I'm suggesting, actually, in that section is that from Burleigh Falls to Apsley, we put five photo radar pieces, because when they had a Black Cat speed system put in to track, the average speed was 98 kilometres an hour, in an 80 zone. If you're doing 95 on that section, and we have five photo radars, it'll cost you \$575 to go from Burleigh Falls to Apsley. You're only going to do that once. You're not going to keep doing that; it's way too expensive. Automated speed enforcement making it easier to use these types of devices can be used as a safety enhancement. I don't want to punish people. I don't want to hurt people in the pocket. But I want to make sure I don't have any more deaths on that highway. This bill is going to make it easier for us to implement something like that, and I know it's going to make a big difference to people.

Speaker, there's one last thing I want to touch on on this bill before I sit down and answer some wonderful questions I know I'm going to get from the opposition, and that is on the other change we've made that I really, truly can't believe hadn't been made before, around critical minerals. We will be making a change so that the waste from mining can be reused without having to go through an entire mining process, an entire mining application again. I'll give a prime example of it with critical minerals. We are heading down that path for electric vehicles. Ontario has the opportunity to be the world leader in it. We can have the natural resources, the processing, the value-added and the final manufacturing part of it. We've got silver mines in Ontario that have closed because we emptied them out 20, 30, 50 years ago.

I bet hardly anyone in here knows that the waste product from a silver mine is lithium, and that lithium is sitting in tailing ponds, sitting in waste pits for all of those mines. You don't have to do much to get it. It has already been extracted from the ground. It is there, readily available for us. Nobody thought until now, “We should make it easy to take the waste from mining and reuse it.”

That is one of the key things, from my perspective, that this bill will allow us to do. We're going to be taking a waste product and reusing it for electric vehicles. What a great thing we're doing with this.

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the 10 minutes of questions and answers so I can talk of great things again, about what we're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has a question.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thanks to the member for his presentation. I'm glad he's looking forward to the questions, because they will certainly challenge him. Also, I'd like to congratulate him on his Scottish heritage. I happen to be from a Scottish background myself, and English—so a good combination.

My question to the member is, does the government have a contingency plan to address the hundreds of thousands of people in our province who don't have access to computers, don't have access to smart phones, can't afford them? I don't know if you come from an affluent area—you may—but a lot of people in the area I represent can't afford phones, iPhones, computers. They have to rely on constant phone calls to the government, and they wait in line for, sometimes, days before they get a hold of somebody. They don't know how to use the equipment. There's a lot of elderly people and a lot of people who are not familiar—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pose your question, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: Have you and your government taken into consideration all the people who are going to have trouble accessing, the way you're moving?

Mr. Dave Smith: This is a great opportunity to demonstrate the difference in the thought process between a Progressive Conservative government and the NDP. It's either/or in their world; it's not in ours. How do you make it so that it is easy for people to access these services? You can still go down to ServiceOntario with your gobs of paper if you truly want to do that, but if you don't, if you have access to technology, if you have benefited from the enhancements in infrastructure for Internet that we are doing, you get to pick up that tablet and actually do it. If you don't have access to it, you're more than welcome to come down to ServiceOntario and still do the paper copies of it, because we want to make sure that we're serving the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Sarnia–Lambton has a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. It's great to see you in the Chair.

It's great to be in here and listen to this debate today, the great questions and answers.

I want to ask a question to the member about digitization. Could you speak a little bit about digital services? I guess you have just touched on it actually, but maybe expand a little more—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Through the Chair, Bob; we might be able to hear you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to Peterborough–Kawartha to respond to a question I didn't hear.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was about digital technologies and expanding that and how we're going to make it so much easier for people, because this is a government that is for the people. We are doing things using the technology that the average person is using today. As the member opposite did point out, some people don't have that technology. We still have those older processes if that's the way they need to be serviced, because we are the government that is here for the people, doing things that people need, the way that people need.

We're building upon what our youth of today are actually using, what our youth of today are seeing, and we're making sure we're dragging this Ontario government that was so—

Interjection: Archaic.

Mr. Dave Smith: Archaic, yes, for 15 years under the Liberals. We're giving people the choice. They can use new technology, the services from today, or if they're not comfortable with that, they can still do some of the things paper-wise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Humber River–Black Creek has a question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member opposite for his speech and also to congratulate him for Scottish heritage month.

My question is: There are certain classes of business owners that are really being left behind during this pandemic, and the government has been silent on that. Taxi drivers and truck drivers are facing exorbitant levels of insurance costs, and in many cases they're denied altogether. Certainly, commercial businesses have faced 200% or 300% increases on commercial insurance rates, but we've seen or heard nothing from the government on this. Why is the government not addressing these insurance issues that are facing businesses in Ontario?

1750

Mr. Dave Smith: That goes back to one of my comments I had made earlier, that whenever we introduce an omnibus bill, the NDP stands there and they say, "You've got too much in it," and then they come out with stuff like, "Well, you've got to stick more in it as well." They can't pick a lane.

What we are doing, though, is we are supporting all of those small businesses. That's why we had a grant that started off at a minimum of \$10,000 for all of those small businesses—it could go as high as \$20,000—and then we doubled it, and we gave two rounds of that support for all of those small businesses in Ontario, because we know that there were so many people who were hit hard by the pandemic.

We're there for the people. We're there to make sure that those businesses stay in business because if we've got companies working in Ontario, our economy is moving; people are employed. And when people are employed, they have hope for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to commend the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for celebrating Scottish Heritage Day and our colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jim McDonnell, for bringing it here and having the first day.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that Mr. Miller on the opposite side, from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, knows that we can fax his questions in, just to make sure he’s still able to do things.

I want to also commend the Attorney General, the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte, on modernizing a lot of our justice and court system. We’ve been able to do things that haven’t been done for many, many years that are more efficient. They take prisoners who now don’t have to travel all the way to Milton from Penetanguishene to have a stay for their next court case; they can do that by Zoom. Those are just some of the things.

We’re actually trying to prioritize so that proper senior lawyers are doing the cases they should, and paralegals can go in, which will actually allow us to make it more efficient, faster, with less cost for people.

Can the member wearing the tartan today please expand on all of the great modernizations of the Attorney General?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much to the member for that question. And yes, the Attorney General has done fantastic work with it. I think the comment was, he brought the justice system up 25 years in 25 days in his approach to it.

Through Bill 13, we’re proposing to repeal a section of the Barristers Act that removes outdated courtroom procedures—imagine that: outdated procedures—and we are changing the priorities so that cases that senior lawyers had or were forced to do could be done by paralegals. It’s things like that that are changing the system so that it is faster and so it’s less expensive for an individual who has to go to court for something. All of these changes will benefit the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton Centre has a question.

Ms. Sara Singh: A few weeks ago, I was at the post office and there was an elderly woman who lived in a long-term-care home next to the post office, who had been there four times to send a package because she could not access a computer to complete a digital form that was required now to send packages overseas. I happened to be in line behind her and was able to pull out my cellphone and help her fill out that form.

I know that it’s important that we digitize our services here in the province of Ontario, but it’s important to acknowledge that many seniors are being left out of this conversation and will not have access. What the government is suggesting is that seniors like Winnie, who was trying to just send a package, and others who are just trying to get their IDs, go and line up with piles of papers. There

is no actual process there to ensure that they’re getting timely service and that they aren’t being inconvenienced.

Can the member please explain how they are going to help support people like Winnie and seniors in our community access all of the digital services that this government is putting in place?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much for that. Perhaps if the federal government would listen to what we were doing in trying to make changes to it, when you go into the post office you wouldn’t have all of the problems that people experience. Whether they are a senior or somebody who is under the age of 12, it doesn’t matter; when you get into the federal post office, sometimes things are a little bit different.

What are we doing differently? We’re making it easier for people to do stuff. Yes, there is that digital side that we’re going down, but that’s part of the reason that we are MPPs. We’re there to help. If you want to reach out to my office to get a QR code, we do that for you. In fact, we’ve made more than 3,500 QR codes. We’ve printed them off for people, laminated them and handed them back to them in a size that fits in a wallet, because we’re here to serve the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill has a question.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Happy Scottish Heritage Day to my colleague, and of course, the member across as well, and to all those who are of Scottish heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I love the title of this bill: Supporting People and Businesses Act. There’s no better time for us to talk about support not just for the people but for the businesses that have sacrificed so much the last, I would say, 18 to 20 months. The member highlighted some of the support that was provided, the small business support grant, perhaps. I’m wondering if you could further elaborate on some of the supports that have been provided by our government in the very, very difficult time that our businesses have had to endure in the last 18 to 20 months.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): In 30 seconds or less.

Mr. Dave Smith: I’ve been trying to pull my best Bill Walker in here as I’m talking as quickly as possible to fit everything in. The main street support that we have given: digitizing, making it easier for all of those small mom-and-pop shops to go on the Internet, to get their products on the Internet so they can sell to everybody. It doesn’t matter whether you are in Warton, whether you are in Lakefield, whether you are in Perth or even in Hamilton; we’ll get you on the Internet, because if you’re not an e-business, you’re soon—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Report continues in volume B.

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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (Transit-Oriented Communities) / Ministre associé des Transports (Aménagement axé sur les transports en commun)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutilla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Faisal Hassan
Jim McDonell, Sam Oosterhoff
Laurie Scott, Vijay Thanigasalam
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight / Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d'urgence

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Donna Skelly, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell