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Mardi
1^{er} mars 2022

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for the orders of the day, I'll remind the members that if they wish to be recognized by the Speaker, they have to be in their designated seat, as of today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario be amended as follows:

Standing order 7(a) is amended by deleting subclause (i) and substituting the following:

“(i) In a spring meeting period from the Tuesday following Family Day to the first Thursday in June, except that when an election is to be held pursuant to subsection 9(2) of the Election Act, the spring meeting period shall end on the fifth Wednesday preceding the first Thursday in June.”

Standing order 9 is amended as follows:

(1) By adding “Introduction of government bills” after “Reports by committees” in all instances where it appears.

(2) By adding the following subclause:

“(g.1) No later than 12 noon on any Thursday that the House meets, the government House leader may indicate in the House, or may deposit written notice with the Clerk of the Assembly, that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and in such case the House shall commence at 9 a.m. the next sitting Monday with the proceeding ‘Orders of the day.’”

Standing order 12(b) is amended by deleting the number “5” and substituting the number “10” in both instances.

Standing order 27 is amended by deleting “to which less than 10 minutes is allotted” and substituting “of less than 10 minutes.”

Standing order 35(a) is amended by deleting “and points of order.”

Standing order 39(f) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(f) The period for ‘Introduction of government bills’ and ‘Introduction of bills’ shall be limited to 30 minutes collectively.

“(f.1) Only government bills may be introduced during the proceeding ‘Introduction of government bills.’

“(f.2) Government bills may be introduced during the proceeding ‘Introduction of bills.’”

Standing order 61(a) is amended by deleting “Introduction of bills” and substituting “Introduction of government bills.”

Standing order 62 is deleted and the following substituted:

“62(a) When a budget has been presented, the main estimates shall be tabled in the House no more than 12 sessional days later. During those 12 days the budget debate shall be completed. If no budget has been presented by the first sessional day following Victoria Day, the main estimates shall be tabled at the next available sessional day.

“(b) Upon tabling, the estimates shall be deemed to be referred to the standing committees to which the respective ministries and offices were assigned pursuant to standing order 114(b).

“(c) Notwithstanding clause (b), upon tabling, any estimates or supplementary estimates approved by the Board of Internal Economy shall be deemed to be concurred in.”

Standing order 63 is deleted and the following substituted:

“63(a) The consideration of estimates shall not take precedence over consideration of a government bill.

“(b)(i) The order of consideration of the estimates of the ministries and offices referred to each committee shall be determined by selection of members of the committee, such that the members of the party forming the official opposition shall select first, followed by the members of the other recognized parties in decreasing order of their membership in the House, and the members of the party forming the government shall select last.

“(ii) With each turn, the members of each party may choose the estimates of one ministry or office.

“(iii) If, when their turn to select occurs, the members of a party decline to make a selection, the selection process proceeds to the next party in rotation as provided in subclause (i).

“(c) The estimates of the ministries and offices shall be considered in the order in which they were selected. The subcommittee on committee business of each committee may, by unanimous agreement, alter the order of consideration.

“(d) The time for the consideration of the estimates of each ministry or office shall be determined by the respective committee.

“(e) No estimates shall be considered in a committee while any matter, including a procedural motion, relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House.”

Standing order 64(a) is amended by deleting “the Standing Committee on Estimates” and substituting “each committee.”

Standing order 65 is deleted and the following substituted:

“65(a) Upon tabling, all supplementary estimates shall be deemed referred to the standing committee to which their ministry or office has been assigned pursuant to standing order 114(b).

“(b) Each standing committee shall consider supplementary estimates of the ministries and offices selected within the time allocated pursuant to standing order 63(d) for the consideration of the main estimates.

“(c) All other supplementary estimates shall be reported back to the House. The report of each committee shall be deemed to be received and the supplementary estimates for the ministries and offices named in the report shall be deemed to be concurred in.”

Standing order 66(a) is amended by deleting “The Standing Committee on Estimates” and substituting “Each standing committee.”

Standing order 66(c) is amended by deleting all the words after “referred” and substituting “to the appropriate committee as they are presented to the House, shall be deemed to be passed by that committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House.”

Standing order 66(d) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(d) There shall be an order for concurrence placed on the Orders and Notices paper for each of the estimates reported from each committee. There shall be two hours, apportioned equally among the recognized parties, allotted to the debate on the orders for concurrence, at the end of which time the Speaker shall without further debate put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries and offices named in the committees’ reports. No amendment to any question may be moved. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, all divisions shall be stacked and disposed of in one single vote, and the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.”

Standing order 67 is amended by adding “62,” after “standing orders.”

Standing order 68 is amended by deleting “Standing Committee on Estimates” and substituting “respective standing committees.”

Standing order 69(a) is deleted.

Standing order 85 is amended as follows:

(1) By deleting subclause (b)(ii).

(2) By deleting “Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills” wherever it appears and substituting “Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.”

(3) By deleting the word “when” in subclause (e)(v) and substituting “if.”

Standing order 86 is amended by deleting “the Legislative Assembly” and substituting “Procedure and House Affairs.”

Standing order 88 is amended by deleting “considered by the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills” and substituting “given first reading.”

Standing order 89 is amended by deleting clause (a) and substituting the following:

“(a) Subject to standing orders 90 and 91, every private bill when read a first time shall remain ordered for second reading, unless a request is filed in writing to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with the Clerk of the House by,

“(i) a permanent member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs; or

“(ii) five members of the assembly not of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, in which case the order for second reading of the bill shall be discharged and the bill shall be deemed to be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

0910

“(a.1) If no such request is received within 16 sessional days of the bill being read a first time, the order for second reading of the bill may be called at the discretion of the government House leader. When such order is called, the Speaker shall without debate or amendment put all questions necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill. A private bill given second reading shall be ordered for third reading, and the order for third reading shall then immediately be called and the Speaker shall put the question forthwith without debate or amendment.”

Standing orders 89(d), 90(d), 91(e) and 92, respectively, are amended by deleting “Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills” wherever it appears and substituting “Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.”

Standing orders 93 and 94 are deleted and the following substituted:

“93(a) The Speaker shall advise the House of any notices received by the Clerk of the House pursuant to standing order 85(e)(v) and all submissions related to the bill shall stand referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

“(b) Any person whose interest or property may be affected by a private bill, when required, shall appear before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to express his or her consent or objection, or may consent in writing, proof of which may be demanded by the committee.

“94. Private bills when reported by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper for second reading, which orders may then be called by the government House leader, and the provisions of standing order 89(a.1) shall then apply.”

Standing order 96 is deleted.

Standing order 101(a) is amended by adding at the beginning, “Except on the 12 sessional days immediately following the speech from the throne,”

Standing order 101(c) is amended by deleting “on the Thursday of the week preceding the week in which the item of business is to be considered” and substituting “eight sessional days prior to the earlier of the two dates on the order of precedence determined in clause (b).”

Standing order 101(e) is amended by deleting “appear on the Orders and Notices paper two weeks” and substituting “be designated on the Orders and Notices paper eight sessional days” and by adding at the end:

“In the event that a member fails to designate business for consideration by this deadline, the first eligible public bill to appear on the Orders and Notices paper standing in that member’s name shall be designated for consideration. Should that member have no public bills standing in their name then the first eligible motion to appear on the Orders and Notices paper standing in that member’s name shall be designated for consideration. Should that member have no business standing in their name on the Orders and Notices paper by this deadline, the member shall lose their place in the order of precedence and the House shall not conduct a Private members’ public business proceeding on that date.”

Standing order 111(c) is deleted and the following substituted:

“Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.”

Standing order 111(d) is amended by deleting “Estimates” and substituting “the Interior.”

Standing order 111(g) is amended by deleting “Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly” at the beginning and substituting “Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs,” and by adding at the end “and to be the committee provided for by section 33 of part III, Regulations, of the Legislation Act, 2006, and having the terms of reference as set out in that section, namely: to be the committee to which all regulations stand permanently referred; and to examine the regulations with particular reference to the scope and method of the exercise of delegated legislative power without reference to the merits of the policy or objectives to be effected by the regulations or enabling statutes, but in so doing regard shall be had to the following guidelines:

“(i) Regulations should not contain provisions initiating new policy, but should be confined to details to give effect to the policy established by the statute;

“(ii) Regulations should be in strict accord with the statute conferring of power, particularly concerning personal liberties;

“(iii) Regulations should be expressed in precise and unambiguous language;

“(iv) Regulations should not have retrospective effect unless clearly authorized by statute;

“(v) Regulations should not exclude the jurisdiction of the courts;

“(vi) Regulations should not impose a fine, imprisonment or other penalty;

“(vii) Regulations should not shift the onus of proof of innocence to a person accused of an offence;

“(viii) Regulations should not impose anything in the way of a tax (as distinct from fixing the amount of a licence fee, or the like); and

“(ix) General powers should not be used to establish a judicial tribunal or an administrative tribunal,

“and the committee shall from time to time report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations as required by section 33 of part III, Regulations, of the Legislation Act, 2006, but before drawing the attention of the House to a regulation or other statutory instrument, the

committee shall afford the ministry or agency concerned an opportunity to furnish orally or in writing to the committee such explanation as the ministry or agency thinks fit.”

Standing order 111(i) is deleted.

Standing order 114(a) is amended by deleting “standing orders 111(a), (b) and (c)” and substituting “standing orders 111(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (g).”

Standing order 114(b) is amended by deleting “Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly” and substituting “Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs” and by adding after the words “standing order” the words “and for the purpose of consideration of estimates.”

Standing order 118 is amended by deleting “and Vice-Chair” and substituting “and Vice-Chair(s).”

Standing order 119 is amended by deleting “and Vice-Chair” and substituting “and Vice-Chair(s).”

Standing order 120(b) is amended by deleting “Standing Committee on Estimates” and substituting “Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.”

Standing order 120 is amended by deleting clauses (d), (e), and (f) and substituting the following:

“(d) When there are two recognized parties, where the Chair of a standing committee is a member of the party forming the government, the Vice-Chair shall be a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government or an independent member; and where the Chair is a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government, the Vice-Chair shall be a member of the party forming the government.

“(e) When there are three or more recognized parties, there shall be two Vice-Chairs of each committee, chosen as follows: where the Chair of a standing committee is a member of the party forming the government, the First Vice-Chair shall be a member of the official opposition and the Second Vice-Chair shall be a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government other than the official opposition; and where the Chair is a member of the official opposition, the First Vice-Chair shall be a member of the party forming the government and the Second Vice-Chair shall be a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government other than the official opposition; and where the Chair of a standing committee is a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government other than the official opposition, the First Vice-Chair shall be a member of the party forming the government and the Second Vice-Chair shall be a member of the party forming the official opposition.

“(f) Failing the appointment of a Vice-Chair, First Vice-Chair or Second Vice-Chair, as the case may be, pursuant to clauses (d) or (e), any other member of the committee may be appointed.”

Standing order 128 is amended by deleting “Vice-Chair” and substituting “Vice-Chair(s).”

Standing order 129(a) is amended by deleting “standing order 111(a), (b) or (c)” and substituting “standing orders 111(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (g).”

Standing order 141(f) is amended by deleting “Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills” and substituting “Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs;” and

That the Clerk is authorized to renumber the standing orders as required, and to make such other consequential, editorial or other minor changes as may be required to ensure a consistent form of expression throughout the standing orders; and

That this motion comes into force on the sitting day after this motion is adopted, except:

(1) Amendments to standing order 101 shall come into force on the eighth sitting day following the day this motion is adopted; and

(2) Amendments to standing orders 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 111, 114, 118, 119, 120, 128, 129 and 141 shall come into force at the dissolution of the 42nd Parliament.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 10. I’ll return to the government House leader if he wants to lead off the debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, colleagues, for your patience. I know that was a very long motion, and I do appreciate your patience.

This series of standing order amendments, of course, is the conclusion of what has been a four-year process of updating, modernizing and, I would suggest, improving the functions of this House to the benefit of the members. I think that is always our primary responsibility as members. What we want to do is ensure that the jobs that we do represent the new realities of the work that we are elected to do, and I think the final package of standing orders, as presented today, really helps us do that. I’ll get into them individually a little bit more as my time proceeds, Mr. Speaker.

But as I said, really, this is not to suggest, of course—I want to make very clear—that somehow this Parliament wasn’t working effectively, wasn’t working in a proper fashion prior to 2018. Just the opposite, Mr. Speaker: I think we can always be very proud of how well this Legislature has worked on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. What we have done, though, reflects how much things have changed. We recently brought in, as you will know, unanimously, I believe, in the House, changes to the broadcast act. That hadn’t been done for a number of years here, and obviously inserting streaming and other things that didn’t exist when the broadcast act was first considered is about modernization. Some of the other things that we’ve done here by adding committees reflect today’s reality, Speaker.

But I want to just, if I can, because we have some time, reflect on some of the other changes. I guess perhaps before I do that, I’ll just recognize that today is the first day that we are all back in a more normal fashion in this Legislature, and I think it’s, again, very important to recognize all of those who helped ensure that this Parliament during COVID could continue to function in the way that it has. I know I said this yesterday, but I just

wanted to express this again. I think this Legislature, and all of us on both sides of the House, can take satisfaction in how well our table officers and everybody who helped this place work over the last two years—how well and how quickly they moved in order to allow us to continue functioning to allow for bills to continue to be introduced, private members’ business to continue, to allow for the opposition to hold the government to account and the government, frankly, to continue on, not just on COVID but on other initiatives that we were sent here to do, Speaker. I know I’ve received many calls, really from across North America, with respect to what we were doing here, guiding some other government House leaders and leaders in other jurisdictions, in American states, with what the process was here. Again, I took great pride in that, always recognizing the fact that ultimately, we worked together to ensure that we could do that.

But I want to go over some of the other changes that we’ve made, Speaker. I think it really informs, when you take a look at all of the changes that we’ve made, why these last series of amendments are so very important. In 2019—I’ll go over some of the changes that we made then, colleagues—a modification of the daily order of business to increase the profile of members’ statements by moving them from the afternoon to the morning, before question period: I know that might seem like a little thing, and we’re still trying to work that out, because it wasn’t around for that long before we went into COVID protocols. But this was a change that I thought—and I hope colleagues feel the same way—was really important. Often, we would do members’ statements in the afternoon, when the House was empty, the galleries were empty. But by moving them to before question period, you have a full house, the galleries, under normal circumstances, are full, and I think it really elevated the opportunity for members to not only recognize important events in their riding, important people in their riding, but also for the opposition to give voice to issues that might be bothering them, that might then come forward during question period, to set the table as such. We’ve seen that operate. So I was very, very excited by that.

Mr. Speaker, you know, of course, the reciting of the royal anthem during the monthly singing of the national anthem, the addition of that, and how more poignant can that be in this, Her Majesty’s 70th year on the throne, that we really led the way. Now we’re seeing other Canadian provinces follow suit on that.

Again, one of these updating provisions explicitly permitting the use of laptops, tablets and smart phones in a non-disruptive manner in the chamber, that was a standing order change. All of the members were actually doing that already but that had to be changed.

Outlining the formal Introduction of visitors in the chamber: Again, I think colleagues will all remember that it was taking a very long time to get through the introduction of guests. It’s really a unique feature of Ontario. It’s a nice one, but often three or four members would rise and recognize the same person. I think we were all feeling a little bit of frustration on that.

We also eliminated the need for a minister to verbally refer a question to a colleague during question period, Speaker. This was unique to Ontario, and frankly, it always favoured the government to ask a question of the Premier. Then the Premier would get up and slowly refer the question to a cabinet minister or somebody else who was going to answer. Then the Speaker would have to recognize that person, and the cabinet minister would get up slowly, and you're halfway through your minute and question period goes pretty quickly. So it was something that we did.

Again, Speaker, it's one of those times when you have to, as a government, say, "How can we help make the opposition's job better? How can we go across party lines and help them?" It's part of what I always talk about, that bridge-building that we had been doing in this place, and that this Premier has been so well-known for. So we took a look at it. We thought, it's not fair that by doing the referring—and I looked at it before I came here. My gosh, I was watching—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You can see the excitement, sir—it really is. You can see the excitement and it's okay because it really has liberated the opposition in a very real way, as you know, Speaker.

I was watching question period before I was elected here, and oh, my gosh, watching the slow pace at which the previous government would do this referral and this nonsense. We knew that we had to get rid of that. We were in opposition for 15 years and we knew how much of a delay tactic it was and how much it ate into question period. Those who were here in opposition said, "Look, we have to make sure that the opposition doesn't run into the same thing with us. We are different. We're a different government. We're going to behave differently. We're going to be more accountable, and we have got to get rid of that part of the standing orders that allows that reference." I congratulate my other colleagues who were here before who really took that spirit of co-operation and bridge-building and reaching out to a new level and making sure that that was one of the first things that we eliminated, Speaker. I know many of the members opposite have certainly reached out and thanked me for that modest but, I think, important change.

Speaker, this one was amazing to me: eliminating the requirement for written authorization of a parliamentary assistant to answer questions during question period when the minister is absent. We have parliamentary assistants who are every bit as capable as ministers, who get all of the same briefings as ministers, who are as accountable to their files as is the minister, or subject to the same regulations and rules that ministers are, but they weren't allowed to answer questions in this place unless the Speaker was given written authorization by the Premier to do so.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Wow.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know. The member for Flam- borough says "Wow," right? I know. What a frustration,

Speaker. Again, recognizing when we were in opposition, it's one of those things that we did to make it easier for the opposition to hold the government to account. It's just part of that giving. We keep giving, right? It's important to us that Parliament works better and that the opposition have every opportunity to hold the government to account. As part of that giving, we ensured that parliamentary assistants could answer questions on behalf of the minister when they were absent so that it wouldn't then be referred to somebody else.

0930

Imagine this, Speaker: Before these last two changes, somebody would ask a question, let's say of the Minister of Health, the Minister of Health's PA was there, but they would ask it to the Premier. It was a health question, and the Premier would have to get up and he would refer it—or she would refer it, in this case, because it was the previous government—to somebody else, to the Minister of Labour, who couldn't give an answer in any way, shape or form because they didn't know anything about the file, while the parliamentary assistant is sitting right there and is able answer, is able to be accountable to the ministry that he or she is responsible for, Speaker, but they weren't allowed to do so. It was a tool that was used to avoid accountability.

Again, we said that that's not how a proper functioning Parliament should work. We have to make sure, again, that the opposition—because we were in opposition for a long period of time, and we had to make those changes. We made that change, and I think it has really helped the opposition hold the government accountable, because that is their role, that's how Parliament should function. And, of course, I'm not going to say it has improved parliamentary assistants, because they were always exceptional, they were always good—at least our parliamentary assistants have always been exceptional. I've got to tell you, I was watching some question periods before this government was elected—well, anyway, I'll leave it at that, Speaker. I'm certainly proud of our parliamentary assistants.

Now another update: allowing—again, Speaker, you've got to think to yourself, "How is this possible that it took to 2019 to do this?" A small thing, but, think about this—allowing electronic distribution of background materials to ministerial reports and sessional papers tabled in the Legislature. Speaker, honestly, everybody always talks about the environment and how important it is, and we were still printing up and distributing all kinds of paper and documents in this place when email has existed for a very long, long time. So we made that change. Again, it provides another measure of accountability, right, Speaker? Because, as government, you're drafting these bills, you know what's in these bills, you know what's in the statements. It is an advantage for you. But by allowing electronic distribution, the opposition is able to get that much quicker, they're able to plow through it much quicker and they're able to really start holding the government accountable or providing suggestions right away. I think that is an important change.

Another change was providing time to reply to an opposition day motion for independent members. I am

actually particularly proud of all of the work that we have done to give voice to independent members in this place. They are elected by their community and they should have the opportunity to participate in debate, and a lot of the changes that we have made have really elevated the role, also, of the independent members to hold government to account, to participate in debate, and we felt that they should also have an opportunity to participate more broadly in opposition day motions.

We allowed for the co-sponsoring of private members' bills for up to four members, including members belonging to the same party. There's one member who came up to me on this and said, "Look, we've got to do it. It was the member for Sarnia, Bob Bailey—sorry, I'm not supposed to say his name. Now, this is a guy who has got, I don't know how many, seven or eight or nine—he's just the king of PMBs. I know there's somebody over there too who's very—I think maybe it's Paul Miller, if I'm not mistaken, the member for Hamilton East. He is also just an effective bridge builder who can work across party lines very effectively. He works very hard in his community and he has done a lot of good work.

Of course, the member for Sarnia—Lambton came to me and said, "Look, I want to be able to have even more people on this." And there are a lot of times when opposition members want to help co-sponsor a bill, but there's more than one. The Emancipation Month Act was one of those bills, where a member from each party and independents were able to come together on something that we all agreed upon, that we all wanted to move forward and were able to pass unanimously. But before this amendment, we could not get representation from all people in this House. So I think it was a very, very important change.

We're still on 2019, Speaker—think of how much, just on these ones, things have changed. We're allowing debate of the same bill in the one-hour morning session as in the afternoon session. I know all members found this frustrating. You would introduce a bill in the morning, and by the old rules, you then couldn't debate it again until the next day—or you could debate it in the afternoon, but had to spend an hour in the morning doing something else. I know this would frustrate a lot of members, because they would come prepared—they did their work—they were prepared to be seized with an item, and the clock might run out and then they would have to wait until the next day. They might not be in the Legislature at that time. There might be all kinds of other things happening. So it really hurt the flow of how this place worked. I thought it was very important that we made that change.

Ostensibly, again, it was something that is a mechanism that we thought, "This will help the opposition hold government accountable. It will help them." Look, of course, when you're in government and you're in a majority, you have lots of people. You can bring a lot of people to speak to bills at any given time. Obviously, there are going to be fewer in the opposition benches. They have to cover committees, the same as the government has to cover committees. But, ultimately, when you chop up the day, the way the previous standing orders were, it is something

that favours the government, obviously. I heard, again, from our member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound who said, "Look, that's something that was really, really frustrating in opposition." He said to me, "I can't in good conscience sit here now on the government side and suggest that we can't make improvements that not only make Parliament work better but also give better tools to the opposition to hold government to account," given the fact that we were there for a spell, Speaker. So I can't thank him enough for that.

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: And I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain, because she has been encouraging the entire time. When you talk to the member for Hamilton Mountain—and look, I know we all have troubles, but when you talk to the member for Hamilton Mountain or others, it's about: How do we effectively, as an opposition, hold government accountable? Now, I would say this: Given the fact that they're always in opposition, they really have mastered the art of opposing, right? They have mastered the art of opposing. They had gotten it to a level where I think they had reached the peak of their abilities to oppose, given the rules that were in place in this place. So they needed more help to bring it to another level. And it wasn't just for us that we were making these changes. We knew that the opposition party needed more tools, so we started to make some of these changes to assist them in holding government to account. I thank all the members who reached out. There is a recognition that they'll probably be in opposition for a long period of time, so that's why they need additional tools, but it is also important to note that this Premier and this caucus that have been here for a long period of time said, "Look, there are cases when we may be over there," and what we wanted to learn from the time that we spent over there was not to do what the previous Liberal government had done and start reducing powers constantly—reducing the power of the opposition to hold government to account. We wanted to make the Legislature work better, and that's what we did.

It brings me back to—I talk about it often: The NDP, as colleagues over there will know, had one opportunity to serve in government, from 1990 to 1995. They became the fathers, Speaker, as you will know, of the reduction in powers of members of provincial Parliament. It was the NDP who brought in the draconian measures that we have virtually eliminated in this Parliament with respect to the time allocation motions that you would get. It was they who brought in this theory of time allocation in the province of Ontario. Ostensibly, they had to bring it in at that time because not only was Parliament opposed to everything that they had done, but Ontarians, for the most part, were very much opposed as well. But since then, they have understood the error of that and the importance of Parliament and elevating the role of parliamentarians, and I have valued their advice.

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Some of the other things in 2019: permitting temporary committee substitutions for afternoon sessions of committees with at least 30 minutes' notice—a small thing, but

again an opportunity to make committees work a little bit better—and establishing a time for question and answer following each speech given during debate on government bills, replacing the two-minute comments from members—Speaker, I don't even know what to say about this particular one.

This is a Legislative Assembly. This is a debating chamber, where we're supposed to debate each other back and forth, but the standing orders had been changed to eliminate the ability to debate. It's not something I could ever understand—why parliamentarians would have ever allowed that to happen. You give a speech, and then you give what they call the two-minute hit or the two-minute wrap-up, as opposed to debate back and forth. That, obviously, was eliminated. We went to a question-and-answer period after each speech, and I think it has elevated this place. You really start to see the quality of members as well and the work by members on both sides of the House. Often, you'll see one or two members take the focus of the questions on a particular bill. You see how the opposition critic has become expert on a bill and is able to really hold the government accountable, or a parliamentary assistant or a caucus member are able to fight back and explain why those changes being proposed are important.

That was just 2019. We didn't want to do everything all at once; it had to be a gradual progression. We had to bring people with us. You can't be a bridge-builder, you can't be somebody who works across party lines effectively if you're not going to take the time to consult and do it in a way that brings people with you.

In the fall of 2020, here are some of the additional changes. We enhanced the focus on private members' public business by considering one item per day on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Now, that might seem again like a small—and colleagues who were here for the years when we were in opposition and before this change happened will remember on Thursday afternoon we would do private members' business, and that would be the end of it. What we did is we changed it so it would be Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The House would be seized with one bill each day, and—it comes down here later—we also allowed the vote on that to be deferred until after question period the next day.

Think about that, Speaker. Think about that. Each bill's vote deferred until after question period, when all the members are here; the galleries, typically, in the normal time period, are full; and that member's bill, that individual bill, would be voted on by all members of this House, giving very special attention to that one private member's bill. Of all of the changes, that is one of the changes that I'm actually most proud of, because I think it really elevates the work of members who bring private members' business to this chamber.

It also helped lead us to the ability to pass so many private members' bills in this place. We're not talking about what previous governments did—Conservative, Liberal and maybe even NDP—where you cut a deal at the end of a session to pass, like, five or six private members' bills. We're not talking about that. We're talking about

bringing substantive bills to this House from members on all sides, things that are important to them, that are important to their community, debating it in this House, the government giving up some of its time so that bills could be debated in this House during government orders, passing it, getting it through to committees, making changes in committees and then bringing it back to the House for third reading debate, again with the government giving some of its time in order to debate and move private members' bills through this House. The reason you're able to do that is because once you change the private members' business, colleagues will know on both sides of the House, when you're then changing it so it is being your bill that is the focus of the day, your bill will be the focus of a vote the next day, it is in your interest to bring something to the House that all of us can digest and pay special attention to.

The results by the members to this, on both sides, have been spectacular. The Speaker, of course, will recall the poet laureate bill, which was great, which sat on—the Speaker worked through two Parliaments, if I'm not mistaken, to try to get that bill passed. He persevered. He didn't stop until he was able to get it done, and he got it done, but so have so many other members. The member for Richmond Hill—we just celebrated non-profit appreciation week, and I know I saw members all over really taking the opportunity to take time out and to show their appreciation for the work that has been done by our not-for-profits.

We have other special bills that came to the fore. The member for Parkdale–High Park brought a bill forward—and we've seen a number of these—it was Tibetan Heritage Month. Some people might think, “Well, we have a lot of days.” I know the member for York South–Weston brought a Somali Heritage Week. But think of this for a second, Speaker: These are two members who represent the first in their communities to be elected to this place, able to stand in this place and get bills passed to recognize their communities, not by a deal of government House leaders, but by giving government time, by allowing it to go through the process and the entire House recognizing each of those people individually.

I look at our member for Scarborough–Rouge Park. He is somebody who fled war in Sri Lanka. He, along with the member from Markham–Thornhill, is the first Tamil Canadian elected to this place. He was able to work for two years to bring a bill forward to this House, a private member's bill to help people better understand the genocide that was taking place. It was really an educational bill. He worked for two years. He was able to go through the process. He made changes where they needed to be. We were able to bring that to this House, and he was able to get the consent of all parliamentarians to get that bill put on the order paper. Now think about that for a second, Speaker: Here is a person who fled a war at 25 years old, is elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, is able to get a bill that is so important to his community debated in the House, through committee and passed at third reading. He's able to stand in front of Her Honour, get royal assent. A lot of us couldn't even imagine that level of success, but

that's what some of these changes have allowed us to do. Sorry, I get really passionate about the PMBs, because I think it's very important.

We also added, you will remember—because of the COVID restrictions, we had all agreed that we would sit Tuesday and Wednesday—or I think it was maybe Tuesday and Wednesday. But, anyway, we were missing private members' business, so we had to make up the PMBs, the private members' business, that we lost, so we added private members' business on Monday mornings so that we could catch up for the bills that we had lost because of COVID restrictions. And as I said earlier, we required all PMBs to be deferred.

We made adjustments to the length of questions and answers to five minutes for any speeches shorter than 10 minutes. We allowed more time for debate on legislation by extending the sitting day if the afternoon routine lasts longer than 60 minutes. Again, it brings the sitting day later into the evening. But we heard loud and clear from the members who are here. The member for Oxford had talked about it, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, certainly the member for Renfrew talked to me constantly about how the previous Liberal government would bash through bills in this place in record time. He would chop his desk and talk about the time allocations that they would do constantly. And we would hear from the opposition that they want more time to debate government bills. They want more time to debate the bills. That's what they're here to do. By extending the time when routine proceedings go long, it gives us more time. Mr. Speaker, I will say, the use of time allocation in this place under this government, under this Premier, has been almost non-existent since we were able to make this change. By and large, when it happens, when we do get things passed in this place quickly, it is because it's something that is an emergency that we all want to get done together. So I think that was a very, very important change.

0950

Speaker, we created a provision for take-note debates. With a take-note debate—we've used it on a couple of occasions—it's an opportunity for the House to be seized on an issue of great importance, and we've used that very, very effectively, I would say.

We allowed the deferral of closure votes.

We created more opportunity for debate in the Legislature by adding provisions of a 30-minute report-stage debate when a bill is reported back from committee. Again, here, Speaker, this is very important. A report gets reported back from committee. We do allow the opposition or any member, frankly, to stand in their place and demand that we enter into debate on a report. Some will say, "Well, why would we want to do that if we just digested it at committee? Why would we want to talk about it again?" It reflects the fact that many of the independents don't get to sit on some of those committees. This gives them an opportunity to have a say, if they're able to carry 12 members to request this debate.

It also does another thing, Speaker. It also gives the opposition—and we've heard this from them, and it was

from us too when we were in opposition—an opportunity to again highlight some of the things that they might have brought forward and, for one reason or another, the government didn't agree with, an amendment that they brought forward that they might have thought important but we, as government, may have turned down. It is something that they feel is very, very important, they want to express that in a more public fashion here in this House, we allowed that to happen.

Look, it's certainly not in the government's interest to delay passage of bills, it's certainly not in the government's interest to relitigate things that you hear at committee, to give the opposition more opportunity to hold you accountable, but it is in Parliament's interest that we do that—that is why that change was made.

I forgot about this one, Speaker: We gave more questions. The government unilaterally decided that we would take some of our questions that we have and give them to the independents.

Interjection: It's generous.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's generous in many ways; the member is quite correct. It's generous in many ways.

I will say I was surprised at this one, Speaker. I tell you what, I thought that this would be something easily done, right? We could just get an agreement and that would be the end of it. It wasn't this House leader, but the previous House leader of the official opposition didn't want anything to do with us giving our questions to the independents and was not going to be supportive of it unless we gave our questions to the opposition. We said, "Look, you get most of question period already. We have to give voice to the independents. They are important as well. They have a role to play in this place." We couldn't come to an agreement so we put it in the standing orders, Speaker. Again I think that is an important enhancement of the role of the independents.

We allow independents to substitute on committees and to work together to more effectively organize their own business, and there was a bunch of consequential amendments that we made as well.

In the spring of 2021, we eliminated deferral slips, causing all recorded divisions to be automatically deferred. Again, a small thing, Speaker, but you always knew the deferral slip was coming to you. In every instance it was coming, so we just eliminated that.

The ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned: This was something I could never understand. Committees are so important in this place. You'll see in these standing order changes that we have given even more voice to committees. We said, "Look, there has to be an opportunity for committees to recall themselves should something of importance happen while the House is not sitting; there has to be a way." So we made changes to the standing orders whereby a majority of the members on the committee can ask that the Chair of the committee recall that committee and the committee would have to meet. Obviously, Speaker, this is something that probably should have been done a long time ago. We did that in this because it's all part of the process of

elevating committees, elevating the role of the members of Parliament, ensuring the independence of all members of Parliament, whether they're sitting on the government side or the opposition side. So we made that change.

Here's another one, Speaker—I've got to tell you, this one threw me for a loop. I know all of my colleagues will remember the debate on this. This really started that bridge-building—I was starting to question myself on that outreach that the government members had been doing and that spirit of co-operation that had been so important to us, bringing people together in a frenzy of fellowship in the importance of elevating the assembly. I have to say, we instituted bipartisan leadership on committees by requiring that Vice-Chairs of committees be elected from a party other than the party that was chairing, that had the Chair. You would think, Speaker, that if the government is the Chair of a committee, and we are the Chair of the majority of the committees, then it could be a government Vice-Chair. Well, that certainly doesn't add to accountability. So we unilaterally decided that we would make the Vice-Chair come from the opposition. It just seemed to be a better way of running our committees.

It would seem to be common sense that if you're giving up a position of responsibility for the better functioning of Parliament it would make this place better, it would elevate the role of committees. Obviously, you would expect the same thing from the opposition: where they're chairing a committee, the Vice-Chair would come from the government party. It just would make this place—I have to tell you how hurt I was; I still bear the scars of the motion brought forward by the opposition House leader. She'll know this; we've talked about it a lot. I bear the scars of the accusation of being too bipartisan—too bipartisan, Speaker. Now, look, I've been in politics for a while. I've never been accused of—I've never had such an accusation levelled at me of being too bipartisan.

This came on the heels—Speaker, you will know that the Liberals introduced a motion of confidence in the government, so this place was being turned upside down. The government and the House leader and the Premier were accused of working too well with the opposition and they wanted us to stop. They brought a motion that we debated in this place to try and stop me from being too bipartisan. I said, “No, of course not; I'm going to continue in that spirit of co-operation and make this place a better place to be, to make it more effective for generations to come.” I'm not going to stop being bipartisan. I'm going to forge through, I'm going to do everything that I can to break down the walls of partisanship that we see across the aisle and make sure all members have this opportunity, because I know that maybe 15, 16, 17 or 20 years from now we might be back over there, right? You never know. It's doubtful, but you never know. You don't know, right?

Then, as I said, that came on the heels of the Liberals—I mean, the independents get so few opportunities to hold the House—colleagues will know this—very few opportunities to hold the House, and the very first private member's business that they bring to this chamber was a motion of confidence in the government. It wasn't just a

motion of confidence. I didn't know what to do. I was thinking to myself—I had to read it twice—is it possible that the Liberals have already conceded? They conceded the last election before it happened; now they were conceding the next election before it happened, because they knew we were doing such a good job. They made us vote to—“Golly gee, you have to stay in government until the very end.” It's a motion of confidence. To my even greater surprise, the official opposition joined the Liberals, and joined us, in confirming their confidence in the government in begging us not to go to an election earlier.

Now, I will say this: If that isn't the spirit of bipartisanship then I don't know what is. I would say we broke down that wall, we explained and we showed why working in a bipartisan fashion was important, and what it led to was this spirit of, “Yes, this government is doing such a good job in cutting taxes, it's doing such a good job of rebuilding hospitals, it's doing such a good job in reopening manufacturing—it is the first government to work on doing this for the north—that it had to continue.” So we did that.

There were a number of other things that we did during COVID. I just want to give one. We talked about all of the COVID restrictions and the things that we did during COVID. Of course, we did things like voting in the lobbies—there was some controversy over that. I know that the opposition did not want to vote in the lobbies at the beginning, but I think they came around to it. I think they could see the importance.

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It would be easy for me to take credit for that one, but let me just say—I think he deserves a round of applause—it was actually one of my longest-serving assistants, my then-deputy chief of staff, now-chief of staff, Owen Macri, who took on that charge. So when the Premier said to us that during COVID, we have to make sure the opposition can hold us to account, he found a way to get it done and we were all able to do that. So let the record clearly show that it was his idea and not mine. Again, that spirit of bipartisanship—I could not understand, at the beginning, why the opposition was so opposed to that. But, ultimately, you came around, so that's all that matters.

Speaker, I want to go over some of the other things that we're doing in this set of proposals. The estimates committee: Currently, all estimates, when introduced, stand referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates. What we're proposing is that all estimates, when introduced, stand referred to the respective policy committee for their ministry or office. So this will mean that the Standing Committee on Estimates is eliminated—absolutely, it means that.

But what it also means is that the estimates will then flow to each of the policy committees, the standing committees of this Legislature, so that more estimates can actually be reviewed by committees. It means that the members of these committees can become subject-matter experts in the fields that they are responsible for on committee. Those who have served on estimates here, we get through very few of the estimates. I don't know that it is

the beacon of accountability that we would all want to have happen in an estimates committee. We are reverting back to the way it was pre-1999.

We are still allowing the opposition, of course, to lead off in the selection of those estimates when it comes to the specific policy fields. We're allowing the committee to decide how much time it wants to spend. The committee itself, as they are, should make those decisions as to which estimates they want to review, how long they want to spend on those estimates and who they want to call, Speaker. I think you will find that it works significantly better than it has been.

I understand why it was done, why the change was made back in, I think it was, 1989, but that is not—I think what they were trying to do was not accomplished, and this is why, by moving it back to the standing committees, it elevates, again, the importance and the role of committees in this place. Committees will be constantly active now. As I said, members will become subject-matter experts on the ministries that are assigned to each of those committees. I think you will find it a far better use of the Legislature's time.

Now, we are changing the committees in the motion. I know the motion is very technical, but here is, in essence, what we are proposing on committees.

There would be the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, and the ministries that they would be responsible for would be citizenship and multiculturalism; heritage, sport, tourism and cultural industries; infrastructure; transportation; municipal affairs and housing; the Premier's office; and Cabinet Office. They would review the estimates of those ministries as well. Just for a second, Speaker: It also reflects the fact, when you have the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, it respects the fact and highlights the fact of how important arts and culture are not only to this government, but how important they are to this province. Billions of dollars of economic activity, thousands upon thousands of jobs, and now there will be a committee specifically geared towards them.

The Standing Committee on Social Policy will deal with children, community and social services; colleges and universities; education; health; long-term care; seniors and accessibility; and women's issues.

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy will handle intergovernmental affairs, the Attorney General, franco-phone affairs, government and consumer services and the Solicitor General.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will be elevated to a policy committee; it is not right now. So its authority will be elevated by these changes. It will handle the Management Board; economic development, job creation and trade; finance; labour, training and skills development; and the Treasury Board.

The Standing Committee on the Interior: This is a brand new committee that we are proposing here. The Standing Committee on the Interior would have agriculture, food and rural affairs; environment, conservation and parks; northern development, mines and natural resources; Indigenous affairs; and energy—again highlighting the

fact that we believe, and I think all parliamentarians believe, that these are very, very important areas and deserve a sole focus and sole understanding. There is no government that has paid more attention to the north than this government has. A lot of other governments talk about the environment—colleagues, you know this. We hear this all the time—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Lip service.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Lip service to the environment. But it is clear, we all know that it was Mike Harris and Ernie Eves who eliminated the coal-fired plants, which allowed us to bring down our GHG emissions. There's so much work that has continued to be done. But we wanted them to have a specific focus.

And then we're creating the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The chairmanship of that will go to the opposition. We think that it's very important that the opposition lead that. That committee will deal with private bills, because we are eliminating the committee that was otherwise responsible for that. But we're also putting within that legislative affairs, and they will continue on the regulatory process. The reason we're doing that is because as we look at decanting this place, as we look at moving towards the renovation of this place over a number of years, it is important that the opposition also have an ability to hold government to account for the decisions that we make. That's why we thought it was important to have an opposition Chair there.

The PR bills: This is a big change. The committee that had previously been seized with that will be eliminated, and the procedure and House affairs committee will be seized with that, should it be needed. What we are proposing is that after first reading, PR bills are required to remain on the order paper for four weeks, but before they can be called for second reading, any member of the procedure and House affairs committee or five members not on the committee may file a request with the Clerk that the PR bill be referred to committee. It's just a process that reflects the fact that it is not always necessary for this entire House to be seized with the reopening of a numbered company that has gone dark. That should not be something that the entire House is seized with. But there are some times when the House should be seized with that, and it reflects that.

We've made some changes to the PMBs again to make them better. We want them designated earlier. Right now—it's on both sides; it's not just one side or the other—you could go to the night before and really not know what it is that you're debating. I think that really reduces the effectiveness of PMBs. So we're saying that we need to know two weeks ahead of time of your ballot date what you will be debating so that we can properly prepare. As you know, at the start of every session, we always delay PMBs by unanimous consent, because members usually aren't ready because the bills haven't been drafted, and we are moving that.

Again, in the spirit of making sure there's more time for debate, we are allowing the House to be recalled on Monday mornings. We did this for PMBs in the last

session, and I thought it worked very, very well, but we also heard people want more time for debate. There are those instances where something is so important they want more time to debate. They absolutely love the fact that we have virtually eliminated time allocation, this government, in comparison to the previous Liberal government. More often than not, we get to a point where there's been so much debate that we are able to move on, because so many members have participated in that debate.

There is some other housecleaning with respect to a fixed election date, changes to the spring meeting period, obviously. The current Legislative Assembly calendar has us sitting into June. Well, that obviously is not going to be the case this year, because there is a fixed election date. It is probably an oversight that should have been changed when the fixed election date came in.

In addition to the bipartisan wall that we broke down with respect to Chairs and Vice-Chairs, we are adding a Second Vice-Chair, again so that the third party or independents can be better involved. And then some other housekeeping amendments, which will, again, allow this place to function better.

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Really, Speaker, there has been a lot. I can appreciate there has been a lot of change in a very short period of time, given how often standing orders are changed. You say over three years; that's not a short period of time. But given how often standing orders are changed—and they shouldn't happen frequently. Let's be honest. Every generation or two, you have to take a look and see what makes sense, what doesn't make sense and then make the changes to reflect the Parliament of this generation and the ones going forward. That's what this has done.

But what we had seen when we came to office in 2018, what our members who had served here for so long—maybe with the exception of the member for Sarnia-Lambton, who was so successful in getting private members' business passed even in opposition. And look, I've got one last shout-out. I said this yesterday in speaking: Again, it's part of those breaking down walls, Speaker. One of the walls that we had in this place for so long was the NDP's opposition to those who served in the oil and gas sector and those who help build a strong economy. Again, in that spirit, the member from Sarnia-Lambton was able to break down that historic wall and, if not just temporarily, get the NDP to recognize how important oil and gas—

Mr. Bill Walker: And the Green Party.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, no, I think the Green Party stuck to the principle that he had had and voted against.

So I want to thank the member for Sarnia-Lambton for that. There are very few members who stand up for a community quite as well as the member for Sarnia-Lambton. I know I learn a lot from him. I take a lot of notes from him quite often.

Look, this is all about making the place function better, Speaker, and you're seeing that. Even just yesterday, colleagues—I know I don't have a lot of time. Even just

yesterday, we were debating Bill 84. I think it's going to be coming up for debate. We were debating Bill 84 yesterday, Speaker, and I can't tell you—it's rare in this place that you get to a point where the opposition, while you're debating, they have changed their mind, right? They changed their mind. This is a credit to the minister. It's a credit to the people who spoke yesterday. They started out in opposition to Bill 84 and then by the time our members participated in questions and answers—a change that we made through the previous standing orders—by the time debate had occurred, by the end of the day, they had decided that not only was this bill great, they didn't even want it to go to committee. Now, had it gone to committee, they would have found a more robust committee, because of the changes that we made. But they didn't even want it to go to committee.

At the beginning of the debate, they were talking about the budget. Make no mistake about it, Speaker: Bill 84 is a confidence motion. It is absolutely a confidence motion, because it has an impact on the budget. It is a confidence motion, because it returns money to people through the stickers that you had to put on the back of your car. You're going to get 120 bucks back on that. The 412 and the 418—I always remind people that it was only the Liberals and the NDP who have ever put tolls on the people of the province of Ontario, and it is only the Conservatives who have ever taken those tolls off.

But who cares, Mr. Speaker? Here we have again this week another vote of confidence in the government. I am very confident, unless something has changed again, that when we vote on Bill 84, it will be a vote of confidence in the government once again. And I suspect it will be a unanimous vote of confidence—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I interrupt the government House leader to say that we're out of time for debate on his notice of motion this morning.

Debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MOIS DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Guy Bourgoin: En tant que Franco-Ontarien, j'ai l'honneur de me lever aujourd'hui pour souligner le Mois de la Francophonie. Le mois de mars est un temps pour célébrer, pour fêter ensemble la vitalité linguistique et la diversité culturelle de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

C'est aussi le temps de réflexion et de réaffirmer nos engagements envers la communauté francophone. Le NPD continuera de moderniser la Loi sur les services en français. On assurera le retour du commissaire aux services en français indépendant. On assurera l'accès à l'éducation en français, à partir de la maternelle jusqu'à l'université francophone, par et pour. Et on donnera à la culture francophone la place et le respect qu'elle mérite dans l'histoire de l'Ontario.

Mais il faut également comprendre que si nous ne restons pas attentifs, nos droits peuvent s'évaporer comme de l'air. Sous le gouvernement conservateur, nous avons été témoins :

—des points de presse et des publications techniques offerts en anglais seulement durant la pandémie, ce qui laisse des milliers de francophones sans accès aux informations pertinentes dans la langue officielle de leur choix—les bureaux de santé, par exemple;

—des journaux et des radios francophones qui ne font pas partie de la campagne publicitaire du gouvernement de la province;

—ou même avoir accès aux tribunaux dans la langue officielle de notre choix.

Aux francophones et aux francophiles de la province, célébrons notre vitalité, mais restons attentifs pour faire valoir nos droits linguistiques que nous avons obtenus par notre vigilance. Nous sommes, nous serons. Bon Mois de la Francophonie.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

Mr. Will Bouma: I rise in the House today to acknowledge a wonderful event which took place in Brantford this past Saturday. I was able to participate in the Coldest Night of the Year walk with my family. Across Canada, tens of thousands of Canadians stepped out into the cold February evening and walked to raise awareness and funds for those in our community struggling with homelessness, hunger and abuse.

I just have to take a second to say thank you to a former member here, Phil Gillies, who organizes our team every single year.

What is unique about this fundraiser is that funds raised are focused on services at a local level. In my riding of Brantford–Brant, we walked for the Why Not Youth Centre. This organization works with high-risk youth in our community to stabilize their lives, build skills and provide a sense of community and belonging, with the overarching goal of preventing homelessness. In a one-month span, Why Not sees 750 to 1,000 visits from local teens in need. More than \$50,000 was raised on Saturday and will assist this organization in empowering our local youth.

Nationwide, Coldest Night of the Year raised over \$11 million. I will end with the objective of the Coldest Night of the Year as it provides an excellent summary: “Each step we take brings someone closer to safety, health and home, as together, we raise funds for organizations whose commitment and work transforms people’s lives.”

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thunder Bay and Atikokan are home to three excellent hospitals, doing excellent work caring for our communities. These include the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, St. Joseph’s Care Group and the Atikokan General Hospital. Thank you to them for all the work they do. I also want to

thank all the health care workers throughout my riding and in northwestern Ontario who provide care and healing to so many residents.

Today, though, I want to highlight that our health care system and our health care workers need our help. Many Ontarians are waiting for surgery. There is a major backlog. Our province and our region has a shortage of nurses and doctors. Emergency room staff are in crisis. Health care workers are exhausted after two years of a pandemic, and recently the Ontario Health Coalition raised the alarm about private operators potentially running hospitals in Ontario.

I am very opposed to this. Privatization would be the worst possible policy for our hospital and health care sector. Every dollar wasted on private profit is a dollar not spent on public health care. All of us have a right to public health care. Rather than privatizing, Ontarians need pharmacare and dental care. We need to expand our system and improve it with public health care investment. We need to be paying our nurses and personal support workers more and working to end staff shortages. Everyone in this province deserves access to universal, non-profit and public health care.

1020

BLUEWATER HEALTH COMMUNITY ADDICTIONS HUB

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker, and it’s a privilege to be here today with you. It’s my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today and update the House on a very important investment in Sarnia–Lambton by the government of Ontario. On February 1, 2022, it was my great pleasure to join the Premier, the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to announce that our government is investing over \$12 million in a new, permanent mental health and addictions hub at Bluewater Health in Sarnia–Lambton.

Bluewater Health’s new Community Addictions Hub will include a permanent 24-bed facility: 10 withdrawal management beds, eight observation beds and six stabilization beds. In addition, it will include clinical space for programs, treatments, all existing Bluewater Health addiction outpatient services and consultations with allied health partners.

After more than 15 years of advocacy by so many in my community, I couldn’t be more proud of our government for investing in such an important resource to the people of Sarnia–Lambton. This new mental health and addictions hub will benefit so many individuals in our community who are struggling with the disease of addiction.

Thank you to all the members of the community who participated in helping this dream become a reality. This is another example of how the government of Ontario is working with communities across the province to find solutions to big problems and delivering on our commitment to end hallway health care. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to sharing future updates with this House on this exciting new facility in the weeks and months ahead.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Under the watch of this government, over 4,000 senior citizens died in long-term-care homes during the pandemic. We must never forget them. And we must never forget people like Innis Ingram who stood up to protect them. During a horrific outbreak at a long-term-care residence, Innis chained himself to a tree outside the home to bring attention and help to his mom and to all the seniors who were confined and suffering in unimaginable circumstances.

Innis died too young this past year. I was lucky to have met him. He was big-hearted, fearless and kind. I salute his bravery and mourn his short life. To his family, his two wonderful children: May his memory be a blessing to you.

The lack of action to fix systemic problems in the home care and long-term-care sector following these tragic deaths is unforgivable. We continue to see a profit-driven, underfunded long-term-care system. We should be fighting for a system where every dollar goes directly to residents' care, not to corporate profits.

Home care is in crisis. Seniors are receiving below-standard care from overworked and underpaid home care nurses and PSWs. We should be fighting for quality home care to give seniors the help they need to stay in their homes longer.

Like Innis, we should all be fighting to protect our loved ones, to ensure that our seniors receive the care that they have earned. Our parents and our grandparents deserve the very best.

INVASION OF UKRAINE

INVASION DE L'UKRAINE

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Mr. Speaker, we may disagree on many things in this chamber, but if there's one thing on which we're united, it's our commitment to the principles of democracy, freedom and respect for the rule of law. Last week, Russia began an unprovoked, full-scale further invasion of Ukraine. Since then, Ukrainians have been fighting bravely. Yes, they're fighting for their freedom and homeland, but they're also fighting for us.

Cette invasion est non seulement une attaque contre l'Ukraine, c'est une attaque contre la démocratie et contre l'ordre international fondé sur des règles qui nous protègent tous. C'est une menace majeure, non seulement pour la sécurité de l'Ukraine, mais pour celle de l'Europe, de nos alliés, et pour notre sécurité.

Il est essentiel que nous fassions tout notre possible pour nous assurer que Poutine ne gagne pas.

Remarks in Ukrainian.

Nous sommes solidaires avec le peuple ukrainien.
Slava Ukraini.

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC
ATHLETES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: While current circumstances may divide us, the Beijing Olympics 2022 brought Canada

together to cheer on our athletes and celebrate their accomplishments. Canada brought home 26 medals: four gold, eight silver and 14 bronze. This is a testament to their hard work, dedication and passion for their respective sports.

I stand here today in the Legislature to say a special congratulations to a neighbour and a gold-medal Olympian, Foldens's Ella Shelton. Ella is 24 years old and a member of the Canadian women's hockey team. Ella played defence in all seven hockey games, including the gold-medal game against the United States. She recorded three assists in her first Olympic appearance. Congratulations again to Ella and Team Canada for an exceptional gold win in women's hockey.

As we turn our attention to the Beijing Paralympics, which start this Friday, March 4, Oxford is also proud of Garrett Riley, a participant in the men's para hockey team. Garrett's passion for hockey started at an early age with great resiliency and determination. Garrett switched to para ice hockey after a cancer diagnosis 11 years ago and a leg amputation in 2017. Five months ago, while playing para ice hockey, Garrett took a hard hit which resulted in a compound leg fracture. However, he has not let that slow him down. With surgery, rehabilitation and training, he's still slated to play in Beijing on the men's para hockey team.

Ella Shelton and Garrett Riley, I want to thank you both for representing Canada and Oxford at the 2022 Olympics and inspiring future athletes to strive for their goals.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This month, the clock runs out on \$1 billion in child care funding that the federal government is willing to provide to Ontario families. By the end of this month, \$1 billion that would have been available to provide \$10-per-day child care will no longer be available. Families in my riding are spending in the thousands of dollars a month to provide daycare for their children—in many cases, as much as they're paying for mortgage and rent. They need relief. They need it now.

At the same time, child care workers are pushed to the limit with low wages. They need a deal as well. If you google the words "Ontario" and "child care," you come up with pages of results with common headlines: "Daycare deal near ..." "We're almost there ..." "We have it within reach"—and those are the January headlines. At the same time, Speaker, we still don't have a deal. People don't have the relief that they need.

I call on the Premier to take decisive action now, put a comprehensive plan on the table, nail down an agreement and give families a break. Don't wait. Don't stall. Get it done.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize the recent launch of the community fundraising campaign for the new Markdale hospital. After many, many years of inaction from the previous government, our government stepped up and committed to building a new hospital in

Markdale. Construction has begun and the community is thrilled that our government came through for them.

Like with any new hospital construction, the community has a responsibility to fundraise 10% to 15% of the cost of the project. I can say that Markdale and the surrounding community are up to this task. In October, the Centre Grey Health Services Foundation launched its Together in Care campaign with a goal of raising a total of \$12.5 million for the new hospital. Planning for this new hospital has been under way for many, many years and the foundation has already raised \$6.8 million for the project. The current campaign must raise \$5.7 million, and I have no doubt they will be successful in this endeavour.

The community's commitment to this project was already on display the day the campaign launched: Ice River Springs has committed \$500,000 to the project; the Rotary Club of Markdale committed \$300,000; the local Kinsmen Club, \$100,000; and the local hospital auxiliary has also pledged \$650,000 to this important cause.

I have no doubt that the entire community will rally and make sure this campaign is a big success. I encourage all local residents to contribute what they can to this important cause. Every dollar counts and will go a long way towards ensuring our excellent health care system continues to serve our community in future.

I look forward to the future when the new 68,000-square-foot Markdale hospital is complete and open, and the Together in Care campaign will play a major role in that milestone.

1030

HOME CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: There was recently an article in one of our local papers. It was about Madame Jenny Begin, and she has ALS. She is living in Verner, and the article was about how once in a while—actually, quite often—the home care nurse that she has the approval for doesn't show up. Now, due to the article and some work from other people, that situation is much better right now, but it is emblematic of what's happening across—and specifically I'm going to talk about northern rural Ontario where often people who have approvals for home care, they're not there. And we know what happens when home care isn't there: Their condition deteriorates. The person's condition deteriorates, and where they want to spend their lives, they can't and they end up either in hospital or in long-term care and they don't need to be there.

Home care workers and nurses are the lowest paid—they're the bottom rung of the ladder. If you want to fix this system, pay them; pay them what they're worth. You can't recruit people without paying them a salary that's actually going to be a career.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR ELGIN–MIDDLESEX–LONDON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of

the House by reason of the resignation of Jeff Yurek as the member for the electoral district of Elgin–Middlesex–London, effective February 28, 2022. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In the Speaker's gallery today is Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, along with Elections Ontario staff Stephanie Lowe and Jo Langham. They're visiting today in recognition of Provincial Voter Registration Month.

Civic engagement is key to maintaining a healthy society and it follows that a free and fair electoral process is a cornerstone of our democracy, and registering for the vote is the first step. It is fundamental.

We are very fortunate in Canada to have non-partisan offices committed to making voting easy and accessible for all electors, and I'm pleased to welcome Greg, Stephanie and Jo to the Legislative Assembly today to help us kick off Provincial Voter Registration Month. Please join me in showing our appreciation to the staff of Elections Ontario.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm also very pleased to inform the House that page Leah Elder from the riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is today's page captain, and we have with us today at Queen's Park her mother, Majesta Elder. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here as well.

WEARING OF PINS

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to wear pins in recognition of March being Provincial Voter Registration Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear pins in recognition of March being Provincial Voter Registration Month. Agreed? Agreed.

STUART LYON SMITH

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has another point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Dr. Stuart Lyon Smith, with five minute 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): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Dr. Stuart Lyon Smith, 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. Agreed? Agreed.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll recognize the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am honoured to rise in the Legislature this morning to speak about the incredible life and legacy of Dr. Stuart Smith.

Dr. Smith was a former MPP in my hometown for the riding of Hamilton West. He was first elected in 1975, running against Tory Bob Morrow. Bob Morrow was a well-known name at the time—he was a city councillor, he sat on the board of control and he was running in a safe Tory seat. Everyone thought that Morrow would win. Expectations for Stuart Smith weren't that high at that time. In fact, people had doubts that a psychiatry professor could wage a challenging campaign. Smith himself thought that being a psychiatrist was an obstacle because, as he said, "People believe psychiatrists are peculiar."

But on the day of the election, Stuart Smith beat Morrow by more than 500 votes. Bob Morrow went on to serve as mayor of Hamilton for 18 years. Stuart Smith's election is remembered in Hamilton political circles for being involved in one of the most exciting elections that the city has ever seen.

Dr. Stuart Smith had big political ambitions. He didn't just want to be a member of provincial Parliament, he wanted to be leader, and within a year, Stuart Smith contested and won the leadership of the Liberal Party, defeating future Premier David Peterson by 45 votes on the third ballot.

Stuart Smith was just 37 years old. He led the party for six years, through two election campaigns. He served alongside Premier Bill Davis and NDP leader Stephen Lewis. Smith was determined to take the Liberals from being a rural party to one that had a solid presence in the urban centres, and it was under his leadership that the Ontario Liberal Party made inroads in urban Ontario.

As with many things in politics, it was a struggle. Many of his rural caucus members resisted. But Smith was a passionate speaker, especially on issues that were close to his heart, and his strength as a communicator made a difference. In 1976, when Canadians feared the country would be broken up by the Parti Québécois in Quebec, Smith brought a group of young Liberals in Burlington to tears with his emotional speech to keep the country united.

He felt strongly about keeping Quebec within Canada because he had deep roots in Quebec. He was the son of a grocery store owner in east Montreal. He grew up in the city, and by all accounts, he was a brilliant man. He attended McGill University, where he received his science and medical degrees. He was trained as a psychiatrist. He was president of the student council at McGill, where he organized the first strike on campus to force the government to launch a student loan and scholarship program. He

represented Canada at international debates and won every top award for debating at McGill. His love for debating led him to television, where he hosted shows on CBC and later at CHCH in Hamilton.

In 1965, while still living in Montreal, Smith sought the Liberal nomination for the riding of Mount Royal, but was asked to step aside for the then-unknown Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Two years later, Smith left Montreal and moved to Hamilton to take a position as professor of psychiatry at the new McMaster University medical school. He also ran the in-patient unit at St. Joe's hospital in Hamilton.

Medicine was Dr. Smith's profession, but politics was his passion. He led the Ontario Liberal Party through two elections before retiring from politics, and although he was a man who loved public service, he found the pressures of politics debilitating.

Protection of the environment was always a top priority for Smith. He served as chair of the Science Council of Canada and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. In 1991, he headed up the Smith commission, an inquiry into the state of post-secondary education across Canada. He was a lifelong baseball fan, who adopted the Toronto Blue Jays as his team when he moved to Ontario, and he served as the commissioner of the semi-pro Intercounty Baseball League.

Dr. Stuart Lyon Smith was extremely intelligent and well travelled. He made significant contributions to his province and to his party. And although he never did become Premier, he opened a door that future Liberal leaders would walk through. Thank you.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I'll recognize the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: While some of you in this House may have had the privilege of meeting Dr. Stuart Smith, I am not one of those lucky people. However, I do have the distinct honour of representing the same wonderful riding of Hamilton West that Dr. Smith served for three successive Parliaments.

Dr. Smith's political journey began in 1965 in Montreal, where he sought the nomination for the riding of Mont-Royal. He eventually withdrew his nomination in favour of a then young upstart, Pierre Trudeau. In 1967, he left Montreal for Hamilton, Ontario, to become a professor of psychiatry at the new McMaster University medical school. We have Dr. Smith to thank for helping to design McMaster's pioneering and innovative problem-based learning. This unique hands-on approach to learning continues to be used throughout the university and around the world and has helped to earn McMaster many global awards.

Dr. Smith was first elected in the 1975 provincial election, defeating Bob Morrow, a city councillor and future mayor. But in addition to making way for Prime Ministers, Dr. Smith did become the leader of the official opposition in this provincial Legislature. He served alongside Premier Bill Davis and NDP leader Stephen Lewis.

Stuart led the Ontario Liberal Party through two elections before retiring from politics in 1981. He was succeeded by Dr. Richard Allen, who coincidentally passed

away three years ago this week. I had the honour of paying tribute to Dr. Allen at that time, and I will note that they shared many of the same passions. They shared a love for academia, both having taught at McMaster, and they both shared a passion for working to conserve and protect our environment.

Hamilton West is a community blessed with many natural green spaces, like the Bruce Trail, the Niagara Escarpment and Cootes Paradise, so it is easy to see why Dr. Smith fought hard to give protection to our natural beauty. He had this to say about Ontarians' right to a clean environment:

“What it comes to is this: Individual citizens have a right to a clean environment. They should be allowed to insist upon that right in the courts of the land. With such a law in place the ministry would be much more likely to act, knowing individual citizens could take things into their own hands if necessary.”

Dr. Smith would have been pleased to see Ontario enact an Environmental Bill of Rights under the New Democratic government of the day, with unanimous party support. This bill of rights continues to be an important law that gives individuals the right to have their voices heard on issues that impact our environment. We owe it to the work of legislators such as Dr. Smith to ensure this law remains and that we continue to improve protections for people and our environment in Ontario.

Stuart Lyon Smith passed away peacefully on June 10, 2020, at the age of 82. He was the devoted husband and life partner of Paddy, the much-loved and admired father and father-in-law of Tanya and Betsy, Craig and Sandra, and the adoring and adored grandfather of Kyle, Dylan and Alexandra Smith and of Michaele and Isaac Sloversmith.

As a brand new grandmother, I was particularly touched by Dr. Smith's sage advice on the duty we owe our future generations. He had this to say:

“I say simply that some years from now, if the good Lord allows us to live some more decades we are all going to have to look at ourselves and our children and we are going to have to tell them, what we did to make this planet livable.... We are going to have to tell those children when they are adults and we are elderly what we did.”

I'd like to close with the beautiful words from Dr. Smith's obituary: “Closest to his heart, though, was his love of family and friends. Throughout his life he always maintained the two most important things in life are love and learning. He learned very broadly; he loved and was loved very deeply.”

So I say to Dr. Smith's family, thank you for sharing him with us in this Legislature and may his memory be a blessing to you.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured to rise in the House today to pay tribute to the late MPP and leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, Dr. Stuart Lyon Smith.

Dr. Smith served as a professor of psychiatry at McMaster University while also leading the in-patient unit at Hamilton's St. Joseph's hospital. In that role, he

established his lifelong goal of always being there to help other people—a goal he carried into his life as a politician.

I especially want to note his steadfast and unwavering commitment to protecting Ontario's environment in his role as the leader of the official opposition when many of Ontario's first environmental pieces of legislation were passed in this province.

I especially want to take a moment to talk about his post-electoral partisan political life. He chaired the Science Council of Canada and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and spearheaded the formation of Rockcliffe Research and Technology. The ideas he put forward to connect the economy and address the climate crisis in following the science are as relevant today as they were when he chaired the national council.

Speaker, last night I had the opportunity to meet with some first-year students at the University of Guelph. They talked about, “How can we have a sense of hope, addressing the mental health concerns we have, with the climate crisis we face and what seems to be the inability of politics to address it?” I was thinking of the tribute today and thinking: Oh, how I wish I could ask Dr. Stuart Lyon Smith to answer that question, because he would have a profound response to those students.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's an honour to say a few words about the life of a true parliamentarian, a remarkable MPP, a leader, a father, a husband, a physician—Dr. Stuart Lyon Smith. Dr. Smith had a diverse career, and there's not enough time to go through all the aspects of that career, or we might be into orders of the day. Most importantly, he was a devoted husband, father and grandfather.

Before coming to politics, he was a student activist. He graduated in medicine at McGill, became an associate professor of psychology at McMaster. When he was first elected as MPP for Hamilton West and won that election, Bob Nixon stepped down. He decided to run for the leadership, and he won that leadership in 1976, defeating David Peterson, who would later become Premier. He led the party in the 1977 provincial election, when our party displaced the New Democrats as the official opposition. He led the party in that election and in 1981, and he was up against a formidable opponent: Bill Davis's Big Blue Machine—not an easy task.

During his leadership, though, Dr. Smith transformed our party. He came after Bob Nixon, who was kind of Mr. Ontario, and he knew everybody everywhere, but what he believed was that we had to have policies that were based in evidence, that were meaningful, that were going to work. And that work that he did led to the breakthrough in the 1985 election. As most of us here know, sometimes you don't get to the top of the mountain, but the work you do is important for the people that come after you, no matter what party you're in.

I had a chance to talk to my friend Charles Beer, who I worked with here, and who some of you may know. He worked for Dr. Smith alongside people like Gordon Floyd, our colleague here Mike Gravelle, Anne Golden. Charles

said he was one of the brightest, most hard-working people he'd ever met.

I want you to think about this, for those of that are old enough: In the early 1980s, Dr. Smith told his Liberal caucus that all of them had to meet with the leaders of Toronto's gay community—not optional.

He introduced a private member's bill—actually with the help of Albert Roy, who was an MPP from Ottawa—which was the basis of what became the French Language Services Act here in Ontario, a really important piece of legislation.

1050

Many people I've talked to said politics didn't come easy to Dr. Stuart Smith. His staff would encourage him to go to events and would say, "Do what Bill Davis does. Go around and shake people's hands, talk to them," and his response was, "Well, I don't want to bother them." Charles also said when there was a big event coming up, they would pray that Paddy would be there, because he always did better when Paddy was there, and she was a real force in her own right.

After leaving politics, Dr. Smith was a devoted public servant as well. He served as chair of the Science Council of Canada, and from 1995 to 2002 the chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. I spoke to my federal counterpart, Dave McGuinty, who worked with him at that round table, and David said this: "He was renowned for his brilliance, his modesty and humble approach. He mentored hundreds of people. His work on science, sustainability and the economy is unmatched. Next to my father, he is the person who has had the most profound influence on my life." And I don't think, from discussions with people, that David's the only person who felt that.

Dr. Stuart Smith believed that the two most important things in life are love and learning. His life clearly demonstrated that: a true public servant and an incredible human being.

To Paddy, Tanya, Betsy, Craig and Sandra and his grandchildren Kyle, Dylan and Alexandra, Michaele and Isaac, thank you for sharing your husband, father and grandfather with the people of Ontario and the people of Canada. It made a huge difference. Thank you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We give thanks for the life and public service of Dr. Stuart Smith. Thank you very much.

Before I ask for oral questions, I'll remind the member that if you wish to be recognized today, you have to be in your designated seat when you rise.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. We know that Ontarians are not able to

get the health care they need. Many are living in pain, with anxiety, with a quality of life that's reduced. Wait-times were bad before COVID hit, but of course now they have exploded and they're worse than ever.

The Ontario Medical Association estimates the following: 21 million patient services backlogged, one million surgeries, millions of diagnostics and preventative care, cancer screenings.

Just imagine being one of those patients, waiting and wondering why their government doesn't care about the fact that their health is deteriorating. When is this government going to come up a plan and the appropriate investments to clear the backlogs?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We certainly recognize that there are many Ontarians who have been waiting for surgeries and procedures as a result of COVID, however, not to the degree suggested by member opposite. Nonetheless, we've prepared for that. We've invested over \$5 billion into our hospital system to create 3,100 more beds since the pandemic began, to care, first of all, for the COVID patients but now to care for the patients who need to have those surgeries.

Now that we've been able to lift directive 2, we are expecting that hospitals are going to be able to continue with their volumes, and we know that with the additional money we've put in, we can now do weekend surgeries and evening surgeries. We've put half a billion dollars into accelerating those surgeries.

We know that people have been waiting. We're ready to carry on with them. I can also advise the member that in 2020-21, the average Ontario hospital completed 88% of their targeted surgical allocations.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the minister can correct her record. It wasn't me that was raising these issues and these numbers. These numbers come from the Ontario Medical Association, a group of folks that I think have the information and wanted to provide it to all of us so that we could get on with these problems.

The backlogs have serious consequences for people. It's heartbreaking to hear what's happening out there. Nearly 50,000 undiagnosed cases of skin cancer is what the OMA estimates; two and a half years to catch up on knee replacements; a year and a half to catch up on hip replacements; 16 months for heart bypass surgeries; 12 months for MRIs. Speaker, this needs to be fixed, and it needs to be fixed now.

Look, people went through hell during the pandemic and then were told that their screenings, their procedures and their surgeries were being delayed. Some still haven't gotten those appointments rescheduled. A million people are waiting in agony for surgery. Speaker, why won't this government listen to the OMA, listen to patients who are suffering in pain, listen to what we're asking for and

provide a plan and the funding necessary to clear all the backlogs?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government is certainly aware that there are people who have been waiting long periods of time for orthopedic surgeries; in some cases, cancer surgeries or cardiac surgeries. But we're putting the investments in place to make sure that we can relieve their discomfort and their anxiety.

Of the \$500 million that I already spoke about in terms of the investments that we've made, in addition to the \$5 billion for creating more beds, we've put in \$86 million to allow hospitals to extend the OR into evenings and weekends, and almost \$70 million for MRI and CT imaging. That's going to represent a 19% overall increase in available hours for MRIs and a 30% overall increase in available hours for CTs. We've already put \$41.5 million into a Surgical Innovation Fund that's letting a number—over 100 hospitals, 104 proposals put into hospitals to develop their own solutions for how they can increase their output of surgeries and procedures, and additional amounts for—\$18 million in a centralized surgical wait-list.

There's more to say, and I'll go further in the next question.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that patients in other provinces fared much better because they had governments that were prepared to do the planning and make the investments. In BC, we know that 98% of their backlogs were cleared within the middle of last summer because they made the effort.

We can actually fix this here in Ontario as well. The FAO, in fact, identified the scope of this problem last May, and has recently called out this government for not making the investments necessary to appropriately clear those backlogs. It is absolutely clear: This government has no plan whatsoever. They won't fix the problem because they do not believe in good public health care.

My question is, why does this government refuse to listen to the experts, refuse to listen to the OMA, refuse to listen to the FAO, refuse to listen to patients in pain, fix the problem and spend the necessary dollars to get rid of the backlogs?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government absolutely believes in excellent, quality public health care, and we've made the investments that absolutely prove that: \$5 billion into creating more hospital beds, \$500 million into allowing hospitals to expand their surgical facilities, dealing with each and every single hospital bed in the province of Ontario as part of a centralized whole and making sure that we can take advantage of every surgical wait time that we possibly can.

We're also making huge investments in health human resources, because there's no point in investing in more beds if you don't have the people. We are doing all of these things in tandem. It's a significant investment of billions of dollars into our public health care system. If that's not enough money, I don't know what the member opposite would suggest.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All she needs to do is read the FAO report. There's a figure in there.

I want to talk about home care next—and this is to our Premier as well. Home care is in a complete crisis right now. It's part of our health care system. Ontarians and their loved ones are the ones that are paying the price for the home care crisis. There is a severe staffing shortage in our home care system. The providers are there, but they have no staff, and so that means that Ontarians can't get the home care services that they need. What does that mean? That means people who want to get care at home are not able to get it and they're forced to go into long-term care. They don't have the choice to stay at home, which is what folks want.

1100

The staff shortage, of course, has been made much worse by this Premier's low-wage policy, Bill 124. The Ontario Community Support Association of home care providers has said that they are sounding the alarm in the sector, and once again, this Premier is ignoring them.

My question is, why won't the Premier listen to Ontario home care leaders and start fixing the problem now, beginning with repealing Bill 124?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government certainly recognizes the important role that home care plays in our health care system. It's like a tripod: Along with hospitals and long-term care, if you don't have a strong home care system, you don't have a strong health care system.

That's why, with the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, we're modernizing the delivery of home and community care by bringing an outdated system that was designed in the 1990s into the 21st century, we are breaking down long-standing barriers that have separated home care from primary care and we're working to bring home care into the Ontario Health overview and into the Ontario health teams to make sure that people are able to receive the home care that they need close to home.

We also recognize that many people who need home care services now have much more significant health concerns than in the past. And so, what we're doing is working to make sure that they can get the support they need, whether it's nursing services or personal support workers or whatever else they need, so that more people can stay in their own homes, which is where they want to be, have better outcomes for them and is where they—

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

Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: None of this minister's long story rings true when we know that the staff is not there. The sector is begging—begging—the government to solve the problem. The staff is not there, and so people aren't getting the care that they need, as the minister pretends. Nine out of 10 Ontarians, 90%, want to have home care instead of going into long-term care. But they're left with

no choice because this government refuses to solve the problem.

Deborah Simon, CEO of the Ontario Community Support Association says this: “Many have long wait-lists and no staff to service the clients. The shortage has led to longer wait-lists.”

Sue VanderBent, CEO of Home Care Ontario, says, “We need help. We are in a crisis.”

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane told a story about somebody in his own community that does not have the home care that she needs reliably.

The home care sector is desperately calling for this government to step up and solve the problem. Our recommendation: Make pandemic pay permanent so they can keep staff—they can attract staff and keep staff. Will the government do that today?

Interjections.

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

The parliamentary assistant, the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you to the member for that question. Our government is incredibly grateful for the contribution of Ontario’s health care workers and the critical role that they have played throughout the COVID pandemic, providing patients with timely, safe and equitable access to health care and quality care.

The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act is designed to protect public sector jobs and front-line service. Ontario’s public sector employees will still be able to receive salary increases for seniority, performance and increased qualifications, as they do currently.

Based on the ONA, nurses receive a graduated salary increase of an average of 4.4% per year, up to 7.1%, for each of their first eight years of work. This is on top of their graduated 1% annual raise.

Our government’s priority is the health and safety of all Ontarians. We have been focused on the response of COVID-19. As we continue to respond to the COVID situation here in Ontario, our government remains committed to working with our sector partners to support our valuable—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the crisis in our home care system is compounded by the for-profit model that this government and the government before them prefer. And I think it’s pretty frightening to hear a member stand in this House defending a 1% wage cap when inflation is running at 5%. That means a 4% wage cut for those workers that are dealing with this Bill 124 low-wage policy.

Too often in the for-profit sector, wages are kept low and the quality of care is kept low so that profits can be kept high. Ontario should have public home care—period; end of story—public, not-for-profit. We should immediately increase the investments, though, in the interim,

before we can transfer into that kind of a system so that home care gets the kind of funding that it needs. We should eliminate the wait-list so that people can get the care at home and not be forced into long-term care. We should rip up Bill 124 and make sure that the sector is able to hire the staff they need to care for Ontarians.

Why won’t the Premier make those changes, invest in home care and ensure that we get quality not-for-profit care and that Ontarians aren’t forced out of their homes unnecessarily?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are making significant investments in home and community care. In 2019-20, we invested an additional \$155 million more in home and community care. In 2021-22, we made additional supports of \$111 million for the High Intensity Supports at Home Program to enhance care for high-needs clients, including hospital alternate-level-of-care patients and the expansion of community paramedicine.

Right now, we are working closely with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to make sure that the paramedicine that they offer to people who are waiting at home for long-term care, or who perhaps just want to stay in their own home, is matched with nursing resources and other personal support resources and paramedicine that we also have in the Ministry of Health to make sure that we can provide integrated, comprehensive care for all people at home who need that care.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Last week, a Ministry of Labour investigator ruled that gig workers at Uber Eats are employees, just as the courts have been ruling in cases around the world. The ministry’s ruling ordered Uber to stop contravening the Employment Standards Act by misclassifying Uber delivery drivers and start recognizing them as the employees they are. Rather than enforcing its own employment law, however, this government decided to change the law instead by introducing a bill that will deny gig workers the basic employment protections they deserve.

Speaker, why does this government think that gig workers deserve fewer protections than other Ontario workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I’m proud of this government under the leadership of Premier Ford. Yesterday, we introduced yet another historic piece of legislation here at Queen’s Park, Working for Workers Act. For the first time in Canadian history, Ontario will be leading on this front to ensure that all workers have more take-home pay, more workplace protections and better opportunities for better jobs in this province. That’s why, as part of the Working for Workers Act, we introduced foundational rights for gig workers. We know that today in Ontario one in five people are working in the gig economy. That’s why our legislation will ensure that they’re earning at least minimum wage, that they have a

right to keep tips on top of their wages, that when they have a workplace dispute, it's resolved in Ontario, not in a foreign country.

I look forward to talking more about our Working for Workers Act in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: A \$15 minimum wage that only applies when an app-based driver has a passenger in the car is like paying retail workers only when they are cashing out a sale. This is not even close to what gig workers have been calling for. Not only will most gig workers be unlikely to see a \$15 minimum wage for the hours they work, but they will continue to be denied overtime pay, vacation pay, public holiday pay, termination pay, WSIB coverage and other employment protections.

Why is this government more interested in protecting the profit margins of app-based companies than in making sure that gig workers can actually earn minimum wage when they are on the job?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Labour to reply.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We are the first place in Canada to bring forward foundational rights for gig workers. We know that the world of work is changing. That's why we're ensuring that gig workers receive at least minimum wage. They have the right to keep their tips on top of their wage. They have the right to know how and when they're going to be paid, to bring transparency around their paycheques, including gig workers getting pay stubs for the first time in Canadian history.

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Mr. Speaker, we are going to ensure that when there is a workplace dispute, the result is here in Ontario, not in a country somewhere around the world—if companies want to do business in Ontario, they're going to play under Ontario law and play by Ontario's rules.

I can tell you the world of work is changing. We all know that. The economy is changing. One in five people work in the gig economy. We will ensure that under the leadership of Premier Ford, we'll work for workers every single day.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Over the course of the pandemic, I've been hearing from constituents about how much they appreciate the support this government and Premier Ford have provided to them during these past two years. For many businesses, the support they received has kept them afloat and allowed them to reopen safely.

Speaker, through you, could the minister tell us what this government is doing to support Ontario's businesses?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member for Carleton for that great question. The member is right.

I myself have heard from businesses that our supports have made a difference between keeping the lights on and closing them for good. Throughout the pandemic, we have made support available of over \$300 billion for grants, we've provided rebates for property tax and electricity and we've provided cash-flow support to the tune of \$7.5 billion for provincially administered taxes. Our government is also making money available for businesses in Ottawa impacted by the recent occupation.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the backbone of our economy here in Ontario and will be the driving force as we continue to recover from the pandemic and plan for our economic recovery.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the minister. I recall when the minister visited my riding of Carleton back in November to meet with some of the small businesses in my riding and to speak with them about the supports that we are providing to help them get through this pandemic.

As the government is phasing out COVID restrictions and workplaces and businesses are fully opening up, many in my riding of Carleton are feeling optimistic about the future and the direction our province has taken, but we also know that more needs to be done, and our businesses are relying on us.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to ensure we continue to recover from the pandemic and build a stronger Ontario?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again. Mr. Speaker, to be clear, there is still a lot of economic uncertainty here at home and around the world. Supply chain challenges, international geopolitical instability and of course the rising cost of living continue to be challenges for governments everywhere. That being said, our government has laid a strong financial and fiscal foundation on which we will continue to build Ontario.

Speaker, for 15 years, the Del Duca Liberals mismanaged this province and said no—no to transparency, no to building and no to growth. That's why we have a plan for recovery that includes saying yes to new hospitals, yes to new highways, yes to supports for workers, for growth and putting more money in the pockets of families and making life more affordable. Ontario is getting stronger and we will continue to build Ontario's long-term economic prosperity.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the Premier. Hamilton experienced 97 code zeros last year. This is a terrifying event that means there are absolutely no ambulances available to respond to an emergency call. This is a direct result of overcrowded and underfunded hospitals.

Last year, paramedics spent 32,000 hours waiting to drop off patients at backed-up emergency wards, and the problem continues to grow. Hamilton's mayor stated, "It's a vexing problem, but one that rests with the province. The

Ontario government needs to address the associated problem of hallway medicine in hospitals.”

Through you, Speaker, will the Premier commit to addressing the root cause of code zeros in Hamilton, and end the continued underfunding of our hospitals?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: There are several issues that the member has raised with her question. One is the issue of ambulance delays. There are several places in Ontario that are experiencing that, and that’s why we are committed to strengthening the dedicated offload nurses program: to help improve ambulance offload times and emergency patient care.

We’ve invested \$16 million to 20 municipalities to help ambulances be able to return to the community faster and respond to more emergency calls. This funding is expected to support more than 164 equivalent nursing positions in 49 hospitals while increasing ambulance availability by 449,000 hours. That represents a return on investment of more than 51 ambulances available to respond to 911 calls.

We are continuing to respond to that. I will respond to the issue with respect to hospital funding in my supplementary.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the Premier: This problem in Hamilton continues to grow, and it’s a crisis. Do you know what this government’s most recent suggestion was? Batching—that paramedics should double the number of patients they’re caring for in emergency rooms. It’s deplorable. This is an insult to paramedics, who are already working beyond capacity.

I spoke to the president of Hamilton’s paramedics union. Hamilton paramedics want this government to know that the solution to hospital underfunding cannot be solved by asking paramedics and other front-line staff to do more with less.

Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Knowing that inaction will cost lives, will you commit today to reversing the underfunding of our hospitals?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In reality, our government has made historic investments in our hospitals. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we’ve invested over \$5 billion to create over 3,100 more hospital beds. That’s to respond, of course, to COVID, but it’s also to the surgeries and other procedures that people need to have now.

We’ve also invested \$778 million to help hospitals keep pace with patient needs and increase access to high quality care; \$760 million to support with hospital beds; \$300 million initially, then another \$200 million, to reduce surgical and diagnostic imaging costs; and we’re also investing \$342 million, beginning in 2021-22, to add over 5,000 new and upskilled nurses and registered practical nurses, as well as 8,000 personal support workers.

So we’re making investments in hospital size capacity, in the health human resources. We’ve also been compensating hospitals for the incredible expenses that they’ve incurred, into the billions of dollars, over the last two

years. We are absolutely making sure that we can do everything possible to continue to have an—

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

The next question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the bleakest report yet on the risk and costs associated with the climate crisis. People’s health, lives and livelihoods are at risk right now. The science is overwhelmingly clear that we must crush climate pollution and protect nature so nature can defend us.

Wetlands are essential to reducing the risk and cost of the climate crisis, but we’ve already paved over 75% of them in Ontario, and this government plans to pave over even more.

Speaker, will the government say yes to protecting people’s property, pocketbooks, lives and livelihoods by permanently protecting provincially significant wetlands in this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: The environment is so important to all of us. Mr. Speaker, I’ll tell you the difference between our government and the previous government that was propped up by the NDP: They all talk about the environment, but they do nothing—zero.

I’ll tell you what we’ve done: We’ve spent billions of dollars in investment on electric vehicles. We’re attracting some of the largest companies in the world to build batteries right here, to get rid of gas-fuelled cars. We’re going electric in this province. We’re going to be one of the largest manufacturers of electric vehicles anywhere in North America.

Right in the backyard of the leader of the NDP, we invested half a billion dollars for green steel to build those green vehicles. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Stop the clock. Order.

Restart the clock. The supplementary question.

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Mr. Mike Schreiner: The climate fires are raging all around us—it is obvious—and the Premier has brought a little red shovel to fight them instead of a big fire hose. Everything that the Premier said in that answer is completely undermined by the actions of this government: the building of Highway 413, which will create 87 million megatonnes of climate pollution over the next two decades; building the Bradford bypass—87 million kilograms of climate pollution each and every year; ramping up gas plants—300% increase in climate pollution in the next decade. The government’s actions undermine every answer the Premier just gave.

Yes, let’s make Ontario a leader in electric vehicles, but will the Premier commit today to putting forward a plan that will crush climate pollution in half by the end of this decade?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that question. The member didn't put forward one tangible action, but I will. Dofasco: six megatonnes of GHG reductions, thanks to actions of this Premier; the Ontario Line, the largest investment in public transit in this province's history using low-carbon procurement—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. David Piccini: This is the most environmentally friendly major transit project in this province's history.

Finally, the climate change impact assessment: working with all levels of government, lower-tier municipalities, to build climate change resiliency—again, something previous governments could have done. They didn't; we did.

Finally, I was with the Minister of Infrastructure on waste water, making historic investments to build resiliency in our storm water and waste water systems. Because, again, we're planning for growth with a climate-friendly agenda. They could have—they didn't; we did.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is making every effort to protect and support our Ontario workers. I'm proud that safe employers in Peterborough region have done their part to get us through this pandemic. However, these responsible employers who put their customers and their workers first need to know that our government sees their hard work and that we're there for them.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us how the recent announcement of distributing surplus WSIB funds rebates will support safe employers like those in my riding of Peterborough-Kawartha?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for that great question and for his leadership advocating on behalf of workers in his community. After historic underfunding and mismanagement, we are driving generational change at the WSIB. Recently, I was proud to announce a \$1.5-billion rebate to more than 300,000 safe employers' right across the province. For the Peterborough region, I'm pleased to share with the member that merchants and shopkeepers along a main street near him will be getting \$2.6 million.

Speaker, 95% of those receiving rebates are on main street; they're small businesses. That's money they can use to pay their workers more, expand their operations and invest in new technologies. Simply put, tax cuts create jobs.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, I'd like to thank the minister for that response. I know many businesses in my riding can't wait for the cheque to arrive in the mail.

After years of a government that drove jobs and investment out of our province, it's clear this government is building back our province stronger than ever. Putting money back in the economy means more take-home pay for those who put in an honest shift. Money is always better in people's pockets and not in the government's.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please share more about the steps that you're taking to support the recovery of our cities and towns so that our communities can grow once again?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I should correct my record: The small businesses in the Peterborough region will be receiving \$6.2 million. That will really help the local economy and families in that area.

Under our government, WSIB rates have been cut in half to the lowest they've been in more than 20 years. Our latest WSIB rebate builds on the \$2.4 billion that has already been given back to employers through premium reductions. We've done this all without impacting any of the benefits or services provided by the WSIB that workers and their families rely on.

Our government is saying yes to bigger paycheques for our workers, we're saying yes to rewarding safe employers that keep their workers safe and we're saying yes to creating more jobs not only in Peterborough but right across the province.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Nine months ago, I wrote a letter to the Premier warning them about Core Development Group. Core Development Group is spending \$1 billion buying up single-family homes across southern Ontario only to rent them out to the very same Ontarians who have seen the dream of home ownership crushed by skyrocketing house prices. Now, this government has made it easy for investors to buy up dozens—in this case, sometimes hundreds—of homes for profit. That means that everyday Ontarians are being outbid and outcompeted, and they just want to buy one home that they can live in, have pets, have guests and grow old in.

The laws clearly need to change to ensure that homes are for people first. So my question to the Premier is this: What is your plan to stop big speculators from Core from destroying the dream of home ownership?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that very, very important question. There's no question that we have a housing crisis in this province. It's driven by a severe shortage of supply—I think we can all acknowledge that—for rental housing, and affordable home ownership is beyond the reach of many hard-working Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this: I'm very proud of this Premier and this Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who are building new homes in Ontario. Over 100,000 new homes were built in 2021. The last time that

number was reached was 1987. There's no question there is more to do on the supply side, and the minister has shown great leadership there.

Finally, I will say that things like the non-resident speculation tax are types of tools that we're looking at to make sure that we have enough demand-based supply for the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: Core Development Group says it's trying to provide affordable housing for Ontario residents, but the reality is very different. The rental homes speculators typically create are expensive and precarious. Now, Core Development Group has already begun to mass-evict long-term residents from newly bought properties so they can hike the rent.

One of the tenants being evicted is Gina Rossignol, who lives in Chatham. Gina was bullied into signing a contract saying she would leave her home of seven years. Gina is raising her nine-year-old autistic granddaughter, Sophie. She lives on social assistance and fears her family could become homeless because she cannot afford to rent anywhere else. Now Gina is unable to sleep or eat well because she is so stressed.

This government has helped speculators make record profits while renters have been forced to deal with rising rent, stagnant wages and inflation. Premier, what is this government's plan to protect tenants from eviction and make housing affordable again?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I'm always pleased to stand in this House and talk about the measures that our government is doing to create opportunities so that everyone in Ontario can have a safe, secure place to call home.

In the first question, the finance minister talked about some of the measures on the demand side that we're looking at in terms of the non-resident speculation tax. I have been very open right from the first day I stood in this Legislature that we have a supply problem in this province. We've put a number of measures forward on the rent side.

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I can remember back when it was Minister Fedeli who tabled our fall economic statement in 2018. The party opposite and that member opposite indicated that there wouldn't be any increase in purpose-built rental in this province, and she is absolutely, positively incorrect; she was wrong. We've seen more construction of purpose-built rentals, going back to the early 1990s, and we're going to continue to build upon that plan. We've indicated that we've had a three-pronged approach in terms of consultation. We've got lots more to say in the—

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

The next question.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Before I start my question, I want to say directly to the Premier that as a resident of Ottawa, I have never felt so abandoned and let down by a provincial government or a Premier as I did in the three-week occupation of Ottawa.

Today, COVID-19 measures in Ontario are being dropped: no more capacity limits, no more proof of vaccinations. We're all really tired of COVID—really tired of COVID—and we're happy that things are looking better. But the most important thing we can learn about COVID, that we know about COVID, is it can surprise us, so we need to be ready if it tries to surprise us again. The most important tools that we need to have ready are masking and vaccinations. Ontario is at the back of the pack for vaccinating five- to 11-year-olds—right at the back, pulling up the rear, nowhere near our target. We're stalled.

Speaker, through you, does the Premier, does this government have a plan for Ontario to lead the country in vaccinating five- to 11-year-olds so that we'll be ready?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, we do have a plan for increasing all Ontarians who are able to receive the vaccine—five- to 11-year-olds. We've recently started with our rollout of third doses to 12- to 17-year-olds, which is going very well. We are leading, overall, the country in our vaccination rates. We have a last mile strategy that we're working on, where we have mobile clinics, we have GO-VAXX buses, we have clinics that are happening in schools. We have them across the province, and we're working on increasing the number of children aged five to 11 who are receiving the vaccines. We also have availability of physicians for parents to speak with if they have any concerns about the vaccines that are operating out of the Hospital for Sick Children and CHEO so that people can make an informed decision about having their child vaccinated.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The numbers don't lie: We're at the back of the pack.

Two weeks ago, the Premier said this about COVID vaccines: "It doesn't matter if you get one dose or 10 doses, you can still get COVID." Premier, COVID vaccines provide protection against severe disease, hospitalization, ICU admissions and, for some people, death. Although they don't eliminate transmission, they do reduce it. Premier, it doesn't take much to undermine the work of thousands and thousands of health care workers in this province, but you did it in one single quote on one day. Ontarians need a Premier who gets up every morning and says, "What can I do to get vaccination rates up for kids?" not a Premier who's creating doubt around vaccines.

Ontario is right at the bottom of the pack for vaccinating five- to 11-year-olds, at about 58%. Speaker, through you, what is the Premier's plan to put Ontario number one in

vaccinations for five- to 11-year-olds, to keep children and their families safe?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Premier supports vaccination, and so does our government. We're continuing with our rollout. We've administered over 31 million doses to date, more than any other province or territory, and that means that over 92.4% of Ontarians aged 12 and older are benefiting from the protection of a first dose of the vaccine, and more than 90.1% are fully immunized.

We are happy to advise that approximately 55% of children aged five to 11 are receiving doses, and we're continuing with our vaccine rollout, both in schools and across the country, and with primary care as well. Some parents would prefer to have their child vaccinated by their family doctor or nurse practitioner, whoever it happens to be, and we're continuing with that rollout. We are going to make sure that every parent who wants to have their child aged five to 11 vaccinated is going to have the opportunity to do that in their community and close to their home.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, manufacturing jobs fled the province by the thousands. They gave up on the hundreds of thousands of families that work in our supply chain, and that, Speaker, is simply unacceptable.

The workers across this province are relying on our government to right the wrongs of almost two decades of economic mismanagement by returning Ontario to being a manufacturing powerhouse. Can the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade please outline how the government has taken the necessary action to bring back Ontario's critical manufacturing sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we heard from the business community, and we put our plan into action. First, we focused on every area where a government has some control, like WSIB, taxes and red tape. As a result, we lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion each and every year. Then we put business supports in place to stimulate regional development. This has given our manufacturing sector the certainty they needed right here at home.

In Brighton, we saw Premier Tech invest \$18 million in new equipment to make herbicides and other sustainable agriculture and horticultural products. They're not just brightening lawns and gardens; they're creating jobs. They hired 52 people the day we were there. Our government invested \$2.8 million through our Eastern Ontario Development Fund. This is one of the thousands of Ontario business success stories, showing that Ontario is getting stronger.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's great to hear that our government is

taking action to grow our manufacturing sector after years of Liberal mismanagement and neglect.

To encourage that growth, Ontario needs to have the right supports in place to ensure investments will lead to continued prosperity for families working in manufacturing. Can the minister please provide an update on our recent investments that will secure Ontario's manufacturing sector for years to come?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We recently visited Medicap Labs in Windsor, where they made a \$38-million investment. They are an Ontario leader in the dietary and nutritional supplement manufacturing sector. With the help of almost \$1 million from our southwestern development fund, they have added state-of-the-art, advanced manufacturing equipment. But more importantly, they added 50 people to their workforce.

Down the street, in the town of Oldcastle, a dynamic mother and son duo are bringing their version of great food to supermarkets throughout the world. Cedar Valley Selections invested \$1 million to expand their line of all-natural salad dressings and a brand new line of their own pita chips. The province has provided a \$162,000 grant to support this dynamic duo as they attempt to supply 1,500 stores by the end of the year. Speaker, this is another example of the thousands of Ontario business success stories, showing that Ontario is getting stronger.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Speaker, it's more expensive than ever to live in Ontario these days, especially for working parents. That's because they continue to pay the highest child care fees in all of Canada—in all of Canada.

While families struggle to make ends meet and more women are pushed out of the workplace, the Premier has dithered and delayed signing a federal deal that would deliver relief. In fact, it has now been over a month since the Premier told us a deal was very, very close.

On behalf of every parent watching today, when will this government stop wasting time and deliver \$10-a-day child care?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I think parents want to know why, when the members opposite had an opportunity, Liberals and New Democrats coalescing together, to even support incremental savings for the people we represent, for working parents and for the students of this province, you voted against it.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced in our first budget the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit, appreciating it saves roughly \$1,250 per child; New Democrats and Liberals opposed it. Then we enriched it to \$1,500 a year; you opposed that. We put \$1 billion in our budget for the next five years to build 30,000 more child care spaces that are accessible and, yes, affordable; New Democrats and Liberals coalesced again to oppose it.

1140

During this pandemic, at the peak of difficulty for working parents, we permitted \$1.8 billion, roughly \$1,000 per family, in direct financial support; New Democrats and Liberals voted against it. But this Premier is going to stand up to Justin Trudeau to get the best deal for the people of this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: My baby is turning 21 in a couple of days. Every single day of her life, my party has fought for affordable child care—every single day.

Speaker, the minister has been making the same excuses for months, and every day he spends spinning is another day that families are left on their own paying outrageous child care fees—families like my constituent Paula, a working mom of two, who pays over \$1,200 a month for child care. That's about a quarter of her family's monthly income, at a time when everything is getting more unaffordable.

Speaker, again, while every other province and territory in this country has lowered fees, this government either can't get it together to reach a deal, or they're what, waiting for some kind of pre-election ploy? Which is it, and how much longer will this government make families wait for \$10-a-day child care?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, it is unusual for me to be quoting the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, but here's a headline from BC, where the New Democrats govern: "Some of the Highest Child Care Fee Increases Were in BC Last Year"—the most expensive child care system, under the New Democratic leadership of British Columbia.

In this province, we're going to build out a plan that supports accessibility and affordability, and we're going to stand up to the Prime Minister of Canada to ensure we get the best deal for Ontario families. That is our job, that is our responsibility, and we're proud to work hard to land a deal that is affordable for families in this province.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Today, the province of Ontario ended the imposition of passports. The passports dehumanized millions of Ontarians. Everyone now agrees with me that the passports do not prevent transmission and they did not prevent the last lockdown. The passports are not based on science, but on politics of fear and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Government side, come to order.

Stop the clock.

I can't hear the member for York Centre because of the volume of the voices on the other side of the House. I must hear the member who's asking the question, and I need to hear the minister who's answering it.

Please start the clock. The member for York Centre can continue.

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, in spite of the heckling, the government knows that the passports are not based on science, but politics of fear and division. They're a stain on Canada's history. But how about the mandates? If we don't need the passports, then why let the mandates ruin lives and careers? And what about the tens of thousands of Ontarians, if not hundreds, who were fired, suspended, resigned or retired because of this minister's discriminatory policy?

Speaker, will the Minister of Labour have the courage to stand up for workers, correct this injustice and support my jobs and jabs bill this Thursday?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, what I will do is stand up on behalf of the Premier of Ontario, on behalf of the government of Ontario and thank the millions and millions of people of this province who, for two years, worked together every single day to defeat and battle this pandemic. I have to tell you, if it wasn't for the people of Ontario, like the Premier always says, we wouldn't be where we're at today. It's March 1, the restrictions are going, and we're getting back to life as normal.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, history will regard passports and mandates as one of the greatest injustices of the 21st century. On February 15, the Premier admitted that the vaccine does not prevent transmission. I wrote to the Minister of Labour two weeks ago, asking him to discuss the jobs and jabs bill, but haven't received a response.

The charade is over, and this is not just on the government. It's on the independent Liberals, who abandoned their classical roots. It's on the NDP, the non-democratic party who abandoned working-class people and are not standing up for jobs.

But after two years of denial, most members are willing to admit that the lockdowns were harmful and the passports did not work. So I ask everyone here to do what's right and ban the mandates.

My bill is retroactive to September 1. Let's pass the jobs and jabs bill and give many Ontarians a chance to get their jobs back. Will the minister please support my bill?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order, once again.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, again, I'm proud to stand in this House on behalf of the Progressive Conservative government in this province to thank the people of Ontario. By working together, we have saved thousands and thousands of lives in this province. As our Premier says, it's not because of him and it's not because of the government, it's because of the people.

We're all looking forward to getting back to life as normal, and we're heading in the right direction. Today is a great day for freedom in this province, for businesses in this province and for working-class families to get back to normal.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. My riding of Spadina–Fort York is the fastest-growing riding in the country. Our population grows by 10,000 people per year, and we need schools across the riding. Liberty Village now has 14,000 residents, but no school. We need two more schools on the east waterfront. We also need a school in the West Don Lands. The site for the West Don Lands school is ready to go, but we need government to allocate the funding to build the school. Building the school is one of the top priorities for the TDSB.

Will your government allocate funding for the West Don Lands school in the upcoming budget?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I was very excited to join the Minister of Infrastructure just a few weeks ago in the member's riding to announce Ontario's first elementary school built in a condo in the province. It is a major investment, \$44 million, in the new lower Yonge precinct, for 455 students. This is an innovative partnership that is supporting growth in vertical communities where more families are living.

We're going to continue to invest to build schools. We have \$500 million this year alone to build new schools after a decade of closures under the former Liberal government.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Again, back to the Premier: One of the barriers to building the schools that we need is a government regulation that prevents many boards from collecting education development charges. In Toronto, for every condo that is built, the developer has to pay \$2,000 in education development charges to the Catholic board, but nothing to the public board. Both boards need education development charges to build the schools they need. And while the government regulation saves developers money, it costs taxpayers tens of millions of dollars. The condo school the minister just mentioned will cost \$44 million, all of it coming from taxpayers and nothing from developers.

Will your government change the regulation so that all school boards can collect education development charges to build the schools we need, not just in Spadina–Fort York but across Ontario? And will the minister—or the Premier, whoever answers question—please start with a yes or no?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Yes, we're going to continue to build new schools, as a sharp contrast to the former Liberal government, who closed 600 schools. That is their record, and that is why we cannot go back to the Steven Del Duca Liberals. We need to move forward with a plan to build modern schools that are well-ventilated, Internet-connected and accessible for all children of all exceptionalities. We are building over 19,700 student spaces, as we speak, in the province of Ontario, because of Ontario's investment. It is a major expansion.

We recognize, for the member opposite and likewise for our members in urban communities in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and other parts of Ontario, that we need to support those families—that families raising kids in a condo deserve access to a school in their community. We know that is important. We have a plan in place to invest. In fact, for the first time in the history of Ontario, we have partnered with the private sector, working with the school board, to support a project that's going to make a difference for families in lower Yonge and, to be fair, right across this province.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. Ontario families are struggling. The cost of living has skyrocketed under this government. The Premier promised lower hydro rates, and they're up. The Premier promised lower gas prices, and they're up. You can't even enjoy a beer at the game without staring down another broken promise from this Premier.

Ontario families are struggling and looking for leadership. The Premier is dithering on a child care deal that would deliver \$10,000 a year to average families. He's dithering on delivering a budget to support families. He's dithering on funding Ontario schools and hospitals and providing support for municipalities and he's dithering on making life more affordable for Ontario families.

Every province in the country not going into an election has been able to present a budget on time. Why is the Premier dithering on supporting Ontario families?

1150

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: If only the Liberals had dithered on anything over the 15 years. Had they dithered on increasing taxes, we wouldn't be where we are. Had they dithered on spending people's money and accomplishing nothing, we wouldn't be the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the world, Mr. Speaker. Had they dithered on their child care reforms, we wouldn't have the most expensive child care in the country. Had they dithered on closing schools, there would be 600 more schools for kids to go to. Had they dithered on hydro, we wouldn't have had the most expensive hydro rates in North America and we wouldn't have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

Had you only dithered on something for 15 years, it wouldn't have taken us this long to get Ontario moving in the right direction again. So I beg you: Continue to dither, continue to sit in that corner, because nobody in this province can afford a Liberal government again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for York Centre will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Start the clock. The supplementary question.

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is also for the Premier. The cost of living under this government has skyrocketed. Ontarians are struggling with higher grocery prices, higher housing costs. Hydro rates are up, not down; gas prices are up, not down; and the government's response to these challenging circumstances is to offer families \$120, Mr. Speaker.

But as the Premier is offering families a hundred bucks, in the very same bill he's saving himself and the finance minister 15 grand. To put that in perspective, for every dollar the Premier is proposing to save Ontario families, he's saving himself personally \$75. Why is the Premier more concerned about keeping money in his pocket than supporting Ontario families?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the member for the question, but let's be very clear: Bill 84, which the member's referring to, is a confidence vote. I am very excited to see if the opposition NDP and the opposition Liberals are going to vote against the measures in Bill 84. Will they vote against giving people \$120 more in their pocket? I can't wait to see because, I'm going to suggest to you, when you talk about affordability, it is vested in Bill 84.

The NDP talked a big game, but during debate they changed their mind and realized that it is a good thing, Bill 84. They didn't even want it to go to committee because it is such a good bill; they wanted it fast-tracked to third reading. Eliminating tolls—more money in people's pockets; eliminating stickers on cars—more money in people's pockets. I dare you to vote against it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock again. I'll remind the members to please make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Energy will come to order.

Start the clock. The next question?

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is for the Premier. Small businesses in my riding of Toronto Centre recently reached out to my office with concerns about eligibility requirements for the small business support grant. Kyle works in the tourism industry specifically and told me, "My business operations have been severely impacted. My business is now facing a third year of revenue loss. The province has again left businesses and families like mine without support while incapacitating our operation." Kyle's business was not eligible for the small business support grant.

I also heard from Clint who told me that his business is also not getting the support that they need from this Conservative government. Clint wrote to me and said, "All event spaces and offices that we cater to were forced to

close. People don't hire caterers for five people. Our revenue in January is down over 85% from December."

We need businesses like Kyle's, like Clint's, to fuel our economic recovery, but this government continues to exclude them because of their industries from the small business support grant

Will you commit today to fixing the gaping holes in the eligibility requirements for the small business support grant to support these businesses in my community?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for the question. Our government recognized that small businesses impacted by public health measures required immediate support so they could continue serving their communities and employing people across our province. Our goal was to get money into the businesses quickly, because we knew these employers were affected by the strengthened public health measures. Through the new Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant we're providing \$10,000 for eligible businesses, and this builds on the \$3 billion provided last year to well over 110,000 businesses.

So far, as of yesterday, 8,995 applicants have been paid \$10,000 each—over \$90 million—and 9,141 applications are currently in progress. This is unprecedented, this is historic, and I'd like to remind everyone we provided over \$300 million to help offset fixed costs, including property taxes, hydro, natural gas bills. Last year, we also gave all of those businesses \$1,000 for eligible PPE to keep their employees and their customers safe.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), I wish to inform the House that the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning kids' vaccines. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

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

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 1, 2022, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY ACT, 2022
LOI DE 2022 SUR LA PROTECTION
DE LA DIVERSITÉ RELIGIEUSE
EN ONTARIO

Mr. Oosterhoff moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to religious expression / Projet de loi 89, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'expression religieuse.

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 Niagara West to briefly explain his bill.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Religious freedom is a fundamental right, one of the very core reasons why we are proud to be Ontarians. This legislation will support and enshrine the protection of Ontario's religious diversity and religious minorities in law. The bill amends the Ontario Human Rights Code to specify that every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of religious expression with respect to services, goods and facilities, accommodations, contracting, employment, and membership in a trade union, trade or occupational association or self-governing profession.

I look forward to the debate and the support of this House.

NO COVID-19 EVICTIONS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 INTERDISANT
LES EXPULSIONS PENDANT LA COVID-19

Ms. Morrison moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic / Projet de loi 90, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard des expulsions pendant la pandémie de COVID-19.

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): Would the member for Toronto Centre care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Suze Morrison: We know that tenants and renters across Ontario continue to struggle to maintain their housing after two very long years of COVID-19. This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to add new sections that provide limitations on issuing and enforcing eviction orders under the act and writs of possession during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I sincerely hope that the members of this House will join me in protecting tenants during this difficult time.

PETITIONS

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Protect Water as a Public Good."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

"Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

"Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

"Whereas the duty to consult Indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

"Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

"Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario's growing communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to extend the moratorium on new permits for water-taking and to prioritize public ownership and control of water over corporate interests."

I fully support this petition, will add my name to my constituents', and I'll pass it to Pania to take to the table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition was provided to me by the Albion Woods Tenants Association in Greely. I just want to thank president Brian Askett and the entire committee for helping to organize and submit these petitions to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"From the Ontario land lease homeowners' action group in support of amending the Residential Tenancies Act and related legislation as it pertains to land lease communities:

"Whereas the population of land lease homeowners in Ontario numbers 26,000-plus women and men, mostly seniors, in 12,000-plus homes in 72 communities, with thousands more under development; and

"Whereas land lease homeowners live in self-owned homes on rented property; and

"Whereas, from a land lease homeowner's perspective, the Residential Tenancies Act has not been revisited since 2006; and

"Whereas the land lease housing environment has changed dramatically; and

“Whereas many land lease homeowners feel the current practices of certain landlords are contentious and must be addressed;

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

“To direct the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to work in committee with appointed representatives from the Ontario land lease homeowners’ action group, to review and revise the Residential Tenancies Act and related legislation to ensure that land lease homeowners are treated fairly, justly and equitably under the Tribunals Ontario system, specifically when matters appear before the Landlord and Tenant Board.”

I proudly affix my signature to this petition, and I will give it to page Benjamin.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is called “Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Northern Health Travel Grant is supposed to even the playing field so all Ontarians can get the medical care they need, but it is failing” far “too many northern families;

“Whereas not all costs are covered, and reimbursement amounts are small compared to the actual costs. Northern families are forced to pay out of pocket to access health care, which is a barrier for seniors and low-income working families;

“Whereas successive Conservative and Liberal governments have let northerners down by failing to make health care accessible in the north;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fix the Northern Health Travel Grant so we can ensure more people can get the care they need, when they need it.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with a page.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a brief petition here. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, strongly urge Premier Ford to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for all health care workers in Ontario.”

I want to thank Nan Lowe for helping spearhead this petition, and I’ll pass it to page Tanisha for the Clerks’ table.

CELIAC DISEASE

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here from the Canadian Celiac Association, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test. The IgA TTG blood screening is the

internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

“Whereas, celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms. Many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised.

“Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait-times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition.”

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

1510

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled “Support the Green New Democratic Deal.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford is going in the wrong direction on the environment by ignoring our climate emergency and cutting funding to deal with the climate crisis;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to implement the Green New Democratic Deal to:

“—achieve net zero emissions by 2050, starting by cutting emissions 50% by 2030;

“—create more than a million new jobs;

“—add billions of dollars to Ontario’s economy;

“—embark on the largest building retrofit program in the world by providing homeowners with rebates, interest-free loans and support to retrofit their homes to realize net zero emissions.”

I couldn’t support this petition more, and I’ll add my name to those of my residents in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Mr. Joel Harden: I have another petition today. It’s entitled “Extend Ontario Temporary Wage Enhancement to Community PSWs Working Full-Shift, Not Just ‘direct care services’ hour.

“Whereas community PSWs are not getting temporary wage enhancement for travelling between clients, paid break or documentation time;

“Whereas LTC ... PSWs are receiving temporary wage enhancement for their full working shift but community PSWs are not, this is not fair;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend Ontario temporary wage enhancement to community PSWs working full-shift, not just ‘direct care services’ hour.”

I want to thank Willie Lam, Carla Lini and all the folks who signed this petition. It’s a great issue. I will sign it and send it with clerk Daunte—page Daunte, to the Clerks’ table. You may be a Clerk one day, though.

POST-STROKE TREATMENT

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas young adult stroke survivors in Ontario continue to be denied provincial government-funded physiotherapy on the basis of age, after completion of their initial rehab programs; and

“Whereas, as a consequence, these young adults are prevented from recovering to their best potential and possibly returning to work or continuing their post-secondary studies; and

“Whereas, to date, both Liberal and PC governments have failed to permit such funding, although both parties have previously taken steps to publicly support its implementation;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand Ontario’s government-funded community physiotherapy clinic program to include stroke survivors between the ages of 20 and 64 with a doctor’s referral, and after completion of initial rehab programs.”

I fully agree this petition, will sign it and send it with the page to the table.

CELIAC DISEASE

Mr. Joel Harden: A lot of petitions today. I have one from the Canadian Celiac Association, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test. The IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

“Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms. Many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

“Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition.”

I am proud to sign this petition and will send it with page Leah to the Clerks’ table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is a 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 agree with this petition, will sign my name and send it with the page to the table.

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 28, 2022, on the motion for third 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Harris: Just before we get started here today, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to help host the food summit this morning that her ministry was putting on, so I unfortunately missed question period. It’s a very important day in the Ontario Legislature—he’s trying to leave before I get to acknowledge him: page captain today, Maverick Harris. If we can give him a little round of applause. It’s important. It’s really, really neat to have been able to have, actually—well, I think everybody knows here that I’ve got five kids by now because I pretty much mention it every time I get to stand up and speak here. He’s the second page from our family, which is pretty exciting. Congratulations

to him and, of course, all the other pages. It's so great to have everybody here and to really see us get back to normal.

But we're here to talk about Bill 84 today, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, and I'd like to provide a little insight on why I think this legislation is very necessary at this time. My colleagues in government, along with the Premier and I, campaigned on a promise to bring positive change for the people of Ontario, and in June 2018, the people of Ontario gave us a very strong mandate to do so. Bill 84 builds on our promise to make life better for Ontarians in every corner of this fine province, and our track record on that speaks for itself. I think it's safe to say our government has been one of the most progressive in taking action for Ontarians across all sectors and in big and small ways that are, of course, meaningful and helpful on many different levels.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give you a great example: Just last year, the Ontario government announced a total of almost \$4 million to help build and repair local infrastructure in the townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. That investment is part of the government's larger plan to build Ontario by getting shovels in the ground on critical infrastructure projects that support economic recovery, growth and job creation.

The mayor of Wilmot, Les Armstrong, said about this, "This kind of investment helps us to improve our infrastructure and create the opportunity for growth. And we know that if municipalities don't have growth, they suffer. They can wither and die, so growth is very important. And this kind of funding gives us the opportunity to work on our infrastructure like sewers, water, and bridges." I thank him very much for those comments.

The multi-year funding is being delivered through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, or OCIF, as we all know it, and will bring the government's total investment in that program to nearly \$2 billion over the next five years. That's just one example of a small local investment that will make huge impacts in municipalities and rural communities across Ontario. Just like removing red tape, removing obstacles to modernization for small towns and remote communities is just one way the government is supporting people all across Ontario.

Another vital sector we have done tremendous work for is the long-term-care sector. Late last year, the Minister of Long-Term Care announced 364 new and 84 upgraded long-term-care beds that will be built in three new long-term-care homes serving the needs of Waterloo region. This means 12 new and 84 upgraded beds at the Schlegel Villages of Winston Park in Kitchener, and it will expand a new building currently under construction which replaces an existing home, to provide a total of 288 long-term-care beds for the community.

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Speaker, it also means 192 new beds at a brand new home in Cambridge, operated by peopleCare, and 160 new beds at a brand new home in St. Jacobs, also operated by peopleCare.

This brings the total number of long-term-care beds in development or under construction in the region of Waterloo to 888 new and 597 upgraded beds. I'd like to remind everybody—maybe one of my colleagues can mention—the previous Liberal government, under their 15-year term, I think, only built, what was it, 600, colleagues? Six hundred new beds across the province in 15 years? Shameful, shameful, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about what that means for Waterloo region, of course, it means more beds. It means more access to services for people and families who require them. Because as a government, we want life for hard-working people and families of our province to be easier, more accessible and happier as a result.

We've spoken about municipal needs in long-term care. What else is important to Ontarians, Mr. Speaker? Education. Of course it is, and as a father—and here we go; I'm going to mention it right now—of five school-aged children that are all in the public education system, I can tell you how vital it is to have access to safe, modern and connected schools and child care spaces.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Education announced we are investing \$45.8 million to build three new schools and new child care spaces to support the working families of Waterloo region. This investment will support the creation of over 1,600 elementary student spaces and 234 child care spaces as part of our commitment to building modern, accessible and technologically connected schools for Ontario's youth. Three new schools, along with hundreds of new child care spaces, is great news and will provide more choice and flexibility for families, and new opportunities for the children of Waterloo region.

I know that I've been focusing a lot on the region, but it is important to me that we follow through with this narrative through debate here today, because what I'm getting at is that there is so much precedent, even in just the past three or four months, for our government doing so much for the people of this province. Let's not shy away from the fact that most of this has also been accomplished during an unprecedented health crisis and worldwide pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

For the last two years, the people of Ontario have been working extremely hard to stay home, stay safe, protect one another, flatten the curve and get us all through wave after wave of this awful virus. And we're getting closer to that finish line. I'd like to thank all of the hard-working Ontarians that have really been very selfless through all of this pandemic, have helped out their neighbours, have been checking in on loved ones. It's really, really great to see that the province is starting to move back into whatever that new normal is going to look like. Bill 84 comes at a perfect time to help Ontarians, whether that's businesses rebuilding and recovering and, like I said, getting back to normal.

I want to speak a little bit about what I think are some of the best assets of this bill, if you will. First—and this is something we've heard a lot about in the news lately, because it's a big deal, quite frankly, for a lot of people, and I've heard from many constituents who are quite

happy about it. We're cutting costs for millions of Ontario vehicle owners by refunding licence plate sticker renewal fees that were paid up until March 1, 2020. I really can't think of anyone who dislikes the idea of getting to keep more money in their own pocket, Mr. Speaker.

I also have to say that it's a relief not to have to worry about the hassle of renewing the sticker on a regular basis. I think we've all been down to ServiceOntario. They do great work, but they often get a little bit bogged down, and sometimes have you wait an hour or so to renew your sticker. So I'm glad we're doing away with it and saving Ontarians time and money and giving them, quite frankly, one less thing to worry about.

I was watching the debate on second reading of Bill 84 very intently, and a comment from the member from Sudbury opposite struck me as a little bit odd. The member opposite indicated that only people who own vehicles will benefit from this change. But when we did a little research, we found that, according to Stats Canada, over 80% of people in Sudbury use a vehicle to commute to work every day—80%, Mr. Speaker. I can't imagine being anything less than happy and supportive of 80% of my constituents saving even a single dollar, let alone hundreds back in their pockets.

Likewise, the member from Ottawa South also made a similar comment. Again, Stats Canada shows that about 60% of Ottawa South residents commute via personal vehicle—car, truck or van—every day. That same Stats-Can number indicates just over 85% of residents in Kitchener–Conestoga use their own vehicle commuting back and forth to work every day. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine very many scenarios where I wouldn't be on board with saving money for even a single person, family or household in my riding, let alone 60%, 80% or 85%.

And just so we're clear: We're very aware that not everyone has a car, not everyone needs a car and certainly, for some people, a car isn't something that they can afford. That's why we're also investing in public transit. The Ministry of Transportation has told me that a million people are coming to the greater Golden Horseshoe in the next five years, and our infrastructure needs to keep up. After 15 years of neglect by the Liberals, we are investing in a broad, integrated public transit system for the region that will reduce gridlock and greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 480,000 tonnes per year. We're moving forward with two-way, all-day GO service, every 15 minutes on key segments of GO Transit rail networks, with all the stops in between Kitchener. There has been some great progress made already with that. Across the network, capital projects like track work, rail maintenance, noise walls and grade separations were are well under way.

Together with Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario, we continue to move forward with critical procurements, including additional infrastructure works along all GO rail corridors.

We're also supporting public transit in municipalities. That's why, earlier this year, we allocated almost \$12 million to support the expansion and improvement of

public transit services just in Waterloo region alone. This funding is part of the province's gas tax program, which will allocate a little over \$375 million this year to 107 municipalities that deliver public transit. And to make up for reduced gas sales due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's gas tax funding includes a one-time additional top-up of over \$120 million to ensure municipalities can continue to support their vital transit networks.

Whether you drive or take the bus or a train to work or school, we're working for all Ontarians to get them where they need to go. It's as simple as that.

Next up for Bill 84, we have—and this is one of my favourites—establishing a single window for business services which will require service standard guarantees so businesses can track the information they need from government. Small, medium and large businesses have so many challenges to tackle and overcome in an often-changing market. And I don't think anyone can disagree that giving them a better, easier and more direct way of dealing with government information and regulations is nothing if not good sense and good governance.

Bill 84 seeks to level the playing field for Ontario businesses by changing the government's approach to procurement as well. The change will strengthen the province's supply chain and help domestic businesses grow and create good-paying jobs.

Another one that relates to some of the items I touched on earlier is providing more flexibility related to provincial assets by creating a centre of realty excellence. The intent behind this change involving government-owned properties is to ensure priority surplus properties align with key programs, including affordable housing and long-term care. I think it's a great idea and could not have come at a better time, quite frankly, as the province is expanding so many of those services that could be housed at some of these surplus properties.

My colleagues representing the ridings in Durham region should be very happy to hear that we are giving commuters a break by removing tolls on the 412 and the 418. I know that this is something that the member from Whitby has been championing since day one in this Legislature. We know the region has been asking for this relief, and our government is listening and responding accordingly. Because we do that: We listen, and then we act, because that is what our mandate is, and that is, quite frankly, our job.

I know this because, earlier this year, I hosted three pre-budget consultations for the region of Waterloo. I'd like to thank the member from Aurora-Oak Ridges for participating in those as well as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

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I was struck by the creative and collaborative conversations with the organizations and individuals that took part. A major theme of the pre-budget consultations was supporting the local economy and local businesses through their recovery, and one of the ways we can do that is by eliminating unnecessary red tape so that businesses can flourish.

And just to add to that—I'm sure my colleagues will agree to this as well—I wanted to take a moment to thank the people, organizations and businesses and our townships and larger municipalities that came out to take part in those pre-budget consultations. I was really encouraged to see that and I know that the team at the Ministry of Finance is hard at work compiling all the information they've collected over the last couple of years during the pandemic to really, really take a fulsome look at what this budget is going to mean.

In particular, I want to draw some attention to how much this government has done to help the people of Waterloo region. I'm going to ramble off a few facts here:

—House of Friendship, and I've talked about it quite a bit here over the last little while in the Legislature, receiving \$8.5 million for a 100-bed shelter in Waterloo region;

—Waterloo region inner city physicians program, receiving almost \$1 million for six service sites in the region to provide primary care services to 2,700 patients;

—Waterloo Region Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic—this was an announcement we just made last week, I believe—providing almost \$1 million annually to the clinic, which of course is led by nurse practitioners, in Breslau to help more patients in the community access primary care services, social workers and other front-line medical professionals.

I know the intent of Bill 84 is to address what Ontario's businesses have been asking for since we took office. Businesses want to be able to provide their goods and services and, by extension, create jobs, stimulate our economy and benefit everyone.

Back in October 2018, Speaker, I tabled a private member's bill. It was Bill 50, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. This private member's bill echoed some legislation that the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tabled himself back when he was in opposition, but unfortunately, it was never able to pass, Mr. Speaker. I can't imagine why, because it was then, and still is, quite a great bill. But, in short, Bill 50 sought to give motor vehicle dealers registered under the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act the ability to perform certain procedures—we won't get into the minutiae too much here, but really being able to have a one-stop shop for dealerships. You can go in, you can register and get your vehicle plated. You'd be able to have your ownership and everything done right at the dealership and not have to wait for them to go back and forth to ServiceOntario etc.

I am pleased to say that Bill 50 was rolled into a larger government transportation bill and we are delivering on our plan to make government services easier to use, more convenient and accessible, by piloting a program that allows eligible car dealerships, like I mentioned, to register vehicles online and issue plates right in the dealership. As you may know, Mr. Speaker, until now, no such digital option has existed, and registrations must be completed in person at ServiceOntario. So it's great to be able to celebrate this along with this bill.

In the essence of time—I don't have a whole lot left here. I think just really looking at online services, of

course, is saving people and businesses money and time while providing flexibility and convenience for them. And for anyone who isn't a fan of doing things online, or perhaps prefers in-person experiences, of course ServiceOntario will still be there to serve them.

One of the core things that we've talked about over the last little while, and especially within this bill, is that Ontarians deserve a modern and up-to-date government that offers flexibility and convenience for them.

Speaker, there is a lot more that can be said, of course, about the merits of Bill 84 and the changes it proposes for improving the way that people do business in Ontario. I want to thank the Premier for his leadership on this, as well as the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and their ministry teams for their tremendous commitment to making Ontario a better place to start a business, grow your business and raise a family. So, I'm very proud to be able to see this. I believe this is our eighth iteration of reducing red tape here in the province. It's a great thing. We talked a little bit, I think, in the debate—was it yesterday?—about government really signalling certainty to businesses, seeing reinvestment here in the province of Ontario. Under the previous government, we saw 300,000 jobs leave this province, and I was mentioning to the member for Waterloo yesterday during debate that 12,000 of those alone were from Waterloo region in the manufacturing sector. Those businesses went to the States. They went overseas, and it's great to see businesses reinvesting back in the province of Ontario.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this bill continues to give certainty to business, continues to show that this Conservative government has a very business-focused agenda. It's great to see this. From the opposition moving this through to third reading without having to go to committee, it sounds like something that we're all in favour of, so I can't wait to vote on this, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions and responses. I turn to the member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's always nice to hear my friend from Kitchener-Conestoga hold forth in this place. But I know the member is an entrepreneur, so he has to help me with the gaping hole I see in this particular piece of legislation: There's no revenue.

There are always efforts to cut expenses. Friends I know in this government are always talking about cutting expenses. They're leaving a billion-dollar hole in the revenues with this sticker thing. I just want to suggest to the member an amendment. Speaker, did you know that since March 2020, the incomes of Canada's billionaires—59 people—has gone up \$111 billion? Some \$111 billion, and there's nothing in this piece of legislation that will ask those Canadians to share the pain. We've only seen them get richer, Speaker—\$111 billion. That's more money than every government in this country spent on COVID supports.

So to the member: Do you have a plan to make sure you can fill the huge hole you're leaving in the province's

revenues for education, for health care, child care, all the things you were talking about?

Mr. Mike Harris: Well, in fact, I do have an answer for the member. You know, when he talks about those people, he talks about them in a bit of a derogatory way sometimes. Maybe that's his prerogative. But Speaker, those are the people who are the actual job creators here in the province. Those are the people who take that money and reinvest it into creating jobs, and we're talking about good-paying jobs. We're talking about six-figure jobs. We're talking about people being able to have a good pension so that they're able to retire and they're able to do a lot of the things that they want to be able to do in life.

So I personally, and I think I speak for probably the majority of the government members here—we don't believe that taxation is the way to go. We believe in spurring on the economy, and that's what we'll do, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to that member for Kitchener–Conestoga for his remarks today. You know, I was particularly interested, Speaker, in some of the member's comments around our digitization efforts and some of the things that are being done in this bill. As a millennial, I'm eager to see our government move into the 21st century to be able to access these government services online. So I wonder if the member could share a little bit more about why this is important, why this is in this bill, and how this is going to help Ontarians better access and deal with their government.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. It's a great question, and it's something that I think has been lost in this place for a very long time: really creating a 21st-century government. The way that people interact with government really needs to change. I'm going to give a great example.

I did some consultations a year and a half ago with the commercial fishing sector. We've actually got the largest freshwater commercial fishery right here in Ontario, on our Great Lakes. When they unload their catch, Mr. Speaker, they have to fill out a probably 1970s-era, six-carbon-copy piece of paper that then has to get shuffled off to various ministries and biologists within government. To be able to streamline things like that, the way that people interact with government, have a one-window approach so that they don't have to continue to do this old, outdated paperwork, is something that I think, quite frankly, all Ontarians are looking forward to.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to address schedule 3 of the bill. There are two Indigenous child welfare organizations in my riding, Dilico and Tikinagan, who service communities throughout northwestern Ontario and northern Ontario. It's correct that they have been seeking changes, but what I want to understand is why this change—something so important, the lives of children and the outcomes—was put in a bill that has

things like licence plate stickers in it, because that doesn't show the respect or the comprehensive kind of approach that we need to address child welfare needs in northern Ontario. Can the member maybe comment on why there wasn't a more thoughtful approach to this amendment?

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Mr. Mike Harris: I think when we look at that particular portion of the bill, really trying to take a holistic approach and giving responsibility back to those organizations to be able to govern themselves is what they're looking for. This bill is all about removing burdensome regulations. Being able to allow those agencies to really provide the services and do the things they need without the government getting in the way I think is good for everyone that interacts with those types of agencies.

In regard to talking about where funding is going to come from or what have you from us reducing the need to have licence plate renewal stickers, that's easily going to be made up in economic return, as I was speaking to the member from Ottawa earlier. As we look today at removing restrictions across this province, the Ontario economy is going to be on fire over the next few months, and it's going to be great to see, Speaker.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Great to see you in the chair today and glad to interact with my good friend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I know the member is an entrepreneur. He just has that spirit inside of him, not just to serve his family, his wife and his children, one of whom is here as a page, but his entire community in a true entrepreneurial spirit. I was wondering if he could talk a little bit more, having been an entrepreneur, about what it would mean for him on the ground to have a one-window opportunity, to streamline those interactions that people and small businesses have with government and to have one window that they can come to track where they're going, and in fact that we will pledge to hold the agencies that are a direct responsibility of the provincial government accountable to see where your application is, whose desk it's on, so that you can hold them to account so that things are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Mr. Mike Harris: Absolutely. I think this is especially important for people that are just starting out in business. Often there's all kinds of permits and things that you have to register for and you're not sure what to do, and to have to go to this ministry or this ministry or that ministry, for example, often things can fall through the cracks. They can get delayed and, if you're not savvy enough, could even put you in a position where you may not be able to open your business or you may not be able to expand or hire those new people.

To the member from Brantford–Brant, through you, Speaker: To be able to have that type of service available and where you're also talking about—again, in my earlier remarks about certainty to business, being able to provide that certainty, whether it be through just signalling to the

economy that we're ready to rock and roll or whether it's through this one-window approach, it's definitely good for business and definitely good for entrepreneurs.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, congratulations on having a page in your family. You must be very proud.

You talked in your speech about long-term-care beds opening up in your riding and that they were going to Schlegel. I don't know if you're aware, but Schlegel Villages is facing a class-action lawsuit that alleges gross negligence. I'm going to read just in part from the statement that says—and this is from the law firm:

“There are a small handful of homes which have accounted for the majority of deaths in long-term-care facilities in Ontario. Unfortunately, Schlegel Villages Inc. did not properly care for its vulnerable residents and this has resulted in dozens of grieving families.”

So your government is giving 30-year ironclad contracts—not iron rings around long-term-care residents, but ironclad contracts—to for-profit corporations like Schlegel homes that have a tragic record when it comes to the lives of seniors. How can you defend that kind of action?

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm obviously not going to comment on an ongoing lawsuit, but what I can tell you is, any interaction that I've had with a myriad of long-term-care providers, whether they're for-profit or whether they're non-profit—everyone in Waterloo region has done an outstanding job, especially to move us through to the position where we are now in the pandemic. I want to give a big thank you to not just the actual providers themselves, but, of course, all the staff and support staff who work within those long-term-care homes. They've done a fantastic job through the pandemic and couldn't be happier to see more long-term-care beds being built in Waterloo region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We don't really have enough time for another question and response, so we'll turn to further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House, and today to talk regarding Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts, better known as the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act.

I'd like to start on a part of the bill that hasn't been discussed much. I think part of it is, we all like to concentrate on our own ridings, how our own people are impacted. Although I didn't see it directly in the bill, when we did get the technical briefing, part of it—and I hope this is the direction that the government is going. It was regarding refining metals, basically—I'm thinking cobalt—for electric car batteries. Actually, the company that has the refining licence is in my riding, Electra. It used to be First Cobalt; now it's Electra. The government just announced funding for a study for a battery materials park. That's public money going to a good cause. I give credit where credit is due.

But in the bill, when we were getting the briefing, one of the things was—how do I put this?—as it pertains to tailings ponds. Everyone talks about Cobalt, right? Cobalt is where the cobalt is. Well, there is cobalt in Cobalt. There's a lot of cobalt in Cobalt, but there's a problem getting it. When the silver rush happened in Cobalt, there were three—I don't know if we'd call them minerals. There are three minerals or three materials that present with the—so there's silver, cobalt and arsenic. When the silver rush happened, everybody was really big on the silver—it was years ago—and not that concerned about the cobalt or the arsenic.

One of the companies that—and I give credit where credit is due. One of the companies, Agnico Eagle, now has most of the rights around Cobalt and has done a very good job at remediating around Cobalt. But you could get cobalt out of those tailings ponds. The issue is—and I've had several companies talk to me about it—when you do the environmental assessment, if it's on an individual small tailings pond from a 100-year-old mine, it's actually not worth it, quite frankly. The way I read this—hopefully that's the direction—we could do assessments over an area. So you could actually retrieve the cobalt and remediate the tailings ponds at a much higher level than was done 100 years ago. We've learned a lot, and the mining sector has learned a lot. A mine today and a refinery today is not the same as one 100 years ago.

1550

I'd also like to give a shout-out. Right now, Electra—the electric car market is hot. Even somebody like me—I don't drive an electric car; they don't work yet in northern Ontario. When it's minus 40 the range is not—I drive a hybrid. I'm on my second one. I can tell you, even a hybrid, when it's cold, the usage of fuel—because hybrids use gas—goes up, because the electric part isn't as efficient. Believe me, at minus 40, nothing is efficient.

But who I'd like to give a shout-out to, and I'm not going to go through the whole list, but that refinery has been there for quite a long time. Many companies and many investors and many workers over the years have been ahead of their time, and it has failed a few times, because they were ahead of their time. But we've all tried very hard to make sure that they kept that licence valid because it's really important to have a refinery licence. There's a lot of people in our area, us included, who worked hard to make sure that that resource was there.

The government, despite having started by pulling out charging stations, they seem to have seen the light. I think just as long as it's done sustainably—so if we can get cobalt for batteries parts from previously used materials, from previously mined materials, as opposed to from other countries that maybe don't have the same standards we do, I'm all for it. We're all for it. We always have to look, when you're talking about the environment, on the whole chain.

So I can tell you that a hybrid car, even a pretty big one—because in northern Ontario we don't like small cars because your odds in a small car are just not good. That's

a fact of life. Ford Fiesta was not a big seller in northern Ontario.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Uncle Ernie is saying, “Don’t be so honest.”

Mr. John Vanthof: I’m not using my notes anymore.

I have a Ford pickup and a Ford hybrid. I used to have a Toyota hybrid. They make about the same mileage. But my Ford hybrid uses half the gas of a Ford pickup. Before, I had a non-hybrid SUV and it uses 20% less gas than that does, too.

As long as the components going into that hybrid are reused and are sourced environmentally correctly, it’s a big step in the right direction. Electra, in Cobalt, is going to be a big part of that. I just looked up their website. In under a year, they are going to be the first producer of commercial battery-grade sulphate in North America. A lot of people have put a lot of work into that and I think this bill goes a little way into helping that. I hope it does because it would be a shame if we have a cobalt refinery in Cobalt and the tailings ponds don’t get fixed. That would be a failure. Cobalt is a great place, great people. I live just outside of Cobalt. I’m very proud of it. But there are things that should be fixed, and not a lot of people spent time on that in this bill, and that’s why I thought I’d spend a little bit of time on it.

Now we’ll go through—now I’m going to need glasses, because now I have to read. I was listening intently to the debate over the last—it has been a very quick debate, and I’m sure I’ll get a question on it. One part of this bill I’m not going to spend a lot of time on, but I hope that everyone takes the time to look up the Hansard from the member from Kiiwetinoong, because there are some very important changes to children’s services for Indigenous people in this bill. Quite frankly, I’m surprised they’re in this bill; it should be a stand-alone.

To have changes is everything—to have changes as benefit—no. I’m going to reword that: To make fairly substantial changes like this—they’re not perfect. They’re a step. But Indigenous kids aren’t red tape. Well, they shouldn’t be, and they’re getting lost in this bill. Regardless of how the vote is, we will be criticized for how the vote—but this should have been stand-alone and is, to me, perhaps the most important part of this bill. Is it perfect?

We’re talking about people, and if I could—I’m not a note person, but I’ll see if I can find it. There we go. I think this speaks for itself. This is actually from our critic on this issue. It was yesterday: “I think it’s ... important” to note “schedule 3 ... reflects this because, as of March 2020, 69% of children in care were Indigenous; out of 26,000 children in foster care, 14,970 were Indigenous.” Schedule 3 is a good first step in that direction. It should have been on its own. Again, as the government, I wouldn’t be taking a big victory lap on this; it’s a step. This is the same government who took out Indigenous curriculum writing in the school system as one of their first steps when they got elected. But this is a step in the right direction.

Another one—and I’m going to switch gears here. There’s a reason I don’t use notes very often, Speaker: because I mess them up. And I’m not going to use a direct

quote, but I was here when this government first came out. Remember when it was “For the people” and “Promise made, promise kept”? It was like a football team. It was going to be all about accountability. There’s my note.

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It was April 11, 2019. It was, at that time, Minister Fedeli: “As part of the budget legislation, our government is proposing a new, robust accountability framework called the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act.” This is one of their better titles. “This represents the first comprehensive change to Ontario’s fiscal planning legislation in 15 years.” Part of that was that the Premier and the finance minister were going to be held personally accountable—personally accountable. I can remember it. It was March 31 that the budget had to be out, and if they didn’t get it out, they would pay a price, a personal price. Actually, in the subsequent budget, they did. But it’s slipped in this bill that, “Oh, no, we don’t want to be personally accountable anymore.” Actually, the whole argument about having the budget out on March 31 so people could plan—that whole argument is gone. Basically, the budget’s now going to be the campaign document.

You know what? Some of you weren’t here when I was here, but when you were on this side and we were there—oh, the howling you would have yelled at this. “Oh, my gosh, how could the Liberals do this? This is obvious electioneering, basically dropping a budget and then walking out of the House.” How? And you know what? You’re doing exactly the same thing. You walked across the floor and somehow you became them. The same things that you rallied against, you are now doing. Now, is that—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: How ironic.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, it’s ironic. If you balance that against schedule 3, okay, but why do it? The licence plate stickers: The member from, I believe, Waterloo—I didn’t look it up in StatsCan; I’m sure 99% of the people in Timiskaming–Cochrane take the car to work, and many of them who are having a really tough time are going to appreciate the cheque. Why wouldn’t they? It’s really interesting, though, that that cheque is going to land just before the election. Now, again, if that was the former Liberal government doing the same thing—oh, there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth from the former official opposition. And yet you don’t see any problem with it.

Where have the real Conservatives gone? I’m sure there’s a few of you over there. I have family over there. I say this line all the time. But those two examples aren’t the Conservatives that ruled, that were the government, for the Bill Davis Conservatives. No. Why do you do that? Why does a government that appears to be so confident do that?

There are supportable things in this bill. The procurement—ah, that’s a big word for me. Our finance critic had a private member’s bill that was much along the same lines. I believe about only 43% of what the Ontario public service buys comes from Ontario businesses. Is there room to fix that? Yes. Room to improve that? Yes.

There are supportable issues in this bill, obviously. It’s unfortunate that it is allowed to be tainted by some issues

that just—the more things come around, the more things go around, and it just seems like we've just got the Liberals all over again, and I think that's a sad documentary for the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): After that, I can't imagine there would be any questions, but let's find out.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the member for his speech. He did talk about schedule 3, which has to do with the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, and I note that it “provides the minister with the authority to designate entities as prevention-focused Indigenous service providers and sets out their functions.”

I know in Parry Sound, just on October 1, 2021, Nijjaansinaanik was created and it says, “Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services is a culture-based organization responsive to the holistic needs of all children, youth and families. Nijjaansinaanik provides services that reflect values, beliefs and principles rooted within the Anishnabek culture.”

I'm just a little confused whether the member supports these initiatives in the bill or does not. He left me confused. I'm just wondering his position on whether he supports the schedule 3 changes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, I'm surprised that the member was confused. I referred to—people should look up the Hansard from the MPP from Kiiwetinoong, who did a very good job. I said that this part of the legislation could have been a stand-alone piece of legislation. It's supportable; I don't think I left any question on that issue. It's supportable. I could read a quote from—I won't bother reading it; maybe next question I'll read a quote. I quoted the numbers on how many Indigenous kids are in the system right now, and it doesn't need to be that way, so that part of the bill is very supportable.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for your always interesting and entertaining speeches.

I was curious about the cut to the licence fees and the cut of up to \$1 billion in revenue to the government's budget. I'm sure that that cut to revenue was something that you're also concerned about too, and I was curious to know what kind of services you would be concerned would be cut in your riding.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a very good question, and many of the comments that we get in our office are, again, “Thank you for the cheque. Does that mean one less snowplow on Highway 11?” Does it? Right? In one way, the licence fees are a flat tax. So someone who's having a really hard time making it, that hundred bucks makes a big difference; somebody who's driving a Lamborghini, that makes no difference at all. Perhaps this is the chance to actually make this system a progressive tax system, so the people who can afford to pay, pay, and the people who can't afford to pay don't have to pay more than their fair share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for the presentation. I was listening to him, and it was nice, I didn't hear him say he's not going to be supporting the bill, which I'm really happy to hear. He's a hard-working individual, he has talked about his background, and I'm sure he appreciates what businesses have to go through on a daily basis. When they require services and permits and applications, there really are no set timelines right now or standards. This bill will correct that. It will help our small business owners.

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I'm glad that my colleague, in her question, mentioned that this bill will also make life more affordable for Ontarians, something that our government has been working on from day one after the previous government could not do it. They made life as unaffordable as possible, every opportunity they got.

My question to my honourable colleague is, will you be supporting this wonderful bill that's been put forward by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction?

Mr. John Vanthof: First of all, the honourable member, whom I respect very much, talked about how there is now going to be a standard for business, but there is no standard set in the bill. There is a recommendation to start a standard, but we really don't know what the standard is. That's going to be set out later in regulations.

As a former business person—believe it or not, I used to run a business, and the simpler the approach to government, the better. But when you approach government, there also has to be an answer, and now, as a representative of people, with the last iteration of the business supports for COVID, there hasn't always been answers. So the one window also has to have answers behind it, not just the window.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches–East York has a question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to thank my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his speech. His speeches are always entertaining, delightful and informative.

Actually, I have a couple of questions. I would love to know more about what you think Bill Davis would have had to say about this bill, but the question I'd actually like you to answer concerns schedule 3, because the question of Indigenous kids in care is actually one of the most pressing questions that a provincial government of Ontario can deal with, and it should have been tackled in the sunrise as opposed to the sunset part of this session of the Legislature. I want to know what you think it says about this government's priorities, that they're only tackling it now and sticking it into an omnibus bill that is more about fees than it is about kids.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York. That's a tough question. I guess my answer would be, well, it's never too late to try to do the right thing, right? It's never too late to try to do the right thing.

I've mentioned it in my speech that this government started by cancelling Indigenous curriculum writing for

schools. I went to school a long time ago. I learned a lot about European history. I didn't learn much about—right? And some of the issues we are facing now with—we saw during the convoy. We saw it, right? The reason for misinformation is a lot of lack of information and anything we can do to help that—so it's better late than never.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: A very good speech from the member opposite, but I think the reality is that we know, despite the words being talked about today, that the member for Ottawa Centre, the member for University–Rosedale, the member for Beaches–East York, the member from London Centre I believe, the member for Hamilton Mountain, the member who gave the speech, the member for St. Catharines and the member for Thunder Bay will all be walking through the yes lobby—or actually, they won't be. They'll be rising in their place here in support of this bill, and I congratulate them for that.

Despite the fact they disagree with putting more money back in the pockets of people, they will be supporting the bill. Despite the objections they are raising, they will be supporting the bill. How do we know that, Mr. Speaker? Because despite what they've been saying, they're the ones who decided to fast-track this bill so that it didn't have to go to committee and the amendments that they are talking about couldn't happen because they made the decision to fast-track the bill. So I congratulate them for that.

Again, I congratulate the member. I don't actually have a question—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

If he could respond to the question that was almost posed.

Mr. John Vanthof: I thank the government House leader. I do have a comment. I find it a bit disconcerting that the House leader takes glee in the fact that—and I'm going to take full credit that I made a mistake.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, you didn't. You supported it.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I made a mistake, but the government could have put this to committee themselves. I was expecting the government to do that themselves. And now the government House leader takes glee in the fact that, on a parliamentary “gotcha,” he himself didn't take this to committee. The government House leader and the minister had the power to put this to a committee and, with a parliamentary “gotcha,” decided not to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, I “gotcha” running out of time, so we're going to continue the debate with the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's really a pleasure to be here this afternoon. Following the member from Timiskaming is always hard for me. There's a competition between the two of us on who has the most hand gestures. I think it's a tie right now, but I'll do my best—

Mr. John Vanthof: You have the most fingers.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. Yes, I got the extra one.

I want to say to my colleague across the way—earlier in debate—from Kitchener–Conestoga: Yes, I think the

modal split might be close to what you're saying in my riding in terms of public transit and cars, but I actually don't have any highways. I'd be glad to take you on a tour around Ottawa South and people's routes. I know that may have been some sensitivity around the 407, which I will have the opportunity to mention later. I'm sure you'll recall that.

This is another red tape reduction act. The two biggest pieces of red tape that they removed is, number one, they removed the red tape from around that law that they created to present the budget before March 31, a law that they created some three years ago that they've only followed once. So that red tape has been removed.

The other red tape that the House leader so gleefully mentioned to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane is that this didn't have to go to committee; we didn't have to go through the red tape of committee. Well, committees aren't red tape. I don't think it's a good thing that this didn't go to committee. I don't know how it all happened, but as a normal matter of course, I think it would be good for public business for this to have gone to committee. I'm not criticizing anybody. It would have been a better bill if it had gone to committee, just like each bill that we put forward does.

The bill talks about removing red tape, but the government spent nine months wrapping \$10-a-day child care in red tape: wrapping it and wrapping it and wrapping it again. It's a huge ball of red tape around \$10-a-day child care. The problem with that is two things: (1) It's eight or nine months less that families have access to affordable child care, and that's not good for them; (2) what's probably the most important thing for our economy? Full participation. What does child care do? It helps people fully participate in the economy—moms and dads, two incomes in a family. It's not just the right thing to do for families, it's the smart thing to do for our economy. So delaying it is not smart.

What about the red tape around people trying to get primary care? What about the red tape that families experience around making sure that their son or daughter gets the help that they need in school to learn, or the mental health help that they need? What about that red tape? Because there's lots of that red tape for families.

What about all the red tape around a plan for the environment that this government has put? They cut a plan for the environment and put nothing—nothing—in its place. They fired the Environmental Commissioner. I guess she was red tape too. And the child advocate: more red tape for the government.

Getting off red tape a little bit, I know the tolls are in this bill, and I think that that's a good—to the member of Kitchener–Conestoga, I think you'll want to hear this part. Look, reducing tolls, that's a good thing, but I have to tell you that if I lived anywhere west of Pickering, I might wonder, “Well, what about me? What about that road that I drive on everyday, the 407, that the government sold, the road that I have to rent everyday to put my car on?” The tolls aren't getting any better there.

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But then the next challenge is that the people who you sold the highway to, well, they owed us \$1 billion—\$1 billion—and I'm still paying the toll? But there was too much red tape around that \$1 billion for you to collect it from them. That's the red tape that you needed to remove. Really—\$1 billion? You always talk about, what will \$1 billion buy? It will buy a lot of stuff. It will provide a lot of relief for families on that road. Why wouldn't you reduce the tolls? Why wouldn't you say, "You can get \$1 billion back from us by reducing those tolls"? Nothing. You put red tape around that.

Licence plate stickers: a good thing. Families are hurting right now. They need every penny. Licence plate stickers—it's not enough. It only works if you drive a car—if you own a car; you don't even have to drive it—if you own a car. Not all families own a car. Some people take public transit, like the member from Kitchener–Conestoga said earlier—in my riding, 15% to 16%. Some of them go to two jobs. They work in retirement homes or long-term-care homes and they've got to take public transit. They don't get anything. They're also going to jobs that don't pay them enough. They don't have pensions. They don't have benefits. How are you helping them? You're not helping them.

Licence plate stickers is one of those things that sounds great. You know what sounds great? The Premier saying, "We're going to give you a 20% income tax cut" at the time of the last election. Do you all remember that—20%? Anybody see it? Anybody outside this building see that 20%? No.

Hydro prices: "I'm going to put your hydro prices down." Have they gone down? They've gone up.

Gas prices: Have they gone down? They've gone up.

Okay, you did do buck-a-beer. It did go flat after about six months, and you can't find it anywhere in the province.

Here's the thread that ties all those together: They didn't happen. They sure sounded good at the time. They sounded great, but they didn't happen. It's not enough for those families.

So, yes, I'll support the licence plate stickers, but it's not enough. We're not helping all the people that we need to help. We can't just do things in this Legislature that sound great, that are appealing—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Apparently you can.

Mr. John Fraser: Good point.

You know, it's funny, I was reading about Stuart Smith this morning—I didn't include it in the eulogy—but at the time, the Bill Davis government labelled him "Dr. No." It's sounding a bit familiar right now. Things don't change very much, right? What Stuart Smith called Bill Davis was "Dr. Dolittle." Now, obviously Bill Davis gained a greater advantage with a simpler, shorter clip, and that was hard for Mr. Smith.

Saying yes to people is not the only thing that we have to do here. We can't say yes to everything. We can't. We know that. What's the hardest thing about our jobs? It's doing all the things we know that we need to do for people. To me, that's the hardest thing about this job. All the

things that we want to do for people, we can't do them all. So when we're looking at doing things for people, I think we need to remember the people who need those things most.

I'm going to support the stickers, but I want you to do more. Just because I vote for the bill doesn't mean I don't want to you do more or I don't think that we need to do more. We obviously have to do more—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: You know what? Here's the story, right? The Premier comes in, cuts minimum wage, ends paid sick days, ends equal pay for equal work. A few months before the election, the heat's coming on, the Premier's says, "You know what? I'm going to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour"—what it would have been three years ago—and then he's crowing about raising the minimum wage. It's like tearing down a two-storey house, and then building up one floor and patting yourself on the back for destroying it—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an old house.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, you guys are getting old; there's no question about that.

Miss Monique Taylor: There are a lot of tents surrounding it.

Mr. John Fraser: You got it.

I would like a Premier who wakes up in the morning and says, "What can I do to keep Ontarians healthier? What can I do to keep Ontarians safer? What can I do to make Ontarians smarter? What's the thing I can do that is going to help Ontarians?"; not a Premier who wakes up and says, "What can I do to make myself more popular? How can I help my friends?" That's not what I want. That's not what Ontarians want. That's not what any of us want. Our job here is to do our best, to make Ontarians' lives better every day. We can't do it all, but we have to think about all of them, not just some of them, and we really do have to think about the people who are having the hardest time surviving. That's our job.

If I could ask you to do anything today, it's that you remove the red tape from around \$10-a-day child care and just get it done. Every day you wait is a day less for families that desperately need that, and I'm hoping that you're going to announce it. It feels like it's really more about election timing than it is about families.

Do you know what my comment is? It's not enough. It's not enough to help families. It sounds good, but it's not enough, and I think Ontarians deserve more. I think we have to think about people who don't drive cars.

Thank you for the time, Speaker. I'm really looking forward to the questions, which are always fun. We've got the afternoon going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Who's first into the bear pit with a question? Let's go to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was listening to the member opposite. I've sat here a little longer than he has. He talks about many different things—one, the \$10-a-day child care. He would be more familiar than any of us with trying to work with the Liberal Party in Ottawa on a promised

\$10-per-day daycare, when, really, the money they were giving was \$20, and that's what we're working with. Ontario is different, and we just ask for our fair share. We're 40% of the population, and we thought that close to 40% of the money that they were providing would be fair. I'm not sure why anybody this House who is looking after the province of Ontario's finances would not think that that was fair, as we pay likely more than—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now is a good time to pose your question.

Mr. Jim McDonell: So, anyway, what does the member opposite think of such a thing? Should we not ask for our fair share?

Mr. John Fraser: Great question. Here's the thing: Let's think about who got a deal here. Jason Kenney got a deal. I mean, Jason Kenney—he's pretty easy on the federal government. Scott Moe got a deal.

So here's the thing: Whatever you want to say about when we were in government, we can debate that, and that's fine. I'm proud of all the things we did, and I'm very conscious of the things that we needed to do. And the thing that I'm conscious of today is, we need \$10-a-day child care. Families have waited far too long, and there has been no need for that. Nine months: That's a cost to families. I'll give you six months.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll give you 10 seconds.

Mr. John Fraser: Thanks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question goes to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: A question I'd like to pose—I appreciated the member's comments with regard to the people who are in need in this province, that this bill doesn't do a lot for them. And we have some dire need. We know that the years have not been kind: no increases to ODSP or OW, or they were minimal, 1%—which of nothing is almost nothing.

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I had a bill that was called "Who Am I," and it was about eliminating the fees for birth certificates and identification, which we know is a barrier for so many marginalized people. It was turned down because that was far too expensive to eliminate those fees, but yet we're seeing this. Do you agree that we should be looking at user fees and providing relief to people who are the most in need?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, 100%. Why are we just giving money to people who drive cars? There are people on ODSP that can't afford their ID or people, the working poor, who have got to spend \$40 getting a birth certificate. Why are we just doing it for the people who drive cars? Is it because the government thinks they vote more than people who need other kinds of assistance? Is that why?

Why aren't we doing it? What you offered up is perfectly reasonable, and the right thing to do. I don't understand why the government won't do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader has a question.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's interesting to hear that the member for Timiskaming now says that the government has to do his job as well, which is kind of adding a lot to it, Speaker. But it wasn't just the NDP who didn't ask that it go to committee; it was not one member of the Liberal Party—not one member of the Liberal Party. They participated in expediting this bill to third reading.

You're hearing from the members—this member says it's a bad bill, that it can't be supported, that it doesn't go far enough. The NDP say that it's an omnibus bill; it's too much; they can't keep up with it. They can't keep up with it, but they want more.

The member for Ottawa South says, "I don't approve of the tax cuts." So does the member for University-Rosedale. Again, the member for Ottawa South doesn't approve of anything in the bill. But every single one of them will rise in their place and support this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pose your question, please.

Hon. Paul Calandra: So I ask the member, if the bill is so bad, why are you and every other member of the opposition with the exception of the leader of the Green Party voting for a bill that you think is a bad bill?

Mr. John Fraser: Obviously, the member must have been not listening—that's the word I wanted. He wasn't listening to what I said, because I'm going to support the bill. I said it's not enough, and then I talked about all the things you've done to put red tape around stuff and all the red tape you didn't remove around stuff that people need. So I don't understand where—somehow it's like I just said that this bill should have gone to committee. I think you would agree. I think this member here would agree. I think all members in this House would agree that that should have happened. It didn't happen. It didn't happen because somebody made a mistake, and that mistake is going to be a problem, because we can't make this bill better. I don't know how that's enabling in any way. The bill didn't go to committee. It was a mistake for it not to go to committee. I think we can all agree on that. Committees make bills better. We all know that.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Sorry, Speaker, just on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Point of order. Stop the clock.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's more of a point of clarification. I'm just wondering, when a bill passes second reading, if it's only the government that can refer it to committee or if any member of the opposition has the power do that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That's not a point of order. I'm not going to do a point of clarification on a point of order that wasn't a point of order.

The next question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you also to the member for Ottawa South for your regularly entertaining, interesting and insightful comments.

I was most interested in the conversation you were having around affordable child care and the issue of red tape around that piece. The reason why I bring that up is

because under the Liberal government, my children were in child care. I happened to be paying then, and I continue to pay, some of the highest child care fees in Canada. What happened? When you were in power for 15 years, what happened? Why didn't you take action and make child care affordable for families in Ontario?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, some of the things we did are, we did start the 100,000 spaces that these guys are continuing building. Number two, there wasn't \$10 billion on the table to do this. I have family. My kids have kids in child care, so I understand that cost. As I said, I'm acutely aware of the things that we did and the things that we needed to do—which is our problem here, right, being able to do all the things that you want to do for people.

I take that criticism just as I'd take it from the other side. But we're at where we're at right now, and for families to wait while there's money on the table and there's a deal to be done, for them to wait an extra six months—it doesn't mean a lot to folks here; most folks, not everybody, not yourself. I mean, it does to yourself, right? But it matters to people who we serve. Six months for them is a long time, especially if you're working two jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Well, Speaker, I don't even know where to start, to be honest. This member sits here and talks about how he wants to have a Premier who is going to stand up for Ontarians, and he thinks that the best person to do that is the one and only Steven Del Duca, who was, quite frankly, the right-hand man of Kathleen Wynne, the then Premier, and was part and parcel of creating some of the most unaffordable energy rates in not just North America but probably the G7; part, as the member from University–Rosedale just mentioned, of having increases to child care that became so unaffordable that we're now left in a position where we have to clean up their mess once again. The list goes on. I guess we've had the gas plants scandal. We had the green energy stuff that never came to fruition but all these contracts were issued. Why does he continue to support those types of ideologies when there's a government here in place that is trying to put more money back into—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We'll go back to the member from Ottawa South to respond.

Mr. John Fraser: Where do I start? Here's where I'll start, here's what I support: a decent living wage. That's why I supported the raise to the minimum wage that this Premier cut. I supported paid sick days in 2018 that this Premier cut. I supported a plan for climate change that this Premier cut. I supported a plan for equal pay for equal work that this Premier cut. I supported the child advocate that this Premier axed—who is now running for them. That's besides the point.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I just wanted to make sure you're all awake, right?

That's what I support. What I support is getting up every morning and thinking: What can I do to make

people's lives better? Not: What can I do to win the next election? What can I say that sounds good, that may or may not happen, that will help me in the long run? I'm more interested in the things that—

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

We have further debate now, and we'll go to the member from Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's actually been quite a fun afternoon. Maybe it's just because, overall, we're getting such broad support for this bill from all parties in the House. I really appreciate that. I do agree that there is always more to be done. As everyone knows, this is the eighth red tape reduction bill that we've introduced in the House, and with another four years I'm hoping that we do another eight red tape reduction bills, because this is the kind of stuff that has decreased burden to businesses and individuals by almost 7% since we started doing this. So hats off to the ministers responsible, and in fact all the ministries, because what you're seeing here, what's called an omnibus bill, is a whole-of-government approach to decreasing red tape.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll launch into my actual comments here. It's always such a pleasure to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents of Brantford–Brant about the tremendous work this government has done, and is doing, to make life easier and more affordable for the people of Ontario and for Ontario businesses.

Bill 84—I'm not going to be sharing a whole lot of new information here, obviously, because we're on third reading. But it's called the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, and has legislative items that would better serve the people of Ontario and help build Ontario businesses. I deeply want to thank Minister Tangri, Minister Fedeli and Minister Rasheed, along with their parliamentary assistants, staff and other ministries, for taking this well-thought-out approach and plan to better lives and businesses for the people of Brantford–Brant, and indeed for all Ontarians. Thank you.

I would like to start by mentioning what the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act would do for the people of this great province. Speaker, Bill 84 proposes relief measures to Ontarians and provides support to customers who need to use highways. We've already talked about that, but it enables commuters and commercial vehicles to use certain highways without toll charges. Bill 84 proposes the removal of costly tolls on Highways 412 and 418.

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Since day one, our government has made affordability a priority for the people of Ontario. If Bill 84 is passed, effective April 5, 2022, people and businesses will no longer need to pay to use Highways 412 and 418, and I will thank all the members from Durham and Oshawa for their advocacy to make this happen.

This government has always focused on the pocketbook issues of everyday Ontarians. Helping Ontario families further supports Ontario businesses. That attention to the bottom line for families has never been more important as we come out of this pandemic and as we grapple with inflation.

The previous government unfairly targeted drivers and businesses in the Durham region by imposing tolls on Highways 412 and 418, leaving them underutilized while local streets became increasingly gridlocked. When the previous government imposed these unjust road tolls, they placed a financial burden on drivers and families in the Durham region and, after careful consideration, the Ministry of Transportation is proposing to remove these tolls on these highways to bring fairness and financial relief for Ontarians and provide drivers with travel savings and more predictable travel times.

This is also part of the province's plan to help alleviate gridlock across the entire Durham region and beyond by offering more transportation options for drivers. This proposal is a relief measure to Ontarians. It provides support to customers who need to use these highways. It enables commuters and commercial vehicles to use the highway without incurring tolling charges on a permanent basis. Specifically, drivers using the highway and surrounding road network will benefit from faster and more predictable travel times since the removal of tolls will relieve congestion on local roads.

Speaker, the next item in this proposed legislation that will better the people of Ontario and keep a few more dollars in your pockets is through, as we've all talked about, the removal of licence plate stickers and validation tags. This applies to passenger vehicles, light commercial vehicles, motorcycles and mopeds from needing licence plate stickers, as well as the associated fees.

The Ontario government is taking these steps to provide financial relief to millions of Ontario vehicle owners. As mentioned by my colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore, it's worth taking a moment to review some history here.

In 2012, the licence plate sticker fee was \$82 in southern Ontario. This is the year the leader of the Liberal Party was elected and, as we know, became the Minister of Transportation. A year later, in 2013, the fee went up 10%, to \$90. In 2014, the fee went up 9% to \$98. In 2015, it went up another 10% to \$108, and in 2016 it went up another 11% to \$120. In just four years with Steven Del Duca as Minister of Transportation, the cost of drivers' licence stickers climbed by almost 50%, costing drivers hundreds of dollars of their hard-earned money.

Given the rising cost of living, and if this legislation is passed, Ontario would be providing financial relief to millions of Ontario vehicle owners, including businesses, on a go-forward basis. This will put money back in pockets and support the economic recovery of our province. This will save Ontario drivers \$120 a year in the south and \$60 a year in the north. Not only does Bill 84 save Ontario drivers money down the road, but it will provide refunds to vehicles owned by individuals who have paid validation fees for the period of March 1, 2020 and onward. I know I'll be one of those because I always like to go two years in advance. That was my first question when we got our briefing.

Speaker, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act proposes to establish not only these things but also a centre of realty excellence, known as CORE. While real estate is one of

the government's greatest resources, we don't always get the greatest possible value from our properties. Taking a government-wide approach would help drive leaner processes and greater efficiencies that allow the government to realize greater value from government real estate, maximizing that value for the taxpayer.

This is why we are proposing to establish a centre of realty excellence or, as we've called it, CORE. This would be a single body across the public sector to ensure prudent management of government property and to determine priority surplus properties aligned with key programs, including affordable housing and long-term care. Creating a holistic approach to better manage government property to determine priority surplus properties will allow under-used or vacant real estate to be more easily transformed into needed facilities like long-term-care homes and affordable housing.

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, or MGCS, will engage impacted ministries and agencies to highlight the benefits, potential cost savings and burden reductions associated with CORE and listen to their perspectives. If the government chooses to expand the CORE model to broader public sector organizations, MGCS will ensure that adequate consultations with impacted entities are conducted and the benefits are highlighted. CORE will enable the government to more nimbly and efficiently manage government property and realize value from surplus real estate using a consistent lens and suite of tools to help unlock opportunities to attract investment, identify social benefit opportunities and support Ontario's local communities.

This bill also improves the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. It will distinguish customary care from residential care to better reflect the customs of Indigenous First Nations and implement circles of care as a holistic approach for First Nations.

Speaker, I know I've mentioned it here in the House before, but I can remember when I took Minister Dunlop, from colleges and universities, to Six Nations territory to have a meeting with Arliss Skye and her team. When she learned of something that is difficult to think about, that children would be taken out of homes based on the history that the moms had with the system—a birth alert system in the hospitals, which would keep young Indigenous women from going to the hospital to have their babies because they knew what might happen, affecting 240 children in this province every year—it broke us. I can remember the minister walking out of that meeting, and she said to me on the way to the car as we left that meeting there, "I don't care what I have to do. I don't care what it takes. That system is going to go away."

That's not in this bill, but that's just the approach that we have taken: to recognize some of the systems that have been in place for so long that we have the opportunity to fix. And it's so good to see more changes coming forward. I'm so glad to hear that no one is speaking against these things. Even our member from Kiiwetinoong can speak positively—maybe not enough; we have a long ways to go—about the changes that we are making.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has heard from representatives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, as well as Indigenous service providers for nearly a decade about specific changes needed to Ontario's child and family services system that would improve outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. Everyone will remember just a few years ago when the government of Ontario had to step in to my family and children's services in Brantford and put in an administrator. I remember when I was first learning, because you have so much to learn when you're first elected—I remember asking on the territory, on Six Nations, just for feedback. I remember the hard look that the person that I was speaking to got in her eye. She looked at me and she just said, "I'm not going to talk about that, but there's a reason that we told those people to get off our territory and never come back." So to see the support that we're putting into Indigenous-led services for Indigenous youth that are in the system is so gratifying for me personally.

Also, by creating opportunities for community economic development, by enhancing the role of prevention-focused Indigenous service providers, the existing role of Indigenous societies can be reinforced. Their role is still vital and supported. MCCSS will continue to work with both Indigenous societies and prevention-focused Indigenous service providers, more commonly known as PFISPs, to ensure safety and improved outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children.

And so to Arliss Skye, who works on the territory, I just want to say thank you. You have been heard, and you are making a difference every day, not just on the territory, but in the entire province of Ontario. Thank you.

1650

Our goal is to provide children, youth and families with services that are community-based, high-quality, culturally appropriate and responsive. The proposed changes are designed to address issues relating to the systemic racism and disparities experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth. Additional access to supports and services that integrate Indigenous cultures and traditions is a key part of our work to achieve better opportunities and outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis families.

I have to move on. Speaker, I've mentioned some items in this bill that would benefit the people of Ontario and now I would like to pivot to what the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act will do for Ontario businesses.

With respect to the towing industry and towing appeals, there's a provision in Bill 84 to allow appeals by towing operators to be sent to the Licence Appeal Tribunal, or LAT. This ensures consistency with other licensing systems regulated by the province.

With respect to the towing industry and the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, it will require tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators to have a certificate to operate. An amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act would allow tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators to appeal

decisions about certification through the existing Licence Appeal Tribunal and provide for the ability to further appeal Licence Appeal Tribunal decisions to the Ontario Divisional Court. Using the Licence Appeal Tribunal will allow certificate applicants and holders to use the LAT's well-established and effective processes for appeals and ensures consistency with other licensing systems regulated by the province.

Moving on to another item: We are enhancing police inspection in the Liquor Licence and Control Act, 2019, by restoring police powers in relation to the Liquor Licence and Control Act. This would allow police to maintain their current role in licensed establishments, as well as maintain Ontario's strong focus on health and social responsibility when it comes to alcohol sale, service and consumption.

Speaker, in November 2021, the government implemented a modernized legal framework for alcohol to replace the previous complex legislative and regulatory framework. The government is committed to maintaining its strong standards for social responsibility with respect to the sale, service and consumption of liquor. Our policing partners are essential in ensuring the safe and responsible service of liquor in Ontario.

With respect to the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry, Bill 84 proposes housekeeping and administrative amendments to fix incorrect or outdated provocations in the Mining Act. These administrative amendments will provide clarity and reduce confusion in the interpretation and application of the legislation by fixing incorrect cross-references and by using language that is consistent with other similar provisions.

These proposed amendments would address gaps that have been identified since the Mining Act was amended through the Supporting People and Businesses Act. Changing the definition of "Aboriginal community consultation" to "Aboriginal consultation" will result in more consistency with other references to "Aboriginal consultation" in the act. This proposed amendment to the Mining Act is responsive to feedback received both by industry and by the Indigenous community as a result of engagement.

We are also proposing to give renters and owners of mining lands the ability to claim costs reasonably related to Aboriginal consultation efforts when testing for mineral content, ensuring a consistent approach with eligible costs considered for other programs administered under the Mining Act. Costs associated with these consultations have been highlighted by the Ontario Mining Association as significant expenditures during exploration activities. This is part of our Critical Minerals Strategy to attract investment, to increase Ontario's competitiveness in the global market and become an important global supplier of critical minerals.

Our government is working to create business certainty for the mining industry and improve timelines related to the approvals and authorizations to undertake mining activities. Our government is committed to cutting red tape

in the mining sector to attract global investment, expand the industry and create new jobs.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker: As promised in the 2021 Ontario budget, we are proposing to provide a single window for business, an online portal that would make it easier for businesses to access the information and services they need to get up and running, create jobs and 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. Bill 84 creates the establishment of this single window for business, a cross-government initiative to consolidate approval processes, government information and application statuses into one single window to save time and money for the people of Ontario; and new legislation to implement service standard guarantees, holding government accountable when dealing with businesses.

An integrated digital experience would make it easier for businesses to access the information and services that they need. This would include a single web portal so they could easily see where in the approval process their applications are.

This enabling legislative framework is designed to improve the user experience by providing additional clarity, transparency and government accountability for the service standards we have publicly committed to. This government 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.

This government is reducing the administrative burden on businesses by reducing time spent on permits, applications and licences, publicly committing to standards and guarantees and enhancing government transparency and accountability on application tracking.

Speaker, I'm going to skip my last item because I went too far off my notes here, but I just want to finish up by saying that Bill 84, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, if passed, will better serve my constituents of Brantford–Brant, the people of Ontario and will help build Ontario businesses.

This well thought-out, whole-of-government approach and plan is what Ontario needs. It takes a lot of work to activate all the pieces of the economy that we need to recover from COVID. You may hear that this is an omnibus bill, this touches so many different pieces, but the reality is, we just don't have the time in this Legislature to introduce every single one of these pieces to make everything work better. As we've been hearing in the House since this bill was introduced just last week, it has the support. It's almost a motion of confidence in our government by all the parties in this House. It feels almost like private members' business, that we're all working forward together for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have 10 minutes of questions and responses. The first question goes to the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I was delighted to hear the member opposite talk about the need for systemic change.

The fact that the government can even talk about the need for systemic change is, in my view, an enormous step forward from when I first walked into these doors the better part of four years ago.

However, it's really important that he understand that the piece in here concerning Indigenous kids in care—that is not systemic change. That is a small tidbit dropped into a red tape bill towards the end in the sunset days of this government's session in office.

We do need systemic change, and my question to the member is, where is the systemic change and why isn't there a bill unto itself that actually creates systemic change for Indigenous kids in care?

Mr. Will Bouma: I think that's an excellent point, and I really appreciate the comment. I think of a story that I heard once about a gentleman who was telling me how he used to watch ships come into Montreal harbour. That was back in the days before they had all these fancy rudder systems. He said it was interesting because it would take them miles to turn that ship around as it was coming into port, and that's exactly the same thing that we're doing here. These sorts of changes cannot happen overnight. You cannot turn a ship the size of Ontario on a dime. It's like what my father-in-law used to say: "How do you eat an elephant?" Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you know the answer: one bite at a time.

So every one of these little changes that we're making that can be supported by our Indigenous community is absolutely a step in the right direction to make that systemic change happen.

1700

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to comment on this bill. I wanted to comment on the part about the coming out of COVID-19 and the pandemic and the need to support the Ontario economy. I think that the bill will go a long way towards that—the measures included in this bill and also other announcements about initiatives that are already under way and putting us on track to recover.

I'd like more information from the member from Brantford–Brant on schedule 2 of the bill, which is called the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, otherwise known as BOBI. I've got a special [*inaudible*] to that. Thank you.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, we're not allowed to say members' names, but I appreciate that question from the member from Sarnia–Lambton. I can understand why he wants to hear more about BOBI.

Mr. Mike Harris: Who doesn't?

Mr. Will Bouma: Exactly. This goes back to so many of the things that we're taking as a whole-of-government approach, and I appreciate the question. The Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, or BOBI, 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. The act requires public sector buyers to contribute to the growth of Ontario businesses by giving them

preference when procuring goods and services under a specified threshold amount, building their competitiveness for the global market, providing them with great opportunities to secure public sector contracts. Just another small piece, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I noticed the member opposite talked about the licence fee cut which will lead to a reduction in the government revenues of about \$1 billion a year, and this is happening at the same time as we have what doctors are calling a catastrophic health care surgery backlog, where up to 400,000 people are waiting for critical surgeries, cataracts, 11 months for an MRI, heart bypasses, even some cancer surgeries. And the Financial Accountability Officer is saying that this government needs to put an additional \$1.3 billion into health care in order to deal with that surgery backlog.

How does this government intend to do that, given that you're looking at cutting government revenues by another \$1 billion?

Mr. Will Bouma: I think that's such a great question, and I really appreciate the member from University-Rosedale and our friendship. I think she hits the nail on the head, that if we can hit affordability issues for the people of Ontario, making those small changes, as we have through the entire pandemic—and that's the thing. When you look back, and I don't have time to say it all, but a year ago at this time we were staring down a \$31-billion deficit, and by supporting businesses, by supporting employers, by supporting individuals, we saw the revenue come back to the point that today—today—we have a smaller deficit than what we were handed by the previous government. Do you know how we did that? Not by cutting spending; we spent money like crazy on all those supports, and the Minister of Health is making great strides in the surgery backlog. But we do that by supporting businesses and individuals by putting money back into their pockets, which is exactly what getting the val tags and stickers does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries has a question.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's lovely to see you, by the way, and I wish you well for 2022. I know this is your last term and I want to wish you well. I've enjoyed sitting in the Legislature with you.

To the member from Brantford-Brant: I thought you gave a really great dissertation about how valuable this piece of legislation is, and I think you talked a lot about why it is important to bring a piece of legislation like this together because it is a whole-of-government approach—novel, I know, having served 16 years in this assembly and 13 in opposition. I didn't see enough of a whole-of-government approach, and that's something Premier Ford has done.

You have a large Indigenous community in your community. I was fortunate to be able to join you in your community and meet some of the Indigenous business owners, but I want to talk a little bit about Indigenous children and those children in care. I'm wondering if you

can expand upon that and your commitment, as well as our government's commitment, in ensuring that we protect those children.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister. You know what I've learned in visiting the Haudenosaunee people on their territory, Mr. Speaker? We have to take a whole-of-government approach, from a duty to report to a duty to respond. It is so easy to report someone—as an optometrist, also: “Oh, someone is close to the border; take away their licence.” No, no, no. And what I've learned from the people on Six Nations is that we have to have a duty to respond; that we see a situation and we come around that person as a community, and we work together to fix it. Seeing those things, those philosophies come through in the small changes we're making, whole-of-government business parts but especially in how we take care of our most vulnerable children, just means so much to me. Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan has a question.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to the member from Brantford-Brant. I always enjoy your positive approach and you often talk about working together, so I want to congratulate my colleague from Oshawa, who worked so relentlessly about trying to get the tolls removed on those highways, and that this government and the member across the way finally did it. So that is something to celebrate in this House, and I really thank the members that worked on that.

The question I have is, though, why wouldn't we remove all tolls from highways in Ontario? The 407 was given away—and I understand it's a private highway—but we're also allowing them not to pay \$1 billion worth of fines. What is going on there? Why aren't we looking at ensuring that it's fair for everyone?

Mr. Will Bouma: I really appreciate that question, too. I don't have an answer to why we're not removing the tolls on the 407. I'm no lawyer and I'm not in the Ministry of Transportation.

But what I can say is that what I heard here today, even from Liberal independent members and from opposition members, are so many great ideas that we can continue to bring forward in future red tape reduction bills because it takes good ideas like that to come forward and make these small changes positively. To see this eighth bill is a testament to our desire to eliminate red tape and bureaucracy. And you're right: What we see as bureaucracy, by people in the Indigenous community, is seen as colonialism. That's even more of a reason to get rid of those things so we can fix them. And that's why it's so good to see. We realize even more how far we have to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It always is a great opportunity to be able to stand in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain, as I've been doing for 10 years now, proudly doing that. This bill is something that some people in my community will appreciate, other people may not appreciate, but we feel that moving

forward with this bill is the right thing to do for many reasons.

I'm going to touch on hopefully most of the schedules in this bill and put my say into it and things that I've heard from my community and how things will affect my community. Schedule 1, right off the top, is an interesting schedule. Right from the bill itself, the preamble is, "Ontario is committed to reducing administrative burdens for those seeking permits, licences, information or any other type of government approval and improving the overall experience for the user by making it easier to access required information and services." What this will do is allow the government to create a service standard. I've looked through the schedule, and I don't see what the service standards are. That will come in regulation later, I'm assuming. But they're setting a standard. We don't know what the standards are, but there is going to be a standard for services.

Now, remember, these are places like ServiceOntario and other services that the government would provide, and also remember that it's the government that funds these services to be able to provide the services to our community. Unfortunately, many times we see the government underfund these services and that puts more burden on the service provider to provide those services to our community.

1710

So in this legislation—let me just get through some of this stuff. There are guaranteed service standards, but again we don't know what the standards are.

Compensation can be payable in respect of the permit, licence.

Reporting: The government shall regularly give public reports on—so if you go and complain, I guess, against the service provider, the government will keep a databank of that and publicly name and shame these government service providers. They're going to name and shame them for not providing that service. There will be immunity for the government. They've built themselves immunity into this legislation so that they cannot be held accountable for the service provider that they fund to provide the services to our community. Do you see what a tangled kind of mess this is going to lead in to be?

So let's go back again to: The government provides the funding to the service provider. I, as a consumer, am not happy with the service I receive, so I can complain and possibly get my money back. I can complain about the provider, but the government who funds that provider and doesn't give them the necessary tools to provide me the service is immune from the actual legislation. I can complain about the provider, but I can't complain about the government who is giving the provider the services. It's messy. It's really messy.

And then there's also going to be a business standard, but we don't exactly know what that means. It says, "The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade shall make available to the public a list titled 'Business Service Standard' that identifies the service standards that meet the prescribed requirements and which

of those services standards are guaranteed service standards as defined in this act." That's it. We don't know what those service standards are.

We don't know what that's going to mean for small businesses—small businesses who have been struggling for the last couple of years under this government. Yes, we've had a pandemic and it's put all of our communities in a strenuous position, but we have a government who did not provide the necessary tools to those small businesses to be able to provide for our communities and to be able to ensure they had the tools necessary to survive through the pandemic. Many businesses in my community contacted me several times over, depending on which tranche of money they were trying to get from the government, and then many businesses were denied—denied over and over and over again, businesses that should have been accepted, and now we're seeing businesses that don't even know why they're being denied. They have been calling our office, calling the hotlines provided, and not getting answers. I think my staff was finally able to get through to a parliamentary assistant or a minister's office to be able to get some clarification, but it's just been a muddy, muddy, muddy mess for businesses. And now the government is going to create a service standard for these businesses and name and shame them even more and put them further at risk for the businesses that they're already struggling to keep up. It's concerning to see this, and like I said, it comes back down to the government funding these providers. So how can you expect people to do more with less when you're not providing them the funding?

Drivers' tests—that's a major problem—people being able to access their driver's licence and their driver's test, particularly in the north. We've heard many stories from our neighbours and our colleagues here in the north of not being able to get those drivers' tests and having to leave their communities to be able to access drivers' tests. Again, this would be a service, I'm assuming, under what this schedule would perform. So if someone is not able to get their driver's test or they're unhappy about their driver's test, they'll be able to complain about the provider giving them the driver's test, and then that provider is going to get in trouble and the government is going to be immune from it, yet the government provides all of the funding and the services and the ability for it to happen.

I'm kind of confused on how that's going to work out, Speaker, but there are many things about this government that confuse me on a regular basis, and they confuse my constituents, because they are constantly calling my office asking for clarification of what the government is up to and what their legislation means and what it's going to mean for them.

Schedule 2 of this bill is the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act. The member from Waterloo has done a lot of work on procurement bills, and so we're seeing this as some of the work that she's been doing in the past. But procurement is something that we should—it's the "build in Ontario." This is something we're hearing about on a regular basis. We're hearing about businesses that can't get their products to the government markets to be

able to be utilized. We know that we've had great success stories with hand sanitizer, with masks, but there are also so many stories where people weren't able to get into that market and have struggled because of it, because they literally put that market together during COVID in the hopes that they would be able to access the market to serve. We heard that from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin the other day, with a factory in his riding that was making masks.

An interesting point that I found is, the OPS only does business with 43% being Ontario businesses. I think we could do better. We could do better by that. We can be Ontario made, Ontario grown, Ontario purchased. I think there's a lot of room for improvement there to be able to move forward and to be able to help businesses in our community. The government talks a really good game about buy local and utilize local, but think of Thunder Bay and what's happening there; building the Ontario Line and yet our Ontario cars are not going to be built in Ontario. It's kind of shameful. They changed the RFP process to benefit themselves, from 25% to 10%, taking more of that market away from the good jobs in Ontario to be able to do that work.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's terrible. Why would they do that?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's absolutely horrifying, and who knows why they do what they do. I'm sure there's something in the background that has created that scenario for them to be able to do that, and I can't even get into it because it would probably get me in trouble.

Schedule 3 is the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, which is for Indigenous children in care—long-awaited changes. I know I was working on this back in 2017, when I was the critic for children's services. We've definitely heard from a lot of our members, particularly from the member for Kiiwetinoong and how he felt about this. One of the things that was very glaring was the fact that this schedule, which is so important, is stuck within a red tape bill. We've heard this from several members in the House today: Children are not red tape. Our Indigenous communities—not “our,” sorry; I'll retract that and apologize to the Indigenous communities. They've been put in a bill, in an omnibus bill, to be able to fix problems that have been happening for years. I know that the community has been asking for these fixes for years.

We heard the numbers of the number of Indigenous children in care and in the children's aid societies. We're giving them a little piece to be able to help the community along, but if they had drinking water, if they had housing, if they had proper services in their communities, if they had health care, better education where they didn't have to leave their communities, we probably wouldn't see the breakdowns in families that we see. So that, in itself, could have been a stand-alone bill, making sure that we were helping Indigenous communities across this province, starting with drinking water and housing. I mean, we could start anywhere; there's so much work to be done.

1720

This piece is helping families who are already in crisis. So where's the work to stop families being in crisis? It's

what we need to see in this Legislature. Those are the types of bills that we need to see.

Schedule 4 on the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2019, moves the deadline that the budget must be tabled by the end of April or else they will face financial penalties. Now, this one, Speaker, is rich. It was the former finance minister, who is now, I believe, the Minister of Economic Development, who brought forward this legislation some time back, saying, “The budget would be tabled on time. The Liberals never tabled a budget on time. We're going to be accountable, we're going to be responsible, we're going to make sure it's done and we're going to put money on the line. If we don't get that budget out on time, we're paying. We are going to pay out of our own money.” Now I guess they had to change the legislation to protect themselves so that they didn't have to pay.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: They couldn't get it done.

Miss Monique Taylor: They couldn't get it done. They were so busy crowing previously that they put in legislation that was actually biting them now. Instead of having to pay, they had to change the rules in the legislation to fix their mess. I mean, honestly—and it's not even just that it's a regular budget. We are coming into an election days later. The legislation says the budget is going to be tabled by April 30, but we've heard tell that the budget is coming on April 30, then the writ drops and we're into an election on May 4.

So there is no time for the opposition to be able to look at the budget, to comb through it, to do our due diligence, to take out all of the rosy words and put it into perspective, into people's language, which I know I appreciate. Not many people can just sit there and read through a budget and understand what that means. There are a lot of rosy, glossy words, and I'm quite sure when the finance minister tables his budget here in this House, it is going to be with balloons and maybe they'll bring a band in; I don't know. There have been some pretty wacky things that have happened around this House celebrating budgets. But when you pull the meat off the bone, you start to see the poison pills that the public won't see.

We won't have that opportunity to be able to do that critical work. That is our job, to be able to look at these budgets, to be able to go through them with a fine-tooth comb, to pull it apart, to see what's really there instead of rosy words. It's very, very, very concerning that this is happening, but we know the budget is really just going to be the Conservative platform running in the election. Like I said, it won't have the proper scrutiny that it needs, and hopefully the people of Ontario will see through that because they are seeing through quite a few things, Speaker, and I'll tell you—well, I'll get there.

Schedule 5 is the 407. The member from Oshawa, my colleague, has done amazing work with private member's bills. For years she's been pushing, pushing and pushing to get the tolls off the 412 and 418. Congratulations to the member from Oshawa for just sticking to it and doing that really, really important work.

The other schedule that I wanted to talk about is—there it is: the Highway Traffic Act. This has definitely become

a hot topic. It was floated out there before the legislation came out that the government was taking the fees off of licence plate stickers. Well, I'll tell you, at my local pub, I'm sitting there having a beer with my constituents—it's my local pub; it's around the corner from my house—and all they could talk about was the fact that the government is doing this because it's an election. Every single person I ran into, they're like, "Hey, Monique, what's going on with the licence plate stickers? It sounds like buck-a-beer." These are the things that our constituents are talking to us about. They're directly telling me that they think that this is an election ploy, to be getting this money back right before the election. They're going to have money back in their mailbox for their stickers. And I get it. But do you know what I don't like about it? That it comes out of service money, money that could be—look at your kids in autism: over 50,000 kids on wait-lists for autism because you guys blew that so bad. And now they're just giving money away. They're taking money out of the revenues; they're taking money out of the Treasury Board right before an election.

They're critical dollars. We all know we have a housing crisis. We have a mental health crisis. We have a crisis in health care. We have a crisis in education. I've got a school in my riding that I can't get fixed. It was promised under an ARC process, but I can't get it fixed because the ministry won't give us the money. So how can they justify \$1 billion out of the Treasury Board at this point in time? Businesses are in crisis; people are in crisis across our communities. Taking \$1 billion of revenue and just giving it back to people who need it at the same time—but is it the same people who need it? I don't know. Are people happy they're getting it back? Most know why they're getting it back. They're not buying it.

It's just the way that this government rolls. It's just the way that we're going to see things fall out before the election, the campaign. I'm sure there will be goodies floating here and there. The people of Ontario are smart. They get it. They are paying attention, and so I'm just happy—that was a quick 20 minutes. Thanks for the opportunity.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,
Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (IND)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associé des Transports (RGT)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutilla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurattan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Faisal Hassan
Jim McDonell, Sam Oosterhoff
Laurie Scott, Vijay Thanigasalam
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: 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