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Jeudi
24 février 2022

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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, 2022, Bill 84, Mrs. Tangri / Loi de 2022 pour de meilleurs services et moins de frais, projet de loi 84, Mme Tangri**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 February 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 février 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers / Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEWER FEES, BETTER SERVICES
ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022

POUR DE MEILLEURS SERVICES
ET MOINS DE FRAIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts / *Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe that when we last debated this bill, the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore had the floor.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to finish my speech on Bill 84, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act. Today I'll be speaking on the part on the centre of realty excellence. The province owns many surplus asset properties in Ontario that are no longer required to deliver our government's programs and services. Selling surplus properties reduces ongoing operating costs, minimizes risk, and most importantly, it puts the properties back into productive use for urgently needed housing or long-term care, or for economic development. Locally in Mississauga–Lakeshore, we're going through this process now with our former OPP building after the detachment moved from Port Credit to the associate minister's constituency in Streetsville.

Unfortunately, there are often complex policy, operational and governance issues to overcome before surplus properties can be sold. As a result, taxpayers sometimes don't get the best possible value from our properties. Speaker, if passed, schedule 11 would help us to address this issue. A new centre of realty excellence would allow the government to unlock greater value, bring in greater revenue and lower costs from the pool of about 20,000 public real estate assets in Ontario, maximizing value for taxpayers. The centre would have an online portal with surplus property information for both the Ontario public sector and the broader public service that can be used by both government and the public to identify new options,

opportunities and partnerships and ultimately to help us make better decisions about the best way to use Ontario surplus properties.

Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to address schedule 2. As we're reopening the province and recovering from COVID-19, the US government is implementing buy-American policies that target many key Ontario industries, including automotive manufacturing, but also agriculture, lumber and many more. Having worked at Ford Motor Co. for over 31 years, it's very troubling to me that the US Congress is considering measures that would impact auto agreements that began with the Auto Pact in 1965. These agreements have brought high-skilled, well-paying jobs to workers and communities across Ontario and North America for more than half a century. Vehicles and auto parts manufacturing directly supports almost 100,000 Ontario jobs, plus hundreds of thousands more spinoff jobs in communities across the province. Buy-American policies threatens these jobs. They threaten our recovery and the progress we're making.

I want to thank the Premier for appointing the Council on U.S. Trade and Industry Competitiveness, led by Jerry Dias, president of Unifor. It's working to protect our economy and employ millions of workers on both sides of the border by promoting a buy-North American policy. As a former Unifor member, I'm glad that Mr. Dias and 10 other members of the council are working together with our government in this critical time.

Schedule 2 will help level the playing field for small and medium-sized Ontario businesses in our public procurements so that local Ontario companies can sell more goods and services locally, and centres more jobs in these communities so that we can get our economy back on track. As I've said before here, small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy and our province. They account for 98% of our businesses and they employ close to 2.4 million people in Ontario. There can be no recovery without them.

Finally, Speaker, I have a few comments on schedule 7. As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and as the parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board for internal audits, I support our efforts to obtain documents for the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit to get to the bottom of the crisis at Laurentian University.

My friend from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill spoke about the resistance of the university, which was frustrating to all members. I won't repeat what he said, but I want to speak about how the changes in schedule 7 of

Bill 84 are only the first steps in a series of more comprehensive changes that we're going to need to make. However, at this time, I believe that reducing the size of the board of governors from 25 to 16 will help support better decision-making at the university so that they can get through the current creditor protection process and once again focus on the success of the students. I want to thank the associate minister for including this measure in Bill 84.

Speaker, it is appropriate that we're debating this bill this week for Red Tape Awareness Week. As the associate minister said, this is the government's eighth red tape reduction bill. It builds on the success of many previous bills that I've also had the privilege to speak on. These are the high-impact bills that will make Ontario more competitive and help support our economic recovery after the pandemic. In total, this government has taken over 400 actions to reduce the burden of red tape. We are providing clear and effective rules that will promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing growth, innovation and opportunities. This has resulted in almost \$400 million in net annual savings to businesses across Ontario.

Speaker, again, to conclude, I'd like to thank the associate minister and her team for all their hard work on Bill 84, as well as my OLIP intern Iqra for all her hard work in researching this information for me.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you to the member opposite: The government has had time, and time again, to confirm they were going to be different than the last Liberal government. But legislation like this one moves the budget to just days in front of an election. We've already seen the priorities: licence fees over child care and health care spending. You promised to be different and not move the budget days. Why is it okay now to play politics here?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As you know, the Liberals missed their budget targets six out of the eight times when they were in power.

0910

We are going to have our budget released at the end of April, and we are working very hard to get that done. As well, as you know, we have gone through a pandemic for the last two years, so things are much more difficult than in a usual regular year. Thank you very much for that question.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: As we've heard, this bill will introduce the At Your Service Act and enable the government to set business service standards, requiring ministries and other provincial bodies to follow those standards. This is a terrific step in the right direction for people and businesses across the province, but it's not the final step. Can the member please elaborate on what else this government is planning to do to make it easier for businesses to interact with the government?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. In the 2021 budget, which I'd like to remind the House both the Liberals and the NDP voted against, we committed to providing a single window of business, an online portal that would make it easier for businesses to access the information and services they need to get up and running, and create jobs and growth. The digital experience would make it easier for businesses to access the information and services they need. This would include a single web portal that could easily see where in the approval process applications are. Work is being created out of the Ministry of Digital Government from the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. The portal alone, with the business service standards implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, will help this move forward much quicker.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Under this government's schedule 1, the At Your Service Act—it was light on details during the briefing. However, they're saying that they were going to provide a business service standard. In it, the ministry, governments who can't comply with these standards are going to be named and shamed.

I want to give you an example. The Northeast Superior Mayors Group, on February 5, 2018, sent a letter to the previous government in regard to DriveTests. On March 6, I sent a letter to the previous government on DriveTests. On March 12, I sent a letter to the previous government. On October 15, 2018, I sent a letter to this government in regard to the problems. I sent another letter on June 5, October 1, the dates go on.

Can I ask this government: Who are you going to shame? The entity, the business standards? Or are you going to shame your own government?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. I'm not privy to that information that you've just spoken about, but I know that we are working very hard to improve the system going forward, and I know with our new Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, we are working very closely to improve that system moving forward.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is going to be about digital dealer. Many of my constituents in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean enjoy the convenience of interacting with the government online instead of in person. I have also heard similar sentiments among businesses across my riding and the province.

One area that we can look to further bring into our digital jurisdiction is the automotive sector—which I know is something the member knows a little bit about—through car dealerships. With the digital dealer initiative being brought forward, I wonder if the member can express his opinions on its usefulness.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As you are aware, I worked in the automotive industry for over 31 years, and I've spoken to many

dealerships through the province of Ontario that I deal with. They think that this is the thing that they've been looking for for so many years. It will make it much quicker for them to get plates on vehicles and get the vehicle out so they can sell more vehicles and stimulate the economy even more.

I think this is a great idea, and I think it's overdue that we do this in the province of Ontario. Other jurisdictions around the world are doing that as well right now, so I think this is a great initiative, and I think that we should continue bringing more digital technology in every aspect of automotive and anything in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Good morning, everyone, and thank you to the member from Mississauga-Lakeshore for his commentary this morning. I, too, am frustrated and interested in the area of service providing because this government—and over the last almost four years, service to our constituents in northern Ontario has been just an abomination, specifically the Northern Health Travel Grant. People have had no access to appeal. People are waiting very long times to get reimbursed for money out of their pockets that they have to pay in order to access the health care that everyone is entitled to under the Canada Health Act. We are entitled to equitable health care.

So when we talk about service standards and naming and shaming, what is that going to do about the services that aren't being provided to the people of northern Ontario?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I thank the member across for that question. Moving forward with digital technology, it's going to be much easier to access these programs and find savings as well. This is the step that we're moving forward with our new Associate Minister of Digital Government. This is what Ontario needs that we haven't had for years. I think this is going to be a great asset for our province to get things done much quicker and more effectively for everyone.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I want to thank my colleague for his very informative speech this morning, and I just had a few questions. I was wondering if maybe the member could expand a little bit on what he's talking about.

Through you, Madam Speaker, there are many items in this bill that are designed to make life easier for people and businesses in Ontario. Our government has made a promise to improve the experience for people in businesses, especially through digital interactions with the government. So could the member please point to any pieces in this proposed legislation that would help alleviate some of that frustration, especially for businesses in this province?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank my colleague for that question. As we know, we're moving into a digital world and doing this digitally will make it much more effective for our business owners. Right now, I look at Mississauga-Lakeshore, where I have tons of restaurants

down on the Lakeshore corridor, and they're always having troubles calling and trying to get through, but doing it digitally will be much more effective for them in getting the funding they need and the access to our government much quicker.

I think this is a great initiative, and moving forward it will make it more efficient for the small business owners across the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for a quick back-and-forth.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Further on what we're doing, we hear that we're making digital services available for folks, but I don't know if any of you have had the experience of trying to apply for any of the government services that are already on digital formats in Ontario, and I can tell you, it is not an easy process. Often, people have to come into our office. We also have many people who don't have access to those and have to go to a library or come to our office to access those services. What is the member going to do about that, or what is your government going to do about that?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I thank the member for that question. Like I said, digital is the way of the future, and we are moving in that direction. That's why we are expanding broadband to northern ridings as well, as our government has said. This is going to be where we're moving, and that's where it will be more effective for everyone. This is less travel time as well, so it will reduce the carbon footprint in the province too.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Before I begin my debate, I just want to say good morning to Jackson Twain. Jackson is a young man from Sudbury—just a small, little guy—who is going through some cancer treatment here in Toronto and has been living with his family at Ronald McDonald House. Jackson, I just want to let you know that I'm thinking about you this morning as you head off to your treatment.

Today, we are debating Bill 84, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act. It's another omnibus bill. It's another in a series of anti-red tape—anti-red tape, I guess, works well when they poll with voters, so every bill is anti-red tape.

0920

Anyway, before I get into it, Speaker, I just want to set the table. I have talked countless times about the importance of listening to others, about consultation. My background is in health and safety. Health and safety is based on the internal responsibility system, and it's actually written into law that all the parties—the government, the workers, the employers—have to work together, have to listen to each other.

It's a great system, and I've shared stories of us thinking in our joint health and safety committee room that we have the best ideas, and then going out there and making a mistake of things, with the best of intentions—spending a lot of money, wasting a lot of money, and the results not being what people wanted. I share these stories because I'm hopeful that at some point the Conservative government will think, "Maybe we should work with other

people. Maybe we should listen to everybody. Maybe we should check into stuff.” It’s good advice, but four years later, it’s in one ear and out the other ear. This bill is a good example of this.

On Monday we didn’t sit; it was Family Day. This bill was tabled on Tuesday at 2 o’clock. There was a briefing at 4 o’clock, two hours after it was tabled. Most of the people who would be at the briefing were on House duty. Because of COVID, we’re in cohorts, so we have more House duty than we normally would. Our availability becomes reduced and we want to debate what’s going on. So the opportunity to attend the briefing wasn’t there. Then debate started yesterday, so tabling, briefing, debate, back to back. And I know the Conservatives are going to say, “Well, this is efficient,” and all the buzz words, but no, this is ineffective.

Tuesday night, after House duty—6:30, quarter to 7—I go to my office and I search for the bill. I search the legislative web page and it’s not up yet. I can’t find it. I search the Internet to find it and there are a lot of press releases. There’s a lot of fluff. There are a lot of feel-good statements in it, but the bill is not there either. But do you know what I found, Speaker? I don’t think I can hold it up. It’s a government document, but I don’t know if it could be considered a prop. I found a 15-page flyer. This is what I started preparing for debate with: a flyer. Not the bill, not the briefing notes—no time to prepare for that—a flyer they had online. It’s 15 pages, but that’s generous, Speaker, because most of this is photos. It’s an election ad, let’s be honest.

There’s a nice message from the minister. There’s a photo of a young couple, I suppose; small business owners, I guess; and a nice photo of Queen’s Park in the springtime. You’ve got a table of contents, another photo of a whole bunch of people who have all got their hands together, working with teamwork. You go through this thing, a couple of bullet points, and then you get to page 10 and you find that the last five pages are just, “Here’s what we did in the past.” Nothing to do with this bill. “Here’s what we did in previous bills.” It is basically an election ad.

I have to say, though, there’s a lovely photo of the Big Nickel and the Superstack, which is nice. I’m nostalgic for the Superstack because my office was just below that when I worked at the smelter, so I do appreciate that, but that was not helpful.

On page 9 they talk about Laurentian University. When I saw that, I thought, “Oh, this is going to be good,” because Laurentian University is a big deal in my city. It’s really helpful in my city. I read it, and I’ll just read it out to you. I don’t know if it’s a prop so I don’t want to raise it. It says, “Modernizing the Laurentian University of Sudbury Act to reflect positive change as it emerges from the CCAA (creditors) process and turns its focus to the success of its students.” Well, what does that mean?

I got a copy of this bill at about a quarter to 9, 8:30. I find the Laurentian part of it is schedule 7 of the bill. I’m going to go to schedule 7 in the debate as I move forward.

I know the pamphlet is not the bill. I know there’s a process in place. I know maybe I could have searched

somewhere else. But the deadline is pretty tight, when just before the end of the day they go, “Surprise, you’re debating this tomorrow.” And I joked before about how the government loves to surprise us, how they don’t often tell us what we’re going to debate the next day. I like to joke that the way the Conservative government handles House business sometimes feels like the most boring improv show, where we’ve got to flip through our notes. They give us a topic, and we’ve got to debate it. That might be fun for them, but that is a bad way to provide legislation. That is a bad way to get the best results.

I want to remind all of my colleagues that our purpose here is actually to work together. There is the owl behind me, as a reminder for you to make wise decisions as the government. You’re looking at the owl. I’m looking across at the eagle. We’re supposed to look for ways to improve it. When you don’t share information with us, it is tough to improve it. I know there is this father-knows-best attitude, but you get it wrong a lot. A lot of the bills that we have to debate are you fixing stuff you got wrong in previous bills. Let us help you help yourselves.

I’m using that as an example of how difficult it is to get information from the Conservative government, Speaker—how frustrating it can be here to provide good legislation for the people of Ontario. There are people who think that when you’re in opposition, it’s your job to say no when they say yes, but it’s not; it’s to improve legislation. It’s to make legislation better, and we’re committed on this side to making legislation better. We’re hopeful that you will listen, and we’re hopeful that you will share your information ahead of time so we can really get some good things done.

I’m going to jump over to schedule 7: The Laurentian University of Sudbury Act changes. It’s going to make some amendments to The Laurentian University of Sudbury Act, 1960. It amends the size of the board of governors to 16 members, so 10 of the members will be elected from the board, five members will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and one member will default to whoever the president of the university is—at this time, it’s Robert Haché, but the president’s name changes. I think that’s a good system. I think that makes sense.

The problem, though—and I’ll go back to consulting with others—I talked about working with others, consulting. I talked about how, when you don’t do that, you make errors. For four years, I have told you, when you don’t do that you make errors, and there are countless examples of where you didn’t do that and you made errors—not you, Speaker, the Conservatives. I’m sorry—through you, Speaker.

On Tuesday, I finished House duty, I tracked down the bill and then I spent a few hours in the middle of the night talking to LUFA and LUSU. LUFA is the Laurentian University Faculty Association. They represent the profs. LUSU is the Laurentian University Staff Union. They represent the staff workers, the administrative people who take care of the buildings, that sort of thing. So I call Fabrice from LUFA. I call Tom from LUSU. They had no

idea—actually, no, Tom did, because Tom saw a tweet saying there was going to be something about Laurentian University, but he didn't know what it was.

I want to remind everybody about the CCAA process. I'm laying this on the Conservative government's lap, because this happened under your watch: Over 100 people lost really good-paying jobs. This faculty association and this union represent those workers whose lives are in crisis. You can picture your best-case scenario, but the one I always picture was a woman going into mat leave who lost all of her benefits and was the breadwinner from her house. I can picture the family that was married, who both lost their jobs. I know the economic devastation that happened under this previous minister's watch—I notice he's looking at his phone, because he doesn't want to make eye contact, and that's cool.

The workers who remain, the workers who weren't hired are stretched to their limits. They are feeling the whole weight of this. In January, it was the one-year anniversary of CCAA. That's one year since the Conservative government dropped the ball. It's one year since the former minister went into hiding. I remember every question period it was the parliamentary assistant who was answering. It was one year since those programs were decimated. The midwifery program is gone—300 applicants every year, fully funded by the federal government; for some reason, that's the program they cut.

Environmental science—gone, in the city where they measure pollution in relation to Sudbury, and how Sudbury has re-greened after a century of pollution. They got rid of environmental science. We turned a city that was like a moonscape into a green city, and they got rid of environmental science. And what was the Conservative government doing? Twiddling their thumbs. It's not important to them.

0930

It's one year since groups of people were fired en masse in a Zoom call. Imagine how callous that is. Not just you lose your job like that, while the Conservative government stands to the side, but you're on a Zoom call with your colleagues, and you go in and they go, "Bye." As you can imagine, trust is a little bit strained. It is tough to do your job when you're in that university, at all levels. I'm talking about the president, I'm talking about the CCAA group, I'm talking about the faculty, the staff, the students—everybody.

And I will tell you that LUSU and LUFA—I wouldn't blame them if they had an axe to grind—are committed to the success of that university. I know that the NDP is committed to the success of that university. Both the member for Nickel Belt and I are graduates of Laurentian University. We know how important it is in the north. We're committed to the success of Laurentian University. I believe some of my colleagues over there—I know they are committed, some of them. Some fail miserably, but I have to believe, because I'm optimistic, they're committed to the success of Laurentian University.

But I want to remind you, Speaker, LUSU and LUFA didn't even know this was happening. At a time when trust

is really strained, the Conservative government thought, "We don't have to talk to them." I picture in my head Jenga, when almost all the pieces are going and you can't believe the tower is still staying up, where even the people you're playing with are hopeful that you can do it, where people are holding their breath as they move the pieces. That is how strained the trust is. That is how much trust people have. They're working together, they're hopeful for a better tomorrow, and the government said, "We don't need to consult. We know best, again." They made a flyer and they shared it with the media. They wrote a bill, brought it forward, rushed it in for debate. They didn't consult with a single person who represents those workers. And because it was last minute, I still don't know if they consulted with anybody.

So I did consult, and this is what I learned and this is what I can share, because it's not confidential. Like I said earlier, the relationship at Laurentian is fragile, but the university, the faculty and the staff are committed to making it work. They have a term sheet, and the term sheet spells out, "What do we need to do to emerge from CCAA together?" A good example is that one of the term's agreements they have is that whenever they go to the province, they're going to go jointly. When the faculty association and the staff union find out this came through, it makes them nervous that maybe the university didn't go jointly.

Another example is that one of the terms—and this is related to this part of the bill—they agreed that the board of governors in the future is going to include an elected student member, an elected faculty member, elected staff members—not appointed; they would be elected by the people they represent. They would be voting members. This is important that they're voting members, because that means they can go into in camera discussions so they won't be surprised.

These people suffered the largest amount of loss from what happened at Laurentian University. They didn't see it coming. They weren't aware. They deserve that level of transparency. The university has agreed to it. And the Conservative government came out like a bull in a china shop and knocked over the Jenga set. They need to rebuild that trust. They don't need a surprise from the Conservative government, especially a surprise that doesn't match. It's great to have a happy surprise, but not when you're messing things up.

What you're proposing doesn't include elected student members, elected faculty members, elected staff members. It doesn't include in camera access. It just says, "We're changing the size of the board," and I don't understand why you would do this. I still don't understand why you don't consult on almost every bill. We have bills that have "worker" in the title, and you don't consult with workers at all. It blows my mind. You don't share information. You don't consult. Speaker, the Conservatives don't share. They don't consult. They are always convinced they are right, and they are almost always wrong. It's so frustrating, because I want it to be successful; I want to help them be successful.

I called Tom Fenske from LUSU, and he was hopeful. He said that it's probably not a big deal to shrink the size of the board of governors. I talked to Fabrice Colin. He said that as long as they can adapt the bilingual, tri-cultural mandate to accommodate enough people, it makes sense.

There is some good in this. There's a way to develop how to replace board members. Tom said that maybe it's one change; that maybe there are more changes coming in the future. He said, "But why wouldn't they make all of them at once? Why would they do this? Why would they not tell me? Why would they just nudge this?" He said, "Make them all at once." An example he told me is section 15 of the Laurentian University act. It prohibits what was agreed on in the term sheet, that these faculty members could join and be voting members and have access to in camera. Tom said, "Why don't they take care of that? Because that would be helpful." That would help the university, that would help the term sheet, that would help the faculty association, that would help the staff union. Tom said, "Look, don't do this part and not the other part. Or do it with changes to section 15." Also, maybe pick up the phone and call Tom and call Fabrice so they know what's going on.

I'm going to move on—and I don't have a ton of time—because I have a ton of notes, which is too bad. I want to talk about schedule 6. This is where they're going to eliminate vehicle licence sticker fees. Speaker, yesterday when you were debating you mentioned how two of the biggest failures the Conservative Party has had in the last four years was changing licence plates to licence plates that no one could see, and stickers that kept falling off. Someone in their press group said, "You know what's a good idea? Let's remind everyone in Ontario about our two biggest failures. Let's talk about licence plates, let's talk about stickers so people will remember what kind of boondoggle that was."

It was discussed a lot of times yesterday. I only have two minutes so I'm going to have to be brief on this: It's going to cost about \$1 billion. It's going to cost about \$1 million to process everything. I know the Conservatives are going to say, "Everyone's going to get \$120 in their pocket"—everyone who has a car, so if you take public transit you're out. In northern Ontario, you're only getting \$60, but it's not like they care about northern Ontario anyway.

I talked to a Conservative. He said, "I don't know what's going on with this party. I believe in fiscal responsibility. I believe in small government. I don't know what this is." They invent ministries so that their members can get raises. They have these kind of back-page fancy ideas of \$120 in your pocket. I was thinking about that. Are people going to take their money, \$120? Sure, yes; \$60 in the north. But you know what's a bigger bang for the buck? It would be child care.

I was thinking about this: \$120 a year is \$10 a month. So for someone who is paying \$1,000, literally a mortgage payment, a month, Speaker, they will get \$10 towards that. They'll get 1% of their child care towards that, and they'll go, "Ooh, thank you." Instead of getting \$10-a-day day-care, which in Ontario—the Conservative government is

the very last to sign on. They haven't said they're going to sign on, haven't announced; maybe it's going to be a pre-election issue. But instead of that, what they're saying is, "Here's \$10 a month for you guys, instead of something that will really make a difference in your life."

I think I'm out of time, Speaker. I have 10 seconds. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The member knows that my grandson is graduating from college and needs to do his placement. To do his placement he needs to drive. For the last two years, he has had his driving test rescheduled and rescheduled. It was supposed to happen in March; now it has been rescheduled. He lives in Sudbury. There is no spot in North Bay, Sturgeon Falls, Sudbury or Espanola. He is booked in Sault Ste. Marie, which is, there and back, a seven-hour drive, for somebody who doesn't drive, because he needs his driver's licence. Do you think that we need to wait for the At Your Service Act to fix this, or could we have DriveTests in northern Ontario where people live?

0940

Mr. Jamie West: It's a really good question. I brought this up in question period last year, as well as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, about the backlog in northern Ontario and the lack of access to DriveTests. It was an issue across the province because of COVID-19, and the Minister of Transportation came forward with additional DriveTest centres across southern Ontario and then again, about a month later, with more additional DriveTest centres across southern Ontario.

I don't want to discount southern Ontario, especially rural areas, but in northern Ontario we don't have public access to transportation. Sudbury is fortunate, a couple of places are fortunate, but most places don't. And so you have to drive to get to work. You have to drive to get to your family. You have to drive to get around. Not being able to access your driving test is very damaging in the north. That is something you could address that would help people, that we've been calling on this government for months to address, and they haven't done a thing.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: As the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction mentioned in her lead-off, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act is this government's eighth red tape reduction bill. It builds on the previous legislation we introduced to support people and businesses across the province.

The measures included in these bills have allowed us to reduce needless regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5% since June 2018. We are also near our goal of achieving \$373 million in net annual compliance cost savings for businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, universities, colleges, school boards and hospitals.

Does my opposite colleague support efforts to make things easier for the people and the businesses in our province?

Mr. Jamie West: You talked about red tape and fiscal responsibility. I want to read a quote from the Ontario Parent Action Network. It says: The Premier—it uses his name—“spent just 1.2% of the allocated budget for capital repairs in crumbling Ontario schools this year.” He left “\$1b unspent.” He’s using it to rebate licence sticker fees.

When they talk about saving money, Speaker, they’re talking about money that isn’t invested into our schools, into our hospitals, into our roads. I had a fatality south of Sudbury on Highway 69. For four years, I’ve been begging the Minister of Transportation to fix what the former Minister of Transportation, the now leader of the Liberal Party, Steven Del Duca, couldn’t do, and tender the last 68 kilometres of Highway 69.

The party opposite, the Conservatives, wants to brag about the money they’re saving. That money they’re saving is costing people’s lives. It is costing the infrastructure of our communities and our schools.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to my colleague from Sudbury for his remarks, which I always enjoy. I was touched by your discussion about Laurentian University and how important that is to our northern mosaic. We have Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, and it’s such an important innovator. It wins awards for mining support, forestry support. Laurentian is, like you said—the midwife program is so vital.

I’d really like to ask you, through the Speaker, why northern universities are so important.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague. Lakehead is a fantastic university. I was actually accepted to Lakehead when I went to Laurentian University, and I had to make the decision. Frankly, we were just too poor to leave home, which is the reality for a lot of people in northern Ontario. The majority of students who go to university in northern Ontario are the first in their family. I was the first in my family to go to post-secondary school. That made a step change in my life. I truly believe I would not be an MPP if it wasn’t for that access to post-secondary education.

Studies show, Speaker, that even attending for one year, even if you don’t graduate, will benefit you later on in life financially and lead to a better class of life.

The access to education is essential in the north because, for example, from my riding to this member’s riding is about a 16-hour drive. That’s a long way from your support system and your family. If you add southern Ontario, you’re looking at at least four hours. You need access to services where you live, and we love living in the north, Speaker.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member from Sudbury for those comments. Affordability is a key issue, not only in my Markham–Thornhill riding—affordability, the rising price crisis, the housing price crisis and the cost of living.

Our government’s recent announcement through this bill: Highways 412 and 418 in Durham region—Madam Speaker, you know that; you are from part of the region—and also to remove the sticker price. It’s a key issue. In Markham, the average house has three cars, three automobiles: \$120 on their family budget for three vehicles is close to 400 bucks. This would be a key issue for the average family.

Does the member opposite think adding costs to the life of everyday Ontarians is the right thing to do, or are you going to support this bill removing these tolls and stickers?

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member from Oshawa, who’s the Speaker currently, for all the work that you did in removing the tolls in the Oshawa–Durham region, tabling the bill four years ago and then tabling it again. I’m glad they took your advice and moved it forward. I think that’s an excellent part of this bill.

The problem with omnibus bills—and I think the member from Humber River–Black Creek described it best. He said what they do is, they have some good ideas, and then they take a Snickers bar and they throw it into an in-bin, a garbage bin, and let it swirl around with all the juices and stuff from the garbage, and they pull it out and say, “Don’t you like chocolate?”

So, will you support this omnibus bill with a million bad ideas and one good idea? I don’t know. That’s a tough decision. Can we pull the bad ideas out? Then, for sure. But do I want the chocolate bar that’s been floating in the garbage? No, and neither do the people of Ontario, Speaker.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Of course I was very interested in schedule 7 that talks about Laurentian University. Since they declared insolvency, since they chose to use the CCAA process for their insolvency, it has created so, so much hardship in my community. When you look at what’s happening now, 45% less enrolment in my university than before this all started.

I represent the people of Nickel Belt. Nickel Belt is built all around Sudbury. There are many young people right now who are sitting at home. They cannot afford to go to university in Toronto or Ottawa. The only thing they could afford was to go to university in Sudbury, but now their program doesn’t exist anymore. Do you think that schedule 7 is going to solve this?

Mr. Jamie West: Schedule 7 isn’t going to resolve this. I’m very hopeful, with the tenacity of LUSU and LUFU, that they’re going to ensure that Laurentian University’s going to be successful. This, as I described earlier, is like a bull in a china shop, the Jenga system of trust where it’s very fragile. And they’re working—I’m including the university as well; I’m including that team working on CCAA—all working to ensure Laurentian is successful and supported, of course, by the NDP at every opportunity.

The member from Nickel Belt is always passionate speaking about Laurentian University, just as I am. When you talk about these students whose programs were eliminated, my son Thomas is one of those students. He fell in

love with philosophy, absolutely fell in love with it. He took it as an elective course, fell in love with it, and that became his major. That program was eliminated. When the government talks about people not being affected, they also say that his program wasn't affected, because he can go into—

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

Mr. John Fraser: As I was preparing for debate this morning, I was having a bit of a hard time, because there's a lot of things that are going on in the world, have gone on in the world and are going on in this country right now that make it really hard to clearly speak about this bill this morning. It was hard to focus on it, but I'll do my best. First off, to the people of Ukraine: We're with you. Our hearts are with you, our prayers are with you.

0950

Anyway, to the bill: We're speaking on an act to enact two acts and amend various other acts—that's a lot of acting—and I think that's what is at the heart of this bill. It's called red tape reduction, but I'm not sure who it's removing the red tape for. It's removing the red tape for the finance minister and the Premier so they don't actually have to follow the law that they created three years ago that they've only followed once. That's some red tape to remove. All aside from the penalties and the fines, why did you make the law in the first place, if you weren't going to respect it? That's the red tape that sticks out to me the most.

What's the red tape that people want removed from their lives? They want the red tape that prevents them from getting to a family physician, or getting their child the help that they need in schools, or the mental health help that their child needs. That's the red tape people want removed.

A really important piece of red tape—that you guys have created, nobody else—is removing the red tape around getting \$10-a-day child care here in Ontario. You guys wrapped that in red tape. You're still wrapping it. Why is it taking so long? You're the last province, the last government. Six months for people—it may not matter to you, but it's six months less that they have an opportunity to get affordable child care. Just because the Premier wants convenient timing for announcing it—if that's the case; maybe he's not even going to do it, which will be even worse—it is not a good reason to make people wait. You wrapped that in red tape. Try unravelling some of the red tape around that, maybe this week.

Removing tolls: I'm all for that. That's great. We've got to pay for it somehow. But if I lived in Brampton or somewhere west I might be thinking, "What about that highway that you sold that I have to rent every day when I put my car on it?" The tolls aren't getting reduced there. And why did you give those people back \$1 billion? Was there too much red tape in trying to figure out how you could collect it from them? That's red tape you should have removed. I think you put that red tape on yourself.

Now, stickers: We had the gas pump stickers—I know the member from Sudbury mentioned it; we don't need to go back there. And we're still talking about licence plates.

Look, it's hard on families right now. They need every penny. But you're not helping every family, not at all. People who drive cars, yes. You're not helping every family. I don't know if I'd be that proud of it. What about the families that have to take transit to two jobs because they don't drive, because they work in a long-term-care home, because they don't have a pension, because their wages aren't great? Not that helpful, is it? Not at all. So I don't think it would be something I'd be crowing about.

The licence plate sticker removal cost follows the Premier's commitment for a 20% income tax reduction rate at the time of the last election. Did that happen? No.

Gas prices: "We're going to cut your gas prices." Did that happen? Nope.

Hydro rates: "They're going to go down. We're going to bring them down." Did they go down? No, they went up 4%.

Buck-a-beer: It went flat after about six months.

I really am not sure whether the Premier of Ontario is running to be his class president or the Premier of Ontario. What Ontario needs is a Premier who gets up every morning and says, "How do I make Ontarians healthier? How do I make Ontarians smarter? How do I make Ontarians safer?" Not a Premier who wakes up and says, "How do I make myself more popular today? How do I help my friends?"

We need a Premier who wakes up and says, "The first thing I want to do every day is to help Ontarians, not myself. My job is to do whatever I can to make people's lives better—not my life, not my opportunities in an election." That's what's happening here. That's the acting that's going on in this act to amend many acts and create other acts. I think you've got five acts in that bill. It is quite appropriate.

Why are we delaying the budget? Does anybody know? Any answers? I'm not hearing any, but we'll wait for the questions, Speaker. Why are we delaying the budget? Because it doesn't fit into the Premier's election plan. This nonsense about, "Well, we've got to watch the economic"—no. I could buy that in 2019, I could buy that in 2020, or in 2021, maybe; not now. It just doesn't ring true.

I'm going to be happy to take questions afterwards—I'm sure I'll get some interesting ones—but I just want to recap. What Ontarians need is for this government to remove the red tape around \$10-a-day child care that they put in place. They need the red tape removed from getting access to a primary care physician. They need the red tape removed from getting their child the kind of help that they need in school, whether it's with their education or mental health. That's the red tape that Ontarians want us to remove. They don't want us to tinker around the edges. They don't want gadgets and baubles that don't come into place, like gas prices, like hydro prices, like buck-a-beer, like the 20% income tax cut. They didn't happen, but they sounded really good at the time, didn't they? That's what this bill is about—more of the same. You're not taking red tape away from the people who matter most.

I want to say something here that I haven't had a chance to say, and it's not partisan in any way, but I want to say it

on behalf of the people I represent. The citizens of Ottawa, especially the ones downtown, had an awful three weeks. They didn't feel safe in their own neighbourhoods. I had never felt so let down by a leader and a government as I had over the last three weeks. The approach of the government was to say, "We want it to be somebody else's problem." And it was somebody else's problem. Thousands and thousands of people in downtown Ottawa had their lives turned upside down, were terrorized, and the Premier stood by and watched for two weeks. I have never felt so let down, so abandoned, so angry as I did over the last two weeks. I don't get angry often, and I'm not angry right now, but to say that I'm disappointed and discouraged doesn't go far enough.

I'm happy to take people's questions.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for his presentation.

Under the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals, the annual costs for businesses to comply with regulations soared to \$33,000 per business, the highest in Canada. It's no wonder that businesses were packing up and leaving before this government stepped in.

Would the member opposite prefer to keep the Del Duca-Wynne Liberal legacy going, or will he vote in support of this legislation, to make it easier for businesses to operate in the province of Ontario?

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the member for the question.

Yes, I want to keep a legacy going, of great schools, of world-class health care, of investing in the things that people need. That's why we collect the monies we do. That's why we collect taxes. That's why you and I pay taxes, so that we can bring the things to all of us that all of us need. That's public education, publicly funded health care. Yes, I'm proud of that legacy. There's a lot more work to be done in there, but I thank you for the question.

1000

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The MPP talked a bit about the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2019. That's a mouthful, let me tell you. The act amends it to provide that the deadline for the release of the budget for 2022-23 will be April 30, 2022. How is this going to help the community care sector, and everybody who is waiting to see how much money they are going to get to provide the care that we need, to provide the education that we need? Who is going to be helped by moving this date to April 30, 2022?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member for the question. If you're dependent on the government for your budget—you're a school board or you're a hospital or you're a community health centre—you need to know what your budget is, just like we all do every month to know how much money we have to spend on groceries or tuition or rent. It doesn't convenience any of those people; it makes their job harder, in a pandemic.

And the government—look, April 30, a few days away from a writ. If you're not telegraphing what you're doing, I don't know what. The only person that I can see that it advantages is the government's plan for the next election, and that's not a good reason. It's not a good enough reason. As I said earlier, what the government should be doing is removing the red tape from the \$10-a-day child care. They should be doing that right now. People have waited too long.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Look, I listened to my colleague, and I thank him. I always enjoy debating him here in the chamber. I get it; it's tough. It's tough being in opposition, but this particular member had an opportunity when they were in government, and some of the things that he mentioned here, he needs to address.

He talked about schools. This was a member who was a part of a government which closed 600 schools—600 schools across the province. It was their party that left this province in a position where manufacturing and jobs were fleeing this province. We turned that around, Madam Speaker. When you look at the electricity prices alone, when we were campaigning—he heard it as well—we changed all that. He referenced gas prices. We talked about this. When the carbon tax came in, we opposed it. We said it was going to make life more unaffordable for Ontarians.

My question to my honourable colleague is, as we listen more and more—and he's also referenced support for small business as well; I congratulate the Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for bringing this single window for businesses—and that is, has he talked to his businesses to ask them how this will support the local businesses in Ottawa—

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

Response, the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member for his question. I did catch on something you said. You talked about hydro rates, but you also talked about gas prices, and you also talked about a 20% income tax cut, and you also talked about the price of beer—buck-a-beer. You talked about it. That was great. Did it happen? No. You could do all the talking that you want.

When this government took over, for five years Ontario led the G7 in jobs and growth. For five years, we were in the top three for foreign direct investment here in North America. You never talk about how many schools we built: 800 schools. You never talk about that. I'm proud of the work that was done. Was there more work to be done? Yes. There will more work to be done for you. There's a heck of a lot more work to be done on the other side of the aisle, and you know that.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to put my question to the member in regard to schedule 2, the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act. It says, under schedule 2,

provide preferential treatment for Ontario businesses when conducting procurement processes for government goods and services.

I want to know if he'd be surprised if I informed him that not one, but two mask-developing organizations, businesses, have happened in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, one in Wiikwemkoong First Nation, where the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions—I'm glad he's here—was actually there with me for the opening of this plant, recently creating 30 jobs. Recently, in Sagamok First Nation, another plant has been opened. Would you be surprised if I told you that not one mask from this government has been procured in regard to these two production plants?

Mr. John Fraser: No, I wouldn't be, because I'm sure that somebody has got those deals locked up. I don't know how, but they've got them locked up. We should be trying to promote our local manufacturers. Obviously, it's not happening here. That's what I hear from—was it the mask-making company in Waterloo? Same thing: They're doing the right thing; they get stuck with an overload of masks.

Look, this stuff is not easy. It's been hard. People invent medical devices in this country all the time in this province, and they can't sell them to Ontario hospitals. That has been a long-standing problem. I'm not going to say it's all your problem, but it's a problem that needs to get solved, and it's not getting solved by saying, "We're going to do it." It's not going to be solved by talking about it. Talking just ain't going to cut it.

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

Hon. Ross Romano: My question is obviously to the member opposite. I'm trying to get my timer going here.

When you reference the PPE issue—I'm just curious now. If you go back to the start of the pandemic, the Premier had to walk into a warehouse and see that we had a PPE stockpile of masks rotting, quite literally. We pledged, our Premier pledged, to never again be in this situation. Never again would Ontario be beholden to any other jurisdiction.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, just before Christmas, we procured 79 million masks from the 3M factory in Brockville. We're buying all of our PPE now—all of our masks are coming from Ontario-made businesses.

My question for the member opposite is, what do you have against local manufacturing here in Ontario?

Mr. John Fraser: I don't have anything against it, and that was the point. The point was, you're not actually looking at this member's community, where they're manufacturing masks. You're not looking at Waterloo. And as far as masks go and not rotating them and not fulfilling that stock, that's the problem with two governments. We take responsibility for that, but you guys have to too. You were there too. There's no sense in looking back on that, but we have to do something to support our local businesses when they're trying to help us. They're trying to help our economy. They're trying to help our health care system. It's hard, because sometimes they're small, and sometimes

maybe they can't sell them, but you've got to figure out a way. You can't just talk about it.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I've been in the chamber this morning for a little over an hour. When I first thought about what I was going to say on this speech, talking about this bill, I had some great thoughts, and I was going to approach it a certain way. I've sat here and I've listened to the opposition and to the independent member stand up and talk. You would think that somebody shot their dog, that this was absolutely the worst thing that has ever happened, that, my goodness, there's nothing good at all about this.

This is another one of our red tape reduction bills; we've had a number of them since we've come in. Whenever you talk to anybody about red tape, they all say the same thing. Everybody says the same thing: "We've got to reduce red tape. Cut it down. Get rid of it." Different people have different opinions on what red tape is. Different people have different opinions on how you should be doing things. Here's my take on it: I believe that as government our job is to regulate to the point of integrity but not to the point of interference. We shouldn't be getting in people's way. We shouldn't be making things difficult. We should be finding ways to make it easier for people. We should be doing things that make life better for the people in the province of Ontario. That's why we're elected. We're brought here to make good decisions, to take a look at what the situation is, to adjust, to move forward and to do things in a way that makes it easier and better for the people of Ontario.

1010

I do have a little bit of a joke that has been said to me repeatedly since I got elected. I was not a politician prior to 2018. I didn't have a whole lot of the political engine behind me in how things work and so on. But this is something that has been said to me a number of times, and I think a lot of times it's true—Ronald Reagan touched on it; I'll touch on his comment in a minute—"To err is human, but if you really want to foul up you bring the government in."

Ronald Reagan once said that the most dangerous thing you can hear is, "I'm here from the government and I'm here to help." Really, when you look at some of the things that have gone on, government has gotten in the way. And government continues to get in the way. We're not moving at the speed of business. We can't. Our entire process—everything that we do—is to drag things out to make sure that you're getting it right and that you're doing it in a way that is most appropriate.

Another thing I've heard is that we spend a lot of money to show that we're not spending too much money. When you look at some of these things, a lot of these things really come to fruition. It's really true.

Where I'm going with that is the renewal of licences. I don't think that there is anyone who is going to say to you, "We should not be having a renewal process for licences. We should not be checking to make sure that you've got

insurance on your car. We should not be checking to make sure that your vehicle is still registered to you. We shouldn't know any of that information." I don't think that there is a single person in Ontario who is going to tell you that.

But what I will tell you is, everyone who has talked to me about it has said, "Why do I have to pay you to check to make sure that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing? Why can't you just trust me and give me a process that I can do this, and not reach into my pocket?"

And I take a step back and I think: Yes, why? Why am I saying to you, "You have to come to me and tell me that you've got your insurance and you've got to come to me and tell me that, yes, you're still driving the car and yes, it's still going to be on the road and all of that—and by the way, you need to give me 120 bucks to tell me that you're going to do that, to tell me that you've done what you're supposed to do"?

When you step back and think about that, I'm putting, as government, the onus on you to make sure that you're doing the right thing. I'm coming to you as government to say, "These are the parameters that you have to follow." We all agree that government is there to regulate to the point of integrity. And that is the point of integrity. We shouldn't be doing things to get to the point of interference.

Then I say to you, "And by the way, give me 120 bucks so that you have the privilege of telling me that you still have insurance, that you have the privilege of telling me that the car is still on the road and you're going to be able to drive it." What we've done is we've said, "Why?"

The member opposite this morning stood up and said, "This is the worst possible thing that we could ever do." My goodness. We're telling people that they shouldn't be giving money to the government. How dare we do something like that? How dare we tell the people of Ontario the money that they earned is their money and they should keep it? How dare we do that? It's a horrible thing that we're doing as a government. Imagine that.

To the member from Sudbury: You don't have to pay us 60 bucks anymore because you live in northern Ontario. I can't believe he's saying to me, "That is the worst possible thing that has ever happened. Please don't do that. That is the worst possible thing that you could ever do." That I just can't imagine.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): While I'm sorry to interrupt the member there, it is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Four years ago this Conservative government promised to make life more affordable. Promise made, promise broken.

Many people in Windsor can't buy a home. A single-family home has increased almost 32% in just one year. Because of blind bidding, my constituents have to bid hundreds of thousands of dollars over asking, and young families aren't able to buy a home of their own.

This government cut rent control, allowing rental costs to soar. The average one-bedroom unit has jumped from \$700 to \$1,200 a month—a 71% increase. The cost of child care, groceries and fuel have all gone up under this government's watch. Hydro, which they promised to cut by 12%, has increased by 5%, and they refuse to sign the \$10-a-day child care deal.

Ontario Works and ODSP recipients have been forced to live in legislated poverty, struggling to make ends meet, relying on food banks because they can't afford food and rent. Workers from our casino, bingo halls, auto assembly and parts plants haven't had steady employment in almost two years. They're struggling while this government supports their corporate buddies at Amazon and Walmart who are making billions of dollars in profits.

Nurses and other workers have their wages suppressed because of Bill 124. Inflation is 6%, yet the Conservatives believe health care workers are only worth a 1% pay increase. That's equivalent to a 5% pay cut.

In 99 days, people can choose an NDP government that will take profit out of long-term care, repeal Bill 124, ensure everyone has a home they can afford, reduce child care and grocery costs, increase social assistance rates and support workers and small businesses.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Michael Parsa: Good morning, everyone. It's great to be here in the Legislature with all of you.

Speaker, I know a lot of great initiatives and events have taken place since I last rose here in this chamber. Today, I'd like to highlight one important celebration that is taking place through the month of February. For this entire month, we are celebrating and learning about the contributions that Black Ontarians have, and continue to have, in our province and in our local communities.

This year, I was honoured to participate in the first flag-raising ceremony held in the town of Aurora, and attended an online, virtual event to kick off this month's festivities. I'd like to give special thanks to my good friend Phiona Durrant, the president of the Aurora Black Community Association; Milton Hart and Michael Corniffe from the Aurora Black Caucus; and Mark Lewis from the Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Task Force for their incredible work and leadership that they continue to provide in our community, which was on full display at these events.

At the virtual Black History Month event that was hosted by the Aurora Black Community Association, it was an absolute pleasure to hear from the event's main guest speaker, the Honourable Jean Augustine. She explained to us her experiences as a member of Parliament in Ottawa and the journey in creating and passing the legislation which officially recognized February as Black

History Month. Along with all the participants, we were captivated and inspired by her relentless pursuit in achieving this goal.

As I mentioned at the event, I believe learning and celebrating Black history in our province and in our country should go beyond just the month of February. Now, it's important to recognize that we have made significant progress over the years, but there's still so much we can do, and there's always room for improvement.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: There is a crisis in health care in the north. One person in eight across the north does not have access to primary health care. In northwestern Ontario, we have a shortage of hundreds of physicians. Facts like these represent the failure of this government to make sure northern Ontario gets the health care it deserves.

Equitable access to health care is a right under the Canada Health Act. We need to encourage more physicians and health care professionals to work in northern communities. We must retain those we have and work to help with their burnout. The provincial government needs to take action to build a better and more resilient health care system for the north.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine—NOSM—has done an excellent job training the next generation of physicians who will work in communities across the north. But this government needs to immediately expand the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's capacity to meet the needs of northern Ontario. There are other solutions that need to happen immediately. It must work with stakeholders and communities to address shortages of physicians, nurse practitioners and the health care professionals that form our teams. The people of northern Ontario deserve to have equitable access to health care.

1020

FLOODING IN BRAMPTON

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to begin by sending my thoughts and prayers to the families impacted by catastrophic flooding in Brampton. The Churchville area has dealt with an incredible amount of flooding and many residents were forced to evacuate their homes. It has been estimated that around 100 homes have been impacted by the floods, and the water in some areas has risen up to six feet deep. I want to thank all first responders for all of the hard and necessary work they're doing to help residents get to safety.

This is devastating news, and I pray for the safety and well-being of many Bramptonians impacted by the flooding. If you have friends or family living in the area, I recommend checking up on loved ones.

Once again, this natural disaster has caused pain and suffering for many Bramptonians in the Churchville area, yet it is truly heartwarming to see the community come together to help one another.

FIRE IN SANDY LAKE FIRST NATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: This morning, I'm going to share the words and the notes of Cassandra Fiddler. She was the mom of Grant Meekis, nine, Remi Meekis, seven, and Wilfred Fiddler, four, who passed away in a tragic house fire on the night of January 13, 2022, in Sandy Lake First Nation. This is her note:

"All my kids were asleep and I went to check on them and had turned on the heaters in their rooms. I went to put two small logs in the wood stove and I went back to my room and after not even 15 minutes, I smelled smoke and saw flashes. I went to look and" saw "the fire on the ceiling. Right away I got my boys up, to take their blankets and go to the door. I ran to Remi and Wilfred's room, got them up, and went towards the door. The boys couldn't open it because it was already too smoky.

"I thought I had all my kids by the door so it opened and I ran back into my room to get my baby. I went outside and saw only Malaky and Brayden. I was going to go to back inside but when I turned, the fire was" already "getting bigger.

"Two people came to help but the fire was too big. I told them my babies were inside and the girl who came to help told me, 'They're knocking on the windows.'

"They broke it but" they "couldn't see them inside and then we were taken to the nursing station because I had inhaled a lot of smoke and was burned.

"I cried so much for my babies. It made breathing hard and I was on oxygen until I was stable."

That's the end of her note. Cassandra, meegwetch for your words. We will always remember Grant, Remi and Wilfred.

PROTEST IN OTTAWA

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We're all aware of what happened in Ottawa over the past three weeks. Blocking all lanes on bridges, inhibiting the flow of goods between Canada and the US and preventing people from getting to work, was problematic.

But why were the truckers there in the first place? Fighting for the reinstatement of vaccine exemptions? Initially, yes, but it became much more than that: defending individual rights and freedoms. To eliminate this peaceful protest, all that was needed was for the Prime Minister and the Premier to meet with the organizers. Sadly, that didn't happen.

Civilian journalism came to light. Paul Harvey would say, "And now, the rest of the story."

Were the people of Ottawa disadvantaged? Perhaps, but crime was down and people weren't getting sick and being admitted to hospital. Actions of the many cannot be held responsible for the actions of the very few. Many question if those causing trouble were in fact associated with the convoy.

Truckers took care of things. They had rules of conduct, cleaned up garbage, stood guard around monuments, supported local businesses, were respectable and fed the

hungry. Truckers and non-truckers from my riding provided updates. Ottawa citizens would come up to truckers, offer food and hugs. Negative reports were from the very few.

In summary, I was offended by the characterization of the truckers by Trudeau and others. The use of such inflammatory language was unjustified, in my opinion.

Protests in Ottawa happen all the time. Calling this peaceful protest a siege, illegal or calling truckers and supporters terrorists and occupiers is so wrong. Now the Emergencies Act has been revoked. Why now did the PM change his mind? Paul Harvey would say, "It's pure politics."

PETERBOROUGH POLICE SERVICE FACILITY DOG

Mr. Dave Smith: Usually when I rise in the House for a 90-second statement, I'm talking about something that's going on in my riding or we're talking about an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the community.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about an individual who is quite possibly the best listener any of us will ever meet. She has won a number of awards over the last three years for her ability to support people who have faced trauma. Every day, she puts her specialized training to work to help others. But Speaker, she also has a dark side and knows exactly where the treats are held in the desks of those she can convince to give one of those treats to her when she tilts her head and flashes those puppy dog eyes. I'm talking about the Peterborough Police Service's victim support dog Pixie.

Pixie is a black lab who has the most calm demeanour of any dog you will ever meet. She's never in a hurry to get anywhere and frequently requires a good scratching behind her ears. Pixie has proven to be a great support for many individuals in their time of trauma, and she has also been a fantastic addition to help an officer when they've had a particularly difficult day on the job. Sometimes all you need is that unconditional, non-judgmental friend who wants nothing more than to sit with you and just listen. That's exactly what Pixie does.

Pixie is a credit to the service of Peterborough, and I want to thank Alice Czitrom for all of her work in victim services with Pixie.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Early on, I learned as a city councillor that you must be prepared to work with everyone—even today, in these chambers—to get things done. Often, I've worked with all political stripes to help the residents in St. Catharines. However, it is clear: Sometimes the vision of Ontario that this current government has is too far from my own. The disability programs in Ontario are an example of that.

One of the first acts by this Premier was to ensure disability programs received no more increases. Since 2018,

this program has not seen an increase, even though Ontario's annual inflation is over 5%. This is shameful. Last year, the average single-bedroom apartment in St. Catharines almost hit \$1,500 a month. Our Ontario Disability Support Program's shelter benefit covers about one third of that.

I've requested many times that, at the very least, this province review this program—nothing. Advocates have requested livable incomes for individuals on disability—nothing. The Auditor General has called it one of the worst job programs ever created—no change.

Premier Ford, you inherited the ODSP program from the past Liberal government. Under this government's watch, it has gotten worse. We need to see increases in supports for disability programs in the upcoming budget, and if we don't, we need a new Premier who will.

SAUBLE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize an act of incredible generosity in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Recently, Sauble Area Medical Clinic Inc. donated a total of \$1 million to the foundations of Grey Bruce Health Services to purchase equipment for hospitals in Wiarton, Owen Sound and Southampton. Close to 20 years ago, community-minded citizens in Sauble Beach began working on the concept of establishing a new medical clinic in the town. After a lot of hard work and a lot of fundraising, the clinic on Main Street became a reality, and the Sauble Family Health Team was born. Today, there are 2,800 patients rostered using this clinic. There are two doctors, two nurse practitioners, three nurses and a social worker who are all working at the facility.

The clinic is an amazing success story for the community, and it would not have happened without the hard work of many people, including the late Marj Lipka—a dynamo, Mr. Speaker; and let me tell you, never underestimate the power of butter tarts and perogies, because she got a lot of stuff done with that—Carl Noble; Dr. John Van Dorp; Gena Van Dorp; Tracy Jones; Joan Williamson; Dr. Shazia Ambreen; nurse practitioners Kevin Linnen and Kathy Babin-Niven; Cathy Goetz-Perry from VON; Sheila de Winter; Drs. Leeson, McNay and Barker; Cecil Groves; and everybody that continues to make the clinic such an important community facility. Currently, Dr. Sue Gundrum, Dr. Larry Schmidt, and nurse practitioners Emma Lustig and Hailey Shapiro continue to provide service.

1030

Speaker, the owners of the building that is home to the clinic actually sold it to be able to give back. There are plans to spend \$400,000 for the Wiarton Hospital to purchase an X-ray machine, \$350,000 for the Owen Sound Hospital to purchase a new C-arm for the operating room and an ultrasound machine, and \$250,000 will go to the Southampton hospital foundation's CT scanner campaign.

Speaker, this is fabulous community work that's providing community benefits forever and a day. Thank you so much to those individuals who have been involved.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that page Kristian Tanuwidjaja, from the riding of Etobicoke Centre, is one of today's page captains. We have with us today at Queen's Park his mother, Shinta Tanuwidjaja, and his stepfather, Peter Tricarico.

We're also joined today by the parents of our other page captain, Lucia Wei, from the riding of Richmond Hill: her mother, Jing Yu, and her father, Xiaoning Wei.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here.

INVASION OF UKRAINE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm informed that 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 response to the Russian Federation's invasion of the sovereign country of Ukraine, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: There are certain dates that will be forever printed in our history books, dates that will be forever etched into our memories: June 28, 1914, the beginning of World War I; September 1, 1939, the beginning of World War II. We must pray that February 24, 2022, isn't next. Last night, we witnessed a violent attack on a sovereign nation by a despot, a thug. We witnessed Vladimir Putin's war of aggression begin in Ukraine.

The bonds between Ukraine and Canada run deep, for without the Ukrainian people, their resilience, their bravery, their strength, their willingness to fight for their family and friends, the Canada we know and love today would not be the same. The food that feeds our families is farmed by grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Ukrainian immigrants who left aggression and poverty to settle the Canadian west.

Our greatest athletes, like Gretzky; our greatest entertainers, like Trebek; our greatest voices, like Bachman; and our greatest scholars and scientists, like Dr. Bondar: Ukrainian Canadians. We've cheered them on. We've laughed and sung along together. We've touched the heavens. They left a permanent mark on Canadian history. They left a permanent mark on our society. For again, without Ukraine, the Canada we know and love today would not be the same, and because of that, we will forever be tied together as two nations an ocean apart, but forever one. Canada shall never waver in standing against tyranny. Canada shall never waver in our support of Ukraine.

As Putin's aggression lights up the skies of Kiev, they will see the strength of the Ukrainian people emerge from the darkness. We must ensure the Ukrainian flag flies high above the skyline. The blue and yellow must be the last colours the invaders see.

Slava Ukraini. Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes.

Thank you and God bless the people of Ukraine.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This morning we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, all Ukrainians who call Ontario and Canada home and Ukrainians worldwide—folks who fear for their loved ones overseas and are deeply worried about the lives, safety and sovereignty of the Ukrainian people during this dark time.

I join global leaders and peace-loving people around the world in condemning this unprovoked attack by the Russian federation and the violent invasion Putin is using to drag people into the horrors of war. We all call for diplomacy and the immediate de-escalation of military actions.

Speaker, as Ontarians, we know the vital role Ukrainian Canadians have played in building this province and our country—the Premier just spoke of exactly that. Cities and towns across Ontario are steeped in Ukrainian history and culture. And as Canadians, we are so fortunate to share a strong bond with Ukraine.

The official opposition NDP has always been proud to stand side by side with the Ukrainian community. From working closely together to make September 7 Ukrainian Heritage Day to recognizing Holodomor Memorial Day every November, to celebrating Ukraine's 30th independence day this past fall, we will always stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine's efforts to strengthen their democracy and institutions. And we will always reject the path of aggression, the path of stoking the flames of division and imperialism for political gain, and the path of threatening world peace by attacking the sovereignty of others and their democratic right to choose their government.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, to its economic and financial stability and to the well-being of its people.

In closing, Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister and the federal government to ensure that we welcome Ukrainian refugees, commit to family reunification and provide humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine to our best and highest ability.

Remarks in Ukrainian.

We stand with the people of Ukraine.

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

Mr. John Fraser: We stand with the people of Ukraine and our Ukrainian friends and neighbours in condemning the illegal actions being taken by Vladimir Putin in Ukraine this morning.

There is evil in the world and it's kind of a shock to all of us this morning and last night. Think about the children in Ukraine who are going to be children of war. Think about how we explain it to our children who are afraid. How do we give them confidence? What is it we need to do? What we need to do is stand united, not just on this, but on everything. We have to put aside our differences.

That's what our children need. That's what the children of Ukraine need. If we're going to stand up for them, we have to stand up for them together.

1040

We've seen recently in Ontario, in Ottawa, something similar to what we're seeing in Ukraine—not nearly as bad, not nearly as dangerous. But we have seen how hate and anger and division can tear a society apart. Make no mistake, what's happening right now in the Ukraine is hate and anger and division.

Ukrainian Canadians are such a big part of our history—arts, science, sports. They're our neighbours. They're our friends. Many of us have Ukrainian Canadian communities inside our ridings. We go to the festivals. It's about family and community.

It's really hard, sometimes, to figure out what you can do. How do you change the things that you can't change? How do we stop the thing that's happening right now? What do we do? The only thing for us to do is to be united, to bring ourselves together, to put aside our differences, because that's what the people of Ukraine need. That's what our children need right now. It's a scary time in the world, and I know for them that it's scary. It's scary for all of us.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to unequivocally condemn the military invasion and bombing of Ukraine by Russia. War is never the answer. Violence is never the answer. Launching bombs at innocent civilians is never the answer.

We, as Ontarians, stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and Ukrainian Canadians to denounce the senseless act of aggression by Russia. We, as Ontarians, have a duty to stand in solidarity with Ukraine and our fellow Ukrainian Canadians.

Speaker, last night, I watched in horror as I saw our neighbours to the south having a debate about which side they were on. So I want to say to the Premier, thank you; I want to say to the official Leader of the Opposition, thank you; I want to say thank you to the House leader of the Liberals—that in this House, in this province, we stand united for democracy. Democracy must always trump authoritarianism.

We may have our differences in this House, and we've had a lot of back-and-forth, but the one thing we stand united on as Ontarians is our respect for democracy, our respect for international order and our respect for peace.

So I want to thank every member of this House today for standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and for denouncing this senseless act of Russian aggression.

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

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition has a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 2,262

Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since this House last honoured the victims of the pandemic on December 9, 2021.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence for the 2,262 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since this House last honoured the victims of the pandemic on December 9, 2021. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Members, please take your seats.

QUESTION PERIOD

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I ask my first question to the Premier, I just want to acknowledge that it's RNAO's lobby day today at Queen's Park. I am sure we're all looking forward to hearing the advice of the RNAO in terms of how we fix our health care system and our nurse shortage.

But my first question is on a different topic, Speaker, and it's to the Premier. We all know that we've heard of the devastating layoffs that are happening in Thunder Bay this week, so it's now more important than ever to commit to investing in manufacturing jobs and trades in our province. Ontario has had a long-standing 25% Canadian content policy for transit vehicles, which has created thousands of good jobs and protected thousands of good jobs in our province over the years. So my question to the Premier is: Will he commit to maintaining Ontario's 25% Canadian content policy for transit vehicles and will he rigorously enforce that commitment?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, our government has always championed made-in-Ontario solutions. No government has ordered more Canadian-made vehicles ever than our government.

We're going to play a little game: fiction and fact. Now I'm going to tell you the facts. Over 75% of the Ontario Line will be Canadian content, with almost 90% occurring right here in Ontario, Mr. This project alone will generate more than \$11 billion in local benefits. During the construction, it will support over 4,700 jobs per year, with more employment afterwards for the operations and maintenance of the line.

And do you know what's a shame, Mr. Speaker, with all the investments we've put into Thunder Bay and Alstom? The Leader of the Opposition voted it down, the leader of the Liberals voted it down and the leader of the Green Party voted it down. They had no interest—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Unfortunately, the Premier's actions don't match his words. The fact is that there used

to be a 25% requirement for Canadian content in transit vehicles here in this province, but I'm going to read from a recent RFP for one of the largest transit projects in the history of this province that the Premier was just talking about. I quote from the Ontario Line Subway Rolling Stock, Systems, Operations and Maintenance Project RFP: "'Canadian content' means a minimum of 10% of the final value of a car" supplied by Project Co under the project agreement, which must be contracted for by Project Co Canada, as calculated in accordance with this schedule 38. I ask the page to send this over to the Premier.

1050

The question is, why has the Premier put at risk so many good-paying jobs and dropped Ontario's long-standing 25% commitment to Canadian content in transit vehicles?

Hon. Doug Ford: For 15 years, northern Ontario was ignored and was put at risk through the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP government. They were totally ignored, Mr. Speaker.

The facts are, if it wasn't for this government, the Alstom plant wouldn't even exist as of today. We invested over \$171 million for 94 refurbished GO rail coaches. In May, we made a \$180-million investment for new streetcars for the TTC. Those investments are supporting over 300 good manufacturing jobs at the facility alone, as I said earlier.

The shame is, the Leader of the Opposition voted against this, voted against the people in Thunder Bay, voted against the people at Alstom, the hard-working people, has never showed up to their plant in a few years, while we're there. We're listening to the people, we're always going to have their backs, and we're going to continue to invest in the people of Thunder Bay and Alstom.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Premier cannot just ignore the facts, Speaker. In fact, I'll ask a page to send another copy. Maybe he can read what's highlighted in yellow on this document.

It's very, very clear, Speaker. This RFP is for the Ontario Line, and it clearly states, I will say again: "'Canadian content' means a minimum of 10% of the final value of a car" supplied etc. Speaker, this Premier has abandoned the 25% content requirement. Why on earth would this Premier do that without telling anyone, without consulting anyone? Why would he put thousands of good-paying Ontario jobs on the line and get rid of a long-standing 25% content policy for transit vehicles in our province? Shame on him.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

To reply, the Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA).

Hon. Stan Cho: I agree, there is some clarity necessary here, so I will clarify for the leader of the official opposition exactly what is already outlined in a letter from Minister Mulroney on this matter just last week. To be

clear, there have been no changes to the existing Canadian content policy. And in case the leader did not receive that letter, I'd like to send, through a page, a letter from the minister outlining exactly those details.

What we are talking about here is \$11 billion from the construction of the Ontario Line that will go right back into the economy and support those great jobs in Thunder Bay. At the end of the day, 75% of the project will be manufactured in Canada, 90% of that in Ontario. Speaker, it's called the Ontario Line for a reason. We are investing in transit and transportation across this entire province, and that includes the great people of Thunder Bay.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. But I have to say, with all due respect, it means squat what's in the Minister of Transportation's letters. What matters is what is in the RFP. That's what matters, and this government has abandoned the 25% content requirement. Can you send this over to the Premier, please? I don't care about the minister's letter. The letter has to have legs by being included in the contract, and it is not. He secretly changed the contract, Speaker, after he promised the Unifor workers very recently the exact opposite.

In fact, last August this Premier said in Thunder Bay, "We will make sure anything bought in Ontario should be produced in Ontario." So what manufacturing organization, what municipality, what union asked the Premier to put thousands of good-paying jobs at risk and risk millions of dollars in investments by changing the content requirement for transit vehicles, perversely reversing this policy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

The Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Stan Cho: I guess it's worth repeating to the Leader of the Opposition that there have been no changes to the Canadian content requirement for manufacturing here in the province, Speaker. I will repeat: 75% of the Ontario Line will be Canadian content, with almost 90% occurring right here in Ontario. This is in addition to the fact that there is \$180 million we committed to in May to support the purchase of 60 new TTC vehicles; in addition, \$171 million to refurbish 94 GO Transit rail coaches; 60 new electric streetcars.

The layoffs in Alstom—we know those are temporary, because our government, our Premier, has reached out to the leadership team there, who have assured us that their intention is to bring back their workers in June of this year. They have to, Speaker, because this is unprecedented growth on the way for this province and for Thunder Bay.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What is unprecedented is that for almost 15 years we've had a Canadian content policy that required 25%. It's unprecedented that this Ford government would stand up and pretend that they didn't reduce that content to 10% in the RFP for the Ontario Line.

I will send this over to the associate minister, if he doesn't know the facts of what's in their own RFP.

This Premier told Unifor workers in Thunder Bay, "Please don't be looking for other jobs because we will make sure we have contracts to keep you going." But he secretly changed the long-standing policy that created great jobs for years. There won't be contracts without a 25% requirement. It's not just Thunder Bay, Speaker; it's the entire supply chain, which will impact the entire province.

Will this Premier, right now, then, today, if he is committed to that 25% policy, stand up and commit that not only will we continue to have a 25% content policy, but he will make sure that that is included in all RFPs going forward and he will—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

To reply, again the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, we will clarify for a third time that there have been no changes to the existing Canadian content policy—no changes. Our government will continue to say yes to deals that make sense for taxpayers and transit riders, especially when it creates good-paying private sector jobs. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Ontario Line, a massive undertaking that will support over 4,700 jobs per year during the years of construction, while generating more than \$11 billion in local economic growth.

Speaker, I know the opposition is used to propping up the Liberals when they were in power: 300,000 manufacturing jobs left from 2004 to 2014. We will not take lectures from the members opposite on this issue. It is our government that is building back the manufacturing sector and transforming Ontario's transit network, after the Liberals doing years of nothing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's no doubt that that policy had been in place for 15 years and that it created great jobs. It was supported by manufacturers. It was supported by workers and unions. It was supported by municipalities. The Premier, I think, gave some false hope to the Unifor workers up in Thunder Bay, because he has now betrayed them and abandoned that policy. It is in black and white. I've run out of copies. I guess the government side doesn't know how to read or doesn't pay attention to the policies that they embed in their RFPs.

The letters from ministers mean nothing, and the drivel coming from the associate minister means nothing. What means something is embedding the policy in the RFPs, and this Premier decided not to do that. So why would he secretly ditch that policy? He has to stop making excuses, Speaker. He has to stand up for workers—some claim that he makes all the time, which is absolutely not the case and we see it right now.

Buck up, do the right thing, pull that RFP and fix it to make sure there's 25% embedded in that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Members will please take their seats.

To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I find it ironic and hypocritical by the Leader of the Opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The Premier will take his seat.

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. The House will come to order.

The Premier must withdraw his unparliamentary comment—

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. He may continue the response if he chooses to do so.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the Leader of the Opposition has the gall to say what she's saying when they have voted against it. They voted against the funding for Alstom. They voted against the people of Thunder Bay. For 15 years, northern Ontario was ignored by the Del Duca-Wynne-Horwath governments. They were propped up. They didn't worry about the people in the north. They were worried about their downtown Toronto elites. That's what they were worried about. That's what their concern is about.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, this project alone will generate over \$11 billion. There's no government in the history of this province that has invested more into transit than what we have.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Premier. The workers at the Alstom plant in Thunder Bay deserve better from this government. I want to talk specifically about the workers because they do great work. They produce excellent vehicles. We are proud that Thunder Bay produces transit vehicles that are used by people all over Ontario—actually, all over North America. Every time I come to Queen's Park, I walk past many Thunder Bay vehicles, and it makes me proud of my city and of those workers.

When this government began their time in office, we had 1,200 staff at the then-Bombardier plant. Soon there will be only 75 unionized employees. It could have been avoided. We knew the problems. We were talking about it in this House in 2018.

Premier, why didn't this government take action sooner to stop the layoffs at the Alstom plant?

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

Hon. Stan Cho: I, too, like the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, have immense pride when I see our fine TTC fleet vehicles being manufactured right here in Ontario, in the Thunder Bay area, and our government is

also proud of that. That's why we're investing in those good, homegrown jobs in Ontario.

When it comes to the layoffs in Thunder Bay, I want to be clear: These layoffs are temporary. Alstom's leadership team has spoken with our government and said exactly that—that their intention is to bring these workers back in June of this year. Speaker, they have to, because there is a lot of construction happening when it comes to transit in our province. There are contracts that have been signed with our government in May of last year—\$180 million for 60 new streetcars. This investment is part of a contract with the Thunder Bay plant to supply streetcars, with vehicle delivery starting as early as 2023—and another \$171 million for 94 GO Transit rail coaches at the Alstom facility in Thunder Bay.

Speaker, there is a lot of work on the way to Thunder Bay and Alstom, and we are confident that they will be up and running again in June, very soon.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Premier. Last year, this government announced an order for 60 streetcars and refurbishing 94 bi-level cars, but the contracts were signed so late, and now the work won't be able to begin till this fall. If this government had planned ahead, we wouldn't be facing layoffs.

This government needs to realize that you can't turn on and off manufacturing capacity with a light switch. Uncertainty means we might lose workers to other regions and other industries, because this government chose to take its time. We need to make an in-Ontario transit vehicle procurement policy.

Premier, when will you commit to a made-in-Ontario policy for transit vehicles?

Hon. Stan Cho: Well, to answer that question very directly, the Premier committed to creating those jobs a long time ago. That's why, at the Alstom plant in Thunder Bay, 60 new streetcars are on the way, 94 GO Transit refurbishments are on the way, 60 new electric streetcars are on the way. And here's the greatest part of all of this: This means jobs in Thunder Bay.

Now, of course, the plant has to be retooled to create all that capacity. That's why it is temporarily shut down. But the fact of the matter is, those vehicles are on the way. And that's despite the best efforts of the opposite members as well as the Liberals, who voted against every single one of them. They voted against the 60 new streetcars, against the 94 refurbishments, against the 60 new electric streetcars.

Despite the best efforts of the opposition, we are going to support jobs in this province and in Thunder Bay.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. For far too long, Ontario's small, rural and northern communities have struggled to keep their public infrastructure up to date, due to chronic underfunding and neglect from previous governments. This neglect has led

to the infrastructure backlogs in communities across our great province.

For 15 years, the Liberal government failed to address infrastructure needs, continued to cut investments in crucial infrastructure and ignored calls for further funding. The people of Ontario, no matter where they are in this province, deserve to reap the benefits of new, modernized and updated public infrastructure that will help the town they call home be safer and more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Infrastructure, what is the government doing to provide Ontario's municipalities with the funding they need to upgrade and renew their critical infrastructure?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I want to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for this great question. I also want to thank him for his years of service to the people of Ontario.

Our government is stepping up and investing in infrastructure and saying yes to building Ontario and providing municipalities with the funding they need to provide residents with the safe and reliable public infrastructure they need and deserve.

Earlier this month, our government released the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Build Ontario. In it we reaffirmed our commitment to supporting small, rural and northern communities by increasing the amount of annual funding they are getting through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, also known as OCIF. Over the next five years, we are investing an additional \$1 billion in OCIF to help 424 communities to repair and modernize roads, bridges, drinking water, stormwater and waste water projects. That works out to an additional \$200 million every year until 2026.

And we are not stopping there. To continue supporting the growth of our province and our communities, we have also gone so—

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant—who is looking very GQ today—for his response and dedication to supporting critical infrastructure projects in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and across the province. I am proud to be part of a government that is taking appropriate measures to ensure our small, rural and northern communities are getting the attention and the funding they deserve.

Municipalities in my riding are repeatedly expressing their concerns over infrastructure backlogs, and stress the need to address critical projects such as replacing water mains, upgrading water treatment plants, resurfacing roads and so much more. Ontario's municipalities continue to face financial restraints when preparing their budgets and are concerned they will be forced to cut back on their infrastructure capital projects and reduce services to stay within their budgets. These municipalities are calling for further financial support to work through their project

backlogs so they can provide their residents with infrastructure that is safe, reliable and more resilient.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot as a government and will continue to do so, but I ask the parliamentary assistant, through you: What does this investment mean for the people of Ontario?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thanks again to the member for another great question. Unlike the repeated noes and flip-flopping on policies we have seen from previous governments, our government has created a detailed and comprehensive plan that supports infrastructure projects throughout the province. To provide additional support for our municipalities to address financial restraints during the pandemic, our government stepped up and created the COVID-19 resilience infrastructure stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. From Kenora to Chatham-Kent and Essex to Glengarry, our government is ensuring the people of Ontario have access to the safe and reliable infrastructure they need and deserve.

When it comes to Ontario's infrastructure, we are not leaving any stone unturned. We are investing \$148 billion over the period of the next 10 years. We are building new schools. We are building new hospitals. Most importantly, we are connecting Ontarians, providing them with a high-speed Internet connection and making sure that every household in the province of Ontario will have access to high-speed Internet by 2025.

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. The Minister of Long-Term Care recently came to Hamilton and announced provincial funding for several for-profit long-term-care homes. The minister left out Macassa Lodge, which is in my riding, from his announcement—a municipally run not-for-profit home with a request to upgrade 44 existing beds. Only one not-for-profit home was included in the minister's announcement. This is unacceptable and quite obvious of where this government's priorities lie.

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Seniors in my riding need access to upgraded, quality long-term-care-home beds now. Will the Premier commit to providing funding to Macassa Lodge so they can make the necessary upgrades to the 44 existing beds?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member is right: Ontario seniors have needed access to quality long-term care for a very long time in this province—in fact, for decades. That is why we are endeavouring to ensure that over 30,000 new long-term-care beds are built across the province of Ontario, upgrading an additional 28,000 in what is the largest upgrade and building of new long-term-care beds in the history of the country.

She is quite correct: We were in Hamilton, making an announcement for a number of new and upgraded beds in Hamilton. We've built, are committed to building and are

in the pipeline more beds in Hamilton alone than were built by the previous two Liberal administrations, and for a number of those years supported, of course, by the NDP. So there is good news for Hamilton, good news for Ontarians, and it's long overdue.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, Ontarians need access to quality, not-for-profit long-term care—which you have heard the government minister not deny—beds that are safe and of quality and that are good enough for our parents and grandparents. That is the only quality that we should be looking at, and that should not be lost on for-profit. It is shameful that this government continues to refuse to recognize this—although we shouldn't be surprised, considering last year this government announced that over half of the new long-term-care homes being built in Ontario would be for-profit. They have a crusade against public health care, and this needs to end.

Can the Premier promise that his government will only fund not-for-profit long-term-care homes in Ontario from here on out?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, we'll work with providers to ensure that our seniors have access to the best quality health care and long-term care possible.

I do note, of course, that in the member's riding, Macassa Lodge actually has been approved for additional beds. She might not have known that, because she missed the announcement—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Grace Villa, 192 upgraded beds; Shalom Manor, a not-for-profit, 128 beds; in the member for Hamilton Centre's riding, 128 new and 128 upgraded beds at Baywoods Place; 34 new and 126 upgraded beds at Parkview Nursing Centre; 160 redeveloped beds at Dundurn Place; in addition, over \$2.4 million—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain must come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know they're going to try to shut it down, but listen to this, Speaker: over \$2.4 million in new funding for new staff in the Leader of the Opposition's riding and \$15 million more in annual funding on top of the \$2.3 million in the member's riding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the House that when the Speaker calls you to order, you must come to order. If you don't, I'll call you out by name, and if you still don't, you'll be warned. And if you still don't, you might be able to go home early.

The next question.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Premier. On Tuesday, the minute I left this chamber, and without notice to me, the PC government tabled a motion

to condemn the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for inflammatory social media posts encouraging people to engage in conduct that this government has repeatedly claimed they disapprove of. But what the government won't say is that the actions of the member in question have been funded by this government for months through changes in election laws which provide this member, for the first time ever in Ontario's history, a riding association with an annual taxpayer subsidy of \$66,000—and the governing party granted itself \$5.9 million per year in the same deal.

If the government opposes the member's actions, why don't they stop sponsoring the political operations for him and all MPPs by cancelling the per-vote subsidy for all members in this Legislature, which has cost taxpayers more than \$100 million in 10 years?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply for the government, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I am sure you can appreciate that it is not my job, as government House leader, to monitor the attendance of the members of the House. This chamber sits most days from 9 o'clock till about 6:40, and it is the expectation that if members are interested in the proceedings of this House, they will attend to this House. I will endeavour to tell the honourable member that, in future, if the member is concerned about motions that may be coming forward or the work of this House, the best place to hear about that is in this chamber itself.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: In justifying the government's most recent emergency measures and the Premier's seal of approval for Justin Trudeau's, the Premier called the Ottawa protest an "illegal occupation." But those in Ottawa who were trying to lead a safe withdrawal of the protest and to safely negotiate with the city were hijacked by the government's own agent provocateur, the member from Lanark. It was reported by one of the leading protesters that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston encouraged the convoy to talk to the mayor of Ottawa, but once the talks became public, the member said they were abandoning the protesters, thus making the possibility of a peaceful withdrawal impossible. In fact, the Premier's own first chief of staff was reportedly in the back talking to all leaders involved.

Can this government tell us how many other sponsored actors it has infiltrating peaceful protest movements, with the job of sabotaging the efforts, so the government can use the actions of its own agents as justification for imposing authoritarian measures on all Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on her use of language, and allow the government House leader to respond.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, we just talked yesterday about the importance of elevating the level of debate around this place, of people on both sides—the opposition and the government, frankly—better understanding what happened in Ottawa, what happened at some of these protests. We were all very clear. We spoke

unanimously on the fact that the aims of the protest leaders to overthrow a democratically elected government were not something that any of us could ever support. In fact, they were idiotic, and we all stood up against that.

But within that protest movement there were other people who had other concerns: the cost of living, the cost of fuel, the carbon tax, other issues that impact some of the things that we are doing, the mandates. We all talked and we all said that we had to find a better way of communicating so that all people feel part of the decision-making process.

So I would ask the honourable member to reflect on the question that she just asked and ask how that can help elevate the level of debate in this place. This House spoke unanimously yesterday when it came to the member for Lanark, and I am proud of how this House reacted to that member and the nonsense that he has been spewing.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Before I ask my question this morning, I would like to add my voice in categorically condemning Putin's unprovoked aggression and invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine. In speaking with my family in Poland this morning, I learned that the situation is extremely tense as Poland prepares humanitarian aid, shelters and resources to accept Ukrainian refugees. I believe I speak for members of this House in expressing our solidarity with the people of Ukraine and in calling on Putin to get out of Ukraine.

My question is to the Associate Minister of Digital Government. As you know, February 11 was the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, a day to recognize the crucial role of women and girls in advancing science and technology. In acknowledgment of this important day and being an advocate for women in the tech sector, I understand Minister Rasheed hosted a "helping women in tech to succeed" round table. Speaker, through you to the Associate Minister of Digital Government: What topics were discussed and what next steps will be taken to support women and girls in tech?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I just wanted to reflect on the first part of the member's question. Again, as the leader of the Green Party and each of the leaders in this place have highlighted, the actions that have been taken by Russia are completely unacceptable. We will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine, understanding how important it is to the Ukrainian diaspora here in Ontario and across this country that we continue to do that.

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At the same time, I do reflect on the fact that the Minister of Labour and immigration just this morning also reiterated Ontario's openness to working with and helping the federal government, looking at ways that we can better settle immigrants from Ukraine to Ontario as quickly as possible. I thank the honourable member for that question,

and again thank all the members of the House for their statements earlier.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you to the House leader for acknowledging the gravity of the situation.

Back to the Associate Minister of Digital Government: Recruiting and keeping talented people, especially women and girls, in Ontario's tech sector is a priority for our government. As you know, Ontario is committed to being a leader in the tech sector, and I am interested in hearing the feedback participants provided.

To the Associate Minister of Digital Government: What information was gathered and how will the input received assist the government going forward? This round table was very informative and highlights just how important it is to continue building an inclusive and diverse workforce.

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

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member for Mississauga Centre for the question. Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. As a father of three daughters, I'm a strong advocate for not only women in tech but also about seeing women advance in the workplace.

I recently invited my colleagues Minister Dunlop and Minister McKenna, as well as Ontario's chief digital and data officer, Hillary Hartley, to host a "helping women in tech to succeed" round table. Eight leaders in Ontario's tech sector joined our virtual event. It was important to discuss how our government can partner with the tech sector to encourage even more women to get involved in the STEM field and build their careers right here in Ontario.

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Ontario's one and only local manufacturer of injectable oncology drugs is at risk in St. Catharines. This is because, unfortunately, hospitals in this province mostly buy their drugs through large group-purchasing organizations—huge entities that deal with billions of dollars of taxpayers' money with no oversight. Last month, HealthPRO, the biggest of these groups, told Biolyse it could not bid to sell their products in Canada because of a contract dispute, effectively putting their 25 years of producing medicine in Canada and 25 years of creating good-paying jobs in St. Catharines at risk. This is not building medicine manufacturing capacity in Ontario. This is going backwards.

Through you, Speaker, is the Premier going to at least respond to this company with many unanswered letters, because this situation has gone from a contract disagreement to a destructive force that could ruin a really good local Ontario company?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the minister to reply, we have some trouble with the clock, but I've got my watch, so no problem. Don't worry. I'll be watching carefully.

Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep it short and sweet, then, so you don't have to check your watch.

While we don't get involved in corporate contract disputes, we continue to encourage the company to deal with Health Canada to make certain that they have met all of the regulations.

But I can tell you, to your comment about manufacturing in Ontario, when we first saw the pandemic, we realized very little of our pandemic requirements are made in Ontario. We invested \$100 million. We ended up with 45 projects, \$187 million by companies was invested, and we have continued to reduce our dependence on foreign-made PPE, including injectables, and we will continue with the \$100-million Ontario Together Fund that we have in existence.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Back to the Premier: The diluted chemo drug report made it clear that a lot of public money goes to kick back to group-purchasing agencies. The idea of having public money being kicked back to a private organization does not sit very well with me. We talk about supply chain issues with medicine, and Biolyse has been a company with 25 years of experience producing medicine for the Canadian market. They have come to the rescue. When other chemo drug manufacturers let us down, they saved the day for cancer patients.

Speaker, I hear the Premier talk today about made-in-Ontario vaccines and medicines. However, allowing a drug procurement system with no oversight that can put a nearly-three-decade company at risk of closing puts in question this government's priorities. The purchasing groups are more interested in making money on their kickbacks than making sure the supply chains for cancer medication are strong.

Will the Premier bring oversight and accountability to group purchasing agencies?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Again, I would encourage the company to continue to deal with Health Canada, who monitors our pharmaceutical sector.

But I can tell you that back to when the pandemic first began we saw very little PPE being made here in Ontario. We're very proud to be able to say that now, as of today, 74% of all PPE purchased by the province of Ontario—that's almost from zero to now 74%—is made domestically, and almost all of it is made right here in Ontario. I would encourage the member across the aisle, through the bill that the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction presented just this week that has a section in it called BOBi, the Building Ontario Business Initiative—that she continue to support that initiative which supports made-in-Ontario companies.

ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, until we hear about the details of the government's plan to help the people of Ottawa who have suffered from 24 days of occupation, I will continue to stand up for the people of Ottawa–Vanier

and to rise in this House to ask the same question. I want this government to fully understand the enormous economic cost of this illegal occupation that was allowed to go on for way too long in Ottawa. In my riding alone, that means 1,000 businesses that were impacted by the occupation; \$200 million in lost business revenue and \$30 million in costs to the municipality. These costs and these losses could have been mitigated if the Premier had taken action instead of waiting and letting down the people of Ottawa.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier admit that he needs to pay his share for the costs of the occupation in Ottawa?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the parliamentary assistant, the member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you for that question. I very much appreciate it. I can completely understand the difficulty that businesses and individuals have had throughout Ottawa. I've heard some of those stories and I very much feel for the people there, as does the Minister of Finance. I think we've demonstrated since the beginning of the pandemic that we have been there for individuals and businesses. But we also recognize that the situation in Ottawa is extremely, extremely unique. That's why we are working on this issue, and I hope to be able to bring more forward soon.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Ontario Liberals representing the Ottawa area are calling for the government to provide substantive support to our city now. There was nothing of that in the first part of the answer.

If the government doesn't know where to start, we have provided specific recommendations: match the federal support for businesses; forgive hydro charges that businesses have incurred while they were forced to close; cover policing fees that have been forced on the city; call for an inquiry into how the situation was allowed to deteriorate into flagrant lawlessness; and, most importantly, this government should be financially supporting workers who lost wages during the whole occupation period. Will the government follow our advice and provide urgently needed support to Ottawa?

Mr. Will Bouma: Again, thank you for reiterating the importance of the support that the businesses and individuals in Ottawa need. I was very encouraged to see the support program announced by the federal government. While it was a quick announcement, what I did not see in it was exactly how it would be rolling out. I think it's very important, as we have in the past as we've supported businesses and individuals through COVID, that we also have a very clear sense of what will happen, how it will happen and who should be eligible because we don't want to see any assistance going the wrong way. That's why we are working on this, and we hope to be able to announce something soon.

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Again, thank you for the question, and I look forward to being able to say more.

SERVICE FEES

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. When meeting with members of my community, I often hear how costly life has become for individuals, families and especially those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The last thing Ontarians need right now is to worry about spending more money and extra time away from their jobs or loved ones just to renew their licence plate stickers.

Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please explain to this House how the recent decision to eliminate licence plate renewal fees and the requirement to have licence plate stickers will benefit all Ontarians?

Hon. Ross Romano: Speaker, through you to the great member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, thank you for the question. By eliminating licence plate stickers and those renewal fees, we're saving people money: \$120 back in your pocket for every motor vehicle that you have registered on the road in southern Ontario, and \$60 per vehicle in northern Ontario. This is eight million vehicle owners across all of the province.

It's a very, very stark contrast to the former Liberal Party with then-Minister of Transportation, now leader, Steven Del Duca, who actually increased drivers' fees. Mr. Del Duca put his hand deeper into your pocket. We're actually taking our hands out. We're putting money back into people's pockets and giving money back to the people of this province. We're putting it back in their pockets because we're about saying yes, Mr. Speaker. We're not about saying no, like the party of no and, obviously, their friends led by Mr. Del Duca.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I really appreciate the answer provided by the minister. Speaker, this announcement presents a great opportunity for millions of people across the province to create additional savings after two challenging years. My constituents and many Ontarians want to know more. Speaker, through you, can the minister explain how Ontarians can expect to get a refund for their licence plate sticker payments and where can they access additional information on this program?

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you again for the question, to our member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. I think it's a very good question. It's very important that we make sure—we want to be able to get a refund and the refund is going to be for any registrations that you paid right back to March 1, 2020, so two years' worth. If you paid for, let's say, two vehicles, \$120 a vehicle for two years, you'll get \$480 back.

But we need to make sure we have your proper address, so please visit [Ontario.ca/addresschange](https://ontario.ca/addresschange) so we can verify your address and you can get your cheque in the mail, or you can call 1-888-333-0049. Please call by March 7, 2022, so we can process those cheques.

Mr. Speaker, if I may say, just as a last piece to the member opposite, this isn't just about putting more money in your pocket, but the convenience. I, for one, am extremely happy that I won't have to change a sticker on my licence plate anymore.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, residents of my community in Toronto—St. Paul's, Jewish Ontarians and allies across the province are deeply disturbed by the escalating incidents of anti-Semitism in our schools. Students performing the Nazi salute, anti-Semitic graffiti like what Beth Sholom Synagogue in our community experienced last year, and a teacher comparing COVID-19 vaccine mandates to the yellow Star of David that Jewish people were forced to wear during the Holocaust are all part of a traumatic pattern of anti-Semitism harming Jewish students, families and our educators.

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center and other Jewish community leaders have called for an emergency board-level investigation into anti-Semitism in our TDSB schools. What is the Minister of Education doing to support this request for an emergency investigation?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I absolutely agree that the rise of anti-Semitism is disturbing. It is the fastest-growing hate crime reported in Canada year over year, and the first principle is that we, as legislators, must acknowledge what is transpiring: that there is hatred against Jews transpiring in schools and communities and in workplaces in Canada. We have to acknowledge that as the first principle, and be decisive in denouncing it and combatting it, which is exactly why we partnered with the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs for the second year in a row, for the first time in Ontario history, to strengthen Holocaust education so that students are ambassadors and allies when it comes to combatting this age-old hate and so that they learn from history never to repeat it.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Of course, we must move away from awareness alone; there have to also be mandatory changes.

My question is back to the Minister of Education. Last month, Liberation75 released a study showing that approximately one out of three students were unsure—unsure—about the Holocaust, thought the Holocaust was exaggerated or, frankly, didn't think it happened at all. The study also found that 40% of students were learning about the Holocaust through social media. The Holocaust was the mass genocide of over six million Jewish folks—six million—and other marginalized people.

Liberation75, Jewish community organizations and educators have long called for Holocaust education to be a mandatory part of our curriculum that moves beyond just awareness, and not at the teacher's discretion. Only the provincial government can make that change. We must address the escalating anti-Semitism. Will the minister recognize this long-standing call for action and make Holocaust education a mandatory part of the school curriculum today?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We accept that anti-Semitism must come to an end. The rise of hate affecting Jewish students and educators and families is honestly deeply

disturbing for all of us. I think leading by example is the reason why, two years ago, we started an investment working with Jewish community leaders to help empower and educate all Canadians, all citizens in this province. When it comes to Holocaust education, we strongly support further strengthening and mandating Holocaust education.

You mentioned Liberation75; the lead of it is Marilyn Sinclair, who happens to be a constituent, someone I've met with consistently over the past years. I have assured her we will work with her in advance of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which is the basis of that organization, to embed education learning on the Holocaust to make sure that students are aware of what transpired, the human history, the devastation, and the evil that has happened in the last century, so that we seek to avoid it in the coming years.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Health. Often, the minister claims that vaccines are safe and effective. Respectfully, people are telling me that that line is getting a little old. First, it was two weeks to flatten the curve. That was two years ago. And here we are, basically four lockdowns later: Thousands of small businesses have closed or are on the verge of closing, and students, some of whom you'd never expect, are suffering from mental health issues, including contemplating suicide.

When the vaccines were introduced, everyone thought that once they got the jabs, everything would be okay, but it wasn't. Many ended up with either short-, mid- or, in some cases, long-term adverse effects. Then the new variants were identified, Delta and Omicron: more panic, more jabs. Recently, Dr. Moore stated boosters don't cure Omicron. So why take the boosters?

Minister, will you follow the new science and Dr. Moore's advice, convince the Premier that it's time to end all mandates and open everything up? Premier Ford says that he's done with it. The people are done with it. So, Minister, together, let's—

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

Minister of Health?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member will know, we already have a plan for reopening Ontario. Two steps have already been taken, and on March 1, if the Omicron numbers continue to go down, we will be able to take that step to, again, cautiously and gradually, open up Ontario.

But to suggest that the mandates are of no use is not correct. Dr. Moore has always indicated, as has the Premier, to please get vaccinated. It's important for your health and for the health of people that you care about. Unvaccinated people are six times more likely to have to enter hospital if they contract COVID, and 12 times more likely to end up in intensive care, with the result that sometimes happens: People do lose their lives.

1140

The vaccination has been proven to be effective. It continues to be effective. It saves people, and I encourage

anyone who hasn't had their vaccination yet—first, second or booster—to please do so now.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: Recently, the UK government admitted that vaccines have damaged the natural immune system of the double-vaccinated, stating that they will never again be able to acquire full immunity to COVID variants, or possibly any other virus. Vaccines did not prevent infection or transmission of the virus. The British have found that the vaccine interferes with the body's ability to make antibodies after infection, not only against the spike protein, but also against other parts of the virus. In the long term, the vaccinated are far more susceptible to any mutations in the spike protein, even if they have already been infected and cured once or more.

Now that far more research and clinical testing has been done, Minister, will you reconsider your previous statements and, based on new information, put a stop to further boosters? After all, the life you save could even be your own.

Hon. Christine Elliott: The short answer is no. No, we are not going to change our policies with respect to vaccination. The view that you've just indicated is contrary to the view of the vast majority of scientists and specialist epidemiologists around the world. That is contrary to the views of NACI, Health Canada, Dr. Moore, the science advisory table and all of the medical experts who are advising us in Ontario. Vaccinations have saved thousands of lives in Ontario, and there is no change to vaccination policy that we're contemplating.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Long wait-lists and placing arbitrary surgery caps was a callous cost-cutting measure by the previous Liberal government which forced countless seniors to live their life in agony. Constant pain changes a person. It changes their personality. Orthopedic surgeons have their hands tied. They were willing and able to complete the surgeries, but the Liberal government didn't want to pay for it.

Now, as a result of the COVID pandemic, people will wait almost three years for knee replacements, two years for cataract surgeries, and a year and a half for hip replacements. It's unacceptable. Will this government invest today and stop forcing people to live in agony?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, the short answer is, of course, yes, we have made those investments. There is good news here, despite the nature of the question. We've recently been able to lift directive 2, which required the postponement of many surgeries and procedures for many people who, as you've indicated, have been waiting for orthopedic procedures, cancer surgeries, cardiac surgeries and so on.

But we have put the money into assistance. We are allowing those surgeries to proceed. Many hospitals now

are able to proceed with up to 90% of their 2019 surgeries, if they have the space and if they are still able to take patients from other hospitals where they need that relief. We have put \$5.1 billion into creating another 3,100 hospital spaces, first to cover COVID patients, but now to continue to remain open, in order to be able to serve the patients who have been waiting for a long period of time to have those orthopedic procedures done, as well as cancer surgeries and cardiac surgeries. We are putting the money into those investments, because we know—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Premier: Speaker, allowing these procedures to proceed is different than making a solid investment to make sure to catch up with the backlog. It's unfortunate that we always hear these procedures called "elective" when we're talking about people living in excruciating pain.

Cancer screening and treatment have also been seeing much longer wait times. Oncologists like Dr. Joseph Chin at London Health Sciences Centre have called for more operating time, stating that patients who should be treated within 12 weeks of diagnosis might wait several months, and some patients might miss the window in which surgery is a viable treatment.

Furthermore, nurses play a vital role in reducing surgical wait times. This government needs to support them and rip up Bill 124.

Will this government listen to the calls from patients, doctors, the RNAO, the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario Nurses' Association to distribute more funding, hire more nurses and strengthen home care, so that people get the treatment they urgently need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, with the lifting of directive 2, we are now investing in all of those procedures, some of which had to be postponed during the COVID pandemic, when the numbers were very high. But we've also already reinstated the cancer screenings, pediatric surgeries and others; and we've also made the investments to allow that to happen faster. We invested \$300 million last year in order to allow surgeries to happen more frequently on weekends and in the evenings. We've put another \$200 million into that—\$500 million to allow people to get those services, to get those surgeries that they need.

As for people who had life-threatening conditions such as, perhaps, a cardiac surgery or cancer surgery, we did that triage to make sure that people who needed it immediately were able to get it, and now we are bumping up. We've put the money into hospitals. We've put the money into operating times. We have a comprehensive health human resource strategy so that the people of Ontario can get their—

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

CHILD CARE

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: My question is to the Premier. But first, yesterday, Vladimir Putin began a full-scale

invasion, an unprovoked war on Ukraine, on democracy and the international rules-based order that protects us all. I join with all members of this House and stand with the Ukrainian Canadian community and the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the government today: February 24, 2022, almost a year since it was first offered by the feds, 72 days before the election is called—when will this government stop denying the people of Ontario \$10-a-day child care?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: For 15 years, the Liberal Party denied Ontario families affordable child care, increased it by 400%—40% above the national average. Who in this Legislature believes the Del Duca Liberals have any credibility on affordability? You had an opportunity. Speaker, they had an opportunity to vote for \$1.8 billion—\$1,000 on average—in direct financial payment, e-transfer into the accounts of families during this pandemic. You voted against that. You had the opportunity to support affordability. You had the opportunity to build child care spaces. You did none of it, but our Premier is fighting and standing up for this province for the best deal for the people of Ontario.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that the government House leader has a point of order that he wishes to raise.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, Speaker, just to rise on standing order 59 to outline the order of business for next week for colleagues.

On Monday afternoon we will begin with opposition day number 1, which is on surgical backlogs.

On Tuesday, March 1: A motion on the standing order changes, and before question period there will be a tribute to a former member, Dr. Stuart Smith. Of course, thank you to all colleagues. It is certainly nice to be able to honour our former colleagues again. In the afternoon we will move to Bill 84—the fewer fees, better government act—and in the evening PMB ballot item 25, standing in the name of the member for St. Catharines, which is private member's notice of motion number 13.

On Wednesday, March 2, in the morning, we will continue on with the motion on the standing order changes. In the afternoon, it will be Bill 84—again, fewer fees, better government act. In the evening it will be PMB ballot item 26, standing in the name of the member for Kitchener Centre, which is Bill 67, the Racial Equity in the Education System Act.

On Thursday, March 3: In the morning and afternoon sessions a bill which will be introduced early next week will be debated, and in the evening we will move forward to PMB ballot item number 27.

DEFERRED VOTES

MAKING NORTHERN ONTARIO HIGHWAYS SAFER ACT, 2022 LOI DE 2022 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ DES VOIES PUBLIQUES DANS LE NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to make northern Ontario highways safer / *Projet de loi 59, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun pour accroître la sécurité des voies publiques dans le nord de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): 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 1150 to 1220.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 59, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to make northern Ontario highways safer, has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 50; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless—I recognize the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed? Agreed. The bill is now referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1221 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BLACK MENTAL HEALTH DAY ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES NOIRS

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 87, An Act to proclaim Black Mental Health Day and to raise awareness of related issues / *Projet de loi 87, Loi visant à proclamer la Journée de la santé mentale des*

Noirs et à sensibiliser la population aux questions connexes.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member for Parkdale–High Park to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This bill proclaims the first Monday in March of each year as Black Mental Health Day to recognize the ongoing mental health impacts of anti-Black racism and to raise awareness of the specific mental health needs of Black communities across Ontario.

This bill also requires the collection of race-based data to address the lack of evidence-based policy-making and service provision, and to begin addressing the issues of systemic discrimination and worse health outcomes for Black Ontarians.

Finally, this bill requires the provision of culturally appropriate services that speak to the diversity within Black communities.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Miss Monique Taylor: I am very proud to be tabling this petition today, supported by 1,731 names online also.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas students, alumni, parents, teachers, area businesses and community are members of the Save Sherwood group;

“Whereas the community wants the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board ... and trustees to abide by their commitment to ensure that Sherwood high school stays where it is;

“Whereas no matter what conclusion” Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board “comes to, whether it is temporary status quo where only necessary repairs are done, an extensive renovation, a complete replacement or some other solution, they ensure that Sherwood high school stays where it is;

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

“To keep Sherwood Secondary School at its current location and eliminate Barton school and location as a permanent option.”

I wholeheartedly support this, thank my community for coming together on this and will affix my name to it and give it to page Benjamin to bring to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank London West resident Nicole Abbott for her advocacy with Justice for Workers, who collected signatures for a petition entitled “A Just Recovery Means Decent Work for All.

“Whereas COVID-19 has exposed the way in which low wages, temporary jobs, unstable work and unsafe

working conditions are a health threat not only to workers themselves but also to our communities;

“Whereas systemic racism in the labour market means Black workers, Indigenous workers, workers of colour and newcomer workers are overrepresented in low-wage, precarious and dangerous employment and more likely to be without paid sick days, supplemental benefits or working part-time involuntarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to:

“—provide at least 10 permanent, employer-paid emergency leave days each year and an additional 14 during public health outbreaks;

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$20 per hour, no exemptions;

“—promote full-time work by offering additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new employees;

“—provide set minimum hours of work each week, and provide schedules at least two weeks in advance;

“—legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work regardless of race, gender, employment status or immigration status;

“—protect all workers from unjust firing (stop wrongful dismissal) and ensure migrant and undocumented workers can assert labour rights;

“—ensure all workers are protected by ending misclassification of gig workers, and end all exemptions to employment laws;

“—make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining, when they use temp agencies, franchises and subcontractors; make companies financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for deaths and injuries of temp agency workers;

“—end the practice of using temporary agency workers indefinitely by ensuring temp workers are hired directly by the client company after three months on assignment;

“—make it easier for all workers to join unions by signing cards, allowing workers to form unions across franchises, subcontractors, regions or sectors of work ...; and

“—enforce all laws proactively through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws.”

I'm proud to affix my signature to this petition. I will give it to page Leah to take to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Mary Louise Hitchon. It is entitled “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Lucia to deliver to the Clerks.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I would like to thank the residents of Parkdale–High Park who are part of the Justice for Workers campaign for this petition entitled “A Just Recovery Means Decent Work for All.

“Whereas COVID-19 has exposed the way in which low wages, temporary jobs, unstable work and unsafe working conditions are a health threat not only to workers themselves but also to our communities;

“Whereas systemic racism in the labour market means Black workers, Indigenous workers, workers of colour and newcomer workers are overrepresented in low-wage, precarious and dangerous employment and more likely to be without paid sick days, supplemental benefits or working part-time involuntarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to:

“—provide at least 10 permanent, employer-paid emergency leave days each year and an additional 14 during public health outbreaks;

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$20 per hour, no exemptions;

“—promote full-time work by offering additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new employees;

“—provide set minimum hours of work each week, and provide schedules at least two weeks in advance;

“—legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work regardless of race, gender, employment status or immigration status;

“—protect all workers from unjust firing ... and ensure migrant and undocumented workers can assert labour rights;

“—ensure all workers are protected by ending misclassification of gig workers, and end all exemptions to employment laws;

“—make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining, when they use temp agencies, franchises and subcontractors; make companies financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and

Insurance Act for deaths and injuries of temp agency workers;

“—end the practice of using temporary agency workers indefinitely by ensuring temp workers are hired directly by the client company after three months on assignment;

“—make it easier for all workers to join unions by signing cards, allowing workers to form unions across franchises, subcontractors, regions or sectors of work (broader-based bargaining); and

“—enforce all laws proactively through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

1310

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the members from the Greystone community for this petition and handing it over to us. The petition is entitled “Metrolinx Train Tracks Construction.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Metrolinx has planned a major project that impacts the Greystone and surrounding Scarborough community, specifically the Midland layover plant immediately south of the Greystone buildings;

“Whereas this project has approximately a two-year-long construction period and Midland labour project has an estimated duration of six months;

“Whereas there is no noise barrier wall planned for the Greystone side of the track and Metrolinx has rejected the Greystone residents’ proposal to install a roof over the tracks where the trains will be idling for approximately one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon;

“Whereas residents have concerns regarding the impact of additional construction and operation noises, dust and debris, traffic interruption and other disruptions that will occur both during and after this construction; and

“Whereas the Greystone properties are unique to Scarborough Southwest and the family-friendly close-knit community that wishes to maintain the health and safety of the residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand of Metrolinx the following:

“(1) To establish ongoing dialogue between Metrolinx, the province and Greystone community members and keep them updated about the project’s progress;

“(2) Acknowledge the concerns of Greystone community members and respond to them in a timely manner;

“(3) Installation of a cover over the layover track to hide the trains;

“(4) Installation of a noise wall along the north side of the layover;

“(5) Maintaining a safe and accessible walkway on Midland Avenue and Danforth Road to St. Clair Avenue East; and

“(6) Using all appropriate measures to minimize or eliminate dust and debris that could affect residents living in the construction area.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to the Clerks.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank Mountain Eye Care, Advanced Vision Eyewear Boutique and Dr. Otto C.W. Lee and Associates for providing me with these petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I’m terribly saddened that this still hasn’t been rectified. Optometrists are back to work. Unfortunately, the government’s still not funding them. I’ll affix my name to it and give it to page Julia to bring to the Clerk.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure as a former educator to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly. It reads:

“Call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to Make Safe Classrooms.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas smaller class sizes allow our students to social distance during the pandemic;

“Whereas additional education workers will give students more one-on-one time after remote learning disruptions;

“Whereas our students need additional mental health supports as a result of the pandemic;

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

“Petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cap class sizes at 15 students per class, invest in more education workers to help our students, and increase the number of mental health supports for students that have struggled during the pandemic.”

I could not support this petition more, will affix my signature and give it to page Kristian to deliver to the Clerks.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here entitled “A Just Recovery Means Decent Work for All.

“Whereas COVID-19 has exposed the way in which low wages, temporary jobs, unstable work and unsafe working conditions are a health threat not only to workers themselves but also to our communities;

“Whereas systemic racism in the labour market means Black workers, Indigenous workers, workers of colour and newcomer workers are overrepresented in low-wage, precarious and dangerous employment and more likely to be without paid sick days, supplemental benefits or working part-time involuntarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to:

“—provide at least 10 permanent, employer-paid emergency leave days each year and an additional 14 during public health outbreaks;

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$20 per hour, no exemptions;

“—promote full-time work by offering additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new employees;

“—provide set minimum hours of work each week, and provide schedules at least two weeks in advance;

“—legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work regardless of race, gender, employment status or immigration status;

“—protect all workers from unjust firing (stop wrongful dismissal) and ensure migrant and undocumented workers can assert labour rights;

“—ensure all workers are protected by ending misclassification of gig workers, and end all exemptions to employment laws;

“—make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining, when they use temp agencies, franchises and subcontractors; make companies financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for deaths and injuries of temp agency workers;

“—end the practice of using temporary agency workers indefinitely by ensuring temp workers are hired directly by the client company after three months on assignment;

“—make it easier for all workers to join unions by signing cards, allowing workers to form unions across franchises, subcontractors, regions or sectors of work (broader-based bargaining); and

“—enforce all laws proactively through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws.”

I will affix my signature to this petition. I fully support it and will give it to Morgan for the Clerks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEWER FEES, BETTER SERVICES ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 POUR DE MEILLEURS SERVICES ET MOINS DE FRAIS

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

Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that when we last debated this bill, the member for Peterborough–Kawartha had the floor and he has some time on the clock. I'll recognize him again.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

This morning, when we were debating this, as I said first thing in the morning, the approach I was going to take on the speech is very different than I got into. That's because of some of the conversation that was happening, some of the other debate that was there. Over lunch, one of my constituency assistants called and said that she really couldn't believe some of what was being said, and I have to agree with some of the stuff she was saying to me.

There was a discussion about the licence plate stickers—that's where we left off—and how we were being told by the opposition at the time that this was something that wasn't needed. It was useless. It was a waste. And then in the same breath, the member from Sudbury said that everybody in the north has to drive their car to get around, to get from one location to another location because things are distances apart. So I'm confused as to how having that refund, not having to pay to have the privilege of renewing your licence, is something that is negative.

But I suppose that their job is to oppose everything that we do, and sometimes they take that a little bit to heart. And perhaps looking at what's really in the best interest of people is something we should all be doing to make sure that people do get benefits from it.

One of the other things in this bill is the At Your Service Act. It's about having service standards. I came from private business before getting elected. I worked for school boards at one point. I worked in software. I was a manager of product development for a software company. I owned a small pizzeria at one point in my life as well. Service is something that we all have to focus on.

1320

Prior to getting into government, prior to working with a lot of the individuals I work with, I had been frustrated by some of the processes. I have a much better understanding now because I'm here. I've had the opportunity to work with some exceptional people who are at that bureaucratic level. A lot of them—and this is not meant to

be derogatory to them—are career bureaucrats. They have been here their entire career.

What I find from my own work experience is that when you spend a significant amount of time, wherever you are, you start to look at what you're doing in your job and how you can make things easier for you in your job, and you forget what your job really is about.

I'll point to when I was the owner of the pizzeria. Everything that I did there was about serving people and about providing high-quality food to them.

I remember really well that when we first opened, I was 24, and I got asked to speak at the Generation E conference at Trent University—it was "E" for entrepreneurs, and it was the business club at Trent that put it on. They asked me if I would come and speak about my experiences as an entrepreneur. What I was saying at the time was, I didn't know why people wanted to buy pizza, I didn't know why people wanted to eat mine over something else, but what I wanted to make sure of was that when they opened that box, the smell that came from it was the most enticing thing that they had ever had, and that when they looked at the pizza itself, they'd say, "That is the best-looking pizza I would ever have," and that when they ate it, it was the best pizza they ever ate. My logic behind it was, if all of those senses combined to give a great experience, when I was competing against another pizzeria, if it took me five minutes longer to get the pizza to them, they would forgive that, because it was the greatest pizza that they had ever seen, that they had ever smelled, that they had ever eaten.

I felt I was fairly successful with the pizzeria. When I got married, we had to move on to another industry because my wife decided that working at the pizzeria until 4 o'clock in the morning wasn't conducive to a family life, if we were going to have kids. So I ended up selling it.

When I got into the software business, we were always focused on: What were the clients' needs? One of the things that would come out from it, one of the things from software design, surprisingly, is that the design of the software that you make is not always the most time spent doing what the client asks. The client will come in and say that they want a widget or a gadget or an app that does X, Y or Z. That's great. You start to design it that way. But then you have to step back and think about: How is the user going to experience it? How is the user going to use the product? How can the user break it? You make sure that you're not giving opportunities for that user to have a poor experience, by breaking the application, understanding different ways that someone is going to go at it so that they can't inadvertently break it. Why? Well, obviously, if it breaks, they're not going to buy your products anymore. Secondly, if it breaks and they can't use it, they didn't receive quality service; they didn't get to do what they wanted to do; they weren't able to use that product the way they wanted to use it.

So all through my professional career, we were focused on making sure that it was the top-quality service—that it was the experience that those individual users wanted. That is what they were paying for. That is what they expected. The expectation was, it was going to work the

way they intended it, the way they wanted it. They wanted a positive experience.

So, now, we come to government. And I come into government—and again, I have the utmost respect for a lot of the individuals who work in government, because they work very hard, and they’re trying to do a good job. They truly are. But, sometimes, I think there have been things that have been designed historically in government that make it easier for us to get what we need. There’s less of a thought, then, on what the experience is for the individual who has to provide that information to us.

What we’re doing here with schedule 1 is we’re looking at ways that we can ensure the consumer, the user, the person who wants the service from us, is having a positive experience. Because if they have a positive experience, they will continue to use it. They will continue to do it. They will speak highly of it, and it won’t be a hassle for them. To me, this is something that should have been implemented 150 years ago. To me, this is common sense.

We should be looking at how we can make the experience for the taxpayer, the person who has to do these things for us—how do we make that experience a positive experience for them? How do we make it convenient for them? How do we make it so that it’s non-intrusive? And that’s what the At Your Service Act, schedule 1, really is at the core: to make sure that what we’re doing as government suits the needs of those who are providing the information to us, those who are doing things that we require them to do, instead of focusing on how we make it as easy as possible for that bureaucrat to get the information that they need. Instead, we’re changing the focus away from ourselves to the people of Ontario. We’re saying, “People of Ontario, we want to make sure that it is as easy as possible for you, that it is as convenient as possible for you, that you have a good experience doing that, because we’re here to serve you.”

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll now invite questions to the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I’d like to thank the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his presentation. Earlier in his discussion, he mentioned contradictions. It’s interesting to hear the member speak that way, because in this legislation itself, we see the government contradicting itself by changing when the budget deadline is going to happen. It’s something that they are really foisting upon themselves. It’s really not through any fault of anyone but their own that they are changing their own laws which they created.

With this contradictory change that this government is enacting, what assistance is the government going to provide for not-for-profits, for shelters and other public services people depend on for their safety? With the budget ending, with people depending on your support, what are you doing for them?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much for the question, because it gives me a great opportunity to talk about why we would be doing something like this. We are coming through an unprecedented time. COVID-19, this pandemic, is not something that any of us have ever seen

in our lifetime. The last time we had a pandemic was 1918, the Spanish flu.

We know that right now we’re coming out of the Omicron wave. We know right now that some of the challenges that we have faced in COVID are starting to get behind us. Does it make sense for us, then, to stay rigid in what we do? Or does it make more sense for us to be a little bit more fluid, to make sure that we can have the most appropriate pathway forward and provide the services, provide the things to the constituents that they need to be successful moving forward, knowing that we’re coming out of a wave? We’ve had to make some adjustments to it. Changing it so that it’s a little bit more fluid so that we can make those adjustments that best suit the needs of the people of Ontario is what we’re doing.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is going to be on digital dealer. Under the leadership of the Premier, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and, of course, our Associate Minister of Digital Government, this government has taken action to allow more government services and transactions to be conducted online. Online services save people and businesses money and time, while providing flexibility and convenience.

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And so I wonder, Speaker, can the member provide some information on the initiative in this package that will allow more transactions to be completed online?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much to the member for that question. That’s an excellent opportunity to talk about, and it’s something I’ve actually said in this House on a number of occasions. Back in the early 2000s, Oracle came out with a statement that if you’re not in e-business, you’re going to be out of business and, really, what we see moving forward is that everything we do in our lives is based around technology.

How many of us have cellphones? How many of us have computers? Broadband Internet is something that we have been pushing all across Ontario, to make sure that everyone can be connected. We are a digital-first, but not digital-only, government as we move forward, and the way that we can do this is by making it more convenient—more options for more people—so that they can pick up their cellphone and, at 1 o’clock in the morning, because that’s the end of their shift, do what they need to do, so they can give that information to us, so we can do what we need to do to support them.

Now, if they don’t have a cellphone, if they don’t have Internet access, there is still that paper copy and being able to do it. We’re supporting people in every possible way that way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: The Ford government and the government member opposite talk about helping the people of Ontario, helping small businesses move forward. Affordability has been a huge issue for some time now.

The cost of living in Ontario has skyrocketed, so my question to the member is: Where is the action on delivering \$10-a-day child care? Where is the action on providing rent control, so that tenants are not facing unfair rent hikes? The average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto is over \$2,000. Where is the action on that?

Mr. Dave Smith: I love the opportunity to stand and talk about these things, because what we see in development is that it's taking eight to 10 years from the time that somebody wants to do something until they can actually get it built, and there are carrying costs all throughout it.

In the 15 years prior to us being elected, we saw a reduction in the number of purpose-built apartments, and that drives the cost of rent up, because more people are coming. I think the NDP actually made the statement earlier: We've grown by four million people in the last 20-some years, and yet our housing has not grown that way. Why? Because things were put in place to make it difficult for purpose-built apartments to be built.

We've changed that. We have gone ahead and we've changed it with Places to Grow, with other initiatives that we have, to make it easier to convert existing single-family residential, so that you can have an auxiliary apartment in it. That adds to the stock. But we've also changed the process, so it's faster for someone to get that development—shovels in the ground—the apartment built and the property available for people to rent, and that brings prices down. As you have more property available for someone to rent, more people can move in. When you have less property available for people to rent and an explosion in population, it drives the cost of everything up. It's very, very simple that way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from Peterborough for that wonderful presentation. As anyone who reads this bill can see, this government is focused on digitizing the government and getting rid of regulations that no longer serve their purpose. A fantastic example of this is the elimination of both the annual licence plate sticker renewal fee and the requirement to have a physical licence plate sticker for passenger vehicles. This practical change we are making will impact millions of Ontarians who own vehicles in the province. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is a big good-news story in my riding of Markham–Thornhill, and in most other ridings as well.

Perhaps my colleague can share what these changes are going to mean for not only your constituents, but Ontario?

Mr. Dave Smith: That's a great question, because what this means is that the government is reaching into your pocket less and taking money out of your pocket. We're not doing that this way; \$120 per person per vehicle is what is being refunded back to people if you live in southern Ontario. It's \$60 per vehicle if you live in northern Ontario, because that's what you were paying for it. This was simply a tax on people who drove, and as the member from Sudbury said, everybody in northern Ontario has to travel to get to wherever they're going,

because things are so far apart. This is something that is going to be of benefit to so many different people, so many different families. The Minister of Government and Consumer Services said that eight and a half million vehicles on the road are going to see a benefit as a result of that. That's eight and a half million families who are going to have a significant benefit.

There are those who are going to say, "It's only \$120." You know what, 120 bucks is a lot of money. If we go with what the NDP wants for a minimum wage of \$20, that's six hours of your life given to the government for no good reason. We're not doing that anymore. We're making sure that you are not paying to give us the information that we want you to give.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise. I want to ask the member a question. The Conservative government, under Mike Harris, sold Highway 407 to balance their budget. They signed a 99-year agreement. When the Liberals came back into power they tried to get out of that agreement, but it was going to cost them billions of dollars. But it was signed—it was ironclad—by the Conservative government. So now we have Highways 412 and 418. They have another 30-year agreement—"ironclad," the Minister of Transportation said yesterday when she was speaking, and it's complicated on what they're going to do.

So, my question to you is—somebody yell to him the answer, because he probably doesn't know—how much is it going to cost taxpayers to get out of this 30-year agreement? I think that's a fair and reasonable question. Harris did a 99-year agreement; there's a 30-year agreement. What is it going to cost taxpayers to get out of a 30-year agreement? Because I don't believe they're just going to do it just because they're a good company.

Mr. Dave Smith: You know, I always love it when the NDP stands up and they talk about things that happened before my children were even born. My children are 24, 25 and 26, so it's great to see that they want to bring up a history lesson and talk about that.

But let's talk about why the NDP supported the Liberals in the Green Energy Act and didn't stand up and say, "Do not do this because it will cost millions of dollars for everybody in Ontario." We're talking about billions of dollars that have been wasted because of ideology, not because it was something that was good for the province. We should have been continuing to invest in nuclear power, and that's why we've been doing it on this side. SMRs are the way that we're going to—

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

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was certainly entertaining, I must say. A Conservative accusing the NDP of us being ideological. And the Tories are not ideological? Come on, give me a break. We're all ideological. That's why we end up in this place. You believe in things one way; we believe in things another way. It's called democracy.

It's a good thing that people have difference of ideas, in order to come to this place to debate them, to send them into committee and hopefully have them reflected into law so that we can do what's good for the public. So, yes, you have to have ideological debates, and for all of us then to throw that out as if it's some sort of big, taboo negative—and trying to pretend that Conservatives aren't ideological. You're as ideological as we are, but in a different way, so let's call it what it is.

The other thing is, before I get into schedule 6 and schedule 10, there are just a couple of comments that I wanted to make. One is in regard to broadband. I, like many other northern members and people living in rural Ontario, suffer from a lack of Internet service. We have Internet services in many places, but the bandwidth that we get is not sufficient to be able to do some of the basic things that we do. How many times have all of us had to do Zoom meetings as a result of the pandemic, and you get kicked out of your Zoom call because there is not enough bandwidth?

Now, the government has put some money into it, which is a good thing. I'm not going to say it's a bad thing. But don't come off as if you guys have resolved the problem, because you haven't. You have, first of all, never spent the amount of money that you said you were going to spend, and you didn't do the key thing, which is—the reality, in northern Ontario and rural Ontario, where you have far-flung populations with a huge geography, is that it is not economical for the private sector to do it on their own. That's why government has to step in and do the things that need to be done in order to spur that development.

Now, don't take a lesson from the Liberals, because they were even worse. The Liberals got rid of the public infrastructure that we had that allowed us to do that under the ONTC. They sold off one arm of the ONTC that actually made money, Mr. Speaker, and allowed us to develop better Internet services in northern Ontario. The Liberals got rid of it. So don't take a lesson from the Liberals when it comes to broadband and the Internet.

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I would ask you to do the right thing and to understand ideologically that the private sector is there to make money. That's a good thing. That's why they exist. If there's no money to be made when it comes to what's going on with the development of broadband infrastructure, they're not going to do it. So government has to step in, and it's got to do some of the things that it does well when it comes to developing infrastructure.

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, back in the 1860s, 1870s as we started to develop the rail service across all of Canada, that we would have said, "Oh, we'll leave it up to the private sector. They'll do it on their own"? They would never have built the CP. They would never have built the CN. They never would have built the Ontario Northland going north. It was done because government created the incentives to make it happen and created the corporations, in some cases, that were crown corps that did the development. Yes, the private sector made a lot of

money. There were all sorts of scandals during the building of the CN and the CP. But the reality was it was driven by government.

We have to look at what each sector does best. Innovation, yes, in the private sector is good. That's what drives our economy and makes us move forward. But government is there in order to provide the conditions to allow that to happen in a way that ensures that all citizens are well served, that it's done in a way that's reasonable and fair to the environment and all those other things. So let's just deal with that the way it should be.

The other thing I just want to touch on—because the member from Parkdale–High Park raises a point that I think is really important, and that is housing. There has not been the building of private apartment buildings in a long time. Why? Because there's more money for developers to build condominiums. That's the long and the short of the story. And this government really hasn't done anything to fix that. It talks about, "Oh, we're going to have development happen faster because now we're allowing people to build stuff in the greenbelt," and other things that you're doing. Yes, that will help your developer friends to build stuff in environmentally sensitive places quicker, without as much scrutiny as needed, but it's not going to do anything to solve our housing crisis.

Housing crises have to be solved by the tools that government has. I was very proud to be part of a government from 1990 to 1995 that built more not-for-profit housing than any government in the history of Ontario. Look across all of our communities, your ridings and mine: We built not-for-profit housing at a pace that was never seen in this province before, and a lot of that housing—about 99% of it—still exists and provides housing in our communities that is much needed.

Now, should all housing be built as a not-for-profit model, Madam Speaker? Absolutely not. There's a role for not-for-profit, there's a role for condominiums, there's a role for private houses, there's a role for apartment buildings. But to put all of your eggs in the one basket, as this government is doing, and saying, "Oh, all we've got to do is quicken the regulatory process, we need to cut the red tape, and all this housing is going to get built"—hogwash. That's what the Liberals were saying for 15 years. You sound no different, this government, than the Liberals did on this one. If you closed your eyes and you listened, you would think it was Dalton McGuinty or Kathleen Wynne making the same points that this government is making, when it comes to development.

There has to be a thoughtful approach when it comes to how we approach housing. You need to do a number of things. Yes, you've got to do the things that encourage development in a way that's sustainable, good for the environment and provides the needed housing that's necessary, at a price that's affordable. But you also have to look at not-for-profits. Not everybody can afford to own a house. You buy a house in downtown Toronto: You can't buy anything under a million bucks. I was just talking to a friend of mine up in Sudbury who just put an offer on a house in Sudbury: \$1.2 million. My God, Madam Speaker, that was unheard of 10 years ago.

Who's going to be able to afford to buy those houses? People who are upwardly mobile when it comes to income, have got a fair amount of equity in their original house that they can sell for a fair amount of equity and have a mortgage that's large but that they can afford because of their wages. But what does that do for these young people who are pages here today? Not too long from now, these pages will be looking to buy houses or to rent, and it's a pretty rough road to hoe, because the price of purchasing is way beyond means. A house in Whitby—I see my good friend the member from—I guess it's Whitby, your riding? Is that what they call it, the member from Whitby? You can't buy a house in that area for less than about \$800,000, \$900,000, and if you buy a \$900,000 house, it's not a heck of a lot. Most houses are over a million bucks. Who can afford that?

I say to the government, there's a number of things that have to be done. Yes, encourage development. There's nothing wrong with that. Do it in a sustainable way. But we also have to look at an aggressive not-for-profit housing program that allows us to provide housing in our communities for those people who can't afford to buy a house or don't want to buy a house.

You also have to look at rent control. When the Harris government came to power, they cancelled the not-for-profit housing programs that we had in place and then they cancelled rent control, and we're surprised, member from Parkdale–High Park, that you're paying \$2,000 a month for an apartment? It's because we went to vacancy decontrol under the Harris government and rents have gone through the roof. That's what's happened.

There has to be a balanced approach to this, and yes, it is ideological to a degree. You either believe in rent control or you don't. You either believe in not-for-profit housing or you don't. You either believe in expedited development or you don't. But I'll tell you what we have to believe: Each of these things are part of the solution. It's not just one thing, and that's the point I wanted to make.

The other thing I'm just going to touch very quickly before I get to schedule 6 is the initiative in the bill that deals with digitizing much of what's in government. Nobody's going to argue that that's a bad thing, but let's be real. The reason we have been so accelerated when it comes to digitizing services for government is because of the pandemic. Our courts have had to operate in a different way. Everything government has had to operate in a different way because people were not able to access government the way they used to before because of the pandemic that we're in, especially in the first year or year and a half of the pandemic, and even in January, when we went through the Omicron spread.

You can beat your chest all you want. Yes, you're the government and yes, you're the ones who are doing it. I think it's great; it's fine. But don't pretend that you guys invented the technology. Governments have been digitizing for years. I came to government in 1990. We weren't even using email back then. I remember, I used to sit in the government lobby in the back, and I had one of the first computers here at Queen's Park that allowed me

to communicate with my constituency and people looked at it as if I'd got some kind of space platform into the government lobby, because it didn't exist. The technology wasn't there. But since then—

Mr. Wayne Gates: You still look that way.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I still look that way. Good point there, Mr. Gates.

But my point is, technology has evolved, and with the evolving technologies, governments have moved towards how to use those technologies in a way that allows us to better serve the public. Don't pretend you invented the technology and it was all because of your government that all this stuff is happening. Some of this is happening because that's just the sheer force of nature.

The other thing is—and I'll just touch on this very quickly—the member talked about his private sector experience, and that's great. No argument; I think there's lessons to be learned in the private sector that are very important for us in all kinds of ways. I ran a business as well. But let's not pretend that the only people who understand how to do service are in the private sector. There are all kinds of other people who are in the service sector who understand service who are in government. Police officers: You don't think they're in the business of trying to deliver service? Firefighters, jail guards, ServiceOntario employees, MPPs and their staff—we all understand what service is.

You need to be able to get back to a constituent, you need to respond to their concern and try to find a solution, and when it's not available and there's none that is practical, you then provide an opportunity by lobbying the minister or coming in with a private member's bill or whatever it is to be able to respond.

But don't pretend that the only people who understand how to give service are people who came out of the private sector. Come on; let's be real. There are all kinds of people in different sectors of our economy and different sectors, both private and public, who understand what service is quite well. I would just ask anybody to go into your emergency room and find out what that's all about. If anybody knows how to triage service, it's somebody in an emergency room, so let's be real. There are lessons to be learned from both sides, but let's not say that we have the only virtue when it comes to providing service because you worked in the private sector. I think that was important in its day. It was good. But in the end, other people can do the other thing.

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I want to thank the government for plagiarizing an NDP policy that was in place many years ago. I'm very proud of that, Madam Speaker. The government decided to take the idea of eliminating sticker plate renewal. It was done. It was the NDP government that did it in 1990. A lot of people might forget. My good friend the opposition House leader was staff at the time. She'll remember. It was our government who removed the price on stickers in northern Ontario. That was Bob Rae—the New Democrats.

Now, here's the interesting part: Who was the one who brought back the sticker fees when it came to the removal

of sticker fees that we had as a government? It was Mike Harris—the Conservatives. You guys reversed a policy that we had in place that eliminated sticker prices for people in northern Ontario. You got rid of it when you came to government by reinvoking the sticker price—in about 1996, if I remember correctly—and now you're running out as if you're the only ones who ever came up with this idea. It was a great idea. We support the idea. We don't think it's a bad one.

Now, I think you have some problems that you're going to have to deal with at committee, and I want to go through that. The first one is, how are you going to make up the \$1 billion? We had to face that. It wasn't \$1 billion back then because obviously sticker prices were a lot less and the overall amount of money collected by stickers in Ontario in 1990 was substantially less than it is now. But we had to find an offset to pay for it.

What this government hasn't said is how they're going to offset the cost of eliminating the fees on the stickers. I think that's important. Are you going to take it out of health care? Are you going to take it out of infrastructure? Are you going to take it out of other parts of the government, such as autism services? Where are you going to get the money? Or are you going to tax somebody differently? I can't believe that you're going to put another tax in, so I think what you're going to do is you're either going to borrow the money by increasing the debt in order to pay for it, or you're going to cut more things like autism services, health care etc.

Let's be real. Everything you do has a cause and effect. You eliminate the sticker price, which is a good thing. I support that. I think it's a great idea. In fact, I was part of a government in 1990 that did it, so I understand how this works. But you've also got to be straight, Madam Speaker, when it comes to how you are going to pay for it. We haven't heard that from the government. I'm hoping when we go to committee—and that there is going to be committee, which is the biggest thing; this government doesn't like to hear from the public when it comes to committee—that we actually deal with that. That's the first part: How are you going to pay for the offset?

The other thing that nobody has raised—which surprises me—is, if I understand correctly, it's not only eliminating the sticker price, it's eliminating the need to renew your sticker. Am I correct, that you will still have to renew your sticker?

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You still have to? Okay. I was originally under the impression that you were eliminating it, because at one point one of the press conferences that was done by the government was really unclear. It sounded like they were saying, “We're going to save money because we don't have reissue the stickers.”

I'm just saying, if that's the case, if the government is going in that direction—and that's one of the reasons I believe that we need to go to committee—you're eliminating a tool that the police need and use. A lot of the arrests that are done in regard to people that have outstanding warrants against them for whatever activity that they have

that come up against them are found when you pull a vehicle over because the sticker is invalid. They pull over the individual because the sticker is invalid, they run the plate and then they find out, “Oh, this person has a warrant against them.” The former Solicitor General is here. He'll know exactly what I'm talking about.

So I'm hoping there is still renewal of the sticker, because that is a huge issue when it comes to a tool that the police use in order to be able to catch people that normally they would not catch—somebody driving without a licence; somebody driving without insurance; somebody driving while they're out on remand and should be facing court. There are all kinds of things that the police come up on and they're found because of the sticker.

My understanding is, the government is moving toward a technology—I can understand why they're doing it; it's a good tool for police officers—and that is, the cruiser has a camera in it, front and back, that scans licence plates as the car is going up and down the highway. The idea is that plate is then run through a database, and if there's an outstanding warrant or there's something that needs to be flagged, that individual would be flagged in that system automatically in the cruiser. Is the government going to provide that technology to all police officers across Ontario, not just the GTA but the OPP officer who is out patrolling somewhere in Kenora and the Timmins police officer who is providing police services in the city of Timmins or a NAPS officer who is in Moosonee or another community that is covered by NAPS? That's a question that you're going to have to answer.

Then the second question on this technology is, what does the privacy commissioner have to say about the use of that technology? Is it an invasion of a person's right to privacy? It raises a really interesting point. I think there's an argument on both sides. I'm not saying it's a terrible idea, but I'm saying those—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear the government saying, “Oh, we already looked into that.” You've looked into so many things that you've been sued and brought back into court for because you haven't done your homework at the beginning.

So I'm trying to raise, through you, Madam Speaker, that these are considerations that need to be made. And I know—I was in government; I helped draft legislation—you don't get it right the first time. Often when you draft legislation, you don't think about certain components of what this legislation is going to do and how it's going to affect things. That's why you have to have a robust committee process that allows people an opportunity to come to committee, point out where its strengths are, point out where its weaknesses are and deal with those things. It will be interesting when it gets to committee if the government actually is going to deal with the sticker thing in a way that makes sense.

And the last thing I want to say—I just don't have enough time; I've got about half a minute—is under schedule 10 in the Mining Act. Now, I come from a mining community and I worked in the mines, so I understand

quite well the need to make sure that we have a tough but fair regulatory system that protects our environment, protects our communities and makes sure there's social responsibility on the part of operators, but you can't make that so onerous that they can't open up a mine. Ontario can pride itself; it's one of the best jurisdictions when it comes to being able to open up a mine. I was involved with Côté Gold, Victor mine and whole bunch of others in permitting, and we got through it. Yes, it was tough, and it wasn't easy, but we got through it, and we got the checks and balances.

There are changes in here when it comes to how you're going to consult First Nations. I'm not sure what those changes really mean as I read the act now, and I think that's one of the issues we're going to have to look at, because if we don't do that correctly, we're going to be in trouble.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: You will know that under the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals, the cost for licence plate stickers increased by 62% in a five-year period for southern Ontario residents and 46% in a five-year period for northern Ontarians, which I'm sure would be of interest to my colleague across the aisle. What we're proposing is to eliminate them entirely while providing financial relief to millions of Ontarians.

Will the member opposite support our bill and our government's plan, particularly as it relates to northern Ontario, to reduce these fees?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, let's both agree on one thing: We're not going to take a lesson from the Liberals. They were there for 15 years, and they mucked that one up real good. So let's all of us agree that's not the way to go.

But also, don't forget that your own party, your own government, increased licence fees by a heck of a lot, when they went from zero to 60 bucks back in 1996. So don't stand there as if the Liberals were the only ones to increase fees when it comes to licence plates when your government created fees for licence plates in places like northern Ontario.

And the legislation: You've already heard my leader talk about—my chair is all stuck here. Anyway, I'm going to fix my chair and do it after.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the comments from the member for Timmins and especially his historical retelling of the process of licence plate sticker fees. I would say that there's quite a contrast between an NDP government that brought in the elimination of this user fee at the beginning of its mandate and this government which is bringing in this change at the very end of its mandate, without any transparency about where that money is going to come from once those fees are rebated. Some have characterized it as vote-buying. I wonder what the member thinks about that characterization.

1400

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I think the opposition House leader actually has a good point. When we did

it back in 1990, we did it at the beginning. It was one of the first things that we announced, so people had four to five years to be able to gauge if that was a good idea. It was very popular in northern Ontario. All of us got re-elected in the north, except for one or two. So, obviously, it was very popular.

I would argue that it is very possible that people will see this as a cynical ploy on the part of the Tories going into the next election, because people are going to get their cheques from what they paid for the last two years just before the election starts. I can't think that's just a coincidence. If they had really wanted to do this, this could have been done a long time ago.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, through you: The Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry announced the creation of a critical mining strategy for Ontario. This will attract investment, increase Ontario's competitiveness in the global market and become an important global supplier of critical minerals.

The proposed changes in this legislation are correcting outdated information so that we can continue to expand mining in Ontario while respecting Aboriginal and treaty rights, and the environment.

Does the member opposite support the expansion of northern Ontario's economy through avenues like mining?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I come from Timmins. I worked in the mines. I was at the McIntyre mine. I understand what mining is all about. I worked underground, and I worked in the mill. So, of course, I support mining. Why wouldn't I? Everybody in this House supports mining. But what we also support is sustainable development. It has to be done in a way that respects the environment and also respects the social responsibilities of the operator.

All I was saying on schedule 10, the Mining Act, is that it's yet to be seen exactly what the government is doing with these amendments. I'm hoping what the member says is correct, because if it's not, we're going to be in real trouble. No development is going to happen in areas controlled by First Nations if we somehow abrogate their rights in any kind of way.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm going to read something that I received from a constituent. It says, "I just wish to let you know that I think removing and refunding the fee is crazy," in relation to licence plate fees. "Roads are always going to need repair. Therefore, the money needs to come from somewhere. Does the Premier plan on dipping into education funds or hospital funds to make up the difference? He has been crying for three years that there isn't enough in the coffers for education and hospitals. How stupid does he think voters are?"

I'm wondering if the member from Timmins can explain, based on past behaviour of this Conservative government, since the government is not being upfront, where he thinks this \$1.1 billion in lost revenue is going to get cut from.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I will not be baited into commenting on the intelligence of voters; I will leave that one alone.

I will only say this: I do think that some people will see this as cynical. The government has been here for four years. It has had an opportunity to move in this direction many times. All of a sudden, in the dying days of a government, before an election—it's less than two and a half months away—the government brings forward this initiative. It leads us to believe that this might be a cynical ploy, leading up to the next election. It's as simple as that, and I think people are seeing it.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Timmins. His colleague from London West referenced his historical memory, and sometimes I question some of that historical memory. So I want to ask about a couple of things that he talked about. He referenced a fair bit in there about cause and effect, and the increasing debt.

I want to remind the people listening at home that his government, in every successive Wynne-McGuinty budget, they voted for—which is the greatest debt this province has ever seen. So that one was an interesting one. They supported the Green Energy Act and the billions of dollars going there.

He talks a lot about housing, and I'm with him on that; I want more housing. If we hadn't spent all the money on the Green Energy Act, we'd have more. And there are things like permits. We're trying to move that forward expeditiously so we can get to housing.

One of his colleagues, the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay—we just supported a bill this morning to do things like standards, so snow removal, for example, will have standards that we can all agree to.

Madam Speaker, I just know—I've sat in those chairs; I've been in opposition. But I think there have got to be some things in there that he can find that he says, "You know what? We can work with you and we'll do some of that." Will he look and give me one example in this bill that he and his party will support 100% and say, "We're with this bill and it is good for people?"

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I will take no lesson from Conservatives when it comes to the size of the deficit. This government has done more—and yes, within a pandemic. But it has raised the deficit more than any other government in history. If you look at the times the Tories are in power, they tend to raise the deficit higher than any other government. So I'm not going to be lectured by Conservatives about how you're fiscally responsible. Our deficit went up by \$2 billion at the beginning of a recession in 1990, and this government is doing just \$1 billion on licence plate stickers. So don't come to me and start preaching that somehow or other you have a better handle on how to deal with the deficit.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and comment on the member from Timmins's remarks. But I'd like to follow up on something the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said, that the government had supported increasing highway maintenance for class 1 and 2. The same government voted against it last year.

They have no problem now, in the late days, changing the sticker fees, sending people a cheque back. Perhaps the government could actually increase the maintenance standards before the House rises; actually try and save people's lives, instead of simply paying lip service to it. What would your comments be to that, member for Timmins?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, I've got to say, listen, it is cynical. There's no question. Here we are on the one end—which is not a bad idea. We're going to be eliminating sticker fee prices. But there's \$1 billion of lost revenue. Which snowplow are they going to take off Highways 11 or 144, 17, 69 or anywhere else in northern Ontario, to pay for it? Or are you going to be cutting back on salt and sand? I don't know. The government is not saying that.

So when the government says, "Tell me one thing that you support," we support generally what you're doing with the stickers. We're just asking the question: Which snowplow are you going to take off the highway to pay for it?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There isn't enough time for another question or comment.

Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I always look forward to the opportunity to speak about how our government continues to support the hard-working families and businesses in the region of Durham. I'm particularly proud to be part of a government that is working hard to make Ontario the first choice for families and businesses ready to invest—as they are, in this province.

I'd like to thank the Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape Reduction to my right and her staff for all their hard work in bringing forward Bill 84.

What's clear is that Ontario's spring 2022 red tape reduction package builds on successive semi-annual packages aimed at eliminating unnecessary burdens and opening doors to economic activity. These initiatives further demonstrate that our province is one of the best places in North America to raise a family, work and operate a business. With the introduction of the proposed Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, the government continues its commitment to make life easier by reducing red tape for all Ontarians.

Overall, this comprehensive red tape reduction package builds on years of work to reduce the burden and lighten the load for hard-working families and businesses in my riding of Whitby, Speaker, and other parts of the region of Durham that you're well familiar with, weighed down by the pandemic's demands.

There are a number of items from Bill 84 that I look forward to addressing in this bill discussion this afternoon,

but I'm going to start with the removal of the tolls from Highways 412 and 418, with which you're well familiar, Speaker. It wouldn't have happened without the leadership of Premier Ford and the perseverance and support from Minister Mulroney and Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, the champion of all things Durham and catalyst for last Friday's announcement going forward.

1410

I also want to address the ways this legislation helps to build capacity, so that our economy can rebound, as we have been working with the region of Durham in the implementation of its recovery plan so that the region can be stronger than ever and, indeed, this province can be stronger than ever, including new customer service standards, the building Ontario initiative, the digital dealer program and, yes, amendments to the Mining Act.

Now, Speaker, last Friday our government announced that it's restoring fairness and cutting costs for drivers and businesses in Durham by permanently removing the tolls on Highways 412 and 418, effective April 5, 2022. We've heard from the people of Durham loud and clear, and others across the regions, and agree that the tolls imposed on Highways 412 and 418 by the previous Del Duca-Wynne government are wrong and unfair. That's why we're removing the tolls on these highways, so that people and businesses have more travel options and hard-earned money in their pockets.

Speaker, you've heard, and others have heard, that Steven Del Duca and the Liberals say they will make life more affordable for Ontarians, but there's a reality, isn't there? There's a reality that after 15 years of the Liberal government in Ontario, the cost of living for hard-working families and businesses went sky-high, absolutely sky-high. We knew, and know, that the tolls were costly and unfair, which the previous Del Duca-Wynne government was fine with, but this government isn't.

When the previous Liberal government made the decision to toll these highways, the people of Durham suffered, and it's comforting to know that under this government, they no longer are suffering. They're done; the tolls are absolutely done. Getting rid of these tolls will bring real, tangible relief to the people of Durham and surrounding regions. It will cut costs for hard-working families and provide more travel options for residents.

When Steven Del Duca was transportation minister under Kathleen Wynne, he ignored the region of Durham. You know that; I know that. We lived it for 15 years. For those long years, Ontarians had to deal with a government that said no to the region of Durham's residents, no to Ontarians and yes to their own agenda.

Here's some of what John Henry, the regional chair and chief executive officer of Durham region had to say about the removal of the tolls on Highways 412 and 418:

"One of the region's focal points continues to be economic recovery"—as I alluded to with the region's economic recovery plan, which you're well familiar with, Speaker—"from the COVID-19 pandemic. A reliable and affordable road network that connects Durham region to the rest of the" greater Toronto and Hamilton area, "and Ontario, is a vital piece of a strong economy.

"That is why I am thrilled to see the provincial government's announcement to remove tolls from Highways 412 and 418, effective April 5, 2022....

"The positive impact of removing these tolls will be immediate. It will promote economic activity supporting local businesses and residents that rely on these highways for the movement of people and goods.

"Maximizing the use of the 412 and 418 will reduce congestion on our local roads, connect people to jobs and"—most importantly—"support economic recovery.

"On behalf of the region of Durham, I thank the provincial government for their continued partnership in ensuring Durham region remains the best place to call home."

Speaker, the removal of these tolls demonstrates our government's long-standing commitment to helping Durham region continue to grow and thrive.

We had another organization that you're familiar with respond to the announcement last Friday, and that's the Durham Region Association of Realtors. They said this:

"Durham region is one of the fastest-growing parts of Ontario. Thousands of people are moving to our region every year because of the opportunities it presents to start a family, grow a business and join a community.

"The announcement ... on the removal of tolls from Highways 412 and 418 is great news for Durham region. The tolls on these vital connecting roads are unfair to local homeowners, businesses and workers. Removing the tolls will save local commuters hundreds of dollars annually and help attract more jobs and opportunity to the region."

Speaker, I want to thank the region of Durham and the Durham Region Association of Realtors for their tireless advocacy and support. There were similar correspondence and statements that were provided following the announcement last Friday, some of which, I know you are aware of, from the Durham Alliance.

For almost 15 years, Liberal inaction on a wide range of issues led to the detrimental impact on the pocketbooks of residents and businesses in the region of Durham and across Ontario. Let me state clearly to my constituents in Whitby and to the residents and businesses in the region of Durham that our government is delivering on our promise to get rid of those tolls. We know that people need relief and they need that relief now.

Beyond this very welcome component of the bill, there are other ways the legislation provides relief to the people and businesses of Durham region and Ontario. Since day one, we have been relentless in finding ways to make it easier for people and businesses to interact with the government. This legislation will give government the authority to create a business service standards list that would make Ontario a leader in North America for how easily and quickly a new business can be started. Our government will require all relevant ministries to develop service guarantees and commit to abide by them.

I'm just running out of time so I will conclude by saying that the new standards that are being proposed would also require ministries with service guarantees to track how often they fail to meet those guarantees and would require that these results be posted publicly so the that the people

of Ontario will know where their government needs to improve. Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to debate the bill today. I look forward to questions.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was listening very closely to the member. I know the member has listened to me raise this often on many occasions for the many years that I have been here—actually, I've been raising this issue since 2018. I brought it back in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, and I put the question again to this government about just a few weeks ago. It's in regard to the DriveTest centres that we don't have in northern Ontario and the backlogs that are there.

I am just looking at your schedule 1, and it says At Your Service Act, where the standards, as far as a level of service, will have to be maintained. And if that is not maintained, then the government will be identifying that business or that government entity and shaming them by bringing attention and correcting the problem.

Would the member agree with me that, over six years now, is it not time to shame someone into getting those services that we need to northern Ontario?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for the question. We have committed in this legislation to provide a single window—an online portal—that would make it easier for businesses and others to access the information and services they need to get up and running and to grow. One of the features of it, which I know will be of interest to the member opposite and others here this afternoon, is it's an integrated digital experience and it will make it easier to access the information and services that are required. This would include a single web portal so that residents and others could easily see where the approval process for applications are. This work is being carried out by the fantastic Associate Minister of Digital Government, Kaleed Rasheed.

1420

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'd like to thank the member from Whitby for his presentation on the bill, which I fully support, by the way. The member and his Durham colleagues have been working hard to get the unfair tolls on Highways 412 and 418 removed, and this bill does just that. Can the member explain why removing these tolls is so important for the people of Ontario and Durham region?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I thank my colleague for that question, and I thank my colleagues for their support on the removal of those tolls.

In my comments this afternoon, I spoke about the removal of the tolls relieving congestion on local and regional roads; for example, Lake Ridge Road, which you are all familiar with. Removing tolls on these highways will bring fairness and financial relief for Durham residents and provide drivers with travel savings and more predictable travel times.

I had several residents from my riding—some who are seniors, some who are commuting day in and day out—

talk to me about savings of close to \$150, in some cases, going forward.

This initiative was part of the province's plan to help alleviate gridlock across Durham region and beyond by offering more transportation options for drivers, and that's exactly what we're doing.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question to the member opposite is: In removing the fee for the licence sticker, it's going to cost the province a loss in revenue of over a billion dollars. So what is the Ford government planning to cut in order to make up for this loss of revenue? Are they planning to cut education funding further? Are they planning to make cuts to our health care system? Are they planning to fire nurses? What is this government going to do?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to my colleague for the question. This is not about cuts at all. This is about benefits to Ontarians. I asked a question earlier today, and I spoke about the benefits to northern Ontario. I spoke about the benefits here in southern Ontario. This is beneficial for Ontarians because not only will they not need the physical stickers anymore, they will also no longer need to pay a renewal fee to confirm their auto insurance. This will help ensure, as our government has been dedicated to since day one—since day one—that more money will be in the pockets of hard-working families and, importantly, out of the hands of government. Doesn't that make sense?

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, through you: Across Ontario, there is a shortage of affordable housing, long-term-care homes and other much-needed infrastructure due to the lack of building by the previous Liberal government. This is absolutely appalling when we have provincially owned surplus lands that could be used to provide the necessary infrastructure that will help alleviate pressures felt in many sectors.

Can the member tell the House whether they believe the centre of realty excellence which is being proposed in this legislation would help create the critical infrastructure that has been missing for so long?

Mr. Lorne Coe: That's a great question that's really at the core of what our government has been working towards for the past four years. The centre of realty excellence is an initiative to streamline, once again, government processes to sell properties that the government no longer needs to make them more productive for their communities. This is huge. I think about some of the municipalities outside of ours, in particular. It will support small businesses by providing single-window access to the properties, enabling efficiencies and providing more opportunities to identify properties for further development and better use.

When we talk about better development—we heard some discussion and narrative about affordable housing, I think there are some linkages here as well. By having one place to manage government properties, we can focus the

goals of government to realize the value of our surplus lands, attract investments and, once again, support our local communities across the province.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The member from Whitby indicated that people need relief and they need it now. However, the toll road 407 was facing penalties of \$1 billion. Did they approach the government and tell this government that they needed relief and they needed it now? Because this government failed to collect \$1 billion in fees from them.

I'd like to also update the government that their social services relief funding is ending. Many people who are relying on services and who are currently housed are going to be kicked out onto the street. Why are we talking about stickers at this current time when we should be talking about the people who are at greatest risk for becoming unhoused as a result of this government not continuing social services relief funding at this time?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I thank my colleague for his question. What is at the heart of this legislation—and I said this in my brief remarks—is making life more affordable for Ontarians. That's what's at the heart of this particular legislation.

When you talk about stickers—and I made the comparison about northern and southern Ontario. It's about putting money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontario families. Who can argue with the benefit of that? We're all here to benefit the people who we have the privilege of serving, aren't we? This particular aspect of the legislation that the member has raised is beneficial for Ontarians because not only will they not need the physical stickers anymore, but they won't have to pay the renewal fee to confirm with auto insurance. This is going to help ensure—overall, the government has been dedicated since day one.

I just want to remind—I want to make this comparison once again—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Am I running out of time? All right, I'll sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to cut off the member, but everyone has a maximum of one minute per question or response, so we're out of time for that.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to Bill 84 today. This will be my first opportunity to rise here in this House since we returned from our two months of being out of here. I have to say, I'm disappointed to see that the priorities of this government haven't changed since I last sat here. It seems they've learned nothing over the past two months, and that's unfortunate.

I think this is time to discuss priorities. That's what it means to govern: We all have to set out our priorities when

we introduce legislation. While they were writing this bill, we were trying to get support in Niagara, especially in Fort Erie, where our urgent care centre was closed, and the government didn't lift one finger to help us. Let me explain what has been going on in Niagara while they were writing this bill. Over the last month, the people of Fort Erie have gone without access to the urgent care centre—three other communities, quite frankly, in the province of Ontario as well. Nothing in this bill seems to acknowledge the emergency that was happening there.

They say these bills are designed to help the people of Ontario—I think that's the title—and, yet, nothing included here to help the situation of people in places like Fort Erie. In this place, my job is to raise the voice of the residents of Fort Erie. So to everyone here, I say this: Fort Erie will not stand for any reduction in their health services. The residents want that said, and I'm going to stand with them. Douglas Memorial is the heartbeat of the town, and we won't let it be shut down. Fort Erie is a growing community. Currently, there are over 30,000 residents, and it's growing rapidly. We simply cannot afford to have less services for more people there. Think about it: A high percentage of those residents are seniors. A lot of them don't drive. So let me say this clearly: The closure of Douglas Memorial's urgent care centre was a shame on the image of Ontario. It's time to commit to never reducing services for Fort Erie and, in fact, investing in their health care today.

1430

This bill talks about ripping up red tape. That's my favourite one. The last Conservative government used it all the time—red tape, red tape. But oftentimes what they're talking about is community protections. We see this in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I'm sure a lot of my MPP colleagues have come to Niagara-on-the-Lake and gone to the wineries. Yes, people are pointing to their chests. You can speak out—how proud it is, what a beautiful place Niagara-on-the-Lake is. It's a great place to go to—great tourism, which creates jobs. Madam Speaker, 2.7 million people come to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the summer months, outside of the pandemic.

Think about this: Three times developers have tried to rip up the greenbelt and develop on it, and three times our communities of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Virgil have said no.

We can't say this any louder: We should not be turning our greenbelt lands into parking lots and high-rises. Once the greenbelt is gone, we can't get it back and—Madam Speaker, you can relate to this—it's gone forever.

Is development a part of solving the housing crisis? I want to be clear on this: Absolutely. But can it only be done on the greenbelt? The answer is, absolutely not. So why does the Premier keep trying?

I'm going to say this again: Niagara-on-the-Lake is a special place. We continue to see those who want to buy up land and build buildings that will destroy the character of the town that the residents spent a generation building. That has to stop. When there is development in the town,

the residents' voices must be heard first. This is the first capital of the country we're talking about. Once it's gone, you can't get it back. There's a sustainable path forward, and that begins with the residents. The town is special. It must be protected. All development must be responsible.

We're seeing this right now with the old Parliament Oak site. The community wanted to turn it into a community hub and they were denied. Now we're being told that, against their wishes, it's going to be developed. Why can't the community have a voice? I think it's important, because not all of my colleagues here on the other side, who may or may not be listening—I never know. Parliament Oak had a school there. It was there for years. The school was closed under the Liberal government. We fought like hell to keep it open, and we weren't successful. I'll be honest with you: Of all the things that I've done in this House, that was one of the most disappointing things that happened to me—closing that school. The incredible history, the incredible building, what it brought to the old town, what it brought to tourism—it was so short-sighted. We've got to listen to the voices of our community. They have nothing but the best intentions for that spot. Anyone who ignores them is ignoring the entire community. It's wrong.

I want to say this clearly, Madam Speaker, because we're losing a lot of our heritage, a lot of our culture so some developer can make money: We must protect the makeup of the old town, including the old Parliament Oak site, and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure I raise that issue here and continue to stand with the residents there.

We have the same issue in a place called Chippawa. I don't know if you guys are allowed to put up your hands. How many of you have been to Chippawa in Niagara Falls? I've got two people over there who have been to Chippawa. It's a small community in the city of Niagara Falls. Again, Chippawa is a place very close to my heart; a community that I love. They're also facing growth, and it's important to have the residents' voices heard in the process. We know that the communities are growing and that's good, but we have to maintain the character that makes places like Chippawa so special and that needs to be remembered for the provincial parts of that. Chippawa is a special place. If you listen to the residents there and include them in the provincial planning, we can keep the character of this special place intact.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, Niagara-on-the-Lake is a special community that needs protection. I didn't have a chance earlier, but I want to quickly say something about the residents there. While I have a moment, I'd like to recognize Women's Institute Week and the organization itself, which is celebrating 125 years in Canada. The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake just proclaimed that the week of February 19 would be Women's Institute Week, in honour of Virgil's Women's Institute branch, which has operated for 106 years and continues to provide women with opportunities to improve the quality of their lives, for their families, locally and around the globe.

What we're seeing today around the globe is a very sad day, quite frankly, in the history of the world. Without

saying too much, I think our hearts and our minds are with what's going on today there.

I also want to thank all of those involved here and thank their incredible president, Margaret Byl, for the incredible work she does.

This government says it is cutting red tape, but in reality, they are solely focused on cutting its services. We don't need to look too far to see that in reality. Madam Speaker, you can relate to this, I believe, in your community. We were promised a 10-cent reduction in gas prices and yet right now gas prices are higher than they have ever been that I can remember—and I'm old.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, you are.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Why is no one discussing this—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, it came from you. It's okay. It's fine.

It's \$1.59 a litre today in Niagara Falls. We've put legislation forward time and time again to reduce prices, and yet your government continually defeats it. How can you justify that, what we're seeing today? Perhaps this isn't an issue elsewhere, but in Niagara, you need a car to get around, and right now gouging at the pump is breaking people. How bad does it need to get before action is taken on this issue?

Niagara residents are being gouged at the pump. The 10-cent reduction in prices that was promised never happened. If we're going to pass legislation, it should be legislation to stop the gouging that's going on, and for relief at the pump. And believe me, there is gouging going on by the big oil companies, not only in Ontario but right around North America.

Let's look at another issue: housing. As I mentioned, we do need new housing to lower housing prices. But the problem is the red tape you were supposed to cut has made it worse. If you're going to cut red tape, why does it only have to involve helping big developers? I can relate to that, and I know the one member—I believe from Peterborough; I think you're Peterborough, right? Home of the Lakers? He mentioned he's got a 24- and a 26-year-old, I believe. Young people can't buy homes, and renters are being kicked out of their homes that are being sold. These people need emergency help. We all have kids, we all have grandkids.

Young people should be able to buy a house in the city they grew up in. There are ways to do this. There are supports that can be offered today to get them into a house. Why are these being neglected? How many of our kids have to move away before we realize there's a crisis here? We have people from out of the province, out of the country, buying up houses and leaving them empty, sitting there for months, never even being used, just to make a profit. Why aren't we taxing them? If you're not going to have somebody living in that house, why wouldn't we tax them, to help our kids and our grandkids? If they want to treat our kids' futures as a way to make money, then they should be paying the province for that privilege.

I also want to touch on something else that's entirely missing from this bill—and I'm surprised, by the way, very surprised. There's nothing in here that talks about seniors. Seniors have built this great country. By the way, if we look at COVID and we're honest with ourselves, outside the business community and the dollars and the economy, who suffered more than seniors in our communities during COVID? Who paid the price for COVID?

1440

We all paid a price, but who paid the ultimate price by dying? A majority of people who died during COVID were who? You can say it, yell it out: seniors. We had 5,000 seniors die in long-term care and retirement homes during COVID—5,000. Nothing in this bill talks about it—nothing. And you know how many of those seniors could be here today? I would say most.

We all didn't do our job when it comes to seniors. So I'm not just going to blame the Conservative government; I'm going to blame all of us. We didn't take care of our seniors. We didn't take care of our grandparents, and that's a shame. But your first bill coming forward is also a shame. In the first bill coming forward, there's nothing in here about seniors, nothing here about our parents and our grandparents, and that's a mistake.

These young kids here, we see them all the time. We change over every three weeks. We meet new young people, the future. They've lost grandparents. They've lost their parents. We could have done better. We could have provided more staffing. We could have made sure that we had PPE. We could have done so much more, yet nothing in this bill talks about them. I think we should all hold our heads down low on that one.

I believe that seniors have been as hard hit during this as anyone. Their food bills are going up—going up, for seniors. No increases in their pay, their pensions—and the cost of living is going up. Every time moves are made to support them, they're voted against, and this is wrong.

We have seniors struggling to make ends meet. We all know them. We all get the calls. We're all MPPs. If you pay any attention to who's calling your const offices, it's seniors, and a lot of times, they're crying on the phone. They don't have money for food. They don't have money to pay the rent because it went from \$800 to \$2,000 in my community. I'm sure in Toronto it's higher. I'm sure I'm even hearing numbers out of Thunder Bay and Timmins, places that were usually a little cheaper—even there, same thing. It's seniors that can't make ends meet. You know why? Because their pensions aren't going up. They don't have cost of living. They're hurting. And nothing in this bill—nothing.

Madam Speaker, in case you're just wondering, there's a piece in this bill that shows just how hypocritical this government is—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm interrupting the member. The member needs to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I apologize. I withdraw.

So we know that nurses are being run off their feet, and what this government did was pass a bill that capped their wages at 1%. With inflation running at 6%, that actually means there's a cut of 5%. That's what the Premier had done—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member again. This is for a different reason.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been six-and-a-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I look to the deputy government House leader.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Please continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Niagara Falls may resume and I will do my best not to interrupt him further. Please continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: We didn't want to cut you off, Gatesy.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. Thank you.

And how does that apply to the 407? Last year, many of you remember that the private company that runs the 407 broke their contract and was required to pay the province almost a billion dollars in fines, and the Premier said, "Don't worry about it. We won't collect them." Do you think the 407 would do that for the drivers who use that highway? It's almost \$100 from one end to the other. It's bizarre. Do you think they would write fees off? So when it comes to the nurses who we all call heroes getting support from the government, the answer was no. But a billion-dollar company that oversees the 407 was allowed not to pay the billion dollars.

I don't have a lot of time, so I'm going to maybe skip a couple of pages.

I want to say a couple of things. Our nurses, our health care workers, our doctors have been run off their feet. We have a lot of young nurses who got into nursing and they didn't stay. You know why they didn't stay? They felt neglected. They didn't feel supported. But the other reason was that one thing they saw that they weren't expecting, quite frankly, coming out of school was the amount of death that they were seeing when they went into work. They were sitting in the parking lot, by the way, crying before they went into work, because they knew—and I'll use my name as an example—a Mr. Gates was going to die that day, and they couldn't take it anymore because they love their patients. They had given everything they could to save that person's life, and they knew they weren't going to be able to. And they knew they were their only family because, as we know, we locked a lot of the families out. So our nurses are going through a lot: mental health, mental stress, anxiety, tough times.

And at that time, when we're calling them heroes—and we've all called them heroes; you guys call them heroes every day—we brought in Bill 124, to them and other workers: nurses, people who work in health care, correction officers who have got probably more COVID

outbreaks than I've seen, EMS. I talked about ambulance drivers. So I say to this government: Repeal Bill 124. Think hard when you go home at night. Think really hard that if you're allowing a company like the 407 to not pay \$1 billion in fines, do what's right. You'll have the full support—I heard a couple of times today, “Is there anything you'd support?” We all support repealing Bill 124. It's time, and you should do it.

I've only got a couple of minutes left. I think it's on the bill, Madam Speaker. I apologize. I've got another 10 pages, but they don't let me talk for an hour anymore. They used to let me have an hour, remember? They won't let me talk for an hour.

But I want to talk about something you guys have been talking about a lot, and that's the auto sector and electric vehicles. Let's tell the truth on what happened in the auto sector. I mention I'm old and some people chuckle. I've been in the auto sector for 40 years. I know what happened to the auto sector. It started with the free trade agreement. That wasn't free. It wasn't reciprocal. That hurt the auto industry and the parts industry. That was the start of it. It was done under a Conservative government. We all remember that.

And then the big issue that caused the 300,000—it was an attack on the province of Ontario by the Harper government. You all remember this, because you have some members that were part of that government. It was the petrodollar that drove our dollar to \$1.10. It was great for out west. As a matter of fact, they were giving their residents money, very similar to what you're trying to do now, to buy votes. But they were doing that in Alberta, because they were making so much money in the oil sector because we had 110 cents. So what happened is the Big Three and some others, particularly in the parts industry, ended up saying, “We can't compete at \$1.10,” even though we had a publicly funded health care system, which helped us draw the jobs into Ontario in the first place. But they couldn't compete at 110 cents on a dollar, and it stayed there for a number of years, so it drove plants closed.

None of you guys know what it's like. I know what it's like to walk into the plant and say the plant's closing and it's closing because of decisions of the government, and a decision of the government was to allow the Canadian dollar to go to \$1.10. The dollar in Canada should never be any higher than 78 cents to 84 cents. That makes us competitive around the world.

So I say, when you stand up, please, at least—stranger to the truth on this, but on this issue, that's what killed the auto industry, that's what killed the parts industry. That's what killed manufacturing in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for the presentation. It's always great to listen to him, a very passionate member and he brings a unique perspective, I think, to this House.

What I want to ask him is, he's often talking about the importance of support for his businesses. He and I have

talked about that here. I didn't hear that in his speech, but he was only given 20 minutes, as he said, not his full hour, like he usually does. But in budget 2021, one of the things—and I talked to the minister about this—was the implementation of single window for business matters, which I thought is fantastic. This idea was implemented in budget 2021 to be introduced, and this bill is looking to implement the At Your Service Act, which starts to provide support for our businesses. I'm wondering if the member has had an opportunity to talk to some of his businesses about this particular initiative which will make life a lot easier for the businesses to be able to work with government.

1450

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate the question, although I didn't quite hear all the wording of it, but I will talk about the importance of businesses in the province of Ontario. As a matter of fact, I talked to the associate minister the other day about a problem with one of the grants, that some of the people were left out—businesses. A lot of the businesses didn't qualify, or they applied for the business grants and what happened is, something was wrong. There was no appeal process. My office got hundreds of calls on the business grants. I was calling the minister's office. I normally bring it right here, as you guys know. I bring it to you and hand it to you. Lots of problems with it.

Not enough small businesses qualify for the grants and they were too slow going, particularly between the second wave and the third wave where small businesses were really hit hard in the second and third waves and we didn't offer them any money. We just offered them some in January, and I'm still having problems. I had an email at 11 o'clock last night from a small business in Fort Erie who were okayed the first time, but still haven't got their money for this time. So we still have lots of problems around small business grants in the province of Ontario although businesses need help.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The next question?

Ms. Doly Begum: The member spoke beautifully about front-line health care workers, and just a few days ago we actually had quite a few of them in front of Queen's Park: CUPE and SEIU members, front-line workers who have been on the front lines, really carrying this province forward, helping all of us get through this pandemic. One of the things this government did—and you spoke about this—was Bill 124. Can you speak a little bit about the damage that this has done to these workers in their morale and what this government could do right now, what they have the power to do right now to help health care workers and front-line workers?

Mr. Wayne Gates: The easy answer to that is they could repeal Bill 124 right away. You could do that today—and not just for nurses. It should be for all workers because all workers are affected. I talked about the EMS, ambulance drivers and the crisis we've got there.

As far as the ones who were here—SEIU and CUPE—they weren't just nurses. They worked in our hospitals, they're feeling disrespected and they have mental health

issues. Under Bill 124, it violates their collective agreements. They can't get mental health supports. They can't get vacation time. Their collective agreements have been violated—and shift preference. So what's happened is, they bring in agency employees who work day shift. The nurses who are there all the time get to go in on afternoons and the midnight shift, whereas the agency employees take the preferential shifts and then they're making about \$25 to \$30 more per hour as an agency employee. Does that make sense to anybody here? So you're cutting their wages at 1%—

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

Next question?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to hear my friend from Niagara Falls. I want him to know that we actually took a vote to not limit his debate so he could finish speech, but we also took a vote on that hour lead-off thing and we don't want him to do those anymore either. So I want to be fair to him.

It's always a pleasure to be here. He brings great ideas to the floor, but what I do want to ask him—he talks very, very passionately about the Niagara Falls area. But it really goes to those developers, and I wonder what Niagara Falls would look like if a government didn't support development in Niagara Falls. He talks about things in this bill. There are permits. It's not just for developers; it's for the small, little homeowner who wants to build. It's the new family owner. It's affordable housing. It's the long-term-care facilities that we want to speed up and make sure they can get done.

A single window for business—he's very passionate about business. Why would you not want something that's going to make them more effective and more efficient? The supply chain—businesses in Niagara Falls are going to support that. So I hope he can find a way to say yes to a couple of things here and consider supporting this piece of legislation.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I do appreciate that, and I'll address your opening comments: I am sure it was unanimous to allow me to keep talking.

What I want to say is, to your point, I've had a lot of tourism operators feel they've been let down by the provincial government when it comes to COVID and not getting monies to them quick enough. You can take a look at Niagara Parks—they've done quite well. The government has given them \$25 million. They've given them cheaper loans—I think loans at about 1%. As a matter of fact if they pay within 18 months or 24 months they don't even have to pay it back. That's good investment. They were able to open up another sector in tourism.

But you didn't do that with the big developers and the Clifton Hill owners, those people that are tied to tourism who are hurting as well. That should have been done by them as well. They should have been able to get this same opportunity. They're not asking for free money, but loans that are 1% instead of paying 7% or 8% at a bank. They're happening, quite frankly, because it is harder to get money

from a credit union. They were going to the States to get money. So you didn't help that particular sector as well—

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

Next question?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I enjoy the member from Niagara when he stands and speaks so passionately about his area. If there is one thing you can count on him bringing to the floor it is bringing the voice of his constituents here.

He talked a lot about local businesses and community infrastructure. He talked a lot and passionately about the impacts on seniors, the long-term-care homes that he has, the auto strategy that I know the member, along with our colleagues from the Windsor area, have been crying for this government to come forward with. He also talked about front-line workers.

My question to the member is, particularly on schedule 1, the At Your Service Act. If the member had to look at this government and follow this act as far as where this government is going to develop a business standard in regard to a certain level of services that should be provided to all of these entities, which one of those—or all of them, if that's the case—would he look at shaming this government for having failed this province?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Let me just repeat my speech because I touched on a lot of things that have really hurt our community. But I think the one I'll talk about really quickly again is the Fort Erie urgent care centre. How do you close an urgent care centre that services 33,000 residents, a lot of them seniors who are going to be asked to drive down a very dangerous highway? The first day that they closed our urgent care centre, we had that big storm, about five, six weeks ago. They were told they couldn't get an ambulance—and I said this the other day—they've got to call for an ambulance because they don't have a car, they don't have close family; they had to get a cab to go to the hospital in Niagara Falls. But driving down that highway—we've had a number of people who have been killed on that highway, unfortunately, during storms. How can you close an urgent care centre?

And it wasn't just in Fort Erie where they closed the urgent care centre. Three urgent care centres in the province of Ontario were closed because of staffing. Staffing levels are because of Bill 124. They're all tied together. Get rid of Bill 124 and the low retention of staff goes away. You don't have to close urgent care centres. You can provide health care to our seniors. They all go hand in hand. All you have to do is once in a while—not all the time—listen to ideas from this side of the House that make sense. This one makes sense. It's a win-win-win—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I am going to say that we don't have time for another back-and-forth, and I am going to continue with further debate.

Further debate?

Hon. Ross Romano: I am pleased to rise in the House today to support our government's important red tape re-

duction legislation, which is the eighth in our government's mandate and one that the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is exceptionally proud to be a part of.

This proposed legislation is aimed at making life better for the people of our great province by eliminating unnecessary costs and burdens on our residents and our businesses and opening the doors to invite more great economic activity into our province. I want to thank my colleague the member for Mississauga–Streetsville and Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for bringing forward the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, which is a very comprehensive piece of legislation that is supporting Ontarians in every single corner of our province.

The initiatives that I will be speaking to this afternoon include some very transformational pieces that will help build a stronger province for us all. From the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act to the Digital Dealership Registration Initiative to the proposed centre of realty excellence, my ministry is seized with supporting our Premier's vision to make life easier and more affordable for the people of Ontario.

Each of these three items plays a critical role to putting more money back in Ontario taxpayers' pockets so that in turn they can invest it in ways that are meaningful to them.

1500

It goes without saying that simplifying everyday transactions—like purchasing and registering a vehicle—is a huge benefit to Ontarians who look to us to make life more convenient and more cost-effective.

For the past two years, the great people of Ontario have been tested like they have never been tested before. Like virtually every other jurisdiction around the entire globe, Ontario had to pivot quickly in order to tackle the onslaught of challenges that were brought on by COVID-19. From strengthening our health care system to keeping the economy going, our government turned our focus to tackling this pandemic and making sure that we were very well set up after it was gone.

The Fewer Fees, Better Services Act is one that shows Ontarians that their province is one of the best places in all of North America to raise a family, to work, to play, to live and to operate a business.

This proposed legislation is also proof that our government continues to keep our province one that is going to be free of unnecessary red tape. We're delivering on our promise to reduce red tape for Ontarians everywhere—unlike the former Liberal government that spent nearly 15 years simply trying to put roadblocks up in front of everyone, preventing communities from being able to thrive.

Speaker, this act is the result of great collaboration across various ministries in our government working together in a united effort to positively impact the lives of workers, families and businesses in every single corner of our province.

For starters, the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act—one that we like to call BOBI—will support our economic growth, build Ontario businesses and create jobs

across the province, while ensuring greater security of our supply chain. The implementation of the BOBI Act will also contribute to the growth of Ontario businesses by giving them preference when conducting procurement processes for goods and services. This will not only build their competitiveness on the global market, but it's going to provide them with even greater opportunities to secure public sector contracts to grow their businesses and, ultimately, our communities.

For example, a tech start-up in Waterloo that is trying to get their foot in the door would not have to worry about competing against more established, out-of-province vendors. BOBI generates even more confidence in the Ontario brand, and it creates confidence in our supply chain security, knowing that we can rely on the great businesses of the province of Ontario to ensure that we have everything we need. Thanks to BOBI, we can do what the NDP-backed Liberal government before us failed to do, and that is support our Ontario-based manufacturers and businesses, and build stronger communities.

We continue, as a government, to work on reducing the burden and red tape for businesses that do work with our government. Instead of making them spend more time and money, and more paperwork that just drags things out—and no one likes doing more paperwork than they need to do.

So to the 15 years of NDP-backed Liberal red tape that have kept this province from sprouting onwards and upwards, we say: no more. Instead, we are leveraging the immense buying power of our provincial government to help domestic businesses grow and create good-paying jobs for Ontario workers and their families.

Here's a fun fact for Ontarians who are watching this debate at home: Annually, the Ontario public service, or the OPS, spends \$6 billion a year on procurement. This is such a small slice, though, of the \$29 billion that is being spent in all public sector organizations across all of Ontario, when you combine all our hospitals, school boards and other ministries—\$29 billion a year in procurement, in buying power we hold as the great province of Ontario. Plain and simple, this is spending that should be done locally whenever and wherever it is possible, because if there's any type of business out there that beats any others in terms of quality, it's most certainly going to be an Ontario business.

BOBI is designed to boost the sourcing of more products locally and help us ensure that Ontario is better prepared for any potential future emergencies. We have been able to ensure and deliver on a promise that our Premier made when we first walked into this pandemic, when he stood before the people of this great province and said, "Never again will we be beholden to any other jurisdiction to deliver to us what we need as Ontarians." When we were in a complete state of crisis, we turned to the private sector, we turned to our communities and we were able to generate huge returns on Ontario-based products that we needed to get us through this pandemic. BOBI has allowed our government to tap into our industrial production potential to support a steady stream

now of Ontario-made goods that our people and operations can depend on every single day, and this allows us to put more money and more confidence back into Ontario's economy and into continuing to build our provincial supply chain through Supply Ontario, our new centralized procurement agency that will be able to harness all of that \$29 billion worth of buying power.

Speaker, just in the last week alone, my ministry made an exciting announcement about how Ontario is bolstering our PPE stockpile and redistributing record levels of critical supplies. We continue to ensure that the province is prepared in the fight against COVID-19 and its variants by ramping up on procurement and delivery of additional services, PPE and critical supplies and equipment—meaning additional critical goods and PPE are getting into the hands of key sectors like long-term care, education and child care, where they're needed to support the safe and gradual easing of public health measures. It's no secret that at every turn of the pandemic, we've strengthened our supply chain domestically, focusing on securing critical high-quality PPE and goods through Ontario-based manufacturers. From the outset of the Omicron variant, we've redoubled our efforts and taken further immediate action to source additional materials and position our province to successfully and safely reopen our schools, our economy and keep children and our communities safe.

In order to further support the gradual easing of public health measures, we implemented a response plan to strengthen Ontario's pandemic supply chain and bolster our stockpile. Look at these numbers: We secured over 97,500 HEPA filters to improve ventilation in congregate care settings, with more than 24,500 going to hospitals, long-term-care centres and retirement homes, 5,500 into agri-food congregate living settings, over 52,000 into our schools and child care facilities as well as another over 15,500 for essential settings.

We procured an additional 79 million superior-quality N95 masks from the 3M plant in Brockville, sourcing another nearly 200 million level 1 and level 2 surgical protective masks annually for over the next five years through Ontario-based companies and providing and delivering over 8.5 million child-sized three-ply cloth masks for students and over 10 million N95 masks for teachers to protect them at school.

Also, we purchased over 157 million rapid tests, including 126 million just between December 2021 and January 2022 alone. These additional supplies are on top of the province's already robust stockpile and previous record-level investments for PPE.

And because we believe in open, transparent government that keeps the public informed, information on how our province is strengthening our pandemic supply chain is now readily available online, including data on the amounts of PPE and critical supplies that are being distributed across our entire province. More specifically, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have shipped over 722 million pieces of PPE to support public sector workers. That includes 282 million masks, 270 million gloves and over 4.7 million litres of hand sanitizer.

In addition to the record-setting delivery of vaccines and booster doses to Ontarians, we've also extended our call to arms to allow and to support Ontario businesses to host employer-led clinics. A growing number of workplaces have actively shown their Ontario spirit by rising to the challenge to help administer over 85,000 COVID vaccines to date, and at the centre of it all, Ontario-based businesses have been critical players to ensuring that the future health of our provincial supply chain stays strong.

1510

Made-in-Ontario solutions to procuring locally produced and sourced PPE and other products are needed to fight the spread of COVID-19, and that is something that we are committed to doing and have been doing, Madam Speaker. The BOBI Act will provide companies in Ontario with greater business opportunities through public sector procurements, helping them to sell more goods and services and to create jobs in their local communities. We are focused on protecting the progress that we have made, and on building on our Ontario businesses, building them up so that we can get our economy back on track.

Another area that we are focused on is transforming our province's significant real estate holdings. While real estate is certainly one of our province's greatest resources, we know that we can get more out of our property. This is why, with the support of this Legislative Assembly, our government will establish a centre of realty excellence, or CORE for short, which has the potential to unlock value and bring in additional revenue and savings from the pool of approximately 20,000 real estate assets held by public entities across Ontario. Not only that, CORE will also allow for the sale of properties by reducing operating costs for the government—gain revenue; reduce operations.

Our real estate sector is undergoing a never-before-seen transformation, and as many of you already know, in most large organizations, real estate is one of the largest expenses that you have, next to employee compensation. As a matter of fact, getting the greatest value from our properties is crucial so that we can continue to be the most efficient organization possible and keep focusing our resources on delivering front-line services to the people of this province.

We have certainly spearheaded those efforts expertly and creatively in the past, through revenue-generating activities such as sales, renting and leasing of spaces. We've also successfully marketed and sold an assortment of high-profile properties across our province already, and helped meet our government's other priorities by using surplus for affordable housing and long-term care.

Taking a centralized, government-wide approach is not only going to help drive leaner processes and greater efficiency, Speaker, it's going to allow the government to realize greater value and to be able to nimbly and efficiently maximize the value of our real estate for the people of this province. On top of that, it's helping to revitalize communities by transforming underused properties into critically needed space, whether it be for long-term care, affordable housing or community hubs.

CORE will create a united approach across the public sector for prudent management of government property, and will determine priority surplus properties aligned with key programs. What's more, while today real estate data is dispersed and not readily available to the public, my ministry is creating an online portal that will act as a central repository of all Ontario public service and broader public service real estate data.

This portal could open countless doors and opportunities to both public and government to identify potential synergies and strategic projects that will give us a more comprehensive option as a government when we're making realty decisions. This is by far one of the most innovative plans to leverage the value of our province's vast real estate inventory, and it serves as proof that we are willing to take any avenue at our disposal to care for the type of delivery of service that we want to provide to the people of this province on a daily basis.

Speaker, before I conclude my statement, there's one final aspect of the business modernization front that I want to share with Ontarians and with this Legislature. On top of all the work that we are doing, we're delivering on our plan to make government services easier to use, more convenient and accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We're doing so much by launching a new program that will allow eligible car dealerships to register new vehicles and issue new permits and licence plates. The digital dealership registration, or DDR, is part of a plan to create programs that offer simpler, faster and better access to services.

Speaker, it is so important that we be able to provide the opportunity for people to buy a car and be able to drive home with it on the same day, and have the dealership provide them with their licence plate right when they buy it. It's convenient, and in short, thanks to this legislation, for the first time ever, Ontarians will be able to just do that: go into a dealership, buy a car and drive out that day.

Automating the vehicle registration process will help improve margins and reduce time spent by Ontarians and Ontario businesses in dealing with vehicle-related administration. It's going to reduce burden by removing layers of registration processes and allow for a better form of communication between ServiceOntario and dealerships that are part of this program, saving us all time and money.

I want to point out, Speaker, that the DDR would not just benefit the ServiceOntario down the street from your home or the dealership in the area where you bought your first car. We are now also able to take advantage of near-instantaneous registration of our motor vehicles, which eliminates the hassle of having to wait all those hours doing extra paperwork when all you really want to do is take your new car home. Not only is this going to allow for a better vehicle registration process for Ontarians, but it is going to simplify this part of the transaction for vehicle dealerships that have to play a very important role, obviously, in supporting our local economy here in Ontario.

You can rest assured that, as always, our government is unequivocally committed to protecting their personal and

private information. Just as many of our government's accomplishments have gone in the last four years, the DDR was also developed in consultation with privacy experts and the law enforcement community to ensure that the personal information of Ontarians is absolutely paramount and protected.

Speaker, my ministry is incredibly proud of this important and exciting act that signals multiple major steps forward in so many areas:

We are cutting costs for millions of Ontario vehicle owners by refunding licence plate sticker renewal fees paid all the way back to March 1, 2020.

This supports the establishment, also, of a single window for business service that is open and transparent to the people of this province. We're doing that as well.

We're contributing to the growth of Ontario businesses by giving them preference when conducting procurement and building their competitiveness on a global stage.

Strengthening the province's supply chain and helping build domestic businesses and grow good-paying jobs here in Ontario: That's a huge initiative, obviously, that we want to be able to pursue.

And we want to provide more flexibility and transparency related to provincial real estate assets, and so much, much more.

To date, this government has taken more than 400 actions to reduce burdens without compromising the health and safety of the public or the well-being of our environment. These changes that we have made in the past year have made it even easier for businesses to understand and comply with the rules—also while always ensuring health and safety.

The collection of these initiatives, Madam Speaker, is bound by the overarching themes of simplicity, affordability, efficiency and, yes, logic. These actions are strengthening and reinforcing our province's status as one of the most important pillars in North America in the supply chain. We're helping communities, businesses and workers along the way as we continue the fight against COVID-19. Now is the time to build our resiliency into our economy, into our communities and into the hopes and the dreams of the people and the families and the business operators all across our great province.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel, Speaker, and with the passage of this important suite of initiatives under the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, we will be able to continue to hope and to grow.

My fellow members, I thank you for your time today, and I encourage you to support the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act. We want to get this right. We owe it to Ontarians to continue to build Ontario into the best place that it possibly can be to live, to work, to raise a family and to do business in.

By standing up for the hard-working taxpayers whose mandates we have earned, we can make so many aspects of their lives simpler, more efficient and more affordable so they can focus on the things that matter to them the most.

Madam Speaker, thank you. Have a great day.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. Wayne Gates: The member started his conversation about manufacturing loss. I gave you a little education on how it actually happened. But you continue to say it was supported by Liberals and the NDP, which is nowhere near accurate.

But let's be clear about something: Oshawa closed under your watch. The Premier was clear. He said that ship had sailed. It was Unifor and MPP—now Madam Speaker—French that fought to keep that plant open. Windsor, under your watch, lost 1,100 jobs in the third shift. It was only the NDP, under MPPs Gretzky, Hatfield and Natyshak, who fought for those jobs with Unifor, including attending rallies in Windsor and Oshawa, which I attended as well.

My question to this member: What PC MPPs attended any of those rallies to help save those auto jobs in Oshawa or Windsor? And maybe Brampton next.

Hon. Ross Romano: To the member opposite, our government has been putting workers first, putting people first since the very start of this mandate. I would be remiss not to speak to something that I alluded to at the very start of my speech, as you had highlighted. This is the eighth red tape reduction bill. I heard some comments today about, you know, that it's just another red tape bill. These are important. This is reducing burden in people's lives. Something as simple as a licence plate sticker—that does reduce a burden. I know it on a very, very personal level. Every time I'm being told that I have to change my sticker, from my wife, and I'm sometimes very, very late on it.

1520

These are all important things, Madam Speaker, that we are doing, and I'd love more opportunity to expand on the member's question in my follow-up here.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is about digital dealer. Under the leadership of the Premier, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the minister of small business and red tape, this government has taken action to allow more government services and transactions to be conducted online. Online services save people and businesses money and their time, while providing flexibility and convenience.

My question to the member: Can the member please provide some information on this initiative, on this package, that allows more transactions to be completed online?

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you to the great member for the question, and maybe just a few pieces, again, on the digital dealership registration, or, as I said, DDR program. We actually have 4.7 million of ServiceOntario's top 10 transactions are digital dealership registrations. Think of that: 4.7 million transactions. There's presently no way for these services to be able to be provided online. Madam Speaker, that's the world that we live in. We have to be able to give people the ability to do things in a digital world. I don't say digital only, but certainly digital first,

right? We want to be able to create that. As a government, we want to be able to demonstrate that we are a very transformational, innovative place to be, and I think this is a great way on us delivering on that.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I listened very closely to what the Minister of Government and Consumer Services had to offer this morning. My question is more in his role that he had prior, as the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. My colleague the member from Sudbury raised quite a few issues this morning in regard to schedule 7. If he would be here, he'd love to have an answer to this.

It deals with the board at Laurentian University. How does schedule 7 actually strengthen the trust and relationship, when neither the Laurentian University Faculty Association nor the Laurentian University Staff Union were consulted, and were actually surprised by schedule 7? And my next question is: Who was consulted if it wasn't the folks of the university that were directly impacted by the changes and challenges put forth in front of Laurentian University?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Ross Romano: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and to the member opposite for the question. I wonder if the member opposite remembers—because we're neighbours; Algoma-Manitoulin actually surrounds all of Sault Ste. Marie. You'll remember something very important, that even constituents—many, many constituents—of yours might: when then-Essar Steel, now Algoma Steel, was going through CCAA proceedings. You may recall from that period of time that when a process like CCAA is going on, there are parties to that.

When Laurentian was under CCAA, Laurentian was a party and so were numerous other groups. The provincial government was not a party to that, and we are not privy to talk about what happens inside of those courtrooms. The member opposite well knows that. But what I can tell you about schedule 7 and why it's in there is that it's important and it's necessary to allow Laurentian to move forward. That is why it's there, Madam Speaker, and to the member opposite.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm really happy to stand and try to speak about this bill, because there are many aspects of this bill which actually are very close to my heart. Having any service being online makes life much easier for users, much easier for customers, and much easier for businesses to address, when we talk about a single window for businesses to address all the government connections and permissions and licensing and all of the applications needed. Can the minister tell us how that will help to bring more businesses—small business, specifically—to Ontario?

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you to the outstanding member for the question. It's really simple: We're making

businesses' lives easier. We're making people's lives simpler in order to do business. As anyone who has ever tried to run a business before will say, capital flows in the path of least resistance, and we are continually ensuring that we maximize on opportunities for people to spend their money on the most important things they want to spend their money on when they're running a business, which are the services that they need to deliver.

And making sure that people have the help that they need from their government on a go-forward basis—we've been providing that through so many of these digital transactions that can now be done online. The top 10 ServiceOntario transactions are now going to be available online. This is critical for businesses in our province to have the opportunity to compete and to thrive.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the minister for government services and consumer protection. He talked about open and transparent government that keeps people informed and also spoke about supporting Ontario homebuyers on the biggest purchase of their life.

Now, my question is about the Ontario Builder Directory. Routinely, Canadians for Properly Built Homes has pointed out glaring omissions and inaccuracies on the Ontario Builder Directory. They've brought it to Tarion's attention. They've brought it to HCRA's attention and, in fact, the emails even have it to your attention. Why is the information on this directory edited, and why is it factually inaccurate?

Hon. Ross Romano: Once again, we're doing everything to ensure that we are making life more competitive for the people of this province, for the businesses in this province, and we'll continue to do that.

This legislation that's before us—I'll focus on what this legislation is speaking of, but I will say, to the member's question, that we are standing toe to toe with builders and with homebuyers out there and ensuring that everything is done as effectively and transparently as possible. The building registry is one that we are doing some work on, with the HCRA and Tarion. The member will be very happy to see the progress that has been made on Justice Cunningham's recommendations with respect to the Tarion work that is being done by that great group.

And, ultimately, Madam Speaker, I think I'll have opportunity to get a little bit more into details here in my next response, but this act is about reducing red tape. That's exactly what it's doing, and that is making it easier for businesses to succeed in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will not have time for another question and response, but we do have time for further debate.

Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my privilege to get up on behalf of my constituents in Windsor West to speak to Bill 84, Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, 2022.

But I do want to point out that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services spoke before me. There were two questions posed from my colleagues on this side of the

House. The first one was, where was this government when Unifor workers in Oshawa were losing their jobs and the plant closed? And the Premier said, "That ship has left the dock." I believe that's what he said. Where were you standing with those workers as those jobs were leaving the province? I can tell you where you weren't: in Windsor, when we were losing the third shift at Stellantis, at the Windsor assembly plant. I can tell you where you weren't: When a company that got government funding, with no strings attached, used workers in Windsor for research and development and manufacturing of a product, and then that company said, "Tough luck. We're leaving town." You weren't there.

So to respond to my colleague who asked that question, I can tell you where they were, or better yet, where they weren't: They weren't standing with those workers. They were waving those manufacturing jobs goodbye.

When my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin asked about Laurentian University and who they talked to when it came to the schedule in this bill, the minister danced all around, talking about court cases and how they can't get involved in things, but he never answered the question of who they actually consulted when it came to that schedule of the bill. And we see that that is classic behaviour of this Conservative government.

1530

My colleague from Timmins talked earlier about scrapping the fees for licence plate stickers, something that an NDP government had previously done and a Conservative government brought back in and started charging for. He asked a simple question, something that the previous NDP government had had to reconcile and deal with. So I'm asking, because I have constituents writing—I read one of them out earlier; I have more. They want to know, with that over \$1 billion loss of revenue from stickers, what services are you going to cut? They just want to know that. They want to hear your plan.

But Speaker, we know they can't answer the question. It's not just that they won't; they can't. Again, this is something right before an election where they can say, "Hey, look at us. We're fantastic. We're getting rid of these fees," but they will not be accountable to the people of the province to tell them what else is going to be cut or what services are going to be lessened as a result of that lost revenue.

The people of the province deserve to know that. You can't just say, "Yay, us! We're taking \$120 off your spending, off your tab every year. Yay, us!" You have to tell them what your plan is for that lost revenue, how you're making that up. Where is it coming from? What services are you going to cut? But I suspect the government hadn't even thought of that. They just figure, "It's a great election gimmick and we'll put it out there." As Nancy from my riding had asked, frankly, "How stupid do they think voters are?" She wants to know where that money is coming from.

They talked at great length about schedule 1 and about small businesses; and I know they have constituents, too, who own businesses, who have gone through the same

issues with the business support plans that they brought forward. I can tell you, in my riding—in my entire region, frankly—there were more businesses that were denied support than were given support. They were denied for things as simple as a spelling mistake, and there was no option to appeal. Many times, they couldn't even get a response as to why their application was rejected. Then, there are those that were told they were accepted and were going to get funding who never got it.

I want to read an email. I have a constituent who applied for the Ontario small business grant and was approved, but she never received the funds. This is an email that one of my staff sent to the ministry liaison: “She has not been successful in resolving this issue with the usual helpline and that is why I am now asking you to assist in resolving this matter.”

This is the response that we got, and this was a standard response throughout, frankly: “Can't help you. Not going to tell you why this person's application was rejected.” Keep in mind she went through the helpline that they provided. She came to us because she wasn't getting answers through the helpline the government provided. This was the response we got back from the ministry: “The ministry is no longer accepting new inquiries as the program closed on April 7. If applicants have questions regarding their application, they can contact our ServiceOntario line. They are able to assist.” And then they give the phone numbers.

Now, I'm not sure what part of the previous email was missed where it said that this constituent, this business owner, had already tried several times contacting the number and the email that the government gave and she wasn't successful, but that's what they said: “Tough luck. Sorry about your luck.”

I want to talk about a recent event in my riding—it was directly in my riding—which was the bridge blockade. We had businesses within that corridor that were impacted. We had businesses across our entire city, out into the county, across the province, across the country and into the States that were impacted by that blockade. The Premier was nowhere to be found for days. Now, I've heard that he got off his snowmobile and away from his cottage to finally come back and start dealing with the issue, or at least be seen to have some sort of an opinion on what was going on in Ottawa, but it took days for the Premier to say anything.

It is the largest trade corridor. That bridge has the largest trade in North America and the Premier was nowhere to be found. I asked, “Will you help the businesses”—direct, specific funding for the businesses in my community that were impacted by that blockade and the workers who were impacted, because there were many within the auto sector and within the feeder plants, within the supply chain who couldn't work. Agriculture couldn't get their food to where it needed to go. Our greenhouse growers couldn't get their product to market.

I've asked for direct funding. The minister yesterday says, “Well, you can look at our business grants that we were giving out”—the ones people can't access. That was

his answer yesterday. I want dedicated funding for the businesses in my community and the workers in my community who lost income as a result of that blockade and the delayed action by the Premier. That's what we need.

Speaker, I had planned for 20 minutes and I ended up with only 10, so there's not a lot more that I'm going to be able to cover, unfortunately.

But this government is not making life easier for people. They're not making life more affordable for people. Everything has gone up. While the Premier wants to hide at his cottage and pretend like nothing is going wrong, the cost of housing has gone up. The cost of rent has gone up. People with disabilities trying to survive on ODSP are getting further behind and relying on food banks because they can't pay for a roof over their head and eat. Hydro has gone up. Hydro has gone up, and this government is saying, “We're making life better for people.” They're making life better for their big corporation buddies like Amazon and Walmart who have made billions of dollars of profits during this pandemic because they allowed them to stay open while shutting our small businesses down.

But it's time for this government to wake up, to really get in touch with the people in this province, to listen to their own constituents, because life is not getting better under their government. It's only getting worse.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you to my colleague for her presentation. I did want to ask her—she mentioned about support for her businesses, and part of this bill is making life easier for businesses. I'm wondering if you've had an opportunity to talk to some of your businesses who have had difficulties in the past when they conduct business. Whether it's for permits or compliance, this bill—really, the initiation started in budget 2021, when they started the process. This will allow the minister to be able to implement this process.

Have you had a chance to speak to some of your businesses? It will now be a lot easier for them to do business with Ontario. Have you had an opportunity to have a conversation with your businesses?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: At the very end there, that member said “to do business with Ontario,” so I'm assuming he means with the province. Apparently he wasn't listening to what I just said.

My office and many others, if not every member in this House—our offices were flooded with phone calls and emails from local businesses, small and medium-sized businesses who could not access the government's business grants, were being denied because of spelling errors and couldn't appeal it. There was no appeal process. Some of them weren't getting a response at all—not a response at all.

1540

So yes, I've talked to small businesses in my community. I just talked about more who needed dedicated funds to help get them past the difficulty from the

blockade. What they need is a government who actually works with them, not a government that's working against them like you have been.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Next question?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member, and I would agree with her comments regarding the difficulty that many businesses had in accessing emergency COVID funds to keep operating. This bill is supposed to make things better, easier for business, but in my 10 years here—when we were dealing with the COVID emergency funds, it was the first time dealing with a government agency that didn't actually have an appeal process. It didn't have an official appeal process.

So while a couple of hundred million dollars or whatever went to companies that shouldn't have gotten it, for companies that needed it, there wasn't an official appeals process. At one point, it was, "No, you just can't call anymore." I've never seen that before. Hopefully this makes it better, but the track record so far isn't that good. Could you please continue your comments on small business and the difficulties they've had?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Absolutely, and I appreciate my colleague for asking me that, because it gives me an opportunity to highlight the businesses who were able to—we cringe now when we hear the word "pivot," but they were able to pivot during the beginning of the pandemic, to move to online sales or to have curbside pickup. They were able to do that in the beginning, and then struggled with it further down the road.

Do you know what happened? They didn't qualify for the government funding, and again, they couldn't get help. Nobody was picking up the phone, returning calls, returning emails, so they couldn't get an answer as to whether they were approved or if they were not approved or if there was an issue. There was no appeal process.

So it's absurd to me—and to them, because I was hearing it from them—that we have a government who say that they are so supportive of small businesses, and they set up a program that is meant to fail. It's meant to fail. It's designed to fail the people that they're claiming it was going to serve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Next question.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: The bill being debated today is an exciting one. It continues our work to make life more affordable for Ontarians and make it easier for people and businesses to interact with the government.

Madam Speaker, this bill not only puts more money into the people's pockets; it also reduces red tape. It's putting more money into the pockets of people by eliminating the licence plate stickers. That will put more money into people's pockets. We're eliminating the tolls on the 412 and 418. That will put more money into people's pockets, also reducing red tape at the same time.

The NDP claim they oppose the tolls, so my question is simple: Will the member opposite support this bill, or will she continue saying no to the people of Ontario?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would like to start by thanking my colleague from Oshawa for twice tabling a bill to get rid of those fees. She's the one who deserves the credit—her and everyone from the community who worked to get rid of those fees.

Madam Speaker, I've already talked at length to some of the other things that he asked me about, so I'm going to say that I heard the member from Whitby yell as I was speaking earlier about, "How do you like your hospital?" We love the idea of a new hospital. We've been fighting for years to get a new hospital, and done it across partisan lines. The only party that has made it partisan is the Conservative Party.

What I want to say on that front, though, Madam Speaker, is something I've said when it was the Liberal government, and I'm saying it to the Conservatives now: You can build a new building, you can put new equipment in it, but until you repeal Bill 124 and ensure that those front-line health care workers get the respect and the pay they deserve, a new building and new equipment will not serve the people that they're supposed to. Until you ensure that we have enough front-line workers—

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member for her presentation and her passion for her constituents. I know she works very hard for the community she represents.

One of the things we've heard from this government is talking about revenue generation, talking about how we need to collect and make sure we have different ways of helping communities. But when it comes to reality, when we look at what just happened with the 407 and the penalty fees and how the government just decided they were going to say, "You keep that. That's all right. We've got your back"—when we know people across this province are struggling. I want to give the member a chance to talk about what took place and how that money could have supported so many front-line workers, and the fact that this government just decided to do that. Why do we think that this government continues to be for their buddies and friends?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to that.

What happened with the 407, which, I will point out, was sold under a previous Conservative government—it was privatized by a previous Conservative government—is, there is a 99-year contract that was given out to the 407 when they privatized it. Under that contract, there are specific obligations that need to be met, and they weren't. When it came time for the owners of the 407 to pay because they did not meet their contractual obligations, this Conservative government said, "Don't worry about it." I think it was about a billion dollars. So while the government is saying, "Hey, we need Bill 124. We can't afford to pay the nurses and other workers what they deserve for the work that they do," while they are suppressing the wages of nurses, while they are cutting education, while they are cutting social services, while they are cutting health care funding—they went to their

buddies and said, “It’s all right. Don’t worry about the contract. We’re going to waive that \$1-billion fine.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I think we have time for a quick back-and-forth.

The member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: In the 2021 budget, which the opposition parties voted against, we committed to the implementation of a single window for business, to reduce administrative burdens and to improve customer service. By providing a single place, it makes it easier for businesses to access information, to access services that they need to get up and running, to create jobs and growth.

This bill begins this work by implementing the At Your Service Act, requiring the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to create businesses, that require business—ministry to comply with the business standard. So when it comes to the standard, does the member opposite agree this will help businesses in her riding—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. A very quick response from the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: We didn’t support the budget because just in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services alone, there was an over \$1-billion cut. Education was cut. Health care was cut.

I will go back to the businesses. The businesses that have been struggling throughout this pandemic, through a government program, have not been able to get the support they need. The government wasn’t responding to them. So I think it’s pretty valid that those of us on this side of the House and those businesses that were impacted don’t trust this government to do the right thing.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It’s an honour to rise in the House today.

Before I begin my debate here, I want to voice what many of my colleagues have said today, including Premier Ford. I stand with the people of Ukraine. I denounce this act of aggression by Putin. I was reading some of the updates on Twitter, and I just want to commend those people in Russia who are speaking out against the acts of aggression by Putin and who are risking their lives in support of Ukraine and democracy.

Madam Speaker, I’m pleased to have been given an opportunity to speak to the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, 2022. This bill is a step in the right direction to removing the layers of red tape that were inherited from the previous government. The people of Ontario are hard-working and ambitious. Our government is making life easier for the people of Ontario by reducing red tape and by cutting costs and service delays.

1550

Building Ontario—that is what our government is doing. We are building schools, we are creating jobs, and building infrastructure that keeps us connected, like broadband. We’re removing tolls on Highways 412 and 418. We are taking care of our elderly by building and

expanding long-term-care homes. In my riding alone, Madam Speaker, in the past three years I have managed to get and secure funding for seven brand new schools.

Interjection.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you. We’ve also secured funding to expand pre-existing long-term-care homes, like the Osgoode Care Centre, and to build new ones in Stittsville, like Extendicare.

Madam Speaker, when we’re talking about investing, and when we’re talking about building Ontario, this isn’t a high-level statement we’re making. There is fact, there is proof on the ground of the steps that we have taken as a government since getting elected to building Ontario and moving forward.

Ontarians are resilient, and over the last two years, the people of Ontario have shown spirit and their ability to adapt, especially small business owners who had to adjust to the way they do business. Small businesses are the backbone of the economy and they are staples in the communities they serve.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on businesses across Ontario. Last year, our government helped to support more than 110,000 small businesses across Ontario through the Ontario Small Business Support Grant to help with operating costs and PPE. Earlier this year, to protect Ontarians our government made the difficult decision to revert back to a modified step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen.

To support businesses that were subject to closure, our government provided up to \$10,000 to eligible businesses through the Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant. This grant can be used for operating costs, paying wages or for inventory and stock. In order to help small business operating costs and families that are spending more time at home, our government reduced electricity costs to the off-peak rate of 8.2 cents per kilowatt hour for 21 days during modified step 2.

Our government sees that in order to serve Ontarians better, there needs to be fewer fees and better services. Prior to us getting elected in 2018, Ontario had over 380,000 regulations. Ontario is one of the most overly regulated jurisdictions of anywhere that I can think of, and most of these regulations were not helpful. They were hindering small business owners. They were hindering families. They were hindering people who are trying to move forward.

To help keep money in the pockets of Ontarians, our government is eliminating the fee for licence plate stickers. That fee is the cost of groceries for a family, and in today’s day and age with the rising cost of inflation, that can go a long way.

Digital renewal reminders by text or emails is a fast and convenient service. It makes for a better customer service experience, streamlines processing time, saving money and eliminating paper waste.

This bill will also keep Ontarians moving by removing tolls from Highways 412 and 418. This will reduce congestion and get commuters to their destinations faster, saving them time and money.

It is important that bills like the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act make Ontario the best choice for people to live or raise a family—a place to stay, a place to play, grow and expand. Those with an entrepreneurial spirit will see a reduction in red tape through ease of access by a single portal. Page upon page of content will be streamlined to a single hub where business-minded individuals can find the information they need, such as required permits or available funding. This creates a better experience and better service.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is essential to putting the people of Ontario first. Cutting red tape allows Ontarians to keep more money in their pockets. It allows the government to better serve the people, to be more transparent and to be more accountable. We are growing the economy and the people here. Ontario is the place to grow and a place to call our own.

Monsieur le Président, le gouvernement de l'Ontario poursuit son travail visant à faire de l'Ontario le premier choix des familles et des entreprises prêtes à investir avec l'introduction du programme de réduction des formalités administratives de cette année, la Loi de 2022 pour de meilleurs services et moins de frais. Nina Tangri, ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives, a présenté la toute nouvelle loi à l'Assemblée législative hier.

Les mesures de transformation prises par le gouvernement jusqu'à présent ont permis aux entreprises de réaliser des économies annuelles nettes de près de 400 millions de dollars. Si elle est adoptée, cette loi permettra de soutenir davantage les entreprises et les entrepreneurs, d'alléger le fardeau financier des gens et de supprimer les processus trop complexes qui ne servent qu'à frustrer et à contrecarrer les investissements.

Voici quelques-uns des changements proposés dans la loi :

—réduire les coûts pour des millions de propriétaires de véhicules en Ontario, en remboursant les frais de renouvellement de la vignette d'immatriculation payés depuis le 1^{er} mars 2020;

—mettre en place un guichet unique pour les services aux entreprises, qui exigera des garanties de normes de service, afin que les entreprises puissent suivre les informations dont elles ont besoin auprès du gouvernement;

—contribuer à uniformiser les règles du jeu pour les entreprises ontariennes, en modifiant l'approche du gouvernement en matière d'approvisionnement. Ce changement renforcera la chaîne d'approvisionnement de la province et aidera les entreprises nationales à croître et à créer des emplois bien rémunérés;

—offrir plus de souplesse en ce qui concerne les propriétés provinciales, en créant un centre d'excellence en gestion des biens immobiliers. Cette approche globale de tous les biens immobiliers du gouvernement permettra de s'assurer que les propriétés excédentaires prioritaires correspondent aux programmes clés, notamment le logement abordable et les soins de longue durée; et finalement,

—donner un répit aux navetteurs en supprimant les péages sur les autoroutes 412 et 418. Cette mesure répond particulièrement aux demandes des dirigeants municipaux et des communautés autochtones de la région de Durham.

Les Ontariens s'attendent à un air pur, à une eau propre, à des produits sûrs et à des conditions de travail sécuritaires. De bonnes règles et de bons règlements sont nécessaires pour maintenir ces normes élevées. Les changements apportés par l'Ontario jusqu'à présent aident le gouvernement à mettre en place des règles claires et efficaces qui favorisent la santé publique et protègent l'environnement sans sacrifier l'innovation, la croissance et les possibilités.

Once again, this bill is essential to putting the people of Ontario first. Ontario is one of the most overly regulated jurisdictions, and I am proud to be part of a government that is making life easier for families, making it easier for businesses and making it a place to grow and raise a family. We are all made in Ontario, and I'm proud to be supporting this bill.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, the current backlog for disrepairs in our schools is at \$16.8 billion. Our kids are going to schools that are literally crumbling. We are at the end of year two of the pandemic and improvements in ventilation are needed in schools in Parkdale–High Park and across Ontario. Yet the Ford government spent just 1.2% of the allocated budget for capital repairs, leaving \$1 billion unspent. And what do you know? The licence sticker fee removal and refunding is also \$1 billion. Is this where the money is coming from, the Ford government essentially cutting education funding for this program?

1600

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to thank the member for her question. As we've stated in our legislation and as myself and many of my colleagues have stated, Ontario's spring 2022 red tape reduction package builds on successive semi-annual packages aimed at eliminating unnecessary burdens and opening doors to economic activity. These initiatives further demonstrate to Ontarians that the province and my community of Carleton are one of the best places in North America to raise a family, to work and to operate businesses.

It's also one of the best places for your children to go to school. That's because of the historic investments that we as a government, Minister Lecce and Premier Ford have made to support children, to support workers, to support their safety as we work through this pandemic and move forward.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: A common complaint that I hear from residents in my riding of Brampton West is that it's difficult for business to interact with government. Small businesses are the backbone of our province's economy, and as legislators, it's up to us to ensure they can survive and thrive.

Currently, there are no set timelines or standards for many ministries and certain other provincial bodies regarding most permits or other applications. Businesses are often left scratching their heads, trying to figure out when they will be approved for a permit or provided an answer by government. Can the member please explain what the proposed At Your Service Act will mean for small businesses and how it will make life easier to do business in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I want to thank the member from Brampton West for the question. I also want to point out that he is parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure. With his assistance, last week, actually, I was able to announce provincial funding of \$3.8 million for the Larry Robinson Arena in Metcalfe. So thank you very much to the member and parliamentary assistant for his assistance with that.

To answer the question, Ontario is committed to becoming a leader in North America for how easily and quickly businesses can get up and running and access the tools they need to grow. Businesses are struggling with navigating through many dispersed and disjointed sources of government information when determining what is required and cannot easily understand where their application is within the approvals process.

The At Your Service Act would require the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to create a business service standard so that we can continue serving and supporting Ontario's businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Next question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Carleton for her presentation. I just wanted to point out to this House that twice, the member from Oshawa has produced legislation to remove tolls from the roads, so I'd like to thank the government for listening to good sense.

As I think about the member from Oshawa, I also think it's been two years since the invisible PC vanity plates came out, and they're still out on our roads. Obviously, this government cannot only not make licence plates, but they also can't collect them, either. What is this government's plan to follow through on their plan to replace them?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for that question. Something that we're introducing in our legislation is the Building Ontario Business Initiative, which will provide companies in Ontario with greater business opportunities through public procurements, helping them to sell more goods and services and create jobs in their local communities.

This is part of a plan of legislation that we have introduced to make life easier, more affordable, to limit unnecessary regulations, to streamline processes and to support Ontario businesses, families and vehicle drivers as we move forward.

I would like to thank the member for his question, but at the same time, voters speak for themselves, and the support that we have received on this legislation speaks for itself.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Next question?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As anyone who reads this bill can see, our government focused on digitizing the government and getting rid of regulations that no longer serve their purpose. A fantastic example of this is the elimination of both annual licence plate sticker fees and the requirement to have a physical licence plate sticker for passenger vehicles. This is a practical change we are making that will impact millions of Ontarians who own vehicles in the province of Ontario.

When it comes to these val tags, the removing of the annual licence sticker, I know it impacts all the ridings in the entire province. It benefits the people. My question to the member from Ottawa is, can the member share what this change is going to mean to her constituents?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for that excellent question. I'm not sure if the member is aware of this, but my riding of Carleton is geographically larger than the city of Toronto, and there is very little public transportation in Carleton, so about 99% of people, if they want to travel, have to drive. They have to own a vehicle. Owning a vehicle is not really an option in Carleton; you have to have one in order to travel.

By removing the fee for licence plate stickers, this is going to be incredibly helpful for the families of Carleton, because this is just one unnecessary government measure that we can now get rid of, and this will put more money back in their pockets. It will help make life more affordable. This will also make it easier for people moving forward, for younger people to buy a car to travel around, because the reality is that people in Carleton need to have a car due to the lack of public transit. This is a fantastic initiative that I'm happy to—

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, during this pandemic we have seen so many businesses suffer. In fact, many have had to close their doors. I heard the member from Carleton talk about small businesses in the beginning of her speech, and I wanted to take this opportunity to ask the member a simple question, which is, many of these business owners applied for the grant, and some maybe had spelling errors or had some documents that they were trying to put in through the online system, or there were people who actually did everything right, went through the application process and were arbitrarily rejected. There wasn't even a proper appeal process, to the point that now there's no one there to answer the questions of these business owners, the people who are the backbone of this province. There is nobody there to answer the question right now about why they got rejected, let alone get a grant.

My question is simple: Why did this government fail these businesses?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, I think the pandemic revealed a lot of the cracks in the system that were put in place not just by the previous Liberal government, but by a Liberal government that was supported by that NDP party over there. They supported the Liberal

government. They supported everything the Liberals did, and they have to answer for it.

What we have done instead is, given everything that's going on, we have been flexible, we have been adaptable and we are committed to making Ontario a leader in North America for how quickly and easily businesses can get up and running and access the tools they need to grow.

While the member opposite is living in the past, we are looking at the future. We are seeing how we can support our businesses, and one of those ways is to make a streamlined administrative database that businesses can access to get all of their information, so they can actually get the support that they need, that they deserve, from a government that is here and working with them and looking out for them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There isn't time for another back-and-forth with 20 seconds—

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to, on behalf of everyone in this House and everyone listening, wish the member from Peterborough–Kawartha a great birthday today, and perhaps encourage you to recess early so he can get home to enjoy birthday cake by 6 of the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will not recognize the member's point of order as valid, but we do wish the member a happy birthday. And we will not be recessing early, unless the government directs me differently.

Continuing on: Further debate?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Oji-Cree.* It's a good day. It's always an honour to be able to rise in this place, but also it's an honour to be able to speak on Bill 84, Fewer Fees, Better Services Act on behalf of the people in Kiiwetinoong riding.

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This bill is an omnibus anti-red tape bill that aims to improve business efficiencies. There are also significant changes to the children, families and youth act, 2017, that impact Indigenous children and Indigenous child welfare provisions in the province.

One of the things I keep hearing throughout the day throughout the debate on this bill is that Ontario is one of the best places to raise families. I guess it all depends on where you live and who you are. I always talk about this when you talk about best places. Just imagine that in your community you have 27-plus years of water boil advisories. I have 14 First Nations communities that have long-term boil-water advisories. Long-term constitutes anything over a year. So I keep hearing throughout that it's the best place to raise families, and I have to remind you that it's not like that in the other Ontario. There's a different Ontario here.

I think it's important today though that the proposed legislation changes involve when we talk about First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, young persons and

families, and to have a policy goal of improving access to prevention and early intervention services, including through holistic and wraparound culture-based supports. I want to be able to provide some context on why this is important.

But first, I would like to say that it's a shame that safety, security, human rights and care of Indigenous children are equivalent to business efficiencies in the eyes of this government, that this discussion on the wellness of Indigenous children has to sit alongside talk of toll roads, licence plate sticker fees, procurement and budget deadlines.

Speaker, our children are not numbers or benchmarks for policy measurement. They are human beings. We are human beings. Indigenous families and communities have ways of caring for our children based on the practices that we have, the laws that we have and the traditions that we have as First Nations people, as Indigenous people, but also our ways of life.

We see children as gifts from the creator, and it is our responsibility as parents to raise the spirit of our children and help them to understand their place in this world. But our traditional child-rearing practices were disrupted by the imposition of colonial policies such as the Indian Act and the establishment of the residential school system.

We all know, now, Canada's history of colonial policies, including residential schools, resulted in Indigenous children being uprooted from their families and communities and being disconnected from the loving child-rearing practices that we have, their parental role models, their ways of life and identity. This type of disconnection continued with the Sixties Scoop and the ongoing overrepresentation of our children in these systems.

I'll just briefly share some stats. These numbers come from 2018 and are from a study by the Ontario Human Rights Commission on the overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black children in Ontario child welfare. Despite making up 4.1% of the population in Ontario under the age of 15, Indigenous children represent approximately 30% of foster children. Indigenous children are overrepresented at all points of child welfare decision-making. This overrepresentation increases as service decisions become more intrusive.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has urged all levels of government to monitor and assess neglect investigations, provide Indigenous communities with adequate resources to keep families together, keep Indigenous children in culturally appropriate environments and make sure that child welfare workers receive training about the history and the impacts of residential schools.

I know what is needed, sometimes, are road maps and guidelines of what needs to be done to reduce the number of our children in that child welfare system. One of the reports is from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It called for 231 calls for justice. One of the things that they stated was that "the calls for justice arise from international and domestic human and Indigenous rights laws, including the charter, the Constitution, and the honour of the crown."

I talk about these things because the changes in schedule 3 seem consistent with what Indigenous care

societies—the child welfare providers—and communities have been seeking and so, in principle, are supportable. But we cannot continue to have these—I'm not sure what to call them—filing-cabinet programs that don't come with any infrastructure. These programs need to be able to come with resources to be able to enact these changes. I say that because our children have spent far too long in these colonial systems, and we deserve better.

I know that the agencies working in these areas are stretched very thin, resource-wise, so this recognition and reform is overdue, particularly as outcomes for Indigenous kids who are in care remain very poor. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. Will Bouma: I can't stress enough how much I appreciate having the colleague from Kiiwetinoong across the way, because the lived experience that he brings to this place is something that's so far outside of my own experience.

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I say thank you for continuing to advocate for your people and, as I've said before, for coming to this place, which affects you so deeply.

I will share my own story. The current Minister of Colleges and Universities, when she visited my riding—we were on Six Nations territory, and we heard about birth alerts and the impact that they have on Indigenous children being taken out of their homes regardless of whether parents are deemed to be good or not. It affected her so deeply. She said, "I will do everything in my power to get rid of them," and she did.

With regard to the bill, if we make it easier for every business to do business in Ontario, including Indigenous businesses, will that make a difference to your people?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch for the question.

In order for prosperity to happen, we need basic human rights first. One of those basic human rights is access to clean drinking water. Time and time again, I've come here and talked about clean drinking water. Again, I spoke about 14 boil-water advisories in the riding of Kiiwetinoong. What is it going to cost when we remove the stickers for the licence plates? How much do we lose of revenue for the province? It would probably cost a quarter of that to fix those boil-water advisories. That's what we need to go ahead first. You cannot continue to treat us differently just because of the colour of our skin. You cannot treat us differently because we are on-reserve.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I always enjoy being in the House when the member from Kiiwetinoong is educating us in regard to the reality of the Ontario that many of his community members live in. We have become complacent in this House. We are talking about stickers and saving dollars for individuals in this province, when he brings powerful words here that make us feel uncomfortable, like "colonialism," "systemic racism" and "oppression of a people." If we continue doing what we're doing, we are the ones who are to blame. We can't do this anymore. We

have to own up. We have to listen and act upon what this member is bringing into this House. Basic water into a community is something that we all need. How many stickers are we going to eliminate until the day that we actually can bring water to all communities in this province?

I ask the member: Continue bringing your stories to the floor of this House. Bring that passion. Make us feel uncomfortable. Because it's only then that we're actually going to be able to change the direction of this province and bring water to your communities.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch for those words. Meegwetch for the question.

I have to be honest here. There are not too many times I'll say "colonialism." There are not too many times I'll say "oppression." I think last year, around June 2021, I said "genocide" in this House, soon after the 215 were found. It was scary for me. It was hard for me. When you have other people who are white looking at you—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Hey.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Sorry. Bad error. But you know what I mean.

It's scary, sometimes, to be in this place, this colonial place. I didn't want to be here, but I'm here.

Thank you for that. It encourages me. I'm glad to be here sitting with everybody to bring you these stories of how First Nations are treated in what you call a great place to raise families.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the member opposite for bringing the stories here. Actually I'd greatly appreciate it if he could expand a little bit for me on why schedule 3 is a good step forward, something that we haven't done previously, something we haven't looked at, because I think that people who are watching right now in Ontario do not truly understand the differences in what children and family mean in a First Nation community compared to others and how it's all intertwined and brought together.

I recognize that that is not the final step. We have not reached the finish line on it. It is a small step forward, though, and I think it's important to recognize that we are trying to make those steps forward so that we can make the appropriate adjustments. So if the member wouldn't mind expanding a little bit for us to explain why it is so important that that cultural aspect is brought in with the children.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Yes, certainly. When we talk about programs, services, funding, they come and go. Governments come and go federally, provincially, municipally, even at the First Nation level. Sometimes we don't talk about the fundamental changes that are needed. We should be talking about land claims. We should be talking about treaties. We should be talking about self-determination, sovereignty, because what happens is, if you do these incremental changes within the systems, it perpetuates the oppression, it perpetuates the colonialism that impacts First Nations. Incremental change perpetuates that. Yes, small steps, but we need to do better. We can do better. You can do better. Meegwetch.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you to my colleague from Kiiwetinoong for really highlighting the plight of Indigenous communities. He talked about this bill that is just saving a few fees here and there rather than talking about the basic drinking water for communities.

I also visited with the previous critic for corrections and the member from Kiiwetinoong at the Thunder Bay jail. We witnessed so many young people there who are just there because they have not had a date in court, simply because the system that we have at the moment values people with money.

My question is, since this bill is just talking about efficiency and not really investing in communities—and I think we need your leadership here in this House, and you

have shown tremendous leadership for raising the concerns of the Indigenous communities. What is needed now, because drinking water is not available for young people—but why shouldn't this government invest in Indigenous youth?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The child welfare system that's there today is not our system. It has been imposed for hundreds of years, and we need to be able to transform that system. We need to give back the power to the parents, power back to First Nations. We need to be able to bring back the teachings that we have. I spoke about the Sixties Scoop; I spoke about residential schools, about how our people are so limited in the services that are needed. But Meegwetch for the question.

Report continues in volume B.

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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: Tanzima Khan

**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: Vanessa Kattar

**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