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Jeudi
24 mars 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 mars 2022

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers / Prières.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BAIT MANAGEMENT GESTION DES APPÂTS

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I want to bring attention to the new bait management in Ontario, an important issue for the residents and outfitters in my riding and in MPP Mantha's riding as well.

Ce nouveau règlement ne fait aucun sens pour les régions affectées par ce nouveau règlement. Soyons clair : je suis entièrement d'accord qu'il faut protéger nos lacs des espèces envahissantes. Par contre, les limites de zones de gestion des appâts posent des problèmes et ne sont pas réalistes à la géographie du Nord.

Speaker, this is only one example: A resident from Hearst can purchase bait in Hearst at the only bait seller in town in the green bait management zone, but cannot bring this purchased bait to Fushimi Lake, 30 minutes from the same bait management zone, because he must cross the orange bait management zone at some point to come back to the green bait management zone, where he is allowed to use the purchased bait. This new regulation puts residents subject to fines if they are stopped by MNR, but it's also detrimental to the outfitters' business.

Monsieur le Président, c'est simplement ridicule. Nous avons rencontré et adressé les problèmes au gouvernement. Nous avons fait des recommandations. Et avec la pêche et les élections qui arrivent à grands pas, cette situation est encore plus pressante.

Speaker, I'm asking the government to understand the urgency of this issue and to work with the affected communities to find a solution that makes sense.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Billy Pang: Today, I am happy to share about the long-term-care investments that this government has been making in my riding of Markham–Unionville.

Last Friday, I joined Minister Calandra and my colleagues in announcing the building of three new long-term-care homes and 640 new beds in Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville. Such investments are crucial to ensuring our seniors get the care they deserve, especially considering the previous Liberal government only built

611 net new beds from 2011 to 2018, while leaving a wait-list of 40,500 people. I am especially proud of the Mon Sheong and Lang Yi homes being built in Markham–Unionville, which will bring 576 long-term-care beds to my riding.

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However, the investments in our seniors don't stop there. I am also excited to share that these Markham–Unionville homes will receive \$2.5 million to increase staffing levels and improve care. I am proud to be a part of a government that takes long-term care seriously. I look forward to seeing how these investments improve the lives of Markham–Unionville's senior citizens.

CAREGIVERS

Mr. Joel Harden: One of the best moments of my time in this building was March 4, 2021, when all parties of this House passed Voula's Law. My friend, Minister Raymond Cho, is here today. He was there and we worked closely with his office to send a clear message to care home operators across Ontario that it is unlawful and unkind to issue trespass orders to family caregivers or guests of people in care homes when there are reasonable complaints about the living conditions of loved ones in care homes.

What is unfortunate news since then is that more of these incidents have happened in Ontario. Thanks to our leader, Andrea Horwath, who allowed me to head out to Peterborough yesterday morning and to take a break from legislative duties here, I met with Diane Tamblyn. Diane Tamblyn is a daughter to a dad who is in a long-term-care home that has been cited for three serious infractions by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. That home has written a Trespass to Property Act notice to Diane, telling her that she is only allowed to go into the home between certain hours and that she is not allowed to go to the family council meeting.

Family councils are the bodies that are supposed to be there to adjudicate disputes, mediate conflicts. This home operator, which has a bad reputation, sadly, in the city of Peterborough, has taken this extreme step. I was there with Diane yesterday to defy that trespass act order and to go into that family council meeting. I encourage the minister responsible, I encourage the government, to get the parties back to the table and to uphold the important principle of Voula's Law.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I am pleased to rise today to mark 201 years of the independence of Greece. In

1821, the people of Greece rose up against the tyranny of the Ottoman Empire and re-established Greece as a free and independent country.

Greece is a land of philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle; of writers, such as Homer and Herodotus; and of leaders who shook the world, such as Alexander.

Greek emigrants have settled in countries around the world, first in settlements around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and now in nations on every continent. In Ukraine—where Greeks have lived for thousands of years—in 1814, patriots founded the Filiki Eteria, the Society of Friends, in Odessa to plan the liberation of Greece. From Odessa, the society raised funds and enlisted supporters, who joined in the uprising of 1821. They fought for freedom, as patriots of Ukraine do today.

Hellenic Canadians are the children of the same diaspora excelling in many fields: business, education, medicine, politics, sport and many more.

The freedom of Greece was long the cause of Hellenes and philhellenes from many nations. It's a freedom that has often been threatened, one that people have had to fight for over the ages. It's not a battle that is won once; it's an ongoing battle in defence of the right of people to be free, to choose their own leaders and to live in peace. The patriots of 1821 fought for this freedom for Greece and their spirit inspires us. Today, this same spirit and this same heritage drives the struggle for a free Ukraine.

Long live Greece. Zhto H Ellada.
Slava Ukraini.

MEMBER FOR THUNDER BAY— ATIKOKAN

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: As we near the end of this session, I want to say it has been a privilege and honour to represent the people of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. This work often takes us away from our loved ones. You miss birthdays, special occasions. You're often pre-occupied, and COVID put us in isolation many times.

I am blessed with three wonderful children, a son and two daughters. They have excellent partners in life who I feel are my children as well. I have two grandchildren who are growing up far too fast.

We all come to this work with our experience, and being a mother and grandmother is the most valuable experience I have found. The grounding and reminder of what is really important in life is due to the love and support of my family. They allow me to do this work with encouragement and support. They take care of my pets, water my plants, help me move and give me advice and perspective. I would not want to do this work without them. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

I also need to acknowledge the people in my riding working to help Ukraine and its people. My parents lived through the Second World War, and I am reminded of them so clearly when I see the devastation to families in Ukraine. I think of their bravery and how it must have felt to have children to protect during that time.

I am so grateful for my children and that my children are safe and thriving. I commit to continuing to do this work to make the world a better place.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: For Ontarians who always had a place to live, it can be hard to imagine what it feels like to be homeless. Whatever the reason may be for somebody to find themselves without a home, no one should have to sleep on the street or seek refuge in a shelter for any length of time. Relying on shelters for food and a roof is not a way of living, and crowding in a motel room, waiting for subsidized housing, is not a way for families to raise children. Everyone should have a chance at a fresh start, and having a place to call home can be the most powerful tool to motivate people to fully integrate into society and contribute to our economy.

We know the shelter model is no longer sustainable and that real help has to come from supportive housing, because what people need is assistance. We know we need more affordable housing to avoid having more people and families end up on the street. That's why I have led an affordable housing and homelessness task force with my municipal colleagues for the last two years. What I've heard and what I have found out, during research and consultation with experts from here and abroad, is that we only need political will and political action to change the actual situation.

I will be bringing forward a private member's bill that captures the results and recommendations that have emerged from this extensive exercise. I hope the government will take notice. I am also hoping that the government will be delivering more concrete measures to address this urgent issue.

SENIORS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the outstanding Canadian community on the 82nd Pakistan Resolution Day.

It has been my pleasure to welcome the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility to my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills on two recent occasions. We met with many elderly constituents and visited retirement residencies, such as the Village of Erin Meadows and Ivan Franko Homes.

Speaker, when Ontario's seniors have a problem, they come to us for help. They know that our government is working hard to make life easier for them. That's why our government provided support for retirement homes to improve sanitation and hire more workers during this pandemic.

We also announced last month that we will distribute \$11 million through the Seniors Community Grant Program. This funding will support more than 250 organizations. In Mississauga, this investment will allow the Shubh Helping Hands organization to host weekly workshops for seniors, the Church of Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius to

help those who have been struggling with isolation and the Feng Hua Senior Association to teach new immigrants tai chi.

Additionally, our government is working to make life more accessible. We are updating standards to improve the accessibility of public spaces. And we introduced the temporary Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit to make the homes of the elderly safe and accessible.

Ontario's elderly, our most vulnerable, can trust that we have got their backs.

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HOME CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Underfunding in health care and a massive staffing shortage has left our home care system in crisis. We all know seniors and people living with disabilities who would like to receive care at home instead of in a hospital or in institutional long-term care. They want to live in their own homes longer, supported and respected. But too often, the services that should be available to them are no longer there.

This crisis is felt acutely by the one quarter of a million Ontarians and their families that live with Alzheimer's and dementia.

I recently met with Mary Burnett, the executive director of the Alzheimer Society of Brant, Haldimand Norfolk, Hamilton Halton. I also spoke with Phyllis Fehr, who is living with early onset dementia. Phyllis described her determination to stay at home but also described the toll it is taking on her family.

This is an all-too-common struggle. Care partners and family members are unsung heroes. A staggering 70% of home care is provided by family care partners. The Alzheimer Society has made a reasonable request to this government to support individuals with dementia and their families by investing in at-home services.

Recently, the Premier said no to our opposition day motion to make much-needed changes and investments in home care and community care. It's hard to fathom why this government is turning their backs on investments in care that would keep our loved ones with us in the comfort and the dignity of their own home. Families, health care, seniors and people with disabilities are all doing their very best. It's time for this government to do the same, step up and do their part. It is time to help those that help others.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: For many commuters across the GTHA, boarding a train at a local GO train station is just a routine part of the day, and as many employees return to in-person work, access to reliable GO Transit rail service is more important than ever.

It's why I was very happy to announce last week that Metrolinx, with support from Infrastructure Ontario, has completed an initial business case, in partnership with the Niagara region, town of Lincoln and a third-party partner, for a proposed GO train station in Beamsville. The release of the IBC is the first step in the planning process to build

a new station in my riding of Niagara West and it's good news for local commuters. The proposed station will help connect people to jobs, education, health and community services while reducing traffic congestion and enhancing air quality while reducing emissions.

Expanded rail service in our region is key to local economic development and smart regional planning as more and more people call Niagara home. The station will improve access to businesses, housing, jobs and destinations in and around the town of Lincoln, attracting between 7,000 and 8,000 tourists to our region per year and complementing the proposed Grimsby station and the existing St. Catharines station.

As our local regional chair and former member of this House noted, a future GO station in Beamsville will help drive our economy, connect our communities and enable Ontario's growth well into the future. This is just another example of how our government continues to build Ontario, creating economic opportunities for everyone across the province, including here in Niagara.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton Centre, I understand, has a point of order.

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 227 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past two weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence for the 227 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past two weeks. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members may take their seats.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Dans la tribune du Président ce matin sont les stagiaires de la Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant qui travaillent avec les députés à l'Assemblée nationale du Québec : Véronique Boucher-Lafleur, Jérémy Dufour-Dinelle, Gabrielle Jolicoeur, Victoria Thàn, Julianne Toupin. Ils sont rejoints par les stagiaires PSALO Iqra Mahmood et Clare Simon. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

We also have with us in the Speaker's gallery Mr. Victor Maligoudis, the consul general of Greece to Toronto. He is here today for the flag-raising ceremony in celebration of Greek Independence Day, which we'll have at 12:10 this afternoon. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Norman Miller: I would like to personally introduce Clare Simon, an Ontario legislative intern who is with the Quebec interns in the Speaker's gallery and who is doing a superb job as part of our team.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to personally introduce my placement student from the politics and governance program at X University, student leader Mary Rose Amaral, who is joining us in the gallery.

Hon. Stan Cho: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Gideon Spevak. I'm trying to get him to volunteer for my team. Now that his name is in Hansard, hopefully the pressure is on, Gideon. Welcome.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to introduce my OLIP intern as well, Habon Ali. Thank you so much, and belated happy birthday. Yesterday was her birthday.

QUESTION PERIOD

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, for far too many Ontarians, the cost of housing is out of control. In my community of Brampton, one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, it's so important that families have a shot at buying a home that's in their community. But that dream is increasingly out of reach.

A new report by Mortgage Professionals Canada shows that Ontario is the most expensive place in Canada. They say that house prices here are more than 22 times higher than Ontarians' average disposable income, which is even more expensive than cities like Vancouver. For example, in Peel, a two-income minimum wage household would need 51 years to save for a down payment today. We have an affordability crisis here in the province.

Why hasn't the Premier taken action to make the dream of owning a home a reality for people?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, we have a plan and we're working on that. The plan started back in 2018, when the Premier said the province is open for business.

He then turned to the Minister of Energy and said, "Stabilize hydro rates in the province of Ontario and cancel the planned 19% increase of the previous Liberal government."

He asked the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, "Work with First Nations to open up the Ring of Fire and develop a critical minerals strategy." He did that.

He then turned to the minister of red tape reduction and said, "You have to do something about job-killing red tape that is driving away investment in the province of Ontario." She did that.

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He turned to the Minister of Labour and said, "We need more skilled tradespeople. Get more in the province. Change the College of Trades." He did that.

He asked the Minister of Colleges and Universities to improve education so that the people who are in our universities can be trained for the jobs of tomorrow. She has done that.

He then turned to the Minister of Job Creation and said, "Negotiate a deal." He did that: the biggest deal in the

province's history, announced yesterday, giving thousands of people the dignity of a job and access to more housing because—

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

The supplementary question?

Ms. Sara Singh: What the government House leader failed to recognize is that you need to have a home in order to turn the hydro on, and most people working minimum wage jobs simply cannot afford to call a place home.

The affordability crisis is only getting worse under this Premier. Tim Hudak, with the Ontario Real Estate Association, wrote last week that even as Ontarians dream of owning a home, "Ontario's looming housing affordability crisis is clouding that dream...." Mr. Hudak says the problem is really one of affordability, and it's getting harder and harder for people in this province to own a home.

Families like those in my city of Brampton need a government that will actually help build homes people can afford as well as take on greedy speculators that help push the prices up for working people.

Speaker, why isn't this government listening to working Ontarians who want to have a roof over their head instead of letting this affordability crisis continue to get worse day by day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Do you know the first thing that people need in order to buy a home, Mr. Speaker? They need a job. They need the dignity of a job. And yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade delivered the largest investment in Canadian history for the jobs of tomorrow.

This is a member, colleagues, from Brampton. What the minister yesterday delivered, not only for the people of Windsor but for the people of Brampton, for the people of all of Ontario, is something that will see jobs and economic growth and prosperity for decades to come. Thousands of people will have a job. They will be able to buy their first home because of the work that this government has been doing since 2018.

When it comes to affordability, the Minister of Finance has been working on that from day one. We cut taxes. We made an environment where people want to finally invest in the province of Ontario. That's not what the coalition did between 2011 and 2018, but a strong, stable, Progressive Conservative majority government delivers and will continue to deliver after June 2.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, deflecting from the reality of the housing crisis isn't going to solve the problem. And just in case the government House leader didn't hear me the first time: In Peel, a two-income, minimum wage household would need 51 years to be able to save for a down payment.

Hard-working Ontarians want to be on solid ground, with a roof over their head, so that they can build their best life. But when we see prices skyrocket, like what happened last week with the new benchmark of over \$1.8 million just to build a new home in the GTA, it's going to be really

difficult for people to do that. People need to live affordably, near their families, their friends and in their communities. Some are raising concerns that without major changes to make housing more affordable, Ontario will have trouble actually attracting workers to our province.

It shouldn't be this way. Homes people can afford should be a priority of this government, not their developer friends and insiders. Where is the political will from this government to fix the housing crisis in Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm going to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the thousands of people who found out yesterday that they will have a job for generations and years to come, thanks to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, are the insiders we are listening to. The insiders who are working on the lines in Alliston, who are building the cars of tomorrow at Honda: Those are the insiders we're listening to. The insiders who are working at Ford: Those are the insiders we're listening to.

Under the policies of the coalition between the Liberals and NDP, GM closed its facility. Under the policies of this government, reducing costs, making this an economy and a province that you want to invest in, they reopened and are now building the cars of tomorrow. Those are the insiders that we're listening to.

We've created thousands of jobs. We are doing even more to ensure that this is the best province to live, work, invest and raise a family. It's because of the work that this government has been doing since 2018, under a strong, stable Progressive Conservative majority government. And that's what we will continue to deliver now and after June 2.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Sara Singh: My next question is also to the Premier. People who are buying a home or a condo need assurances that the deals they sign will actually be fair. But as we saw last year, some greedy developers demanded huge payments just to complete the construction of homes people already had contracts for. There should have been rules against this, and there should have been penalties levied against those developers.

So can the Premier tell us how many of those developers actually received a fine for trying to gouge honest people for hundreds of thousands of dollars for homes they had already paid for?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you to the member for the question. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond. On this side of the House, we are committed to protecting the little guy. We've said it before, and the Premier said very, very clearly that nothing burns him up more than when a developer tries to make extra money off the backs of hard-working people.

We are ensuring that we are going to stop those types of practices, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are doubling fines for any persons who commit these type of infractions. We are going to ensure that if a developer is found

to be breaking these types of rules, to be taking these types of unethical practices with hard-working Ontarians who are trying to just buy their first home—or any other home for that matter—we're going to make sure that not only are those fines being doubled, but they can lose their licence to build for two years.

We are taking these types of initiatives to ensure that we're protecting the little guy, to make sure that we're looking at their past behaviour, something that didn't happen in the past, to ensure they don't lose money on those deposits and to make sure that they can get the reality of affordable home ownership here in this province.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: We've seen this rhetoric before from this government, and the problem with them is actually on the follow-through. The Premier railed against people getting gouged in the pandemic by greedy developers, but according to the CBC, not a single charge was ever actually laid. Homeowners who signed contracts to buy a new condo shouldn't be stuck with even bigger bills for already pricey homes.

There are already fines in place with the Home Construction Regulatory Authority. How many of those fines have actually been levied to date?

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you again to the member opposite. Just imagine, Mr. Speaker, for a moment: You're a developer out there and you're thinking of cancelling someone's condo project. You now have to look in the mirror and really ask yourself, "Do I want to compromise or risk a two-year suspension of my licence to build? Do I want to risk a doubling of the fines if I'm found to be doing something inappropriate in this fashion? Do I want to carry those risks? Absolutely not."

We are ensuring that we are creating the tools for agencies like the HCRA to ensure that they are able to monitor the actions of our builders out there, to ensure there are teeth to the regulations that are going to give people the reality of home ownership yet again. We are protecting our condo buyers. That is what we're doing. We're protecting and supporting affordable housing, and we're ensuring that developers are going to think twice before they try to take advantage of hard-working Ontarians again.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: I didn't hear an answer from the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, so I'm happy to fill him in that there were actually 600 complaints filed last year. That's 600 Ontarians who needed this government to take urgent action, and they didn't. But the Home Construction Regulatory Authority lists only two companies—two out of 600—that were charged in the last year.

The cost of housing is out of control, and the lack of action from this government is helping those prices skyrocket. When people sign a contract in Ontario, they should get what they paid for, and the government should have their backs to ensure that bad actors aren't taking advantage of homeowners. When will this government

hold those actors accountable and help the Ontarians who have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars and the possibility of owning their dream home?

Hon. Ross Romano: Well, the answer is now. The answer is absolutely now. We are ensuring that the tools are present to protect our homeowners. Imagine this: You used to be in a position under the former government—of course, supported by the NDP 97% or 99% of the time, depending on what day.

Interjection: A hundred.

Hon. Ross Romano: We'll call it 100%, I suppose. The fact is that you could put a deposit down and it was actually a negative interest rate. You could actually see yourself lose money on your deposit if your condo was cancelled. Not only that but you had to make a formal complaint in order to have something launched where something could be investigated. Now it's going to be automatic, Mr. Speaker—automatic launching of investigations any time a condo project is cancelled.

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For the first time ever, we are also considering bad behaviour of the past. When these types of infractions occur, we're now going to look at that to evaluate whether a person should face a punishment of up to a two-year licence suspension or should see a fine that could be doubled up to \$50,000 and in some cases \$100,000. These are going to ensure that we're protecting condo buyers from these unethical practices, because, as our Premier said, we are always going to stand up for the little guy, and we're going to ensure that people have the opportunity to purchase their first home.

ASSISTANCE TO TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Almost one year ago, the Premier and Minister of Tourism held a press conference to announce the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program. They promised \$100 million in support for struggling tourism operators, who were hit first, who were hit hardest by the pandemic.

The minister said the applicants should expect an eight-week review process after the applications closed back in November. It has now been close to 25 weeks and not one single dollar of the \$100 million has made it to the tourism sector. We are almost in April, and many businesses are struggling to find money to prepare for the upcoming summer.

Can the Premier tell the businesses when the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program funding will be released?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the member is talking about the program that he and his colleagues voted against, if I'm not mistaken. Is that the one that you're talking about? I'll tell you what. The Minister of Tourism and Culture has been working since the start of the pandemic, really, to try to highlight how important it was that the recovery, post-pandemic, was quick and swift. We know that those are the sectors that were hit the hardest and will take the longest to recover, Mr. Speaker.

It's not just about people's enjoyment of facilities. It's about the people that work in them. Think about the amount of jobs that culture brings to the province of Ontario, the thousands of people and the billions of dollars of economic activity. That's why we put supports in place for them. It's not just the actors, it's the people behind the scenes: the hairstylists who work in the theatres, the plumbers, the electricians, all of those people in small towns across this country.

In my hometown of Stouffville, we cancelled the strawberry festival. That is an enormous potential for economic activity. And that's why we put supports in place for all these communities, so that the recovery could be quick and fast. It's unfortunate you voted it against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, it's disappointing because "quick and fast" is not something which is in this government's vocabulary.

Bruce O'Hare, president of Lakeshore Excursions, applied for funding in October. He has reached out to the ministry multiple times for answers on his application status. So far, zero, zilch, nothing—not even an acknowledgement. Same with Kathy Campbell, owner Onaway Lodge in Lac Seul, who is preparing for the opening of fishing season in just nine weeks. She has no idea if supports will come her way or even make it possible.

It is critical to give businesses an answer on whether they will receive the funds they applied for months ago. They need to plan, Speaker. Some operators are worried that they will have to close their doors before they can even get an answer from this government.

I ask again to the Premier, when will these funds reach these businesses? When will they reach these businesses? And will it be in time for the opening of this summer?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, it's really funny to me, honestly, that the NDP ask questions about programs that they voted against, that they did not support. If it was up to the members opposite, none of these programs would have even existed. They voted against the small business supports—100% of them voted against that. They voted against the tourism supports—100% of them voted against that. They voted against the broadband that we're bringing to communities across the province of Ontario, including in his riding, where we heard tourism operators say that without broadband, their businesses would be hurt. How did they vote? They voted against it. They voted against the roads that the Minister of Transportation is building into their communities so that people can actually get to their tourism facilities.

On every single matter that would help smaller communities, that would help tourism and culture across the province of Ontario, they vote against it, but then they come and ask questions about, "Well, how we can make it better?" The way you can make it better is to vote in favour of the measures that are helping thousands of people.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question this morning is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and

Trade. Yesterday, Stellantis and LG Energy Solution announced their future battery factory in Windsor, a massive investment for the community and for the electric vehicle industry. This is great news for Ontario's automotive sector and the local community at large. I'm sure my constituents, as well as all Ontarians, are curious to know more.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister tell us what this investment means to the future of Ontario's automotive and manufacturing sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Yes, Speaker, as you've heard several times in this Legislature this morning, LG Energy Solution and Stellantis have made a \$5-billion investment in the province of Ontario. This is historic. You'll hear many words used to describe it, but it is the single largest investment in the auto sector in Ontario's history. This is historic.

Think about the two-year construction program, the thousands of good-paying jobs that will be required to build that facility—four and a half million square feet, the size of 112 hockey arenas; 2,500 new jobs when the plant opens—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer. This investment will be truly impactful for the local economy and for the broader automotive supply chain.

Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, automotive and manufacturing jobs fled this province. It's great to hear that our government is taking action to reverse the damage they did to our economy for over 15 years.

Can the minister please tell us how this investment will support Ontario jobs and families for many years to come?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: This \$5-billion investment is to produce electric vehicle batteries for the electric vehicles of the future that are being built here in the province of Ontario. This investment positions Ontario to lead North America in the EV revolution.

This investment is the culmination of our government's work to restore the manufacturing might of Ontario. It began with lowering the cost of doing business by \$7 billion; reducing WSIB costs, without reducing the premiums, by \$2.5 billion; putting in an accelerated capital cost so businesses could write off their expenses in-year, saving \$1 billion. We put in clean, competitive energy, top-quality manufacturing talent and access to investment-ready sites.

Speaker, all this will provide a place for 2,500 men and women to wake up every day and go to a good-paying job.

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. For-profit long-term-care homes had nearly twice as many residents infected with COVID-19 and 78% more deaths

than not-for-profit homes. For-profit homes have a disproportionately higher COVID-19 mortality rate because of facility overcrowding and critical staffing shortages, yet this government continues to award contracts to build new long-term-care beds to private operators. Of 220 planned long-term-care development projects, over half are for-profit. In for-profit homes, long-term care is treated not only as a business but as a real estate investment for shareholders, and this is unacceptable.

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Speaker, how will this government protect residents and prevent outbreaks in for-profit long-term-care homes as COVID-19 restrictions lift? Will they start to prioritize the care of seniors over profit?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, let me highlight the ways we're going to do it. We're going to do it by hiring 27,000 additional PSWs, nurses and allied health professionals. She voted against it. We're going to do it by building 30,000 new spaces, which she is now telling the House she is not in favour of—too bad; I suggest they're important. We're going to do it by providing \$380 million for prevention and containment measures—voted against it. We're going to do it by providing IPAC, infection prevention and control.

The coalition that existed should have learned from the SARS epidemic, but they didn't, Mr. Speaker. That is a failure of the NDP and Liberal coalition times. We learned from that mistake and we're making sure that infection prevention and control funding is in place. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? They voted against it. On every measure that we have put in place to improve long-term care in this province, guess who has voted against it, colleagues? The NDP and the Liberals, both separately and together in coalition.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Properly funding not-for-profit long-term care is just one piece of this puzzle. We also need to invest in publicly funded home care to help seniors stay independent. Because of the lack of home care supports, more pressures are being placed on unpaid caregivers to support seniors with health challenges. One in three unpaid caregivers report profound mental, financial and physical impacts.

Speaker, this is completely unacceptable. Higher rates of caregiver distress signal the real need for more effective home care services and community supports. We need to make these investments to reduce the stress of caregivers and help them provide proper care for those they care for who wish to stay at home. Can the Premier tell us what his government is doing to increase home care options for seniors and supports for their caregivers?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, I'd be happy to tell you about the supports that we've been putting into place to increase home care supports for seniors and other people

needing home care services. We had heard from people that this system was broken, that it was antiquated. It hadn't been reviewed since the 1990s, and that's why we have taken action to modernize home care and community care, with Ontario health teams poised to take on its delivery over the next coming years.

We also passed the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, or Bill 175, which I believe you also voted against, which was passed in 2020. It lays the groundwork for integrated, responsive and innovative home and community care.

But it's not just that: We've put money into it as well. We are investing an additional \$548.5 million for three years for the home and community sector, and there's more to do with respect to what we're doing with the human health care workers as well.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Speaker, good morning. Two weeks ago, the Minister of Municipal Affairs informed me that I likely didn't know how this place worked when I asked whether the government was moving forward with a special executive order they granted for accelerated construction of a mega-facility in my riding rumoured to be for Amazon. Of note, Amazon hired the lobbying firm owned by the campaign manager of the governing party a month before the minister's order was issued.

Speaker, I must admit, I didn't follow the minister's advice. I didn't engage in backroom negotiations with city council, and I didn't follow the minister's actions and whine and complain and file legal complaints against advocates in my riding who have an opinion. Instead, I went straight to the people of Cambridge. Apparently, Speaker, that works around here too.

Now that council has voted against the proposed project the minister approved, is the minister going to pull the special order, as he previously promised, or is he going to break his own rules and proceed with accelerated construction of the facility for Amazon?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Our government has been very pro jobs, and we've been working on MZOs with great results, with new employment, new housing.

In the case of Cambridge, we issued the MZO as a response to the request from council. Council has not followed through on some of the requirements that they have that are a condition of the MZO. Minister Clark has been in conversation with the council, and the mayor of Cambridge is reviewing a letter that he received yesterday. But we reiterate that conditions must be followed. If they aren't, then we will have to revoke the MZO. This is a decision of the local council. They are the heartbeat of the community, and we're ready and willing to work with them.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you, Speaker. I have what I need, so no further questions.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Minister, on Tuesday, you held an important announcement in the city of London that signalled the next step our government is taking to continue making life and business more attractive and more affordable here in Ontario. Business owners across Ontario have long called on governments to support the growth and stability of our communities by placing the future of our province's service delivery at the forefront of innovation.

As such, Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister to please tell us how the government's new digital dealership registration will innovate how we do business in Ontario for years to come.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you to the outstanding member from Oakville North–Burlington for her question. This past Tuesday, our government launched our new digital dealership registration program, or, as I like to call it, DDR for short. Very simply put, to the member, through you, Mr. Speaker, this is just creating an easier, faster, simpler system for Ontarians to be able to purchase a new vehicle. Now a purchaser of a new vehicle can walk into a dealership and leave on the exact same day with their new car. You won't have to worry about taking time to go down to ServiceOntario to register your licence plate, your vehicle or your permit. No, we are moving forward with our transformation in this government, in this province, to ensure that we are moving forward to give people the opportunities to have easier access to the things we all want and need. That is why we are moving forward with further transformation here in the province of Ontario, because we want to make things easier for the people of this province, and more affordable, and we have every intention of continuing this initiative for the next four years as we continue—

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I thank the minister for his answer. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons about how we can work together to make public services more user-friendly and convenient for the hard-working people of the province. Even more so, we've learned how to positively leverage technology to our favour and open the doors for more people to be able to access a wide range of vital services from the safety and comfort of their own home.

My question, through the Speaker, is again for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Could the minister explain how the DDR is contributing to service delivery in our province and what is being done to ensure that everyone is able to use government services regardless of their ability to physically or virtually access them?

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you again to the member from Oakville North–Burlington for that very, very good question. Speaker, DDR is a major step forward in a series of ongoing innovations that we are doing here in this province to enable online vehicle ownership registration transfers. At full implementation, the DDR program will help streamline up to 4.8 million dealership registration transactions annually, all of which must currently be done in person. Now we're moving those online.

Not only that, but the announcement that we made this past Tuesday marked the successful completion of our government's mission to improve or bring online the top 10 ServiceOntario transactions here in the province.

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Simply put, Speaker, this is yet another occasion of a promise made and a promise kept by Premier Ford and this Conservative government for the people, and we're going to continue doing everything in our power to deliver on our commitment to be a digital-first, but not a digital-only, method of service delivery here in the province of Ontario. We're just making things easier—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is for the Premier. My constituent Victoria Velenosi, who runs a small business in my riding of Toronto Centre, recently reached out to my office about delays in accessing small business grants. Victoria said:

"I am among those who have been hanging on by the skin of our teeth for the last two years. My business is an event and live performance space that caters to the performing arts industry. As you know, my industry has been the first to be mandated to shut down and the last to be allowed to reopen.

"February 10, I applied for the third round of Ontario's \$10,000 for my business Space Space Revolution. I am still waiting to learn if my application will even be approved."

Speaker, why is this government making small businesses like Victoria's wait for the help that they desperately, desperately need to survive this pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. I'm going to pick up where my colleague left off. Of course, this is a program that you're speaking about that you voted against. We have now handed out over \$3 billion in support to small businesses.

That is one that you voted against, but you also voted against the program she should be applying for, which is the electricity rebate, the tax rebate. Those are all programs that are available to small businesses. There are eligibility requirements—certainly there are. There are good follow-ups from the 1-800 number and from the ministry's website—again, all programs that you voted against: the over \$3 billion that has been such a vital

support to these small businesses and has been their lifeblood.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: Respectfully, back to the minister: I don't know what planet you're living on, but the small businesses in my community are telling you outright that the money is not flowing. You can pat yourself on the back, but the money is not flowing. They are waiting and they are languishing.

Speaker, small businesses can't afford to wait any longer. Your program is not working. Victoria said:

"I have spoken with the relevant department about the Ontario small business supports, only to be told that my applications are still processing and I should continue to wait 60 calendar days. But my bill can't wait that long.

"The delay happening is defeating the entire purpose of the program."

Businesses like Victoria's are the spaces that Ontarians are most waiting for to reopen, so that they can safely gather and experience art, music, culture, theatre and live performances. Businesses like Victoria's help to fuel tourism and economic recovery. We need them as part of our recovery plan, and they're not going to make it to be a part of that recovery plan if you don't start flowing the money from your broken program.

Will you commit today to fix your broken program and start flowing the money that businesses need today, not 60 days from now, to stay open?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Economic Development to reply.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: This round of business funding that is out there builds on the nearly \$3 billion that was provided last year through the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. In this new Small Business Relief Grant, we're providing \$10,000 to eligible businesses who were subject to closure. These are businesses who were ordered closed under the modified step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen.

Those who were eligible for the previous grant were pre-screened to verify their eligibility. Newly established businesses—the few hundred that were established in that period—were able to apply for this new program, now that the portal is open. We want these businesses that are eligible to be supported, and that's why there were so many opportunities for them to apply, to become eligible, to apply for the small business relief, to apply for the tax relief, to apply for the electricity relief, and I hope that they—

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

The next question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, this government is going ahead with the construction of a 235-bed prison in Kemptville, despite major opposition from the Kemptville

community. Residents don't agree with this mega-project that is going to pave over acres of farmland. The municipality doesn't have infrastructure, including public transit, to support this project.

Ontario Liberals are listening. We have called on the construction of this prison to be put on pause.

Will the government commit to a moratorium on the construction of the Kemptville prison so that they can take the time to actually listen to community concerns and answer some important questions that the municipality has?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Respectfully, we are working very closely with the municipality, the mayor, the clerk and everyone who has questions related to what this investment will mean to the Kemptville and area community.

When we made a commitment to an eastern Ontario expansion of a very-needed piece of our provincial infrastructure on the corrections side, it included the corrections facility in Kemptville. We're in those planning stages now. Talks are continuing. We are working directly, as I said, with the municipality, including raising issues that directly will benefit the community in terms of access to land and access to additional services that, frankly, wouldn't be there without this facility.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Respectfully, the mayor has been asking who is going to be paying for this infrastructure, and I haven't seen any answer to this question.

To incarcerate a person in an Ontario provincial prison costs \$300 per day. Speaker, 70% of the incarcerated people in our provincial institutions are just waiting for trial. Precedent has shown that these people can safely be allowed to live in their communities while waiting for their day in court.

The prison represents an outdated way of thinking about the best way to reduce crime. The government should be lifting people out of poverty and investing in community rehabilitation programs, not spending massive amounts of money to lock people up before they even have been convicted.

Does the Solicitor General think that continuing to pour money into the prison system is a fiscally responsible way to fight crime?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: If the member opposite's question is, will our government support individuals who are in our corrections facility, whether they're awaiting trial or bail, the answer is absolutely, unequivocally yes. Your party continued to say no and to pause these investments.

The investments are going to make a difference for corrections officers, for individuals who are serving in our institutions. We need the ability to offer those programming spaces to keep people safe, to stop recidivism and, ultimately, to make sure that when people successfully leave our institutions, they are going to jobs, to communities, and being a part of society. That will ensure we

have a safer Ontario at the end of the day. That's what our government is doing.

You can continue to say no. We will make investments.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Yesterday's announcement from our Premier and the minister was an absolute game-changer for the city of Windsor as well as the province itself.

As we know, the previous government abandoned the automotive and manufacturing sector. As a result, the cost of doing business became so high that businesses and jobs fled to other jurisdictions.

Speaker, Ontarians are looking to our government to make Ontario open for business. So through you, I'm wondering if the minister can tell us what his ministry is doing to help attract the game-changing investments that LG Energy Solutions made in our province.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, since we were elected, we have been lowering the cost of business by \$7 billion a year.

Since Toyota's \$1.4-billion investment, Ontario manufacturers have announced a further \$13 billion in Ontario, and this is unprecedented in our history:

—\$1.8 billion from Ford in Oakville;

—\$1.5 billion from Stellantis in Windsor;

—General Motors, \$1.4 billion in Ingersoll, and another \$1.4 billion in Oshawa;

—Honda, \$1.4 billion in Alliston;

—Dofasco, \$1.8 billion in green steel in Hamilton; and now

—LG and Stellantis, \$5 billion in Windsor.

Add our tech, our parts, our critical minerals, and we have everything we need to build the cars of the future.

Stay tuned, there's much more coming.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I really do want to thank the minister for the answer.

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As stated earlier by the government House leader, this investment will help secure Ontario's automotive sector for decades to come. It really is great to hear that businesses have such renewed confidence in Ontario's business climate that they're willing to make multi-billion dollar investments here in Ontario. This is in stark contrast to the condition that the Liberals left Ontario in before we came in to office.

Speaker, we can't stop now. Through you to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade: Will he tell this House what next steps our government will be taking to support the automotive sector for years and decades to come in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Lower costs, lower costs, lower costs: That's what you can expect.

There are plenty of words to describe yesterday's \$5-billion announcement. Some would say "historic." Some

would say “unprecedented.” Some call it a game-changer. But Mayor Drew Dilkens, the mayor of Windsor, may have said it best. He said, buddy, “We’ve bagged a unicorn.”

Mayor Drew and his Windsor Works team really worked. Our teams at our ministry, the Premier’s office, Treasury Board, finance, caucus and cabinet have all been rowing with the same set of oars, so our word, Speaker, is “teamwork.”

Thanks to all for giving thousands of people hope, but mostly for creating a place to work for those 2,500 people.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Adi Chityala and Smitha Pradhan have a seven-year-old son, Rishi, who is diagnosed with autism. Rishi’s family have been forced to pay out of pocket for the critical therapy he needs due to this government’s delay, flip-flops, cuts and lack of supports for children with autism.

This year alone, Rishi’s parents will pay approximately \$40,000 for a variety of therapies, far more than the \$5,000 they eventually received from the government after months of waiting. They have seen solid improvements thanks to their intervention, but it has come at the cost of real financial challenges because of this government’s inaction.

This is my question: Will the Premier make good on his previous commitments, follow the recommendations of the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel and finally implement a needs-based funding system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you very much for the question. Indeed, our government is implementing a needs-based autism program and we will continue to do that. We’ve doubled the funding. We have five times as many children in a program receiving services than under the previous government. We have 40,000 children who are receiving services who would not have received services under the previous government’s plan.

We are dedicated and committed to making sure children with autism and their families receive the supports they want. In fact, we have 32,000 payments that have gone out in the interim one-time funding, 3,365 children are enrolled in behavioural plans and 12,914 families are receiving foundational family services; the caregiver-mediated early years program—1,126 children receiving services; the Entry to School Program—912 children. The list goes on.

We are making sure that these children get the services they need, despite the lack of effort by the previous government.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: What I am hearing from constituents who are impacted by this government’s neglect of children with autism is that they don’t trust this government to help families in need anymore. This government promised families like Rishi’s that

the wait-list would be cleared by the end of March 2020. Instead, as we move into 2022, the wait-list has ballooned to 50,000 people.

These families need help. It’s past time to stop playing politics with these numbers. When will this government stop ignoring the needs of children with autism and support children like Rishi?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Our government is absolutely committed to making sure these children receive the services and care they need. That’s why 40,000 children, approximately, are receiving the services right now, funded through the OAP. This is a multiple-pathway program. It is needs-based, it is comprehensive, it is family- and individual-centred to address their unique needs.

The opposition had the chance to support children and youth with special needs and they said no. They said no to the children who will be served by the Grandview children’s treatment centre in Ajax. They said no to the children who will be served by the Chatham-Kent children’s treatment centre and their families. They said no to the children who will be served by 1Door4Care at CHEO’s integrated treatment centre. They said no and voted against the largest investment to support children with special needs, including autism, in two decades, and they voted against these investments, not once but twice in two budgets.

Our government is supporting children with special needs and children with autism. That’s why we doubled the OAP budget. It’s why we had an autism advisory panel and developed an integrated intake organization, building capacity that never existed to serve this vulnerable population, and we will continue to do—

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

The next question.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Tuesday was World Water Day, and most Ontarians would be shocked to know that gravel mines use two billion litres of water each and every day. That’s almost double the amount of water the city of Toronto consumes on a daily basis. Over 5,000 gravel mines are licensed to extract 13 times more aggregate than the province’s annual consumption, but the industry wants more.

Something does not add up here, so my question is: Will the Premier impose an immediate moratorium on all new gravel mining approvals and expansions until it undertakes an independent review of how much aggregate the province actually needs?

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

Hon. David Piccini: The government of Ontario supports keeping the province’s aggregate resources as close to markets as possible, while ensuring protection of the environment and human health. Enhancements to our water-taking program recently include giving municipalities more say in this process, expanding restrictions,

better assessment and management, increasing transparency and data reporting—Mr. Speaker, I could go on.

In addition, we have launched the largest freshwater cleanup of its kind, taking place along Lake Ontario right now, working alongside a number of partners across Ontario to ensure that we balance both the need for aggregates while also protecting human health and our environment.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, AMO came to this committee, to this Legislature, and asked the government to indemnify municipalities' legal obligation to protect their residents' water, because of the weakening of water protections brought forward by this government. People are asking why the government is approving new licence applications when the industry is already has access to 13 more times aggregate than the province needs on an individual basis.

Speaker, you cannot eat gravel. You cannot drink gravel. So my question to the Premier is: He said no to an aggregate mine in Milton. Will he say yes to a moratorium on new licence applications in other communities across this province?

Hon. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, here you see the contradictions and the pretzels this member, the leader of the Green Party, will twist himself into. He wants hospitals. How are you going to build them? He wants to invest in public transit. How are you going to build it? Aggregate washing and the fine-grain materials that we take as a result of that process are critical for that industry.

Speaker, we're working with industry. We've seen the largest investments into the cleanest steel-making production in Ontario's history. We're working with industry on the largest, low-carbon public transit investment in Ontario's history, with the Ontario Line.

That member is full of contradictions. Mr. Speaker. He's just really saying no to workers who get up each and every day to build a more sustainable future. You have to balance the two. We understand that building a better Ontario means investing in hospitals, means investing in public transit, means working with industry to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We're doing just that. We're leading this nation and we're not going to stop for the pretzel-twisting leader—

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.
Please start the clock. Next question.

1130

CURRICULUM

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. There is no denying that two years of a pandemic and the longest school closures in any jurisdiction have had a devastating impact on our kids' mental health. Experts have warned that these impacts will be long-lasting. Just this week, school principals and teachers are sounding the alarm that the resources needed in our schools are simply not there.

But instead of marshalling resources to meet that challenge, this government is rushing to bring back standardized EQAO testing. That's going to add to the pressure that our students are facing every day. Speaker, why is this Premier spending millions on outdated standardized testing instead of investing that money in the direct supports that our students need right now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member from Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My appreciation to the member opposite for this question. We understand, of course, as we spoke about in this Legislature over the course of the week, the importance of continued investments in mental health. That's why our government has brought forward a 423% increase in mental health funding when compared to the previous Liberal government. We saw, of course, that this impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been absolutely noticed on students and staff alike, and that's why we've made such continual investments in this area.

But I want to just address the fact that we modernized EQAO. We've improved EQAO assessments by digitizing tests so that the assessment of math and language skills can occur. We did this so that we can measure progress and make data-driven decisions. I hope that the NDP support data-driven decisions that will ensure we're lifting student performance and enabling success in literacy and numeracy.

While we have seen that over 140,000 students have already taken this test, we're going to continue to invest and support learning in reading and mathematics along with investments in mental health.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I can't believe how completely disengaged from reality this government is. Expecting an eight-year-old to type 150 words independently—that's not modernizing. That's adding stress. That's completely disengaged from reality. And it is not just the fact that these standardized tests will add enormous stress for our kids when they've already been through so much. There are very real concerns about the politicization of EQAO under this government, starting with the appointment of a failed Conservative candidate as chair with a 400% pay hike.

Experts have long argued that these politicalized standardized tests aren't even measuring what matters in our classrooms. They certainly won't be useful after two years of significant disruption. So I'm asking the Premier again, will they finally wake up to the crisis that is facing this next generation, scrap the EQAO test and invest that money in direct supports for our children?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's disappointing to hear that the opposition apparently doesn't believe in evidence-based, data-driven decisions when it comes to improving performance measurements for our students and enabling success in literacy and mathematics. It's disappointing to hear that the member opposite and the official opposition, together with the Liberal government, don't believe in modernizing the EQAO assessments, that they don't

believe in improving our system of standardized tests to ensure that we're able to respond and provide the supports that are in place.

Let's talk about a couple of the things that we've seen as a result of EQAO testing. We saw, under the former Liberal government, over half of students were unable to pass the EQAO math test—unbelievable reductions as a result of their failure to invest in education and closing 600 schools. What we've done as a result of that is responded with over \$200 million to improve math scores and a four-year math strategy to hire over 800 board and school-based leads to ensure that we're providing the supports that are necessary, responding to the data that is before us and ensuring that we're making evidence-based decision-making.

CHILD CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Ontario has yet to sign a \$10-a-day child care agreement with the federal government. We're dead last. We're right at the back of the pack. That's a place where the Premier seems content to be.

This unnecessary delay has hurt families for years. It's cost them thousands of dollars, and that means less money for things like groceries, kids' clothes, kids' sports, kids' extracurricular activities, and it's held back some families from having two incomes. The Premier's message to these families: "Not my problem, folks. You're just going to have to wait."

Speaker, Ontario Liberals have committed to signing a deal and supporting families by retroactively giving them \$2,750 a year to compensate for the Premier's inaction.

Will the Premier get a deal done on child care? And will he commit to retroactively supporting families for the costs that they've had to incur due to his delays?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: It should give great comfort to those families that the Liberals are suggesting that they might give them some money back. For 15 years, the Liberals put in place the most expensive child care program in the nation, if not North America, but now, all of a sudden, the Liberals are going to give you back a few coins so that you can make up for all the hundreds of thousands of dollars that it cost you. And like the NDP, they would sign a deal before even reading it or looking at it. They would sign a deal that doesn't get to the \$10-a-day child care figure, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what we're going to do instead. What we're going to do instead is this: We're going to wait for a deal that gives us \$10-a-day child care, not only for today, leading into an election, but for future generations of Ontarians, because that's what a responsible government does.

There is nobody—nobody—who ever would believe that a Liberal promise to put more money back in your pockets will ever amount to anything. There is just no chance. People know that, and that's why a strong, stable

majority Progressive Conservative government is getting the job done.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's clear that the Premier is not interested in making life any more affordable for these families. With all due respect to the House leader, I've heard his talking point before, and I only have three words for him: full-day kindergarten. The same full-day kindergarten that you all voted against. You all voted against it. The same full-day kindergarten that the Premier said "Maybe we should cut this" about, two years ago, until families said, "No, that's not going to happen." The same full-day kindergarten that, for almost a decade, has saved families thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars a year. The same full-day kindergarten that you didn't want, that lifted up our economy by allowing more people to come into the workforce. So I'm not going to take any lessons from the House leader on this.

Right now, is this government going to get a deal done and retroactively compensate families for the damage they have done by delaying for almost a year?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I would suggest that that's the problem: He is not taking lessons from this side of the House. He's not taking lessons from this side of the House because the coalition of the "tax, spend and tax" has cost this province billions and billions of dollars. I talked about this yesterday.

The first time that these two parties coalesced into a coalition was back in 1985. In 10 short years, they cost \$78 billion worth of debt. Now, as I said yesterday, as they're sitting around the illegal pool in the leader of the Liberal Party's backyard that he built on conservation lands—but as the Minister of Transportation, colleagues, he didn't know that he was supposed to get a permit to build a pool on conservation lands. Oops, Mr. Speaker. As they're sitting around thinking, "What can we do to make life better?" The last time, between 2011 and 2014, how much do you think that cost people? It was \$148 billion. And what did they get for it? They got 611 long-term-care beds. They got a health care system that was failing. They didn't get subways. They got an education system that could barely get our kids the math and reading scores that they require. Failure on every level—

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

HOME CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the Premier. Over half of families in Hamilton are being denied access to essential home care services because of the home care worker shortage that this government has allowed to happen.

Lucy Morton, OPSEU regional VP, said, "Our members' job used to be to care for clients. Now they teach families how to care for them."

This is dire, especially for families in my riding, like Peter and Lynda. These home care supports provide

dignity and essential care, but when there are no workers available, they put Lynda's health at great risk.

Peter and Lynda are not alone. Over half of the requests for home care in this province are going unmet. The people of Ontario don't need any histrionics from this government. They don't need more pats on the back. This government recently said no to our opposition day motion to invest in a home care system that would allow people to live at home, in dignity.

When will this government act to address this urgent crisis in home care for the people in Hamilton and the people of Ontario who need your help now?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member opposite we are already taking action to deal with our home care system because we have heard from people that in the past it didn't respond to their needs. We're modernizing the system. It's outdated. That's why we brought the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, which is going to form the foundation for the modernization of the system to provide integrated, patient-centred care to people.

We know many people are waiting for long-term-care spaces. Many people are also needing home care for wound care and other care. That's why we are training nurses specifically to be able to deal with wounds, which form up to 25% to 30% of all the home care that's required. They need that specialized care. We're also investing \$548.5 million to expand our home care services, and we are also making sure that we have added investments of \$111 million for high-intensity supports at home. So we are already building a connected 21st-century home care system that's going to serve the citizens of Ontario from now and for many, many years to come.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes. I'm rising on standing order 59 just to highlight the status of business last week. I thank all colleagues for what has been a very productive week in the House, on all sides, and again, I thank the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for a game-changing announcement.

On Monday, March 28, we will be debating, in the afternoon, Bill 100, Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act.

On Tuesday, March 29: in the morning, again, Bill 100, Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act. Before question period, there will be a tribute to former member Mr. Marvin Shore. In the afternoon, we're debating a private member's bill which will be introduced later today and, in the evening, PMB ballot item 34, standing the name of the member for Niagara West, which is Bill 89.

On Wednesday, March 30, in the morning, Bill 50, the Hungarian Heritage Month Act, will be debated. In the

afternoon, we're debating a government bill which will be introduced. In the evening is PMB ballot item 35, the member for Brampton Centre, which is private member's motion 38. In the night sitting, it will be a debate—we'll be debating a government bill which will be introduced later on.

On Thursday, March 31, in the morning, we're debating a government bill to be introduced. Routine proceedings: There will be a ministerial statement by the Minister of Infrastructure. In the afternoon, we will be debating a second government bill which will be introduced. In the evening: PMB ballot item 36, the member for Oshawa, and in the night sitting, there will be a debate of a second government bill which will be introduced, again.

DEFERRED VOTES

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY
AND SOCIAL SERVICES
AMENDMENT ACT
(SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
RESEARCH COMMISSION), 2022
LOI DE 2022 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX ET COMMUNAUTAIRES
(COMMISSION DE RECHERCHE
SUR L'AIDE SOCIALE)

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

Bill 92, An Act to amend the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance Research Commission / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services sociaux et communautaires afin de créer la Commission de recherche sur l'aide sociale.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

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

Mr. Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, has moved second reading of Bill 92, An Act to amend the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance Research Commission.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Rasheed, Kaleed
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Harden, Joel	Sandhu, Amarjot
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Ke, Vincent	Schreiner, Mike
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Mamakwa, Sol	Scott, Laurie
Bouma, Will	Mantha, Michael	Shaw, Sandy

Bourgoin, Guy	Martin, Robin	Simard, Amanda
Burch, Jeff	McDonell, Jim	Skelly, Donna
Calandra, Paul	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Todd
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Miller, Norman	Stiles, Marit
Cho, Stan	Miller, Paul	Surma, Kinga
Collard, Lucille	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Tabuns, Peter
Crawford, Stephen	Morrison, Suze	Taylor, Monique
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Park, Lindsey	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	Pettapiece, Randy	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Piccini, David	Walker, Bill
Ghamari, Goldie	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing as they're counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 71; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless—the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would direct the bill to the committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultations 2022 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-budget consultations from January 10 to January 26. Public hearings were held over eight days via video conference for the following regions throughout the province: north-west, northeast, Ottawa, eastern, greater Toronto and Hamilton area, southwestern and central.

The committee heard from a total of 137 witnesses and received over 300 submissions from associations, organizations, businesses, community groups, municipalities, service agencies, trade unions and individuals. On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank each and every one of them for taking the time to share their views with us.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee: Ian Arthur, Vice-Chair; Will Bouma; Stephen Crawford; Catherine Fife; Mitzie Hunter; Logan Kanapathi; Sol Mamakwa; Jeremy Roberts; Dave Smith; and Vijay Thanigasalam; as well as all the substitute members who participated in the hearings held for each region and the report-writing deliberations.

The committee also extends its thanks to the Clerk of the Committee, the staff in legislative research and the staff at broadcast and recording, Hansard and interpretation for their assistance and hard work during the hearings and report writing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROSS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL ACT, 2022

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr65, An Act respecting the Ross Memorial Hospital

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): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ARMENIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ARMÉNIEN

Mr. Babikian moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 105, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Armenian Heritage Month/ Projet de loi 105, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine arménien.

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): And would the member like to give a brief statement explaining his bill?

Mr. Aris Babikian: The Armenian community of Ontario is one of the oldest communities in Ontario. The

first Armenians settled in Ontario—it was in the 1880s. Since then, the community has grown to over 100,000 in Ontario. They have communities from Windsor all the way to Ottawa, and anything in between, and they are very contributing members of our society. They have been involved and contributing in many fields like culture, education, economic and political institutions, arts, science, literature and other spheres of life. But also, most importantly, the Armenian community has a unique history in Ontario. In the 1920s, the Canadian people launched the first international humanitarian relief effort by bringing 120 orphans to Georgetown. They settled them on a farm, and it is now a heritage building. It is the Cedarvale Community Centre right now.

I think it is appropriate that we acknowledge the Armenian community's contributions to our society.

CENTERING YOUTH IN PANDEMIC RECOVERY ACT, 2022

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:
Centering Youth in Pandemic Recovery Act, 2022.

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

Would the member for Davenport care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. Thank you, Speaker. The Centering Youth in Pandemic Recovery Act was first tabled in this place nearly a year ago and, regrettably, the need to address the disproportionate impact this pandemic has had on children and youth is even greater. Experts in child development, mental health and education are telling us that we must do much more to mitigate these impacts or we risk lasting harm to a whole generation of Ontarians.

The bill seeks to establish a child and youth action plan in collaboration with youth, to address the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. It would also create a COVID-19 recovery youth secretariat to ensure that government bills are looked at through the lens of their impact on children and youth. A new standing committee will ensure accountability and transparency so that these issues are not just paid lip service but are measured and acted upon.

A strong recovery for Ontario depends on the social and economic well-being of our next generation. This bill seeks to create a firm legislative foundation to make that happen.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY MONTH

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise in the House today in recognition of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month, a month that is focused on teaching people across the province about the importance of Ontario and Canadian

agriculture. With one in every 10 jobs and a \$45-billion contribution in GDP connected to agriculture, a strong sector in Ontario means a strong province with good jobs, thriving rural communities and a safe and secure food supply.

Now more than ever, people appreciate the key role that Ontario farmers, food processors, retailers, transport and essentially every link along the supply chain—these links play a key and important role in keeping grocery store shelves stocked with Ontario products and our food supply chain strong.

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While expressing appreciation to farmers is important, I know first-hand from growing up on a farm, raising beef cattle, cash crops and now goats; being vice-chair of OAFE, Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., before being elected in 2011; and growing up in the 4-H program and learning to do by doing that agriculture literacy is about more than just recognizing and verbally appreciating our farmers. We can do so much more.

Agriculture in the 21st century is more than the quaint, albeit historic, images of open-air tractors, farmers in straw hats and milking cows on stools. Today's farms employ robotics, data analytics, autonomous machinery, digital soil mapping—just to highlight a few of the best practices in the spirit of increasing yields, processing opportunities, global competitiveness and, most importantly, consumer confidence. Again, it's about technology, it's about automation and it's about innovation, in 2022 and looking forward, and most importantly, it's about building competitiveness and opportunity.

Last week, when I was in eastern Ontario, I met with a hundred farmers and agricultural leaders from Northumberland–Peterborough South, Leeds–Grenville, Stormont, Glengarry, Ottawa, as well as Dundas. During these conversations, they shared with me again and again that we need to show all Ontarians what modern farming looks like today and into the future.

Our government, I am very proud to say, understands the future of farming, and we're leading by example in that regard. I'm so incredibly proud of the investments we're making, and I'm equally proud of the work that we have done to support farm organizations, commodity groups and educational groups that are doing so much in an incredible way to make sure Ontarians understand and value food produced right here at home in Ontario. We're continuing to support AgScape, formerly known as OAFE, and Farm and Food Care Ontario, so that those two organizations can continue to promote careers in agriculture to attract young people to our sector.

Did you know, Speaker, that in Ontario there are three jobs waiting for every graduate? He's nodding his head, ladies and gentlemen. He does know that. But most importantly—I'll repeat that: There are three jobs waiting for every graduate coming out of post-secondary education, whether it's in trades, college or university institutions, and that is exciting because they're good-paying jobs.

I also want to note that there is a record number of women pursuing these rewarding and, frankly, well-paid

careers. Just a couple of weeks ago, I was at the Simcoe research centre with Minister Bouma—I just promoted him; with PA Bouma. I was so incredibly impressed, Speaker: five PhD researchers working at that station, all women, making a difference. That's something that, as a representative of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, I am so incredibly pleased to see.

Let's talk about these organizations that promote careers as well. Through AgScape, we're providing resources to Ontario teachers. They're essentially lesson plans that enable students to think critically about agri-food issues and the importance of supporting our local economy. Beyond that, our government has made food literacy a pillar of our grade 9 science curriculum. Now students across the province will learn about the science related to agriculture and food production.

I also need to recognize the incredible work by the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington and thank him for his relentless advocacy. He has done an amazing job of bringing a diverse group of people together supporting his particular passion, which is agriculture literacy. I look forward to hearing from him in the weeks to come right here in this House.

This may be Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month, but we need to ensure the conversations around food production, the incredible innovative opportunities in agriculture and the awareness we are raising does not end on March 31. We need to celebrate and recognize food production in Ontario 365 days a year because, ladies and gentlemen, farmers are working 365 days a year. Farmers, with their supportive workers, are out there every day ensuring we can have confidence in our food supply here in Ontario.

I would also like to acknowledge Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, which took place last week. Awareness is critical, and at this time, I would also like to take a moment to recognize Marion Feldskov, who passed away suddenly in Howick township in my riding. I offer my sincere condolences to her family. Marion worked tirelessly promoting the farming community, and she ensured volunteers united to celebrate not only their annual fair but their agricultural traditions as well. May Marion's legacy continue to spark the commitment and interest in localized agriculture.

Why is it important to follow Marion's lead and promote interest in local agriculture? Well, the reality is, Ontario's agri-food sector drives the Canadian sector overall. We're the breadbasket. And honestly, we can't have these types of conversations without recognizing the state of affairs in eastern Europe as well. Our need to have a complete and competitive food supply chain where we are producing and processing right here at home has never been more important. We need to ensure Ontarians have confidence in our food supply, and we need to be at the ready for when we need to support countries that need our help as well. Sixty-five per cent of the food processed in this province ends up on Ontario tables, and through our \$25-million Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund, we're going to increase the amount of food processed right here at home.

Every single day, more than 723,000 Ontarians wake up to work in primary food production. I'm going to share that figure again: Every single day in Ontario, more than 723,000 people wake up and go to work in our agri-food sector, whether it's directly on the farm, in food processing, distribution, food retail or service. It has never been more important to have Ontario be a hub for food production, from farm to fork, field to processor and beyond. This needs to be our focus going forward. I share that with you because Toronto is the third-largest food hub in North America, after Los Angeles and New York.

Everyone in the House today and everyone watching, please join me in recognizing Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month and thank everyone who takes time to share their agri-food knowledge and their passion, and encourage them to keep growing right here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House, and today to spend a few moments talking about Canadian agriculture and specifically Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month. One in every 10 jobs in Ontario is agriculture-related, is related to processing the food we eat. As the minister said, 723,000 people get up in the morning and work in the agri-food sector.

I think over the last two years, many people in Ontario have truly come to appreciate what agriculture is, because for the first time in our generation, they've seen empty shelves and they're wondering where our food actually comes from. That's something that people need to know. People need to know where our food comes from, how it gets to your table, how it gets to the store. Many people do think that agriculture is still mom and pop and two little kids in straw hats. It's not that anymore; it's not that anymore. It's robotics. It's computers.

But there are some things in agriculture that haven't changed. Agriculture is people who know the feel of the soil when it's dry enough to plant. That's something that a computer or a robot, I think, is a long ways away from. The one thing about people in agriculture communities is, they plant, they watch things grow, they watch things live and they watch things die. We, the people in agriculture, have a full understanding of what goes in to eating a steak, the sacrifices that have been made by people, and by animals, in eating that steak. We know that.

1320

And we have to make sure, people in agriculture and people in government, that everyone understands all the steps that are taken, all the precautions that are taken. It's incredibly important. There are a lot of groups that do that already—farm and foodscape and OAFE—but we need to do more, and I think it's not a partisan issue. We need to do more, because Ontario is an agricultural powerhouse; it is. But to remain an agricultural powerhouse, we need to make sure the people know that the jobs that are available are incredible.

From my personal experience, I have four kids and only one is involved in agriculture. One of the reasons that the other ones aren't involved is when they went to high school, they were told by the guidance counsellors that

there's no future in agriculture. I've got a lawyer, and I've got a GIS specialist. We have to make sure that stops, because there is an incredible future in agriculture. It's a future on which we all depend. It is the future.

We also have a responsibility to protect the foundation of what agriculture is built on, which is the land. Now, we can increase productivity, and farmers have done a great job of it, and through the whole sector. But at the end of the day, if you don't have the soil, you don't grow the crop, you don't feed the steer and you can't supply your own food. We are lucky; we can access food from across the world. But we know that you have to be able to supply your own people in times of need. You have to.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Farmers feed cities.

Mr. John Vanthof: Farmers do feed cities. We feed cities across the world, but we have to make sure that we retain the capacity to feed our own people.

I'm going to give a shameless plug to something. I never thought I would promote a Netflix program. I never thought I would, and not everyone likes this show. It's a reality show. But if you know nothing about farming, and even if you know a bit about it—Netflix: Clarkson's Farm. It's a reality show, but it does show the problems that farmers face.

For those of you who are wondering, someone on that show, that 20-year-old kid who has never been 20 kilometres from his farm but he knows every farm within three kilometres—that was me, and I'm incredibly proud to be able to say that today.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm honoured to read this petition on behalf of the good people in Sudbury, Elliot Lake and Chapleau. It says:

“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 and present it to page Pallas to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario requires a minimum but no maximum temperature in long-term-care homes;

“Whereas temperatures that are too hot can cause emotional and physical distress that may contribute to a decline in a frail senior's health;

“Whereas front-line staff in long-term-care homes also suffer when trying to provide care under these conditions with headaches, tiredness, signs of hyperthermia, which directly impacts resident/patient care;

“Whereas Ontario's bill of rights for residents of Ontario nursing homes states ‘every resident has the right to be properly sheltered ... in a manner consistent with his or her needs’;

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

“Direct the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations amending O. Reg. 79/10 in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to establish a maximum temperature in Ontario's long-term-care homes.”

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to page Callum to deliver to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. I have a petition that comes from the people of the town of Belle River, the town of Essex and the city of Windsor. It's 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” last “September...;

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

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

I fully support this petition. I'm going to sign it and give it to Ria to bring to the table.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want to thank Amy Bolton from Smiths Falls for submitting this.

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I fully support this petition, will sign it and pass it on to page Pallas to deliver to the table.

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OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to save eye care in Ontario, with signatures collected by Byron Optometry.

“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’m proud to affix my signature to this petition and will send it to the table with page Rhythm.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING ONTARIO OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À CE QUE L'ONTARIO RESTE OUVERT AUX AFFAIRES

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact legislation to protect access to certain transportation infrastructure / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant une loi pour protéger l'accès à certaines infrastructures de transport.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you so much, Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House today to open debate of Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, 2022, which I introduced on Monday. I will be splitting my time with the Attorney General and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

Safe and open international border crossings tie Ontario to the world. Hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of goods for people and businesses pass through our international borders every single day. They are loaded onto planes at our international airports or cross bridges into the United States where truck drivers take them to their next destination. This freedom of movement is why Ontario is poised for massive economic growth. It is the foundation on which countless hard-working moms and dads make their living. Recent events, like the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, have hurt these very people. In February 2022, a group of individuals shut down one of Canada’s most important international border crossings.

Approximately \$17 million of trade crosses over the Ambassador Bridge hourly, making up 25% of all Canada-US trade. The six-day blockade in Windsor of the Ambassador Bridge disrupted billions of dollars of international trade. Supply chains were stalled, manufacturing facilities closed and employees were sent home because parts were not arriving on time. Our auto sector took huge losses, as did agricultural and many other industries. Impacts of the illegal blockade were felt throughout Ontario in Oshawa, Hamilton and Peterborough, far beyond the blockade itself. This, unfortunately, shook investor confidence in Ontario as a reliable place to invest and locate manufacturing facilities. This caught the attention of the President of the United States at, what I don’t need to tell you, is an important time in our trading partnership.

The economic disruption caused by the blockade was compounded by public safety threats, and resulted in significant amounts of police overtime and increased policing costs. It did something else: It highlighted to Ontarians how important it is for police to have the right tools to effectively protect Ontario's international borders, and how important freedom of movement is for people and businesses.

The professionalism of officers from the Ontario Provincial Police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Windsor Police Service and services from Brantford, Chatham-Kent, Hamilton, LaSalle, London and Waterloo was evident as they worked together to clear the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge safely and professionally. In addition to their excellent skill and preparedness, they were able to do so because on February 11, 2022, Premier Ford declared a province-wide emergency, pursuant to section 7.0.1 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

On February 12, 2022, the government approved O. Reg. 71/22, the Critical Infrastructure and Highways emergency order. This emergency order provided police services with the tools necessary to remove the illegal blockade at the Ambassador Bridge, with the authority to order the removal and storage of vehicles and objects used to block the flow of people and trade. It enabled the registrar of motor vehicles to suspend and revoke the licences, vehicle permits and commercial vehicle operator registration certificates of those individuals who were holding up trade and commerce.

This emergency order was necessary because without it, police and the registrar of motor vehicles would have had to piece together provisions from multiple statutes, which may be possible during the normal exercise of duties but was challenging in an emergency context. The tools they had available, such as fines, were not as effective at dispersing the crowd when compared to the seizure of vehicles. And the lack of heavy equipment, such as tow trucks, and the unwillingness of some tow truck operators to assist meant vehicles were not being removed. Even with the emergency order, police were limited by what the province could enable under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

I hope we can all agree that it should not take an emergency order for police to be able to clear a shutdown of an international border crossing. Blockades of this nature are illegal, and we need to give police the tools necessary to remove them.

In light of recent events, workers, businesses and certainly our trading partners will not accept the status quo. They will not accept existing legislation that does not keep Ontario open for business. We must take this opportunity to increase provincial capacity to respond to disruptions at international border crossings like bridges and airports that can have widespread impacts on our economy and the flow of trade. That is why our government has brought forward Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act.

Bill 100 fulfills a commitment Premier Ford made to the people of Ontario in February to bring forward new

legislation to ensure our borders remain open for people and businesses. If passed, it will better protect critical international border crossings from unlawful blockades. The proposed act would protect jobs and shield the economy from future disruptions. It is our talented workforce and job creators that make our province a strong, reliable trading partner, and this bill is a signal to the world that we will continue to be open for business in Ontario.

In a moment, I will walk this Legislature through the measures included in Bill 100. But first, I want to be clear that the legislation we are proposing is specific to illegal blockades at border crossings that disrupt ordinary economic activity or interfere with the safety, health or well-being of the public. We scoped the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act very narrowly. If passed, it will have no impact on the right to peaceful, lawful and temporary protests. It does not apply to impediments that are minor or easy to manoeuvre around. The goal here is to help ensure public safety and limit the economic severity of disruptions in a timely manner if they arise in the future. To accomplish this, we are proposing measures that provide the necessary tools to clear impediments quickly and safely.

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While international border crossings such as international airports are under federal authority, the province does have an active role to play. Local and provincial police are, of course, the first responders to situations of unrest and disruption at these significant sites. That is why section 1 of the proposed legislation applies to:

- any land or water border crossing point between Ontario and the United States;
- any airport that regularly accommodates flights directly between Ontario and a country other than Canada that is prescribed by regulations made under the act; and
- as situations arise where government deems it necessary, any other transportation infrastructure that is of significance to international trade that can be prescribed by the regulation made under this act.

The proposed act would prohibit all persons from impeding access to, egress from and ordinary use of protected transportation infrastructure if a number of conditions are met, including: disrupts ordinary economic activity, including international trade; or interferes with the safety, health or well-being of members of the public. The act would also prohibit people from helping others to impede international border crossings, for example, by providing fuel. Again, these prohibitions do not apply to impediments that are trivial, transient or minor in nature or those that can be moved around easily. And this legislation would have no impact on impediments that are specifically legally authorized or required or that are caused by law enforcement in the course of their duties.

The legislation provides the authority for police to impose roadside suspension of driver's licences and vehicle permits or to seize licence plates for up to 14 days when a vehicle is used in an illegal blockade of critical transportation infrastructure. These provisions would also apply if a vehicle were used to illegally assist a person who

was illegally impeding access to protected transportation infrastructure.

Currently police have a range of tools available to respond to the unsafe use of vehicles, objects or individuals blocking roadways. What we have seen is that these need to be supplemented with additional tools to quickly address serious interference of infrastructure used in international trade. Enabling police to take immediate action provides the required tools to clear road blockages more quickly and effectively.

We are also proposing additional tools for the registrar of motor vehicles to suspend or cancel the plate portion of a commercial motor vehicle or a trailer permit, or a commercial vehicle operator's registration certificate, commonly known as a CVOR. Permit suspensions or cancellations would apply to trucks, buses and commercial trailers. These powers provide significant consequences for the misuse of a commercial vehicle or trailer to interfere with protected transportation infrastructure. A suspension or cancellation of a commercial vehicle operator's registration certificate has significant impacts to Ontario-based companies. The suspension is not only in effect for the vehicle identified as being involved in the blockade, but could impact the entire company's fleet associated with that commercial vehicle operator's registration holder. Where there is a vehicle permit suspension or cancellation ordered by the registrar, police officers and Ministry of Transportation enforcement officers may seize the licence plate for all affected vehicles registered to that company.

In addition, the legislation would give police officers the discretionary power to remove and store objects, including vehicles, that make up an illegal blockade. Essentially, if an owner or operator is unwilling to comply with the direction to remove an object involved in a blockade, including a vehicle, Bill 100 would provide police officers with the ability to remove it themselves or have someone else remove the object for them and store the object for up to 30 days. Police would be required to make reasonable efforts to notify the owner, and any costs or charges associated with removal or storage would need to be paid by the person or persons responsible for the object, as they are today when a vehicle is impounded or towed.

If passed, our legislation would enable police to arrest individuals who breach the act and fail to follow police direction to stop participating in a blockade. It would also require individuals to identify themselves to police when police intend to lay a charge, as is the case when charges are laid for trespassing.

Individuals could be arrested if they fail to follow a police officer's direction to stop impeding critical border infrastructure, fail to follow a police officer's direction to stop assisting others with such an impediment, fail to follow a police officer's direction to disperse, or interfere with or obstruct police or others from performing a duty or function under the act.

When it comes to offences, the maximum punishment for breaching any offence under the new legislation, except a failure to identify oneself, is one year's imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$100,000 for an individual.

Directors and officers of corporations can face up to \$500,000 in fines or up to one year's imprisonment or both. Corporations can face up to \$10 million in fines. Failure to comply with the proposed requirement to identify oneself would result in a fine of up to \$5,000, as is the case under the Provincial Offences Act.

We do not take any of these measures lightly. To ensure accountability and transparency, we have built into the proposed legislation that the ministry responsible for the act, the Ministry of the Solicitor General, would be required to conduct a review of the act once it has been in force for one year. This would require a written report to be published online and tabled here in the Legislative Assembly. The review would have to be published and tabled within 18 months of the act coming into force.

International border crossings like the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia and the Peace Bridge in Niagara Falls are the arteries that keep Ontario's manufacturing pumping. Ontario is the number one export destination for 19 US states and the number two export destination for seven US states. Overall, trade with the US accounts for 79% of Ontario's exports and over 52% of imports. Any threats to our border crossings are threats to our jobs, our business and our economy.

To put this in perspective, at the height of COVID-19, it was Ontario's Pearson airport that served as the hub for the delivery and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines throughout Canada. Speaker, this bill is a necessary step to defend our economy and the flow of goods and people from future disruptions to international border crossings like these.

The mayor of Windsor, Mayor Drew Dilkens, has praised the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, saying the proposed legislation should go a long way in preventing any future blockades from even happening again in Windsor: "This absolutely sends a strong signal and will make any sensible person think twice before they undertake this type of protest again and block an international border crossing...."

"A signal has to be sent how there will now be severe consequences for that type of action."

In Sarnia, Mayor Mike Bradley has also stated his support of the legislation, saying that it may limit the need for large police actions to respond to blockades in his city or elsewhere: "What happens in Windsor hurts here and even the blockade on the 402 had a negative economic impact. Again, it was the right thing to do, what the government is proposing."

Our trade corridors form a tightly woven network where disruption of one piece of infrastructure can have a cascading impact on the entire province. I have no doubt that without quick and decisive action by our government, the individuals who shut down the Ambassador Bridge would have expanded its blockade to include the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia and the Peace Bridge in Niagara Falls.

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This legislation isn't just responsive to events in Windsor; it is preventive so that we are never again in a

position where illegal blockades come at the expense of countless hard-working families. If passed, the legislation will safeguard our industries, reinforce our position as a strong and reliable trading partner, ensure that illegal disruptions to trade are quickly addressed and make certain that the US and the world know that Ontario remains open for business.

I thank Premier Ford for making Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, a priority, and I thank my colleagues the Attorney General and the Minister of Transportation for their valuable input to make this a strong and effective piece of legislation.

I encourage all members to support this bill, which will benefit each and every community across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The minister has said that she's sharing her time. I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today for second reading of the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, 2022. This bill, if passed, would introduce a suite of important new measures to protect the movement of people and goods that flow through our province's vital transportation infrastructure, including international borders, as mentioned, and airports, from unlawful disruptions and illegal blockades.

I'd like to take a moment to commend Premier Ford; Solicitor General Jones; the Minister of Transportation, Minister Mulroney; and our colleagues for moving quickly—and I look forward to the words from the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park, Vijay Thanigasalam—for moving so quickly and decisively to help develop and introduce this legislation to ensure our province remains a strong and reliable partner, not just a partner in terms of social interaction but a partner in trade. Let there be no doubt that Ontario will continue to be open for business.

In particular, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of my colleague Minister Jones and the team at the Ministry of the Solicitor General for making this important piece of legislation a reality. The bill being discussed today reflects our government's commitment to protect jobs and provide police and prosecutors with the tools they need to keep people safe.

The Solicitor General has spoken at length about the circumstances that have led to the introduction of this important bill. Recent events like the blockade at Windsor's Ambassador Bridge and other disruptions to critical infrastructure, including our airports and borders, threaten the economic security of this province. Hundreds of millions of dollars of trade was halted overnight, supply chains were seriously disrupted, manufacturing facilities were closed and negative media coverage was throughout North America and around the world. When we speak about the economy of our province, we're speaking about people's lives and livelihoods. We simply cannot afford the economic impacts that we saw as a result of recent blockades and occupations in Windsor and Ottawa.

Ontarians have spoken, and we have listened. It is of utmost importance that we do all we can to protect the vital

economic lifelines that drive the prosperity of our communities. That is why we are taking swift action to provide new tools through this proposed legislation that will shield the economy from future disruptions by making it illegal to obstruct certain transportation infrastructure should an unlawful disruption impede economic activity or interfere with safety, or if it interferes with health, or if it interferes with the well-being of members of the public. These proposed new measures would give law enforcement and prosecutors the tools they need to hold offenders accountable and ensure justice is done.

The Solicitor General remarked that it shouldn't take the implementation of an emergency order to get our police forces the necessary enforcement tools they need to keep our borders open and Ontarians safe. I, for one, couldn't agree more and would like to take a moment to commend the officers from the Windsor Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who safely and professionally cleared blockades in recent weeks, and that's not to leave out the Toronto Police Service and all the other municipal police services that did their part to keep Ontarians safe and to protect our economic opportunities.

It is important to be clear: The legislation being proposed here today is specifically tailored to illegal blockades of border crossings that impact economic activity or international trade. The right to protest is a hallmark of our democracy, and this legislation is intentionally very narrow in scope and will bear no impact on the right to peaceful, lawful and temporary protest in this province. Having said that, we do not support recent actions taken to choke off the busiest border crossing between the United States and Canada, as we witnessed earlier this year, interfering with the livelihoods and jobs of thousands upon thousands of people on both sides of our border. Nor do we support the occupation of the area surrounding our nation's Parliament buildings, laying siege to the residences and businesses that surround them and preventing people from carrying out their daily lives.

Speaker, let me be clear: While we support the right to peaceful and lawful protest, we will never hesitate to protect people's right to work and live freely and safely. That is why, during February's protests, we worked to respond quickly and decisively in response to the disruptions across this province.

On Friday, February 11, as demonstrations blocked traffic on the Ambassador Bridge for the fifth straight day, our government declared a state of emergency in Ontario. On that same day, my ministry supported an injunction granted by the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice to prevent protesters from blocking the Windsor Ambassador Bridge and grinding millions of dollars in daily trade with our US neighbours to a halt. Our economy was under threat. Our livelihoods were under attack.

A few days later, on February 14, on the Monday, we supported a similar injunction to help clear the streets and provide relief to the people of Ottawa, where several weeks of occupation had turned the downtown into an economic wasteland.

Speaker, the right to make a political statement does not outweigh the rights of citizens in our nation's capital to live peacefully in their own homes. The unlawful activity in downtown Ottawa had to end.

That's why my ministry brought an application to the Superior Court of Justice to prevent anyone from disposing of or dealing with monetary donations through the Freedom Convoy 2022 and the Adopt-a-Trucker campaign pages on the GiveSendGo online fundraising platform.

The Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act would help police and prosecutors take steps against unlawful activity in times of disruption as quickly as possible, without the need to invoke a state of emergency.

Speaker, the Ministry of the Attorney General took action early in our mandate, after 2018, to strengthen and modernize Ontario's civil forfeiture laws, because our province had fallen very far behind, and criminals knew it. We are determined to get ahead of the criminals who prey on our communities for profit, making it harder for criminals, at every turn, to hold onto the money that funds crime. We're now in line with Ontarians who say that crime should not pay, and by introducing administrative forfeiture, we provided more ways for police and prosecutors to fight criminal activity and to address the vast range of property that goes unclaimed every single day. Police and prosecutors here didn't have the same forfeiture tools as other jurisdictions, and it made our communities more vulnerable. We fixed that. By strengthening and simplifying Ontario's laws around property forfeiture, we've made it harder for criminals to hold onto the proceeds of crime. The funds from this forfeiture of property can then be used to help victims and communities fight back against crime and victimization.

Speaker, in 2021, our government reinvested \$1.5 million in cash and proceeds seized from criminals. Funding through the Civil Remedies Grant Program is made available to law enforcement agencies and community partners to help victims of crime and strengthen communities' abilities to prevent intimate partner, family, and gun and gang violence.

The additional reforms our government has included in the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act will build on these previous improvements, giving police the power to remove, possess and store objects like vehicles for up to 30 days. This bill would ensure that property that disrupts critical infrastructure, like trucks or other vehicles, will be subject to the civil forfeiture process, helping to ensure that more proceeds of crime will be reinvested to support victims. This proposed legislation is just another way our government is helping to ensure that crime does not pay.

Speaker, our government is committed to providing police and prosecutors with the tools they need to hold offenders accountable and see that justice is done.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we had to make rapid changes at the Ministry of the Attorney General to keep people safe and maintain the administration of justice. Together with our many justice partners, we rose

to the challenge to break down barriers and speed up access to the legal system.

We've changed the culture of the system over the past few years. We've created valuable muscle memory around how we quickly identify and fix real-life problems that affect Ontarians and how they access justice. We've changed how we make change, and we've changed the way that we approach problems. Instead of "why can't we"—we don't look at the "can't"—we look at why we can. We find a way. We become innovative and creative, and we work with our partners.

Notably, working with our police services, particularly during COVID-19, we led game-changing initiatives in the justice system. For example, working with our partners at the Solicitor General's office, my ministry has developed and launched the criminal eIntake platform. The digital platform actually gives law enforcement more time to spend on the front line, preventing and investigating crime, by allowing officers to file charges electronically instead of in person. This game-changing initiative will actively cut down on the hours law enforcement must spend filling out paperwork and travelling back and forth to courthouses.

1400

Before the launch of the digital eIntake platform, officers were filing—think about this number—225,000 charging documents in person on an annual basis. I don't need to tell you how much time that takes from more important priorities. It's not just filling out the paper, going to file it and coming back; it is just a tremendous amount of time. The partnership with the Solicitor General's office in developing this innovative and current system is putting more resources on the front lines where they need to be—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please.

Hon. Doug Downey: Not only is it freeing up the police officers' time to help better serve and protect our communities, it's also allowing justices of the peace to enter decisions digitally and request additional information from police online. Expanding the electronic filing of criminal charges to all regions in our province and cutting the time spent on paperwork is just another step forward in the work to support prosecutors, courts and police, including in rural communities—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the minister. I've asked for order twice, please. The side conversations I'm finding quite disruptive and I need to be able to see the speaker. Thank you.

I return again to the Attorney General. Please continue.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I was Will Bouma you would see me.

Beyond these changes that we've made, it has been a year of successes within my ministry. If we look back at the past year, we've seen important breakthroughs across all sectors of the province, including in the justice system—breakthroughs that have moved Ontario forward

by decades in the justice space as a result of made-in-Ontario innovation and collaboration. We've built a more connected and resilient justice system. It's a top priority for my ministry and for our government, who have put net new money into the justice system in historic numbers that this province has not seen before.

We've been innovative in terms of taking ideas from other provinces. We've worked with the NDP in BC—not in a coalition way, as can happen. We've worked with others to take the best of the best across Canada and to work together to bring innovation and collaboration to Ontario.

Criminal investigations and prosecutions have grown more complex, as you can imagine, as technologies have advanced and criminal activities have become even more sophisticated. We've had to continuously improve the digital tools and information that our police and prosecutors can access. It's absolutely critical. That's why we're very pleased to support the digital evidence management technology that will enhance the ability of police and other justice sector partners to securely capture, manage, store and share digital evidence. I'm talking about a large audio file, video files like those from bystander cell phones, 911 audio, interview room cameras, dash and body-worn cameras, as well as photographs—the kind of evidence that police collected from the protests in Windsor and Ottawa. You can imagine the volume and different kinds of data that is now being collected from decades ago when the technology didn't even exist to allow it to be collected.

The new cloud-based technology that we've introduced is also allowing police services to securely share digital evidence with crown attorneys and other police services without transporting these large files on USB sticks or DVDs. This takes one more time-consuming step out of the justice process. By just a click of a button, the information gets where it needs to be, safely and securely.

It's not just about prosecutors and the police and the front-line services, it's about the people who interact with the justice system, because then their matters can move faster and more efficiently and matters can be either dealt with or disposed of in a more timely matter. By eliminating the need for sharing and transporting evidence in person, police officers can spend less time carrying out administrative work and more time on what matters most: being in and protecting our communities.

Even better, with this new technology, police can request help from the public by allowing them to anonymously upload evidence directly into the system. This is an incredible advance, allowing more people to safely contribute information to an investigation. I just want to pause on that for a moment. That is true community policing. If you think about the doorbells that have cameras on them now. I was visiting my local police service, the Barrie Police Service, and they said there are so many doorbell cameras out there now that, when they have an incident in an area, they can put a call out and people respond and upload the data from what they're seeing on their front step. Their ability to deal with minor and major crimes has skyrocketed. That, to me, is just a

phenomenal way of having community policing. What a way to have a modern neighbourhood watch to make sure that we're keeping our community safe, and our kids and the most vulnerable.

We are fortunate to have such a strong partnership between the justice ministries in this province, the courts, law enforcement, the judiciary and the associations, whether they be police associations or lawyer associations. Everybody is working together to try and make the system better and to make it more efficient, and not just for those of us who are working in the system but for those who are affected by the system. The last couple of years has been just phenomenal. The initiatives are just some examples of what we can accomplish when we all work together to refocus the justice system around people and their expectations of how justice should happen in 2022.

Speaker, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act sends a strong signal to the world that our province is a reliable trading partner that is focused on public safety as well as ensuring that people and goods can move freely across our international borders.

As my colleague Minister Jones has said, the proposed legislation would provide police services with enhanced measures to make it illegal to block certain transportation infrastructure, like international airports or borders, if the blockage interferes with the ordinary economic activity or if it influences the health or well-being of the public. Right now, the police have a range of tools that can help them with enforcement if a protest involves the unsafe use of vehicles or blocking roadways. But as we've seen from events in recent months, these tools are just not sufficient without the calling of a provincial emergency.

The proposed new measures would let police take immediate action to clear blockages quickly and efficiently, using their discretion, so that our infrastructure and trade routes move freely and our economy is not held hostage by illegal actions. By the same token, the proposed regulations in the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act would give police the authority to effectively stop vehicles in their tracks by imposing a roadside suspension of driver's licences, seizing number plates and suspending vehicle permits for up to 14 days if the vehicle is used in an illegal blockade.

If an individual convicted under the new legislation does not pay their fines, their driver's licence could be suspended and they would not be able to renew their vehicle permit.

There would also be serious consequences for the misuse of a commercial vehicle or trailer. We are proposing additional powers for the registrar of motor vehicles to suspend or cancel the plate portion of a truck, bus or trailer permit. This kind of suspension or cancellation would have significant impacts on Ontario-based companies because it would apply to the entire fleet associated with the vehicle involved in the protest. In fact, to make the penalty even more impactful, none of the commercial vehicles in the fleet would be able to operate for the entire duration of this suspension—none of them. The suspension would not only be permanently documented on the

carrier's safety record, but police and Ministry of Transportation enforcement officers could also actually seize the licence plates for all the vehicles registered to the company. Speaker, the impact of these considerable penalties on a company's operations cannot be overstated. They are meant to be a strong deterrent, and they would be.

The Solicitor General referenced some of the fines, and the maximum punishment for breaching most offences under the proposed new legislation is a one-year imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$100,000 for an individual. Directors and officers of corporations could face up to \$500,000 in fines, or up to one year imprisonment, or both. Corporations could face up to \$10 million in fines. Again, I just want to pause for a moment and say that this goes to the individual in the protest, this goes to the directors and officers of the company, and it also goes to the company itself.

To support the new legislation, we would also invest \$96 million towards new tools to support province-wide responses during unlawful blockades and demonstrations that obstruct international borders and airports. This would include enhanced training through the Ontario Police College for all law enforcement services to support safe and effective public order policing as well as improvements to the operational strength of the Ontario Provincial Police in the areas of emergency management and investigations and intelligence.

In order to keep our borders open and our trade routes flowing, we would also establish an OPP emergency response team and purchase equipment such as heavy tow trucks.

The Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act demonstrates our government's commitment to prioritizing public safety and protecting Ontarians' way of life. We are taking decisive action to ensure our economy can keep running strong to support the prosperity and well-being of our communities at times of crisis, and to let our trading partners know that's exactly what we're doing.

1410

When we speak about the economy of our province, we're speaking about the very foundation on which countless hard-working Ontarians make their living. We simply cannot afford the economic impacts that we saw as a result of recent blockades and occupations in Windsor and Ottawa.

This is why we are introducing this important legislation: to provide new tools that support the important work of police and prosecutors to hold offenders accountable and to ensure justice is done. These robust new measures will build confidence in our economy, protect jobs and help strengthen our communities, both now and into the future. It is critically important that we show the world that we're working hard to ensure Ontario is and will remain open for business. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): It's my understanding that the ministers are sharing their time with the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in my place as parliamentary assistant to the

Minister of Transportation to speak to Bill 100, Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, 2022, brought forward by the Solicitor General.

Madam Speaker, throughout the history of our nation and our province, free trade and free movement of goods to our domestic and international partners has been a crucial pillar to Ontario's economic success that has led to our province's strong international reputation as a fair, responsible and reliable trading partner. Before Confederation in 1867, trade along our interprovincial waterways was the mechanism that enabled our province to grow. As people began to settle and create new towns along Upper Canada's waterways, they were guided by the prospect of the new-found economic opportunity and prosperity that were brought by trade.

Our province with its favourable central geographic position in Canada, an abundance of natural resources and the people's desire to be the manufacturing and economic engine of Canada positioned Ontario to be a trade leader, even in the early days prior to Confederation. Take that in 1854, then British North America and the United States signed the Reciprocity Treaty to eliminate customs tariffs, after realizing the immense trade potential between the two nations. This ultimately provided the foundation for early economic growth in our nation, and partly led to the eventual unification of Canada East, Canada West, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia into a single British North America, the Dominion of Canada, in 1867.

Exports of raw materials like pulp, paper and minerals provided the economic footing for our nation and province to grow in the crucial years following our founding in 1867. And as we entered the 20th century, the manufacturing and production of automobiles, metals and food began to be concentrated in Ontario, which led to an era of rapid industrialization, urbanization and new integrated trade that saw our province and people grow into a highly dependable and capable workforce with an advanced and specialized economy.

But more importantly, at that time, the need to export these made-in-Ontario goods led to the development of critically important and valued freight relationships, especially one with the United States of America that has lasted to this very day. Guided by our shared economic, political and cultural fabrics, both nations recognize the potential of this mighty economic union, which led to the creation of agreements like the Canada-United States automotive products agreement, or the Auto Pact, in 1965. The Auto Pact was influential because it enabled the rapid development and integration of our Canadian sector into the United States market, an action that led to unseen growth of the auto sector at that time and provided countless jobs for Ontarians.

With these sectors in mind, a watershed moment occurred in the 1980s, when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney signalled Canada's intention to enter into a free trade agreement with the United States—a single action which I believe remains among the most important and long-lasting steps taken by a federal government to secure our country's economic footing and represents itself as one of

the most historic moments in the shared history between Canada and the United States. In 1994, with the potential of an even greater continental economic union on the table, the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement expanded the North American Free Trade Agreement, once again recognizing Ontario and Canada's reliability as a trading partner and opening even more markets for our businesses.

Madam Speaker, ensuring that Ontario's border crossings can continue to operate regularly is vital to the safety and security of our residents and to our entire province's economy. In February, an illegal and unlawful blockade forced the closure of the Ambassador Bridge for six days, stalling the movement of billions of dollars in essential goods. Supply chains and factories far from Windsor, like the auto plants found in Ingersoll, Brampton and Oakville, were impacted by this unlawful blockade, blocking the most important international border crossing right here in Canada.

Workers—someone who could be your family member, your friend, neighbour—were sent home and lost their right to go earn a paycheque and provide for their families, something that I find completely unacceptable. While an individual has a right to protest in a peaceful and lawful manner, that right to make a political statement will never outweigh the rights of thousands of workers to earn their living or of people to move freely and safely across our borders. These illegal actions had far-reaching consequences that impacted Ontario companies and trading partners, who paid the financial toll of delayed shipments and lost business.

Now I want to paint a very real picture of the true cost of these illegal actions. The Anderson Economic Group estimates the loss in wages was \$144.9 million in both Ontario and Michigan. Further, the same group estimates that our industry lost \$299.9 million between February 7 and February 15 because of the illegal blockade at the Ambassador Bridge. Speaker, these are very real costs that the workers in the auto sector and all sectors that rely on our borders had to bear, which is unacceptable.

As I mentioned in my introduction, there's no relationship more important to Canada and Ontario than the one we have with the United States of America. These unlawful actions in February shook investors' confidence and even caught the attention of United States President Joe Biden and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. It was just as unacceptable in February to disrupt Canada's history of free, peaceful and orderly trade as it is today.

Premier Ford was clear in February that we will do everything in our power to protect workers, protect job creators and our valuable international trade relationships. That is why we must give our law enforcement officials the tools they need to protect our international borders and prevent future illegal blockades and maintain our history and reputation as a reliable trading partner.

Since our election in 2018, nothing has been more important to our government and Premier Ford than signalling to our international partners that we are open for business. Bill 100 builds on that commitment with its suite of new measures to protect our borders, airports and vital trade corridors.

Speaker, I'll use my time to now highlight to this House the transportation-related measures found in Bill 100. When a vehicle is used in an illegal blockade or disrupts critical infrastructure, the impacts can be felt across the province, not just at the border. That is why Bill 100 contains the necessary measures to have our law enforcement officials take action in the event of a future unlawful blockade.

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The first of these measures is the ability to suspend the driver's licences and vehicle permits of those taking part in an illegal blockade. If passed, Bill 100 would provide the suspension of Ontario licences for 14 days once the officers ask for the licence to be surrendered, regardless of whether the individual complies. Police officers could also seize licence plates from a vehicle when they believe, on reasonable grounds, that the vehicle has been used to breach the prohibition on impediments or assistance for impediments.

Let's be very clear: If you come here with your vehicle to take part in an illegal blockade, you will be stopped. That is why Bill 100 contains measures so that licence plates from any jurisdiction can be seized. Additionally, if an Ontario plate is seized, the vehicle's permit would be suspended for 14 days. For out-of-province licences and permits, the privilege to use the licence or permit in Ontario would be suspended. Police officers would be required to notify the registrar of motor vehicles of surrendered driver's licences and seized licence plates, keep a record, and provide the person with a written statement that includes when the suspension is in effect.

Speaker, Bill 100 brings forward amendments to the powers granted to the registrar of motor vehicles. The proposed amendments in Bill 100 would allow the registrar of motor vehicles, or a deputy registrar who can act on the registrar's behalf, to make orders that suspend or cancel a Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration Certificate as well as the plate portion of a commercial vehicle and trailer permits, if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the holder breached the prohibition on impediments or assistance for impediments or was the owner or operator of a vehicle that was used to breach the prohibition on impediments or the prohibition on assistance.

For out-of-province commercial motor vehicle and trailer permits, the privilege to use the permit would be suspended in Ontario. The registrar would specify the duration of any suspension. When such a suspension or cancellation order is in effect, any person with knowledge of the order cannot transfer or lease any of the operator's commercial motor vehicles or trailers or do anything that will result in a change of name with respect to the vehicle or trailer unless the registrar consents. The registrar must consent if the operator satisfies the registrar that the transfer, lease or change of name is not being made for the purpose of avoiding a suspension or cancellation of a permit or CVOR certificate. There would be no right to a hearing before the registrar that makes a suspension or cancellation order. But an owner or operator could request

that the registrar modify or rescind the order by applying in writing within 30 days after the order is made.

A police officer or Ministry of Transportation enforcement officer, as appointed under section 223 of the Highway Traffic Act, could seize licence plates from vehicles if the permit was suspended or cancelled by order of the registrar. Officers who seize licence plates would have to notify the registrar.

When taken together, the amendments found in Bill 100 make it clear that we will not tolerate this illegal, reckless and unsafe behaviour that affects the ordinary economic activity in Ontario and puts our international reputation of reliability at risk. If you bring your own personal vehicle, commercial vehicle, truck or bus with the intention of stopping international trade, you'll be stopped. These amendments, if passed, will supplement the tools that our law enforcement officials have, ultimately enabling them to clear these illegal blockades quickly.

With other key crossings on the line, like the Peace Bridge in Niagara and the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia, we must implement new measures that will help safeguard the economy, keep businesses open and send a signal to our trading partners that Ontario is and will remain open for business. Most importantly, these new measures would help ensure that vehicles are not used in a dangerous way that could harm others.

Madam Speaker, in closing, there are several key points which I want to reiterate to this House and express my own personal motivations for supporting this bill. Safe, free and open international border crossings connect Ontario to the world. These crossings are the trade corridors that lead to a part of an interconnected network where even one interruption can have a massive effect on the province. Throughout our history the ability for our people and our businesses to freely travel across their border has been the foundation of Ontario's economic success. The United States and Canada have a historic trade relationship that has stood through and passed the test of time, and in forming this relationship we have forged a global reputation as a strong, reliable trading partner.

The illegal actions we saw in February disrupted ordinary economic and transportation activity, full stop. As a member of the provincial Parliament for Scarborough–Rouge Park, I came to this House to represent my constituents and protect their interests, rights and freedoms. I ran to be the member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough–Rouge Park because I believe in Canada, I believe in the rule of law, I believe in a competitive economy and a government that works for the people. I believe that all my constituents should have the freedom of opportunity and initiative and the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of his or her own labour. I believe in their right to economic freedom and the freedom to pursue entrepreneurship.

When all these freedoms and rights are threatened, I support bills like Bill 100 to defend our economy and border from any future disruption and protect the economic interests of my constituents. This is a bill centred on protecting the industries in our communities, communities near and far from our borders, and it stands to

benefit the people whom we serve in this House. These measures will protect this province as one of the best places to live, grow and invest in.

I want to thank Premier Ford, the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the Minister of Transportation for their leadership in making such a strong piece of legislation. I also want to thank the many officers from the Windsor Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for safely and professionally clearing the Ambassador Bridge blockade last month.

I encourage all members to support Bill 100.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We're hearing a lot about the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest border crossing in Ontario and in Canada. Actually, for the record, we have 14 international border crossings in Ontario; we'll soon have 15 when the Gordie Howe bridge opens up. We also have a truck ferry for hazardous goods back and forth across the Detroit River, and there are four passenger ferries that take people back and forth across the border in Ontario.

I know the Solicitor General has been in constant contact with the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens. I know he's asking for a review but he's also asking for more than \$5 million of financial help from the province and the feds to help pay the cost that we, the Windsor taxpayers, have been hit with for this illegal blockade. My question to the Solicitor General is, when can we expect the provincial government to step up to the plate and help the taxpayers of Windsor pay the \$5.5 million that it cost us during this international blockade at the Ambassador Bridge?

1430

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member opposite for his question. There is no doubt that there were a lot of additional resources that came from all across Ontario. We mentioned in my comments about the assistance provided by the RCMP, the Ontario Provincial Police, LaSalle, London, Waterloo, and I'm sure there are other municipal police forces that have assisted in both Windsor and, of course, Ottawa.

While I cannot speak to every individual police service, it is my understanding that the vast majority have no intention of invoicing the city of Windsor for their officers being there. They understood and appreciated that this was important to all of Ontario, and that's why they were able to step up and offer those officers. So I can tell you that from—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: The Solicitor General indicated that the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge incurred a great deal of policing overtime and policing costs. I can tell you that in Ottawa, we know that very well. Actually, the cost of the policing services that were incurred during the occupation is up to \$36 million, and we still haven't

recovered from the extraordinary hardship that the city of Ottawa, its citizens and small businesses had to endure. Yet there is nothing in this bill that addresses that or attempts to prevent what happened in Ottawa from happening again.

While we are using, in this bill, extraordinary measures to protect bridges, my question is: Doesn't Ottawa deserve to be open for business as well?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I'm going to remind members of the House that approximately \$17 million of trade crosses over the Ambassador Bridge hourly, making up 25% of all Canada-US trade. Is the member opposite suggesting that that is not a critical infrastructure that we need to protect in order to protect all Ontario businesses?

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Solicitor General. How will Bill 100 be able to help police forces and law enforcement to do their job in protecting the interests of small businesses and trade going through the bridges and the main international borders, especially when a blockade happens and causes losses to those businesses whose goods might get ruined during their wait? If it's fruit or vegetables or something like that, they will lose lots of money because of the blockade. How will this bill protect them from this?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There are some very specific pieces in Bill 100 that speak to additional officers in public order units through the Ontario Provincial Police, because, of course, often the OPP is called in in these situations and certainly was in the case of Ottawa and Windsor, as well as, frankly, Sarnia and Niagara.

The addition of having OPP-owned heavy tow truck operators is another one. But at the end of the day, this is about ensuring that blockages can be safely and quickly cleared, because literally time is money when blockades are happening at these international borders.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I was listening to the debate the government was providing on Bill 100. The Solicitor General or the Attorney General, I'm not sure which, said the government acted decisively during this situation. I can only say that while they're claiming to act decisively during that time, the people of Windsor were subjected to economic displacement, had trouble getting to work. Obviously, the economic engine of the city was under siege.

This started on February 7, 2022, and while the citizens of Windsor and, quite frankly, all of Ontario bore the brunt of this decision for indecisiveness, I claim, for the action from this government, the city of Windsor and auto groups were actually taking initiatives to file injunctions with the Supreme Court of Ontario to stop this from happening. Where was the government? Why did it take so long, and why didn't they act sooner to stop this?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I trust the member opposite is not suggesting that government members or individuals should be directing the police. There was coordination

happening immediately, actually prior to the Ottawa occupation, coordination between chiefs of police of the major services as well as the RCMP and the OPP. Frankly, your question suggests that you will be supporting Bill 100, because Bill 100 will give the police services the tools they need to act quickly. So I'm looking forward to your support on Bill 100.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General. The proposed bill addresses the situation with unlawful protests at Ambassador Bridge from last month, but my constituents are asking: Would this act exempt protests regarding issues affecting Indigenous people, such as land claims, that fall under federal jurisdiction?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you—a very important question, and I'm glad you raised it. We will always support freedom of speech and the right to protest. That should not come at the expense of the people of this province, as it did in the Ambassador Bridge blockade. The proposed measures are narrow in scope and specific to illegal blockades of border crossings that impact economic activity or international trade, regardless of who organizes it. They will not—I underline not—impact the right to peaceful, lawful and temporary protest, and they do not apply to protests that occur elsewhere across Ontario.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: As First Nations, as Indigenous people, sometimes we do blockades. We do protests. It could be either boil-water advisories. An example could be like Attawapiskat in the James Bay-Mushkegowuk area. I was there two summers ago and I remember they have close to 20 years of a boil-water advisory.

I talk about Attawapiskat because if you see the diamonds in this mace, they come from Attawapiskat. Sometimes we want to fight to be able to have the same treatment from governments, to be heard. We, the land defenders, the water protectors—they have to protest to be heard.

How will you ensure that this bill does not weaponize towards Indigenous people?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will reinforce the answer to my previous question. They will not impact peaceful, lawful and temporary protests, and they do not apply to protests elsewhere across Ontario. It is very specific and narrow in scope to international borders like the Ambassador Bridge, like the Sarnia bridge, like the Peace Bridge in Niagara Falls—a very targeted piece of legislation.

I hope the member opposite gets an opportunity to review carefully, because we were very strategic in wanting to protect our trade partnerships and our trade pathways. This is not about peaceful protests, where people have a right and will continue to have a right in Ontario to share their concerns with government and policy members. It's important to me, and I know it's important to the member opposite.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Just before we continue with debate, will all members silence their devices? Thank you.

Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 100, the keeping Ontario open bill, as it is a direct result of the blockade that happened in my riding at the Ambassador Bridge. Before I get really into my notes and comments, I just want to say that it's not very often that members from different political parties come to each other's defence and speak out in support of each other. But I have to say that when the member from Ottawa-Vanier stood up and asked about supports for the people in Ottawa and for the terrible, terrible time that they had there—traumatizing, as the member from Ottawa Centre will speak to—the traumatizing time that they had there and asking about supports for them, the fact that the Solicitor General got up and tried to spin it as though she was pitting Windsor against Ottawa—just as the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries did to me when I said that Windsor needed support too. I think it is absolutely shameful that the government side of the House would try to put some sort of political spin on this to try to pit the people of Windsor against the people of Ottawa when they have both gone through, frankly, hell over this. So I'm going to ask the government members to knock it off. Knock it off.

1440

Ms. Donna Skelly: Easy. Easy.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member from Flamborough-Glanbrook just said, "Easy." I won't go easy. It is entirely political and partisan to try and pit those two cities against each other.

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: That is absolutely what is happening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Flamborough-Glanbrook will come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: If the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook wants to debate that, she's welcome to stand up and do that when she has time.

Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe that every single Canadian, every single person in this province, every single person in our individual cities and ridings has the right to peacefully protest. This is what makes our democracy so great. Constituents have the right to protest, whether that's at the federal level, the provincial level, the municipal level. They have the right to speak out and share their concerns. Whether they agree with us or they don't, they have the right to do it.

There are people on probably all sides of the House, but I would hazard to guess it happens more often on this side of the House, who have done that, who have shown up at rallies at our city halls, at our parks, at our waterfronts in our case, at our elected officials' offices to share our concerns about a direction they were taking. But what took place in my riding at the Ambassador Bridge was not a peaceful protest, and it still has impacts to this day,

continues to have impacts on the many residents, families, businesses, and workers—not just my riding, but the neighbouring riding of Windsor-Tecumseh, in the neighbouring riding of Essex, all throughout the province.

It affected Sarnia because traffic was being diverted to the bridge in Sarnia to try and get across. The truck drivers that wanted to get to work, taking goods back and forth across the bridge in Windsor, couldn't do it and were being diverted to Sarnia. I want to point out that many of those drivers were stuck for hours—in some cases, days—in Windsor because they couldn't get turned around because of the blockade at the bridge. We had many workers, not just truck drivers—many workers, health care workers—that couldn't get across the bridge to go to work.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out that those nurses wouldn't have to go to work in the States if we didn't have a government like this, who brings in something like Bill 124 to suppress their wages; if they weren't driving them in droves out of our health care system into other jurisdictions like Michigan, who actually value and respect the work that nurses do. But those front-line nurses were being impeded, and other health care workers, from getting across the border to go to work. Since I mentioned Bill 124, one of the things the government could do is repeal Bill 124, frankly, and we'd have fewer nurses trying to cross the border. They could work in their communities where they raise their families.

Businesses in the area were forced to reduce hours or close because of the protesters. Speaker, I heard from several young workers, many of them teenagers, some in their early twenties, who worked in places like McDonald's, who said the protesters would come in refusing to wear their masks even though it was mandated—not the fault of the workers at these businesses. People wouldn't follow COVID-19 protocols, and they were—to say "rude" to these young workers is an understatement. I heard from some of these young workers who were terrified to go to work. That's not peaceful. That's not a peaceful protest.

Auto manufacturing plants were forced to send workers home without pay, and there were cancelled shifts. The Ford plant in my colleague's riding had to start short-shifting, and they eventually had to close the plant down for days because there weren't the parts getting back and forth that they needed to do their jobs. The Windsor assembly plant was short-shifting and was sending workers home partway through shifts because they weren't getting the parts that they needed.

It's important to point out that the Windsor assembly plant, specifically, was already experiencing closures before this. The workers were on layoff and off layoff and experiencing financial difficulties, and they were just starting to go back when this blockade happened and they were plunged back into this again.

Our west end was at a standstill. Bus routes were impacted. Cross streets were inaccessible. So in response to the blockade on Huron Church—or, as we call it, Huron Line—they had to close some of the major cross streets that would cross over Huron Line to get in and out of the

west end of the city. Those residents were impacted well beyond when the blockade was actually dispersed, because our local law enforcement wanted to ensure that every possible way of stopping another blockade from happening—to make sure the access was limited, so another blockade couldn't happen.

Speaker, while I'm talking about this, I just want to point out that it was not a big secret that there was going to be a convoy starting in Windsor. There was lots of news about it. They were heading to Ottawa. It was well known days before it actually happened. It wasn't a big secret that some of them were coming back to Windsor and some were going to stay in Ottawa. And yet, this government did nothing to try to be proactive and to manage the situation before it became the dire situation that it did in Ottawa and the situation that it became in Windsor.

After they cleared the blockade, I was out talking to the residents in the west end. Actually, most of them were calling my office, because they had to go well out of their way to get out of their homes to go to work, to go to medical appointments and that kind of thing. Many of them weren't leaving home at all, because there were so many barriers to them simply getting across the street. There were a lot of phone calls that came in. But after the blockade was cleared, I went and I talked to the residents one on one, and there was not a single person who thinks that this government acted fast enough. They didn't act to stop it from happening or to reduce the impact—as I said, it wasn't a big secret that the convoy was coming through Windsor and some of them were coming back—and they didn't do enough to make it come to an end fast enough. The residents of the west end and, frankly, the surrounding areas—the people who have to go to work in that area—were impacted until just recently.

Over \$400 million in goods travel across the Ambassador Bridge daily. I cannot understate the importance of this bridge when it comes to trade. When I raised that issue a couple of weeks ago here in the chamber, in a question talking about the impact it had not only to the trade going across the border but the businesses—like I said, I talked about auto workers being impacted, but there were lots of local businesses along that corridor and just beyond that corridor that were impacted, that weren't seeing the business they would normally see because of the blockade and the related road closures. People were afraid to go anywhere near the area, so they weren't going there to shop. I talked about the impact to the workers in those businesses.

1450

When I asked a question a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries stood up and she did exactly what I said we shouldn't be doing at the very beginning, like they tried to do to the member for Ottawa-Vanier. She compared what happened to Ottawa to what happened in Windsor, fluffed off the impacts of the blockade in Windsor when I said that we need dedicated financial support for the businesses—not their business programs they run. We all know in this House—they know it too; they just don't want to admit

it—that there were more businesses that were denied access to those business supports than there were that got it. I'm still hearing about it. We need a dedicated fund specifically for the businesses and the workers that were impacted by the blockade. The minister fluffed it off as though what happened in Windsor was completely insignificant, what was experienced by the residents in Windsor was completely insignificant, and then tried to spin it like I was trying to say that Windsor deserves something that Ottawa doesn't, which was not at all the question I had asked, not at all. It's really unfortunate that the government chooses to take that route.

This is the largest international trade corridor—that bridge and the road that leads up to it—in North America, and yet this government, not only did they not pre-plan to try to avoid something happening, but they didn't actually act until well into the blockade. Five days into basically a six-day or seven-day blockade is when this government decided to step up and do something. It's important to note that before this government stepped up to do something, the auto manufacturers stepped up, the various associations stepped up, with our chamber of commerce as an intervenor and the city as an intervenor, to file for an injunction. So it took the industry, the chamber of commerce, the community pushing back and our city to file for an injunction to end the blockade before the Premier stood up and said that they were going to do something about it. I think that says a lot about the priorities of this government.

As I said, it impacted Sarnia, because traffic was being rerouted, and then when the convoy started blocking the 402 to Sarnia, they had to shut down part of that highway, and traffic was being rerouted through the back roads. I had people in my riding that would normally either cross the bridge or go through the tunnel to be able to get to work who were afraid that the tunnel was next and they wouldn't be able to get to work at all, because this government didn't act. When I was raising concerns around the same thing happening in Sarnia because traffic was being rerouted, it was crickets from that side of the house. In fact, my colleague from Ottawa Centre and I were sitting in on the emergency management committee, and the member from Sarnia-Lambton did not ask a single question. While I was asking about what was going on in Windsor and my colleague from Ottawa Centre was talking about what was going on in Ottawa, the member for Sarnia-Lambton did not ask a single question. It was the government House leader who came to the committee at that time; the Solicitor General didn't come that day. He didn't ask a single question, knowing that his community was already being impacted and the problem could become much, much bigger as they diverted people from our border.

My colleague from Ottawa Centre will remember I said at the time how disturbing that was, frankly—I think I said “interesting” at the time—that the member wouldn't ask that: What was being done to stop it from happening at other border crossings? It wasn't a big secret. They were going to Niagara. What were they doing to try and stop blockades there? The community was left wondering and

having to act on their own to try and avoid something like this happening there.

I'm going to talk a lot about the auto sector because it was hugely impacted by the blockade and it has huge implications about the future of auto manufacturing in Windsor, but I have to also mention—I would be remiss if I didn't mention it: It's not like Windsor West is a huge agricultural community, but in the neighbouring riding we have a lot of farmers and a lot of greenhouse growers who were negatively impacted by this blockade. They couldn't get their goods to market.

I'll never claim to be an expert when it comes to farming. I can barely grow tomatoes in my own backyard. Thank you farmers for feeding my family and so many others. I know it's not easy—and that's a small scale. I can imagine what it's like for them on a much larger scale in trying to keep us all fed here in the province.

They were struggling to get their product to market. I would think in some cases that means that they have a lot of product that goes to waste, that spoils. That's time and that's their money that they put into the product they're growing. It's also money they're going to lose because they can't get it on the shelves at the grocery stores—for many of those across the border as well, to help feed families over there, I will say. It impacts the workers because if they can't get the stuff to market, they don't need the workers there who are picking it and packaging it. So the agriculture sector was impacted as well.

I will tell you that the narrative that was starting to brew when we started hearing about the impacts it has had on the agri-food sector was there was a very real concern that because they couldn't get their product to market, that meant that there was going to be a shortage of food in our local grocery stores—not just local, across the province, frankly. People were afraid that they wouldn't be able to get fresh fruit, get their fruits and vegetables, their fresh produce.

If there's one thing I can tell you about the people of Windsor-Essex, we love our fresh fruits and vegetables. There is nothing like the beautiful summer days when you can take a drive out towards the county and hit several different farm stands along the way.

People were scared and this government wasn't doing anything to help lessen those fears.

Again, you're not comparing apples to apples when you're comparing Ottawa and Windsor. There were some similarities. I'm going to read some letters from constituents who will talk about the noise during our blockade: the blaring horns, the music and what seemed like partying going on during the blockade. They're very valid points. But you can't compare what was going on in Ottawa to what was going on in Windsor. It's not apples to apples. Again, there are similarities but it's not apples to apples, and I really wish the government would recognize that, that both communities need support.

While the province did forward some support for businesses in Ottawa, our call in Windsor has gone unheard. It's not just me asking for it, the dedicated funding.

But in Ottawa, and I know my colleague will speak more at length about it, the amount of noise and disruption—and I'm putting it lightly. I'm sure my colleague will describe it much more clearly. People were coming into their work and harassing them at work, and them not being able to work. People with young children, where the kids can't sleep at night because of the noise that was going on—I can only imagine how terrible that must have been for them. It took days for the government to act, and weeks for the government to act when it came to Ottawa.

As I pointed out, in my community, they had to seek an injunction to end it before this government stood up and did anything, and that should never be the case.

1500

As my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh had mentioned in his comments, the city has asked for some financial support around the additional costs associated with policing and enforcement as well. And I'm going to take the opportunity to read a few things out, some of the advocacy work that has been done by the municipality, the chamber of commerce, myself. I know my federal colleague, Brian Masse, is pushing at the federal level for supports as well.

But this went out from the Canadian-US business associations who were calling for immediate action to open the Ambassador Bridge. This is from February 8. They're about 24 hours into it:

“The below listed business associations issued the following statement regarding the closing of the Ambassador Bridge today amid protesting blockades.

“Business associations on both sides of the border are calling for a swift and immediate clearing of the Windsor-Detroit Ambassador Bridge blockade and a timely reopening of the bridge. The group also urges the federal, provincial, state, and local governments to work collaboratively to deliver rapid solutions to the illegal blockages of traffic, which now include the Ambassador Bridge and the crossing between Coutts, Alberta and Sweet Grass, Montana.

“The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest trade crossing in North America and a vital enabler of our two economies. Given the importance of ensuring that the supply of food, medical products and industrial goods can continue, the disruption at the Ambassador Bridge is an attack on the well-being of our citizens and the businesses that employ them.

“As our economies emerge from the impacts of the pandemic, we cannot allow any group to undermine the cross-border trade that supports families on both sides of the border.

“We stand ready to provide whatever assistance may be required to expedite a speedy re-opening of the Ambassador Bridge.”

There are numerous, numerous groups that signed on to this. That was dated February 8, and the government took days—days—after that, almost at the very end of the blockade. It's like they came in at the eleventh hour and said, “Okay. We'll do something about it,” and then it ended. But this went on for days, with calls being unheard.

I wrote on February 9, so early on in the blockade:

“Dear Premier Ford,

“As you are aware, the busiest international border crossing in North America has been blocked by protesters for three consecutive days. The Ambassador Bridge is vital to border cities like Windsor. As of the writing of this letter, the traffic coming in from the United States is completely shut down.” So there was nothing coming into Canada from the United States—nothing. “This has been ongoing for over 24 hours. Residents of Windsor are frustrated and tired, as they anxiously wait for a resolution.

“We want to highlight what importance this border crossing has. An estimated \$450 million of goods cross the Ambassador bridge each day. Locally, 2,600 businesses are in the transportation and warehousing sector employing over 10,000 people. Thousands of workers cross into the United States every day, many of which are front-line workers working in hospitals and health care. Truck drivers are feeling abandoned stuck on highways and parking lots near the Windsor-Detroit border some for over 24 hours without access to food or a restroom break.”

This government was talking about a bill they had brought in about these truck drivers being able to use the washroom during the pandemic, and they just left them stuck on a highway or the roadway to the bridge, without access to food or a bathroom—the irony.

“Mayor Drew Dilkens and Chief of Windsor Police Pam Mizuno have written to you requesting additional supports including resources and personnel from your government. We are echoing their requests to act immediately to provide the resources needed to end this as soon as possible. Each hour that this protest continues is detrimental to our economy and the Windsor-Essex community. Forcibly shutting down essential infrastructure like this important border crossing is not a peaceful protest.

“Please act immediately to help Windsor-Essex residents, businesses and employees urgently.”

That was signed by our leader, Andrea Horwath; myself; my colleagues Percy Hatfield from Windsor-Tecumseh and Taras Natyshak from Essex. That was on February 9.

And I want to reiterate what we said in this letter: We support peaceful protests, but this was not peaceful. This was not showing up at your local elected representative, at whatever level of government that is, and sharing your thoughts or your dislike for something. This wasn't showing up in a park to peacefully protest something. This was shutting down the Ambassador Bridge and shutting off many of the residents in the west end of Windsor from being able to get to and from work, to and from medical appointments, to and from the grocery store. This was directly impeding other people's free movement to do things that they needed to do.

The Windsor police, on February 9, wrote to the Solicitor General asking for support.

The warden of Essex, on February 10, wrote to the Solicitor General asking for help.

Nothing happened until February 11, when everybody was reaching out and saying, for days, “Please help us”—nothing, crickets.

On February 18, I wrote to the Premier about the economic impacts on the businesses and the workers who weren't able to get to work:

“As you know, the blockade that shut down the Ambassador Bridge in my riding last week severely impacted businesses across the province. Since then, the road leading to the border crossing, Huron Church Road, has been lined by cement barricades, and several cross streets have been closed to vehicular traffic to prevent any possible repetition of that protest.

“I am sure you understand that the precautions law enforcement officials have taken to prevent another blockade have caused significant difficulties for local businesses, residents and taxpayers in Windsor West. Access to retail stores, medical offices, animal hospitals, restaurants and professional offices have been severely restricted and, in some cases, have necessitated temporary business closures.

“The province needs to step in immediately to provide relief and replace the income workers and small businesses lost because of the blockade. Working people should not have to pay for the illegal blockade and its aftermath. Small businesses have already suffered tremendously these last two years.

“Premier, I urge you to step up and provide the resources these people urgently need. Whether it's communities like ours here in Windsor, in Ottawa, Sarnia or Toronto—small businesses and residents need strong leadership that will be there for them when they need it most. They need your government's support now.

“Windsor needs to know you will act immediately to ensure that the city does not have to pay any more than it has already.”

That was February 18. Here we are, still with no dedicated financial support for those businesses or workers. The mayor is still asking for funding to help pay for the additional costs that the city incurred. Nothing has been done to address this issue.

On March 4, I again wrote to the Premier:

“As you know the Ambassador Bridge in my riding was under a blockade due to the freedom convoy protest for over six days. It caused a delay of billions of dollars' worth of goods travelling across our border. Auto manufacturing plants were forced to close their doors and send workers home. The agricultural sector experienced barriers in getting their products to market. Health care and other workers were impeded from getting to their jobs across the border. Local small and medium-sized businesses along the Huron Church corridor were greatly impacted as well.

“I have written several letters to you and spoken in person at Queen's Park, outlining the many small businesses and workers that were and continue to be negatively affected by the blockade. I, along with workers and businesses in my community, have told your government that you need to implement a dedicated fund to support those impacted by the Ambassador Bridge blockade.

“Today your government announced support for small businesses in Ottawa that were impacted by the occupation of Ottawa streets. Notably missing however, is any

supports for the Windsor-Essex community. As you should know, although the blockade was successfully ended, many measures still remain to protect the public and prevent a similar event from re-occurring. Concrete barriers have been placed along Huron Church Road leading up to the Ambassador Bridge, many blocking the cross streets from our west end to the rest of the city. While these concrete barriers are slowly being removed, the impact on businesses has had a lasting effect.

“I spoke with several small business owners that have been severely impacted from the loss of business and continue to financially suffer from the remaining long-term effects of the blockade. I have also spoken to workers that had shifts cancelled during the blockade that cannot afford their monthly expenses and have not recovered those lost wages.

“I am asking for you to expand the support program for small businesses to include those in Windsor-Essex and ask that you reimburse workers for lost wages. Members of my community deserve a government that will support them during difficult times.

“Please act immediately to help Windsor recover.” That was March 4. Still nothing.

1510

March 11: The city of Windsor at a city council meeting passed a resolution, and I'm going to read it out. It was sent to Minister Fedeli, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade:

“Dear Minister Fedeli,

“Windsor city council, at its meeting held February 28, 2022 adopted the following resolution:

“Decision number: CR79/2022:

“That the correspondence from the city of Windsor, Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island, as well as the member of provincial Parliament” for “Windsor West dated February 24, 2022 and February 18, 2022 respectively regarding the illegal occupation of the Ambassador Bridge and ongoing restrictions on Huron Church Road be received for information; and further,

“That administration be directed to send a letter to the federal and provincial governments advocating for financial aid for Windsor businesses that were affected by the illegal occupation of the Ambassador Bridge and ongoing restrictions on Huron Church Road.”

Here, the city, along with others—they're citing others that have asked for support. The city passed a unanimous resolution calling on this government to do what many of us are asking it to do.

This is not about picking one over the other, Ottawa over Windsor. Both areas need support. Just do it. Our local businesses have been battered around enough during the pandemic. They've struggled enough—and then this happened. We needed a dedicated fund to help them with the expenses directly related to the blockade.

Here's a letter from March 17 from the mayor—again asking for the Solicitor General to help with funds to cover the costs associated with enforcement and removal of the blockade. I want to read some letters out, because the

government side talked a lot—I have too, out of fairness, but the government side was solely focused on the economic impact, and it can't be overstated. Absolutely not, it cannot be overstated. But there was a real human cost to this too, so I want to make sure that those voices are heard.

I know I touched on them already, but I'm going to read some emails from constituents that were living through this as the blockade was happening. I'm not going to give names, because some of them actually give the street that they live on, and I don't want them to have any negative consequences, perhaps, for sharing their concerns.

This resident says:

“I live on Dot Ave. in the west of Windsor. Today I saw the Ambassador Bridge and Huron Line shutdown and have to say that it looks like a massive fail on the part of all levels of government and the police force. How this group of protestors is given carte blanche to hold my neighbourhood hostage with blaring horns, loudspeaker music, screaming, cheering and BBQs in the middle of Huron Line at all hours of the night is beyond shocking to me. How is this a peaceful protest? I would imagine that if I blocked a major highway and created incessant noise pollution for a suburb of Windsor, I would be arrested!/? So how is this happening? Working people have to get up for jobs in the morning....

“Sincerely,

“A not-so-impressed West Windsor constituent.”

Again, I won't share that person's name just because I don't want to potentially cause any trouble to them since they did name the street they live on.

Again, this was going on—this email came in the very first days of the blockade, and this government was doing nothing to support them.

Here's another one:

“I support the clearing of our roads from the occupying rebels. I live in Windsor (near the juncture of 401, Huron Church, EC Row), and am originally from Ottawa. If people want to peacefully protest at the municipal, provincial, or federal levels, the plazas or lawns at these sites are a peaceful and lawful way to make their objections known. Choking off streets, breaking sound restrictions at all hours, idling vehicles, impeding locals from their daily lives, burdening retailers who are already struggling ... this is not my Canada.”

At this point, this government had done nothing and was failing not only our local economy, provincial economy, the country's economy, but they were hindering the ability for people in the west end of Windsor to simply have peace in their home when they were there, to be able to sleep, to be able to work, to be able to access health care, to be able to go to the grocery store. The government had done nothing.

I talked about nurses earlier. Here's an email from a nurse that I want to share. I talked about the nurses being forced to cross the border to go to work:

“We need help at our Windsor, Ontario-Detroit, Michigan border/bridge ASAP. It is temporarily closed due to the trucker convoy. Please take a look at Huron

Church Road and the mayhem. There are over 2,000 health care workers who are required and relied upon to care for patients in Michigan every day.” They’re required because they can’t get the respect they deserve on this side from this government. “This convoy is hindering our ability for safe and free passage across our international border to work. This is unacceptable, illegal and dangerous practice infringing on our personal freedoms. The public needs to understand that this is not just about the flow of goods across this border but the devastating impact on our patients’ care and well-being if we can’t get to work in a global pandemic. What if this was one of their loved ones affected, how would they feel then?!”

I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that those of us on this side of the House, in the NDP caucus, fully support the right to peaceful protest. But this was not peaceful—not peaceful.

When you hear from the people in the west end—and I have others, but I’m going run out of time. I can tell you, Speaker, when I was thinking I had to speak for an hour, I was a little concerned I’d be able to do it. I’m seeing the clock now and I think my colleagues from London West and Hamilton Mountain might have been right that I might run out of time before I say everything I want to say, because there is a lot to say.

I want to talk about the auto sector, because it was the various auto manufacturing groups that filed for the injunction because this government wasn’t acting. So they filed for an injunction to end the blockade.

We know that the impact was huge. As I said, the Ford plant was short-shifting and then eventually had to close the plant, and those workers were sent home. The Windsor assembly plant was short-shifting—and that’s not even talking about the plants locally that make parts, the mould companies, the tool-and-die companies that make product that crosses the border to help keep their auto sector going. There was a huge impact for them as well.

Speaker, I’m really struggling with not being unparliamentary here because I—question period this morning, what a spectacle that was. What a show the government put on this morning.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: That’s not a good thing. Don’t thank me, because the government side of the House sat there—you should stop chasing nurses out of the province for many reasons, but the fact that you’re going to break an arm, hyperextend, dislocate your shoulder from patting yourselves on the back the way you do is reason enough to keep nurses here.

The fact that the Minister of Economic Development—and Speaker, this is personal for me too; I’m struggling here. That the government House leader stood there and talked about the investment in Windsor—which is huge, a huge investment. Nobody is arguing. It is a huge investment. It is major news for our community and we welcome it. We needed it, and we welcome it. I want to be clear: This is not about the investment itself. But I watched the government side of the House applaud themselves over and over and over again, and not one word was mentioned

about the workers on the shop floor or the unions or the bargaining committees that have worked their tails off in the sector to not only maintain the jobs we have but to build and grow that sector. Not once did this government give any of those people credit for the work they did long before this government came into power, and the work to fight for those jobs just got harder under this government.

1520

I heard—I believe it was the government House leader. My colleague got up and asked a question about affordable housing, and the government House leader somehow twisted that into something about the announcement in Windsor and good-paying jobs and tried to make it sound like we don’t support them. And he had the nerve to stand there and accuse those of us in this caucus, the NDP caucus, of being responsible for closing the GM plant in Oshawa. Now, I don’t know what kind of fantasy land the Conservative government lives in. I don’t know what kind of revisionist history they’re going by. But when my colleague—and Speaker, I’m going to put you on the spot, and I know you have to stay out of this one, but when you were standing up fighting for auto jobs in Oshawa, when people in Oshawa, including my colleague, were losing sleep and had anxiety and very real concerns about that plant closing and she was standing here asking questions, begging the government to step in and help, do you know what the Premier said? And for the revisionist history folks over there on that side of the House, there’s a thing called Hansard. Look it up. The Premier said, “That ship has left the dock.” He wasn’t even willing to try. It is absolutely abhorrent that the government side is trying to not only take credit for the fact that there were some jobs salvaged in Oshawa, but they are trying to blame the folks on this side of the House.

Maybe some of you remember—I don’t think any of you attended. I think you’re all familiar with Sting, the singer or the artist Sting, who held a rally there. There were thousands—maybe 3,000 or 4,000 people; I’m not sure—who showed up to that. I know my colleague from Oshawa was there, on top of standing shoulder to shoulder with the workers, having meetings, showing up when they had their days of action, that kind of thing. I believe I had other colleagues—maybe the member from Sudbury, I think, but there were others who showed up for the Oshawa workers, and not just for the concert, but throughout it. I’d love to see any of the government members who were there through any of that put up their hands. It didn’t happen. They try to take credit for some of the jobs being salvaged in Oshawa when they had nothing to do with it.

I want to talk about a documentary that came out. It was filmmaker Peter Findlay who did a documentary, and I watched it. If the government members of the House haven’t watched it, I suggest you do, because you see the real human impacts of the decisions you make, whether that’s the actions you take or, in this case, the inaction. He talked about how, during his commute on November 26, 2018, he heard on the radio news that after 100 years, GM’s Oshawa plant was closing. He says: “I thought, ‘Oh my God, this is a huge story.’ It was an incredible

economic story and it was an incredible human story. In Oshawa, there are a lot of multi-generational GM workers.”

“Oshawa is indeed a company town. GM’s Oshawa assembly plant has been the lifeblood of the community for a century. At its peak, Oshawa employed some 25,000 people, Findlay said, but GM could not confirm. On the day GM said it would close the facility,” there were 2,500 employees.

Again, as I mentioned, the documentary is called *Company Town*. I watched it a long time ago. I highly recommend watching it. It won awards. It documented the workers’ personal struggles to find financial safety nets, and it captures the heartbreak as the clock ticks toward the last day of operations, when they lose the job they loved and their lives are changed forever.

This is a really important piece, again, when we’re trying to have accurate history and not revisionist history. It says, “The film wrapped up production before Unifor”—Unifor, not Doug Ford, not the Conservative government; Unifor—“the union that represents Canadian autoworkers, saved the plant during 2020 labour talks.”

This goes on to talk about—he interviewed workers there. He talks to a son whose dad worked at the plant. He talks about how it’s intergenerational—or at least it used to be—stable, good-paying jobs. Full disclosure: My husband works at the Windsor assembly plant. He will be 28 years there in August. For the first two years of our marriage, we lived in separate cities. He relocated to Windsor to work at Windsor assembly, and I was still in school so I had to stay behind.

I can tell you that for the families, the people who work there, it is a roller-coaster ride. That cannot be understated—a roller-coaster ride. Because there are times when production is humming, they’re doing Saturday and Sunday shifts, and then all of a sudden that comes to a crashing halt, and there is great uncertainty about their jobs.

There are some similarities when I talk about the documentary in Oshawa, about the Oshawa GM plant. Again, it was the union that saved that in labour talks—not the Ford government, not the Conservatives. It was Unifor. The one thing that is constant is, it is always the union. It’s always the union leadership and the bargaining committees at the bargaining table with the company that do the really heavy lifting on behalf of the workers in order to try to negotiate stability and longevity, and to build on the sector.

In July 2020, we lost the third shift—we call it the midnight shift because it was midnights—at Windsor assembly. The Premier said nothing, did nothing to try to save that shift—nothing. I wrote to him; the president of Local 444, which represents those workers, Dave Cassidy, wrote to him. He’d text him, because the Premier says, “Here’s my number. You can call me or text me any time. I always respond.” There were numerous phone calls from Dave, text messages, letters—we did letters together—not a peep. Not a peep from the Premier.

When the Premier said of the Oshawa GM plant that that ship has left the dock, clearly it hadn’t, because the

union worked really hard and managed to save some of those jobs. Many of them came back on contract—well, not many. Many will never have another job there again, but some came back on contract, making much less than they were in the original iteration of the Oshawa plant.

We saw this Premier do the same thing with Windsor. Nearly 1,400 jobs gone—direct jobs. That has an impact of about seven to nine additional jobs: 1,400 times seven to nine is the effect on workers in other workplaces like the parts plants. This government was nowhere.

I remember Nemark—oh, I want to backtrack a bit. We had a rally for GM Oshawa in Windsor. Thousands of people came to that rally, but not a single Conservative in the crowd to come out and support those workers—not a one. Lots of my colleagues drove from all over the province to come to that and support those workers; not a Conservative government member to be found.

1530

I look back at Nemark in my riding, when it was announced that they were going to close by mid-2020. They were going to shut that plant down; not a peep from the government. Myself, my colleagues, workers, the local labour leadership and the national labour leadership all begged this government to do something, to say something, to try something. Just like with the third shift at Windsor assembly and the Oshawa GM plant, the Premier’s attitude is, “That ship has left the dock.”

Speaker, I want to be clear: for these workers—and these are not easy jobs. I will tell you that these auto jobs break people. They break people. There are sometimes multiple times in a week that my husband comes home from his shift and tells me that a co-worker was taken out in an ambulance. Some have died on the job. They blow out a shoulder on the job. They blow out a knee on the job. Their back gets hurt permanently on the job, and they keep going back, and they work through that pain, because these are well-paying jobs with pensions and benefits that have a huge economic impact to our community because those workers, with that financial stability, that income, go out into our community and spend it.

Do you know that Unifor—I’m trying to remember the exact number, but just in Windsor alone, they are the largest contributor—I know I have it in my notes somewhere; I will correct it if I’m wrong. I believe it was \$1 million in a year that the auto workers contribute directly to the United Way. They are one of the biggest, if not the biggest, one-time financial supporter—I mean “one-time” like an “at a time” kind of thing; they do it year over year. Many of them have it taken right off their paycheques, a contribution to the United Way which then goes to help people in need in our community.

But these workers give it their all, and they go home and they’re sore and they’re injured, and after years of it, it wears them down. I have friends who work at Windsor assembly who, literally every morning before they go into work, have to peel their fingers open, because they can’t open them on their own because of the consistent physical movement required to do their jobs, or they’ve had multiple surgeries to fix a shoulder. Eventually the company

says, “Well, if you can’t do the job we want you to do, whether you’re injured on the job or not, you’re on your own now” kind of thing, but that’s another conversation for another day.

As I pointed out, these used to be generational jobs, where mom or dad starts at the plant, then one of the kids goes there, and another kid, and then those kids have families of their own and their kids work at the plant, and there’s pride in what they do. Although it can be an uncertain sector, absolutely, there is some sense of security when they’re working, knowing that they are making a decent wage so they can take care of their families.

And so, for this government to stand here today with this big show they put on, the theatre they put on this morning, and claim all the credit without recognizing, not once, the workers on the shop floor or their local union leaders, the bargaining committees and even the folks at the national level for the contributions that they make to make announcements like what happened in Windsor yesterday happen—those huge, great news pieces for our community; for the government to take all the credit for that and not give credit to the workers and the labour leaders and the bargaining committees is shameful. It shows how disconnected they are—absolutely disconnected.

While I only have—I guess my colleagues were right. I’ve got four minutes left and I probably could go over that. I really do appreciate your faith in me. It has been a long time since I had to stand up and talk for an hour.

But I want to mention something else too, because when this first happened, when the government first came in—they want to talk about how they’re for the auto sector and they’re for the workers. When they first came into power, when they were first elected—especially I’m going to talk about EV vehicles. I’m going to focus on EV vehicles right now. They got rid of EV incentives. The Premier was like, “They’re only for rich people who want to buy a \$150,000 Tesla.”

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Somebody, I think it was the Solicitor General, just heckled me about it. But—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook on a point of order.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Madam Speaker, this has drifted so far from Bill 100. I don’t know; now we’re talking EV vehicles. Can we at least focus on what we’re supposed to be debating this afternoon?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I had some trouble hearing the member, but I think she was looking to ensure that the debate is indeed in keeping with the topic on the floor. So I would take that suggestion to the member from Windsor West to make sure her remarks are germane to the bill, and I return to the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook was clearly just trying to eat up some of my clock, but I’ll get my thought out.

This directly relates to the bill. We’re talking about trade. We’re talking about how it impacted my community

and the auto sector in my community. I’m sorry if the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook was maybe sleeping through part of what I said, but it’s pretty clear and it’s very important.

This government comes into power and they get rid of the EV incentives. At the time, the Premier says, “We’re not going to fund rich people. It only helps rich people wanting to buy \$150,000 Teslas.” Guess what? Guess what’s built in Windsor? The Pacificas. So there’s no incentive for the people who build the vehicles even, or the people in my community. For the people who aren’t familiar with what Pacificas are, because the government side may not know, they’re minivans. They’re family vehicles, and they got rid of the incentive for it.

They ripped out charging stations for electric vehicles and now they’re putting them back in and saying, “Aren’t we the heroes? We’re the champions of EV vehicles.”

Speaker, again, I cannot understate the importance of ensuring that our international trade can happen unimpeded, that things can get back and forth across the Ambassador Bridge. There’s no doubt about that. There’s no doubt about impact that it’s had on my community.

But I don’t see a heck of a lot in this bill that aren’t tools this government could have used much earlier than they did to stop the blockade in Windsor. In fact, people in my community see this as the government just trying to provide cover for themselves, to make it look like they’re doing something now, that they’re acting now, and trying to deflect from the fact that for five of the six days that the blockade was in place and trade wasn’t happening and jobs were at risk—and they still are, because this government didn’t do anything, so our relations with the States are tumultuous. They’re questioning doing trade with us and investing here. The people in my riding, who had to listen to the horns and the partying going on, see this as a government that didn’t act when they needed to, and now they’re just bringing this in as political cover.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for the question. Speaker, my colleague was talking about how, this morning during question period, we were happy and celebrating the achievement that we have for the workers of Ontario—100%. We’re very proud of the fact that we said, from the beginning, we will fight for every single job for this province. Under this leadership of this minister, we now have a \$5-billion investment coming into this province and 2,500 new jobs being created as a result, and thousands of construction jobs. So, congratulations, again, to you, Minister. Congratulations to the Premier.

1540

But I do have a question to my honourable colleague. The Michigan Department of Treasury talked about 10,000 commercial vehicles hauling an estimated \$325 million using the Ambassador Bridge on a daily basis. Given the huge value of goods going back and forth, Madam Speaker, I’m wondering if my colleague can explain if she sees now the importance of this legislation so that we don’t miss a single day of trade.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's very clear that the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill just did exactly what I said they were doing, while trying to say they were doing otherwise. He just got up and gave all the credit to the minister.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member will come to order, right now.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: What about the workers? What about the unions? What about the bargaining committees that actually bargain into their agreements and fight to maintain and build on the auto sector?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Members will come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: So after I pointed out that they're doing it and what that means, how degrading that is to the workers, the auto workers across this province, the member gets up and immediately does it again: "Yay, us. It's all us. We're doing it for the workers." Never once did they talk about the fact that the workers are the ones to be applauded as well.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the questions and responses, and I'm not interested in the heckling in my ear while that is allowed to proceed. We do have an alternating back and forth. Members will have the opportunity to stand and ask questions and hopefully to listen to the answers. Thank you.

Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Windsor West for her excellent one-hour speech. I was particularly inspired by the wise reminder that it's workers that have built this province and it's workers who run this province.

The Windsor West MPP has called for the government to provide economic relief and support for the prolonged impacts of the blockade, disrupted working-class neighbourhoods and the fact that shifts at the Big Three auto plants and other businesses were shut down. How would you summarize the government's financial support for the Windsor West community?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from my colleague. I'll tell you, I'm going to quote Fred Bouzide, who owns Fred's Farm Fresh. I personally shop there. He was quoted as saying that his business lost \$30,000 to \$40,000 during the blockade.

I have a pediatrician who provides care to children with complex medical needs, many of them with developmental disabilities who could not get to appointments. These are high-risk kids who couldn't get to appointments because of the blockade.

There are numerous other businesses along the Huron Church corridor that either had reduced capacity or had to close their doors because of the blockade. The fact that this government refuses to listen not to me—I've asked for it—but to the city, to the mayor, to the businesses, to the chamber of commerce; the fact that they're not listening

to them and providing dedicated funding to help with the costs incurred, or lost when it comes to businesses, because of the blockade is beyond all of us. We cannot understand why they wouldn't.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's truly a pleasure to stand and be part of this debate today. I hear the member across the aisle. Obviously, we were happy for those unions and the workers and everyone else who is involved. Frankly, at this point, we should just drop all the partisan stuff and say, "This a great day for our province and particularly for those families." That's what my colleague from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill was saying, that this is a great day to celebrate. This is a day to move forward.

This bill will ensure supply chains are not going to be disrupted in the future. Employees will not be sent home because parts were not arriving on time. The auto sector won't take huge losses. The agriculture and other industries won't be impacted negatively because they have the ability to do this without stopping for an emergency order.

I sat at the cabinet table. You have to stop and go through the process. Why would you not support for those families the ability to have the power and the authority to do that immediately?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member is presuming to know how I do or do not feel about the bill, whether I support or do not support it. I would ask that he not do that.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: He just did it again.

The government side is missing the point, so I want to be crystal clear on this: It is not about being happy for the workers. We're all happy for the workers. I'm thrilled. It's about giving credit where credit is due. You have not acknowledged the work of the folks on the shop floor when it comes to our auto sector and getting investment in our auto sector, maintaining and building on those jobs. You have not given credit to the union leaders and the bargaining committees who do this every time they go into bargaining to secure product. You're not giving the credit where credit is due. You took credit for Oshawa when it's clear that it was the union that saved the plant, and the bargaining committee, the national committee—not you.

It's not about being happy for the workers. We're thrilled. It's about giving credit where credit is due, and that's not what you're doing. You're taking it all for yourself.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I did have a quick question, but, just in follow-up to the back and forth that has been going on, I do want to remind members of the House that we have a brand-new carving in this chamber that actually features the Seven Grandfather Teachings within it. Each of the animals that are in it represent one of those teachings, and one of those teachings is humility. I think what I'm hearing from the member from Windsor West is that she's asking for some humility from members of this government in terms of not exclusively applauding

whatever role you thought you played in that deal, but recognizing the workers themselves and not cutting them out. I would remind folks that those teachings are carved literally physically into the walls of this building and to perhaps embrace some humility here tonight.

I do want to mention to the member that here in Toronto Centre, we experienced the convoy very differently from Windsor, but we had a lot of concerns around the safety of our hospitals, specifically. Could you elaborate more on the impact to health care organizations in your riding?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the reminder and the education to the members in the chamber from the member from Toronto Centre. She said it eloquently. It is about humility. That's what I'm saying. Give credit where credit is due. It's not all about you; it's not all about you.

When we're talking about health care workers, in Windsor, our hospital was put on—I can't remember the term off the top of my head all of a sudden, but on alert to prepare for mass casualties. I don't mean—I'm not talking about necessarily deaths, but injuries because of the blockade and trying to eliminate the blockade. It stopped health care workers from getting to work. Health care workers who lived in the west end had barriers to getting to work, which impacted my entire community. I think that that's something that has to be looked at, not just the economic impact, which is important, but also the human impact and the ripple effect that the blockade had.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As we are debating Bill 100, we know this bill will ensure to protect border infrastructure like the airports and bridges, and now we have been talking about how the blockade in February affected Windsor. It truly did. We have been hearing from many manufacturers across Ontario that it has affected not just Windsor, but across the province.

Can the member opposite see this legislation as an ensuring tool that would protect the borders and that would keep the supply chain stable so that businesses can benefit from the Windsor West community?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A very quick response from the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Just to clarify, as I said before, it was the auto manufacturing associations, our chamber of commerce as an intervenor and our city as an intervenor that had to file for an injunction before this government stepped up to do anything to end the blockade.

I cannot state enough that, on this side of the House, peaceful protest and the right to assembly—we absolutely support that, but this was not peaceful. This had huge economic impacts. This had huge, real human impacts on the people in my community, and this bill—most of this was already in place, and the government chose not to use the tools they had. Most of these laws were in place, and they just chose not to use them.

1550

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It is my pleasure to rise here today in the Legislature to speak in support of

Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, 2022.

Madam Speaker, this is a critical time for our province. After an unprecedented period of personal and economic uncertainty, we know that there is hope on the horizon. We have been investing in Ontario's hard-working families, job-creating businesses and growing communities. We are supporting people and businesses in every corner of our province. We're investing in infrastructure that will maximize job creation and strengthen our competitive workforce. And we are crossing that last mile of COVID-19 because of the progress that our investments have given way to.

The name of this bill has particular importance for me, as the minister responsible for managing the province's capital and also as the former Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Small businesses are an essential part of the fabric of our communities. Whether it be the mom-and-pop shop in town, the hairstylist at the mall or the trucking business delivering made-in-Ontario goods to markets across Canada and beyond, our government has made tremendous progress over the last four years to ease regulatory burdens on our small businesses, reducing pressures on bottom lines, as well as creating jobs and growing wages. We have been restoring Ontario's competitive advantage to make sure that there's no better place to open, run and grow a business than right here in Ontario.

When it comes to larger businesses, we have been successful in leveraging Ontario's top-quality manufacturing talent, clean and competitive electricity, access to investment-ready sites, and our government's work to reduce our costs of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion a year, to continue to make this province a destination for major investments.

Just yesterday, Premier Ford and Minister Fedeli announced a joint venture between LG Energy Solution and Stellantis where they will invest more than \$5 billion to build a facility in Windsor to manufacture batteries for electric vehicles right here in our province. This represents the largest automotive manufacturing investment in the history of Ontario. This historic investment puts us on a path to becoming one of the most vertically integrated automotive jurisdictions in the emerging North American EV market. The facility will employ 2,500 people, with good-paying jobs, building a key component for the car of the future. Construction activities are scheduled to begin later this year and will spread the economic benefits even further.

As the Premier said, attracting this multi-billion-dollar investment will secure Ontario's place as a North American hub for building electric vehicles and the batteries that power them. And as we secure these game-changing investments, we're also connecting resources, industries and workers in northern Ontario with the manufacturing might of southern Ontario to build up homegrown supply chains. Every region of Ontario will benefit, with thousands of jobs being created, and a stronger economy that works for everyone.

Each component of the battery supply chain plays an important and interconnected role in the production of electric vehicles, just like each component of an agricultural supply chain grows and distributes nutritious food that Ontarians, Canadians, Americans and people around the world enjoy. So when individuals obstructed the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor and cut off the route of 25% of Canada-US two-way trade, they hurt people and businesses all the way up and down the supply line on both sides of the border, from the steelworker in Hamilton who creates raw material to the assembly plant worker in Michigan who installs a pressed car part.

If Ontario were its own country, it would be the United States' third-largest trading partner. Ontario is the number one export destination for 19 US states and the number two export destination for seven US states.

A staggering fact is that the Ambassador Bridge is responsible for approximately \$17 million per hour in economic activity between Canada and the US. The Blue Water Bridge is the second-busiest Ontario-US crossing, which links Sarnia with Port Huron, Michigan. These two bridges are the arteries that keep Ontario's manufacturing heartlands pumping.

Also consider the other international border crossings like the airports. Toronto Pearson International Airport was not only the hub for the delivery and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across the entire country, but when passenger flights were few and far between, their cargo shipping never slowed; in fact, it picked up.

This is what was at stake as convoy blockades moved across Ontario, seriously impacting one of Canada's most important international border crossings and threatening to impact others.

Thankfully, when the Ambassador Bridge was blocked illegally, we were able to issue an emergency order to provide the police with the tools they needed to clear it, such as to be able to remove objects that were being used to form blockades or the power to suspend a driver's licence where a vehicle was being used in a blockade. This allowed them to diffuse the situation and effectively return the bridge to the public. But the damage had been done, and not just in Windsor. People and businesses all over the country were impacted, and we saw billions of dollars in trade disrupted, shifts cancelled and factories closed.

I'm proud to be the son of small business owners. I had the pleasure of supporting the province's small businesses when I served as the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. I understand what businesses mean to the people who run them. I understand how much these businesses mean to the wider communities they serve, to the economy they support, and to all of us. And I understand that we need to do everything we can to protect Ontario's businesses. Businesses like Stellantis in Brampton were directly impacted by the illegal convoy blockades, and workers in my riding paid the price.

Unfortunately, we know that the impacts of supply chain disruption continue. Consider major grocery stores such as Loblaws. When we hear the term "shelfflation," it's grocery store shelves at stores like Loblaws that come to mind.

According to a Dalhousie University professor of food distribution and policy, between \$8 billion and \$12 billion in agri-food crosses the Ambassador Bridge in both directions each year.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers reports that roughly 40% to 50% of products that come into the Ontario Food Terminal in Etobicoke do so via the Ambassador Bridge. Once the items arrive at the terminal, they are then distributed to the stores. Just picture the coordination and timelines required. Delays in delivery of 12 to 24 hours, let alone of multiple days or longer can trickle down to the pocketbooks of hard-working parents and young Ontarians working to build good lives for themselves, and it can hurt workers, businesses and business owners.

1600

Anderson Economic Group puts the loss of the Ambassador Bridge blockade to Ontario wages at US\$144.9 million. This is based on an assessment of how the blockade impacted the ability to work in Cambridge, Ingersoll, Oakville, Windsor and—this hits very close to home—in Brampton.

Three thousand forty-seven people earn their living at Stellantis's Brampton plant. The union is Unifor Local 1285, and the workforce is made up of talented people who do excellent, meaningful work. So when Stellantis Canadian operations were hampered by the shutdown of traffic on the Ambassador Bridge, they were one of the many auto manufacturers that had shifts affected. In the case of the Brampton plant, it was a parts shortage that led to a shortened shift.

In a release, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association was clear: "Blockades at Canada's borders are threatening fragile supply chains already under pressure due to pandemic-related shortages and backlogs...."

"Auto production relies on efficient supply chain logistics for delivery of parts, components and vehicles. Persistent delays at the Ambassador Bridge risk disrupting automotive production that employs tens of thousands of Canadians."

Now let's zoom out to other industries, and the impact of an impeded border crossing is massive. I heard from constituents and residents who make their living as truckers about how badly this hit their operations. The delays created by the illegal blockades across Ontario greatly disrupted the personal and professional lives of our hard-working truck drivers. Did you know that most trucking companies are small businesses? When you have a handful of trucks and have to reroute for hours around a blockade, we know that what happens is operators end up wearing the costs.

The president and CEO of the Ontario Trucking Association has been clear: "There are more than 16,000 commercial trucks that cross the Ontario-US border each day. These trucks are moving Ontario's economy and when they are delayed in getting to market, our economy and those industries who rely on the trucking sector are negatively impacted." I'm very glad Stephen was able to attend the announcement of Bill 100 on Monday and that

it has his full support. He has praised this bill, saying, “The Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act will protect Ontario’s economy and send a strong message to our American customers that our borders are being protected.” That is exactly the message Premier Ford, the Solicitor General and our government want to send.

On the same day that the Premier declared a province-wide emergency, he committed to bringing new legislation forward that would make these measures permanent. The proposed Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act grew that commitment and demonstrates the priority we put in public safety and protecting the livelihoods of Ontarians.

If passed, Bill 100 would protect certain transportation infrastructure from unlawful disruptions. The protected transportation infrastructure would be international borders, airports prescribed in regulation and other transportation infrastructure that is significant to international trade that has been prescribed in regulation as needed, for up to 30 days.

The proposed act would protect jobs and shield the economy from future disruptions and disturbances like the recent blockades at Windsor’s Ambassador Bridge that halted billions of dollars of trade. It will signal to the world that Ontario is a reliable trading partner and is open for business.

First and foremost, this is about the ability to act quickly and effectively. The Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act proposes several key measures to ensure police can respond more effectively to potential disruptions in the future. This includes making it illegal to impede international borders, certain international airports and other transportation infrastructure prescribed in regulation in a manner that disrupts ordinary economic activity or interferes with the safety, health or well-being of the public.

This act would provide police officers and the registrar of motor vehicles with powers to impose roadside suspension of driver’s licences and vehicle permits and to seize licence plates when a vehicle is used in an illegal blockade.

It would also enable the registrar of motor vehicles to suspend or cancel the plate portion of a commercial motor vehicle or trailer permit or a commercial vehicle operator’s registration certificate, and would enable MTO transportation enforcement officers to seize the licence plates for the affected vehicles. This would impact the vehicle involved in the protest as well as the company’s entire fleet.

In addition, the legislation would grant police officers the power to remove and store objects, including vehicles, that make up an illegal blockade. It would expand the ability of police to arrest individuals that breach the act and fail to follow police directions to stop doing so, as well as require those individuals to identify themselves to police for the sole purpose of laying a charge.

As my colleagues have shared, penalties for non-compliance are strong deterrents. Someone, like the last holdouts at the Ambassador Bridge blockade who refused to disperse as directed or to remove their car from the border crossing, could face severe penalties that I have to

imagine would make them think twice about illegal behaviour.

We are also enhancing police capacity to provide effective public order policing on a sustainable basis through our \$96-million investment in staff, sharing of best practices and equipment.

Notably, within the Ontario Provincial Police we are enhancing positions in public order and emergency management and provincial liaison units over and above the full-time emergency response team complement to enable a surge capacity to multiple incidents and to sustain capacity during prolonged events.

The OPP, RCMP, Windsor Police Service and supporting police services from across the province accomplished a real team lift when they worked together to open the border. I am very thankful to them, and knowing what we do, we need to give them the tools to ensure nothing like the border shutdown we experienced ever happens again.

When our government was elected by the people of Ontario in 2018, we heard how important it was for Ontario to be competitive, as we competed with all of North America for jobs. We were the most uncompetitive jurisdiction for attracting new investments when we were elected. Over 300,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector. Being more competitive and making sure that our businesses can be more productive has turned the tide, resulting in more jobs and trained workers to fill them.

We are investing in training, growing opportunities for each and every Ontarian so that together we can continue to grow our economy. That is what we are protecting with this piece of legislation. It has my full support, and I look forward to continuing to send a strong message that Ontario is open for business. It’s going a long way in my community, and I hope it goes equally far with the US trading partners.

1610

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I’m glad the President of the Treasury Board started with his comments. That’s where I want to go to, to the beginning of his comments, where he talked about the competitive advantage and some of the red tape reduction. I’m looking at Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, and it falls right in line with the question I want to put to him. It’s in regard to the development of masks. As he knows, I’m a huge advocate for mask development in the plants that are in my riding, particularly in Wiikwemkoong and Sagamok First Nations. Their main plant is in Vaughan, over at Dent-X, not very far from here.

Would you believe that it would be a competitive advantage for this government to actually return a call to them in regard to actually purchasing a mask? Would you believe that it would be reducing red tape if the government would actually acknowledge and purchase and come to an agreement with them, a procurement agreement, so that they can secure the 241 jobs that they’ve created? Would that be something that would interest the President of the Treasury Board?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: To the member opposite, our government, from day one, has been committed to supporting domestic production of PPE. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, right at the start of the pandemic, created the Ontario Together portal, where we had thousands of submissions. Much of the PPE we see across the province today is a direct result of whether it was manufacturing plants across Ontario, whether it was other companies retooling their operations overnight to support the production of those materials. So, to the member opposite, absolutely, we are more than happy to continue building on those types of companies in Ontario and supporting them.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the President of the Treasury Board—a wonderful presentation. Trade between Ontario and the United States is so important to our economy. Ontario alone is the United States's third-largest trading partner. But when we saw the Ambassador Bridge blocked last month, supply chains were seriously disrupted and employees sent home because parts were not arriving on time. Our auto sector took huge losses, as did agriculture and many other industries. Also, Ontario's reputation as a reliable place was hurt.

My question to the President of the Treasury Board: What tools does the proposed legislation, this Bill 100, provide officials to ensure that they are able to do more in the blockage of vital infrastructure for future and—

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

Response, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This is about ensuring that we have business confidence and that it continues to remain strong in Ontario, and that is exactly what this act is doing.

To the member's question, one of the opportunities and tools that the police will have, or others will have, is that the registrar of motor vehicles, for example, will have powers to impose roadside suspension of drivers' licences and vehicle permits, and to seize licence plates when a vehicle is used in an illegal blockade. It will also enable the registrar of motor vehicles to suspend or cancel the plate portion of a commercial motor vehicle. Most importantly, it sends a strong message to our US trading partners that we are open for business.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have to go back to the President of the Treasury Board, and I have to let him know that the level of frustration that I'm feeling right now is that—there's not even an acknowledgement from this government of returning a simple call to those who have invested millions of dollars in redeveloping and deploying their employees, providing a PPE product that we had made here in Ontario. They have the three-ply masks, and they also have the N95s that are available for all of our schools. Just last week, students took to the sidewalks of their schools to protest the decision of removing masks.

We have the ability here in Ontario to provide those masks to those students.

Are you not listening to a lot of what is being said by Dent-X? They can provide those masks at 48 cents a piece instead of the \$3.95 this government is spending. Look at what you have in your own backyard.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All remarks to and through the Chair, please.

The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much once again to the member opposite.

Our government, from day one, has been committed to supporting domestic supply chains and the production of PPE domestically. We've had an over \$500-million contract for masks that was just put out, as well, and many successful tenders across companies here in the province of Ontario to support the production and secure our domestic supply chains.

To the member opposite: I'd be more than happy to speak with those companies that are on his radar and continue to build in Ontario. We want to make sure that Ontario remains resilient and that we have strong production across the province, so I would look forward to taking down the contact information and having a discussion with those he has mentioned.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Of course, my question is back to the Treasury Board president.

The proposed bill addresses the situation with the unlawful protests at the Ambassador Bridge from last month.

My constituents have asked, would this act exempt protests regarding issues affecting Indigenous peoples, such as land claims that fall under federal jurisdiction?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much to the member opposite for the question.

As the member opposite knows, the need for this piece of legislation is to ensure that businesses remain open and that there is confidence between the US manufacturing partners and the Canadian manufacturing sector, as well.

As we built out this piece of legislation, its main intent was to secure economic opportunity for all people in the province of Ontario. It is limited to what I prescribed in my remarks during debate on the protection of key infrastructure across the province, and to send a strong message—whether it be to manufacturers that are opening up their businesses in Ontario or internationally, in the US—that Ontario will always remain open for business and protect its economic prosperity here in the province.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened intently to the President of the Treasury Board during his debate time, and I didn't hear him talk much about the economic impacts that closing down the border had on the community in Windsor. It affected businesses. It affected families. The auto plants were seriously affected—having plants and shifts closed down for days at a time, while the

government took their time getting their ducks in order to actually move on things on the sixth day.

I know that the government has provided economic relief funds to Ottawa. Will the government commit to providing those same economic relief fund monies to Windsor?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The member would know that in my speech I specifically referenced the impact on workers across the province that these blockades had. I referenced the Anderson Economic Group, who put out a report that said the loss of the Ambassador Bridge blockade to Ontario wages was estimated at US\$144.9 million. This was based on assessments from disruptions in Cambridge, Ingersoll, Oakville and Windsor. It hit home very close to me in the city of Brampton where we saw a Stellantis plant that operates there having their factory cut down on hours and impacting workers who worked there. I addressed those concerns, and that's why we're putting in this legislation to support workers—

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

1620

Mr. Joel Harden: All right. It's important that I have an opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill 100. I understand what the Solicitor General said about the scope of the legislation. The legislation, however, is talking about keeping Ontario open for business, and that's a major concern to people back home for reasons I don't think I need to explain to people in this chamber.

I want to begin, though, on a different note, if you'll permit me, Speaker. We write a newsletter a week that starts with a column from me, and the title of the newsletter we wrote this week, the leading column was "Kindness First." I want to begin on that note and acknowledge a misstep in my own behaviour in this chamber yesterday when we were having a debate on disability rights, something I pay a lot of attention to in my work, the amount of poverty amongst people with disabilities and the suffering. In the course of the exchange, I got pretty hot under the collar and was pretty harsh on a former member of this chamber, Minister Tsubouchi, under the Harris government. For the record, I just want to apologize for the remarks I made. I think they went way too far. They were said in the heat of debate. That's not justifying what I said; I just want to apologize for the record for what I said.

I also want to use that frame of kindness first to reflect on one of my children's favourite books. If you haven't had a chance to read it, you really should. For those of you with young kids, there's been a movie made. The book's called *Wonder*. It's the story of a young child named Auggie, and Auggie's experience growing up, being discriminated against as a young child who doesn't look physiotypical. If you see the movie *Wonder*, you'll know what I mean, Speaker. At every turn, he faced bullying, he faced discrimination, he faced unwanted pity—just not being treated as a kid would normally be treated.

In the course of this book and this movie, one of Auggie's teachers said something that I want to say to

frame my remarks on Bill 100. Auggie's teacher says, "If you have to choose between being right and being kind, choose kind. I want to submit that when I think about what Bill 100 is responding to, Bill 100 is responding to desperation that we have seen in our society after two years of a historic pandemic; it's also responding to the rise of hate. I want to distinguish between these two things.

I want to begin my contribution to this afternoon's debate by asking the question: Why do we need Bill 100 in the first place? The government and the Solicitor General are suggesting, as I understand it, that we need Bill 100 because people have interrupted critical international infrastructure in the name of the Ambassador Bridge that cost the country, it cost people's livelihoods a significant amount of money.

But I want to pose a bigger question that I think animates the legislation, and that is, what drives somebody to jump in the rig of a tractor trailer and ride across the country to Windsor or Ottawa and blockade a major piece of infrastructure? I want to believe most people don't entertain a decision like that lightly. They clearly are driven to act because they feel they're unheard. I want to submit for our debate this afternoon that I tried. Our office very much tried in Ottawa Centre to understand what brought the convoy to our city, why they refused to leave and why they felt the need to engage in the tactics that were engaged in. What I saw and heard disturbed me, Speaker.

I have American friends that I correspond with. I used to be a university professor and I have friends in the United States who are teaching. During the President Trump era, when we would see the rise of incredible hate, unmitigated hate, unbelievable things being said by elected officials that I don't think had ever been seen in an English-speaking North American context, I would write emails to those friends and say, "I'm thinking of you. You're in my prayers. What a rough time for your country, what a rough time for your city." Those same friends were emailing me back during the convoy, because they reminded me, Speaker, that I shouldn't be too cute as a Canadian, that our electoral system, to a certain extent, disguises professional hate-mongering that has been going on in this country since its inception.

It's been going on for a long time, where people believe in things like "replacement theory," that there's an agenda against white people somehow, somewhere in this country, and that gradually, the government's objective is to get rid of white people. If you can believe it, this is one of the theories that was being promulgated by leaders of the convoy movement that came to our city in Ottawa.

I want to make a distinction between things some leaders of this convoy movement were saying—I'm not going to mention them by name; they don't deserve to be in the Hansard of this place—and what everyday folks that were coming up to Ottawa, often on Saturdays and Sundays, to participate in the convoy movement were telling me, too. Because I was doing my best, our whole team was doing our best, to keep in touch with all of them.

They were saying to me, "Joel, I am so sick and tired of COVID. I am so sick and tired of mandates and masks.

I've lost business. I've lost family members. I've lost loved ones. Enough is enough. This protest is going to lift the mandates. This protest is going to make sure my kid can go to school without a mask and I can run the business without a mask. That's why I'm going. You don't have to agree with me, but it's my right to be there. Deal with it." That was a normal conversation I was having during the Ottawa convoy protest.

I would respond to those folks by saying, "You have a right to protest. I celebrate your right to protest." I'd even heard some arguments that led me to raise questions myself about some of the public health rules that I have followed to the letter, that my residents have followed to the letter. People are raising questions.

But I would ask every single person that framed the protest as being of mandates or masks, that Bill 100 is responding to—I would ask every single person, "Do you know who is leading this movement? Do you know who it is that set up the 500-plus vehicles in the downtown, that's providing food, that's raised millions of dollars? Do you know who these folks are and what they used to say—and what they continue to say—prior to this protest?" Not one of them could tell me beyond being social media celebrities what the people had done and said.

When I told even family members who are Arab Canadian that these folks had preached hatred against Arabs, preached hatred against Jewish neighbours, preached hatred against Muslim neighbours openly, they would say, "Well, Joel, I'm not supporting that. I'm here for the masks and the mandates." And I would tell them, "You can't have it both—you can't do that. The people running this protest movement are talking about bouncy castles and they're talking about freedom, but privately, what they are doing is providing cover for the infrastructure of our downtown to be systemically assaulted and harassed on the daily."

And folks know about what happened in the convoy movement. Media members worked really hard to be on the ground, often at great risk to themselves, to report what was happening. But it was serious, and I want to acknowledge publicly that Bill 100 is attempting to respond to that with, I believe, a limited lens.

We have a bigger debate here that the member from Beaches–East York, who is with us this afternoon, has raised consistently in her time here in the chamber: the rise of hate and what we are prepared to do as a Legislature to address that hate.

The first throne speech that I walked into in this chamber, Speaker—I walked in through those celebrated doors—I passed a gentleman seated in one of the special chairs that, as I understand it, only the leadership of the government can invite someone to. His name was Reverend Charles McVety. I had to do a double take. As a Christian myself, I had to do a double take and say, "What gets someone in that chair? Why is that man sitting in the chair?" Because he has talked about Muslims being part of some global conspiracy or global takeover movement—the same hate that I saw in my city, sitting right there for the first throne speech. And I asked myself, what is that man doing in the people's building?

It's the same question I asked during the convoy. What is leading these people into leadership positions? I think, quite frankly, it's the lack of sincerity a lot of Canadians in the jobs that we hold have had to the rise of hate. How do we get against it, and what's the solution?

So what's in this bill, Bill 100, that can help us deal with that desperation, hate and people using massive vehicles to express their anger? Well, section 3 of this bill talks about discretion for the removal of objects and impediments during protests. But Speaker, that power was already there. That power was already available to law enforcement. The question being asked in our city is why wasn't it used? Why wasn't it used?

1630

I can tell you, Speaker, if I were to—we have one vehicle. If I were to pull up the vehicle and park it on Queen's Park Crescent in the middle of the road, the city of Toronto would tow that in about 10 minutes. So why were 500-plus vehicles chaperoned into the downtown, given preferential parking spaces and allowed to stay there for 14 days—14 days—until the province of Ontario decided to do anything about it? And why was the Premier's first response, "I support the truckers" in that first weekend? I'll never forget the words: "I support the truckers." It was chilling.

On February 1, councillor Catherine McKenney—who represents the downtown impacted area of Centretown municipally—and I wrote the Premier. We noted all of the heinous incidents that people in this chamber and people watching this clip will note. We said, "We need you to act immediately." Our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, Andrea Horwath, came to Ottawa amplifying that message. Together we said, after we'd written the letter publicly to the Premier, "We need you to action the powers of the province on licensing and on insurance. If the owner-operators of these vehicles have taken the sacrifice to bring their businesses here, are told that their rigs will be towed, their insurance policies will be null and void, they will leave." We made that assertion because that is what the province of Quebec did. They were leafleting vehicles in Montreal and Quebec City, and those leaflets said, en français and in English, "If you do not move in six hours, you will lose your rig. We will tow your truck." Guess what? They left. But we didn't see any action, and what's here in Bill 100, what's being proposed, already exists. So I'm sorry, Speaker, it strikes me as performative.

Section 7 talks about the forfeiture of the licence of a person suspected of contravening this law: same thing. I must admit, when I heard MPP Thanigasalam talk about "There will be consequences"—I just want to make sure I understand the member's words correctly: "You will be stopped. There will be consequences if this becomes the law of the land in Ontario." Well, what the legal experts that we consulted told us is that these laws already exist, and they were not used in the critical moments, the first 14 days. When the Premier finally invoked an emergencies order on day 14, when the member from Windsor West and I begged and pleaded—literally, picking our tone carefully, at the emergencies committee, begged and

pleaded for the province to act. And I had written to the Premier 13 days before then asking the same thing.

Finally, sanctions were brought down and licence plates were photographed. Finally, on day 25, they were towing vehicles. Guess what happened two days later, Speaker? They gave the rigs back. They gave the rigs back. The owner-operators got the keys to their vehicles back and they got the rigs back without a penny in fines. So when MPP Thanigasalam says, “They will be stopped,” Speaker, stopped from what? What is the implicit message to anyone participating in this convoy movement right now? You can do it, and up to now the province will levy no fines. There are corporate fines proposed in here of up to \$10 million. It’s just numbers on a piece of paper if you’re not prepared to do anything about it. So that’s what I’m saying to the government right now.

Our experience in Ottawa is that the province of Ontario forgot about us, abandoned us. I will read the words of a journalist in Ottawa, David Reevely, who said, “Never in my career have I seen so many public officials, who presumably got into their jobs partly to help people and partly because they like power, publicly stating that they have no power and will not help people.” Ouch.

We held four emergency community consultations where we tried to let neighbours know how they could bring food to seniors who needed food or to persons with disabilities or other vulnerable folks, where we tried to let people know their rights and how they can protect themselves and keep themselves safe—safe walks home. There was a Discord channel started up, the Centretown citizens’ Discord channel, with 1,000 members, doing that kind of mutual aid work. Neighbours worked their tails off for neighbours. It was incredible, Speaker, incredible. I think of organizations like highjinx Ottawa that runs a community kitchen, that was running around the riding doing whatever they could to help people; Parkdale Food Centre, who launched an initiative called Cooking for a Cause that brings together 200 food businesses—restaurants, caterers and bakeries—and 31 community agencies, particularly vulnerable neighbours in shelters, in rooming houses, in safe injection sites. We utilized the capacity of the food sector in the city to help people in need, and the province implicitly funded that, and that’s good.

But do you know what I just found out from the Parkdale Food Centre this morning? They only just heard from the province that their emergency funding was going to be renewed as of March 31; only just heard. They were feeding 4,000 people a week, keeping an incredible amount of food operations alive and working.

I want to also say that the other people who stood up for us, when it would appear that the province, the city and the federal government forgot about us, were people like Zexi Li. Zexi Li is a 21-year-old public servant who is the lead plaintiff in the civilian lawsuit against the Ottawa convoy. It’s now reached a claims level of \$316 million, given the damage to our city. Zexi had the courage to be the public face of a lawsuit that made the horns stop.

Let me talk, Speaker, about that for a second, because people need to understand, as my colleague from Windsor

West said, what the impact of living in the convoy actually was. The average decibel level in that first 13 days when the horns were blaring, or the first seven or eight days, was 83 decibels. So 83 decibels is like running a lawn mower in your living room all day. Can you imagine raising children, running a business, living your life? People are telling me that they can still kind of hear the horns, that there’s a phantom horn phenomenon, a form of post-traumatic stress.

But what made the horns stop was not the city, was not the province, was not the federal government; it was residents asserting a class action lawsuit. The city took a week later to do its own weak injunction. So I ask the government, sincerely. Bill 100 has powers that you could have used in the early days. I wrote you in the early days, asking you to take action against the convoy because I do not believe it was a protest; I believe it was a planned attempt to strangle the downtown and make us suffer. I suppose they were thinking that if we suffered, the prime minister would act and lift mandates, and the Premier would act and lift mandates.

I was told that by a number of convoy members, because I took my opportunity to visit a number of the tractor-trailers downtown and say, “Help me understand, because these are the impacts.” They said, “Lift the mandates and we’re gone, Joel. Lift the mandates and we’re gone. Take that diaper off your face.” You know? “Go back to your cottage.” There was a sense that we weren’t seeing their suffering. They’ve lost homes, they’ve lost jobs, they’ve lost family. Nobody cared about them, so they were coming to Ottawa to hurt us. That’s the desperation I was talking about off the top that we have to get out in front of.

But just so this government doesn’t always think I’m only picking on them, I’ve said the same thing to the Prime Minister, who I believe won the election, federally, by demonizing people who are angry about the COVID measures. I’m not happy with the way the Prime Minister handled the end of that election, despite the fact that he had every right to be concerned about threats to his family and the rock-throwing incident and whatever happened to him. That’s not okay. But to spend the rest of the election demonizing part of the country who feel unheard—that was then visited on us. We paid the price for that.

I’ll end, Speaker, where I began: If you have to choose between being right and being kind, be kind. What is Bill 100 doing to promote kindness in our province? What are we going to do in the last weeks of this Parliament to see each other as human beings and not dehumanize each other as “You Ottawa people downtown, with your cottages. You work for the federal government with great jobs. You don’t give a darn about me and how I’ve suffered in this pandemic”? I don’t demonize other people by saying, “Oh, you’re part of the #FluTruxKlan, you’re backward, and you’re terrible.” This is the thing that will ruin our democracy. That’s what I see in the United States and other parts of the world, where people stop talking to each other and they engage in ritual dehumanization.

I won’t dehumanize the convoy. I’m angry, frankly. I’m angry with what happened to the city, because I feel a lot

of the convoy supporters still don't get it. Some of them do. There was a guy this morning, a story covered this morning—you could look it up; the CBC—issuing a public apology for being involved in the convoy and talking about how he has lost everything—\$13,000 in savings. I feel for him.

1640

I'm going to ask the Legislature: What is Bill 100 doing to fix the problem that really exists, the desperation that got us here in the first place, the platformed hate-mongering that happened? What are we doing to protect ourselves and community solidarity? What are we doing to help the businesses in Windsor West, Ottawa Centre and everywhere across the province?

There will be a future after this pandemic, but is it going to be one where we continue to dehumanize each other, or is it going to be one where we lift each other up? I know we're capable of lifting each other up. That's the COVID-19 story for me—neighbours looking after neighbours, community solidarity, banging on pots and pans. Do you remember that, Speaker? It feels like a distant memory sometimes, but that is us too, and I want to see Bill 100 empower that and reflect that.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you to the member opposite from Ottawa Centre. I know it's something that was very near and dear to your heart. You were out every day working with your constituents. We heard about it in the House. I followed you on Twitter, and I know you did everything you could for your constituents, and I applaud you for that.

Several times, however, members of the official opposition have, today and throughout the protests, accused the Solicitor General of not solving the Ottawa protests, when in fact, our leadership enabled the police to bring an end to the occupation.

My question to the member: Do you think the OPP and other provincial bodies should be able to usurp local police services such as the Ottawa Police Service, or do you believe in the autonomy of police services?

Mr. Joel Harden: There's a simple answer to the member's question—and I thank her for her kind words: Politicians don't direct police activity. We know this.

I do have a question for the member and for the government. My federal counterpart in Ottawa Centre, MP Yasir Naqvi, and the government set up these interprovincial tables for coordination at the executive level between law agencies. MP Naqvi tells me that Solicitor General Jones did not show up in person to all three of those meetings, and that was something I specifically complained to the government about. Why not? My understanding is that the Solicitor General's response was, "It's not necessary for me to be there," but I think it was. This situation was spun so far out of control. We needed the top leadership of the province there. As my hero, Jack Layton, used to say, if most Canadians don't show up for work, they don't get a promotion. So I'm going to say to the Solicitor General—through you, Speaker—that you needed to show up for us, and we didn't see you there, and that's a problem.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The next question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I really appreciated the comments from the member from Ottawa Centre. I think he spoke to how many of us feel looking back on that time and what we need to change here.

You mentioned how small businesses in Ottawa have been hit. As you said, I see this bill, largely, as performative. I completely agree that this bill really is just paper unless there's actual enforcement—and we saw that not play out, as you mentioned, in Ottawa, nor in Windsor.

I wanted to ask you if you would care to comment on what small businesses and community organizations need from the government right now.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for the question.

There have been some funds dispensed from Finance Minister Bethlenfalvy to Invest Ottawa, to disburse to businesses across the downtown. I appreciate that. We're helping people apply for that.

But frankly, what we need is for people to have confidence that if this were to ever happen again, the response will be swift, it will be deliberative, it will not dehumanize folks, and we'll find our way out of it.

Businesses are telling me that they don't feel safe operating, even now. In fact, I had a meeting a week and a half ago with three women-led restaurants in Ottawa Centre, and they were all saying the same thing: "We feel like the mask police. We feel like if we take the decision to ask people to wear masks and show us their credentials at the door, we take the flak." So they feel caught.

What I'm saying right now is that to bring livelihood back to the business sector, we need that confidence and we need that community solidarity. Funds are great, but we need some actual physical help from this government to make people feel confident that they can come back together again and not face consequences.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for his presentation, but most importantly, for the beginning part of it, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate that we get into heated and very passionate debate here at times, but it's important for us to continue to set the bar high for all those who are watching who would want to take their seats here. It's very important for us to acknowledge that, so I thank him for that.

During his speech, my colleague referenced the fact that police need to be directed. I just want to get this on record: Governments don't direct police, we don't direct courts, and we certainly don't tell the police on whom to lay charges. We provide the tools for this to be done.

I'm wondering if I just could ask my colleague whether he believes that protecting the jobs of workers in this bill—if he does realize how essential it is for us to be able to even acknowledge the chaos that this created. You know that this bill will help provide that. Will you support it?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to agree wholeheartedly with where you started there, friend.

I will also say this, because I only have 45 seconds to reply: I was not suggesting that the government should have directed police. What I was saying is that there are employees who work for the government who operate licensing—MTO officials, Ministry of Transportation of Ontario officials—who could and should have been very active, photographing licence plates early and actioning consequences. That is what happened with our neighbours in Quebec. I told all of you about that. They were issued letters saying, “If you don’t leave in six hours, you’re going to lose your plates and your rig is going to be towed today.” We needed that. We didn’t get that. In fact, we gave people a chaperoned ride, through our police services, to park in our downtown, and I still don’t understand why we did that. There are investigations afoot, and we’ll find out why. That’s what happened.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I deeply want to thank my colleague and friend for his incredible, hard and courageous work, especially during the most difficult of times.

We have all seen this government—when it wants to move quickly, it moves quickly. They’ve recalled the House at times. They have had debate in the middle of the night. But the events that we are discussing, as was pointed out by the member—quite a bit of time passed before action on the matter was taken by the government. Now, long after the events have ended, we see legislation that basically enacts laws that are already in place that just require enforcement. What do you think this is all about?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member. He gives me a chance to point something out. I’m not sure what everybody else’s coping strategy is with the commute home, but I often like to listen to podcasts. There’s one run by a famous Liberal podcaster, and one of his comments, ruefully, that stuck to me was, “If you bother the people of the downtown for weeks on end, I don’t have a problem with that. But if you stop my fresh oranges from going to the grocery store, that’s a line you can’t cross. If you stop the automotive sector, that’s a line you can’t cross.” And that was what I was hearing from a lot of residents. All of a sudden, action was taken from the province when the economic consequences were plain on an international trade level, but we were feeling the economic pain of this convoy within days of it opening.

I think, really, we have to realize that the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act does not just include the interprovincial borders. Ontario is a big and vibrant place, and Ottawa is an important part of that place. We needed the province to stand up for us, and it took 14 days for it to happen.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: We all feel for the residents of Ottawa, and we know that a lot of lessons were learned from the Ottawa Police Service’s experience.

Although the bill is about protecting borders, does the member from Ottawa Centre see how complementary investments in Bill 100 will help police with the right

equipment, such as heavy tow trucks for OPP members, who stepped up in a big way to help Ottawa? Would it be an asset for a city like Ottawa should a similar situation occur again in the future?

Mr. Joel Harden: I do like that part of the legislation, to be honest. I do like the idea of Ontario procuring its own tow trucks for situations like this. It makes sense. What I heard from private tow truck operators who were refusing orders to get involved was what people here heard: They felt divided loyalties. The province needs to have its own capacity in this regard.

1650

But I will say this on the policing front: We have a lot of questions in Ottawa as the investigations go on about what also happened in those early days. Why did the chief of police believe this protest was going to leave on Monday? How could that possibly be the case, given everything that was written? And why were police officers often snapping photographs of convoy protestors? We know that it’s a difficult job, being a police officer, absolutely. But the kind of open solidarity we were sometimes seeing was really troubling for downtown residents. There was a feeling leading up to a major citizen blockade that happened in our city that the people of Ottawa had to stand up for ourselves, and that’s a dangerous situation to put people in. We expect our public tax dollars to be going into keeping the communities safe. We don’t expect the police to be standing by and watching a problem get worse. In those early days, member, that’s what we were seeing. The investigations are ongoing. We will see what they uncover, but there are a lot of concerns.

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

Before we continue with the debate, I’m just going to remind all members, and everyone has been doing it equally: Can we please refer to all members by their riding or their title and not their family names? That has been consistent this afternoon, and I apologize for not bringing the hammer down sooner.

Further debate?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am pleased to rise today to contribute to the debate on Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, 2022.

As a member with significant manufacturing plants in my region, I thank the Premier, the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the Minister of Transportation for bringing this legislation forward. It’s very welcome news for my hometown of Hamilton, as I know it is for many others that rely on open trade corridors to make a living. Because when one of our international border crossings is blocked, the impacts ripple throughout industries in every single corner of Ontario.

In Flamborough–Glanbrook and the wider Hamilton area, the recent shutdown of the Ambassador Bridge impacted the auto industry. Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and Toyota all rely on just-in-time delivery schedules to continue production at their assembly plants. Hamilton’s steel companies produce sheet steel that is used in the auto industry. Any work stoppage or slowdown in the auto industry would have a direct impact on the steel industry.

I've heard from frustrated business owners in the community who are concerned about interruptions in shipping and the delivery of materials that could interfere with their manufacturing schedule. Their operations have already been disrupted by supply chain bottlenecks, and they certainly don't need additional disruptions for their business. Steel manufacturers reported that the shipping delays and higher cost to transport vehicles could hamper supply and push up retail prices.

Automotive is the key sector for ArcelorMittal Dofasco, a major Hamilton-area employer. The company faced concerns with regard to delivering steel to customers in the automotive supply chain in a timely manner. Customers like original equipment manufacturers and auto stampers carry very little inventory, and just-in-time delivery is critical to their operation. Anderson Economic Group estimates that the auto industry and manufacturers up the supply line lost a whopping US\$299.9 million during the blockage, all thanks to the anti-mandate protesters who halted all movement along the border. Anderson puts the loss to Ontario and Michigan wages at a whopping US\$144.9 million and losses to auto makers like GM, Chrysler, Ford, Honda, and Toyota at about US\$155 million, for a total deficit of US\$299.9 million.

Stelco, another huge local employer, had serious concerns about loss of customer confidence and long-term retention as multiple US customers have threatened to withdraw their business. During the blockade, Stelco was unable to ship products by truck to the United States, and in response to slower customer uptake, the company had to slow its steel output. Had the blockade continued, Stelco indicated it would have had to idle its steelmaking facilities. Madam Speaker, this is simply unacceptable.

Now, during February's economically devastating disruptions in Windsor and Ottawa, lawyers in the Ministry of the Attorney General worked with justice sector partners to respond quickly and decisively. We supported an injunction granted by the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice to prevent protesters from blocking the Windsor Ambassador Bridge and effectively grinding to a halt hundreds of millions of dollars in daily trade with our US neighbours. And as you have heard, our government enacted an emergency order to enable police to enforce the law and end the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge.

But the people who blocked it cost the province billions in disrupted trade. Unfortunately, it is not the "freedom convoy" footing the bill for the losses of workers, business owners and entire industries. It is communities like mine that are feeling the losses. It's the business owners and workers who have been losing sleep over the thought of their company being idled.

Employees should not be worried about losing a paycheque because of the actions of a few. When we speak about the economy of our province, we are speaking about lives and livelihoods. We simply cannot afford the economic impacts that we saw as a result of the recent blockades. Speaker, that is why we are taking action to provide new, permanent tools to support the important work of police and prosecutors to hold offenders accountable and to ensure that justice is done.

The Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act demonstrates our government's commitment to prioritizing public safety and protecting the livelihoods of Ontarians. In the bill we are debating today, we are proposing to give police the power to remove, possess and store objects, like vehicles, for up to 30 days.

We took action early in our mandate to strengthen Ontario's civil forfeiture laws because our province had fallen behind and criminals knew it. Police and prosecutors here didn't have the same forfeiture tools as other jurisdictions, and it made our communities more vulnerable. We agree with Ontarians who say crime should not pay, and by introducing administrative forfeiture, we provided more ways for police and prosecutors to fight criminal activity and to address the vast range of property that goes unclaimed.

The additional reforms included in the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act will build on those previous improvements. Today's bill will ensure that objects that disrupt critical infrastructure, like trucks or other vehicles, will be subject to this civil forfeiture process. Police services and the crown would be able to follow the process under the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, to seek to have removed objects forfeited to the crown.

Police would be required to make reasonable efforts to reach those owners or operators responsible for the object while police maintain possession of an object for up to 30 days. Should the object not be retrieved or should the object be an instrument of illegal activity, police can maintain possession of the object, pursuant to the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, to allow the Attorney General to decide whether they should start a legal proceeding that would result in the object being forfeited to the crown. Under the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, police can maintain possession of the object for up to 75 days from the day that a person requests its return in writing or commences a proceeding for the return of the object.

Amendments to the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, will be required to facilitate forfeiture of objects removed and maintained in police possession under the new act. Specifically, the provisions regarding civil forfeiture of instruments of illegal activity would be amended to provide that forfeiture is possible where property was used in unlawful activity and where it was likely to be used to cause injury to the public.

1700

The Civil Remedies Act, 2001, would also be amended to expand the definition of "injury to the public" to include the offences of breaching the prohibition on impediments and breaching the prohibitions on assistance for impediments under the new act.

Beyond this bill, Bill 100 outlines a penalty structure for offences under the act that will deter people from blocking international border crossings in the future. The maximum punishment for breaching any offence under the new legislation, except a failure to identify oneself, is a one-year imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$100,000 for an individual. Directors and officers of corporations can face up to \$500,000 in fines or up to one year imprisonment or both. Corporations can face up to \$10 million in

finer. Failure to comply with the proposed requirement to identify oneself would result in a fine of up to \$5,000, which is the default penalty under the Provincial Offences Act.

Beyond this, if a person is convicted of an offence under this act and they are fined, and they fail to pay the fine, a provincial offences court could make an order causing their driver's licence to be suspended and preventing their vehicle permit from being renewed until the fine is paid.

This power requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act. Specifically, the title of the new act would be added to a list of statutes in the schedule to section 46 so that a provincial offences court can make these orders in relation to the new act. This would help ensure that an individual pays a fine or fines for offences that they have committed under the proposed legislation. The person convicted of violating the legislation would not be able to renew their vehicle permit and, therefore, legally operate their vehicle if they have not paid the fines that are owed.

Fines may not make up for losses caused by people who make the careless decision to block a border crossing—and it certainly wouldn't in the case of the illegal Ambassador Bridge blockade—but it should make people think twice before putting their political agenda ahead of the right of countless workers to earn a living.

Speaker, I lived in Fort Erie for a time when I first started working at CHCH Television. I was well aware of how significant the Peace Bridge is to the economic health of that community and to the entire Golden Horseshoe. The Peace Bridge, which connects Buffalo and western New York state to southern Ontario, is our third-busiest border crossing in Canada. More than 1.2 million trucks cross that bridge every year. The Peace Bridge is also vital to Canada's relationship with the United States. It links one of the world's most integrated multinational economies. There is an extremely strong relationship between southern Ontario and western New York state.

Canadians cross the bridge to shop, to attend Buffalo Sabres hockey games and Buffalo Bills football games. And many Americans come to Ontario to enjoy the great outdoors or summer at a cottage on one of our many spectacular lakes. Nearly 18,000 Americans own shoreline property in Ontario. Over 3,000 Canadian students attend Buffalo-area colleges. Speaker, if the Peace Bridge were blocked, it would disrupt thousands of lives.

Canada sends roughly 70% of its total exports to the United States through trucks and international bridge corridors. They carry all kinds of goods that are vital to businesses and consumers here in Ontario: things such as food, agricultural supplies and, of course, car parts for our vehicle assembly plants.

If the Peace Bridge commercial traffic was interrupted even for a few days, we would see businesses closed and workers laid off. Because of the blockades at the Ambassador Bridge, truck drivers were forced to detour to the Peace Bridge. Can you imagine the disruptions to our economy and to individual lives if both the Ambassador and the Peace Bridges were inaccessible because of blockades?

A major detour cost truck drivers gas and time, and it cost the economy much more than lost productivity because businesses and manufacturing plants couldn't get the materials they need.

Organizations such as the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce urged all levels of government to quickly end the border protests. In an email, the chamber's chief executive officer, Mishka Balsom, said, "We cannot allow any group to undermine the cross-border trade that supports families on both sides of the border."

In border communities like Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, a lot of individuals live on one side of the border but work on the other. Throughout the pandemic, many health care workers crossed the bridge each and every day to work in hospitals on either side of the border. About 1,500 Canadians live in Canada and work in health care facilities in Michigan. Many of these commuters use the Ambassador Bridge to get to work. Blocking any international bridge would impede health care workers' ability to care for the patients who need them most.

Speaker, it wasn't just groups who represent the business community, such as Ontario's chambers of commerce, who were calling for an end to the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge. Unifor's national office called the blockade an "attack" on "workers' jobs by threatening slowdowns and additional periods of layoffs"—and it was, absolutely. "They must come to an end," said Shane Wark, who is the assistant to the Unifor president. "These blockades are creating added hardship on Unifor members and their families in the auto sector, following two years of extraordinary production and supply chain disruptions."

Workers and businesses in Flamborough–Glanbrook and the wider Hamilton area, like manufacturing facilities, restaurants and mom-and-pop shops, are just coming out of the COVID-19 restrictions. Earlier this month, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters released the results of a members survey conducted from February 8 to 28 that shows that nine out of 10 Canadian manufacturers are encountering supply chain issues, with over 60% rating the impact of these disruptions as either major or severe. Canadian manufacturers surveyed say they have lost about \$10.5 billion in sales because of disruptions in the supply chain, and are now experiencing nearly \$1 billion in increased costs.

These problems are holding back the manufacturing sector's recovery and, by extension, the growth of the overall economy. Speaker, this hurts everyone at home. Eight out of 10 manufacturers say they have been forced to increase prices and delay fulfilling customer orders because of the supply chain challenges that they are facing. Now is a time when families, as much as manufacturers, need this legislation to be able to keep supply lines moving and to keep shelves stocked.

Just walk through a grocery store. In recent weeks, we have seen empty shelves, empty of such basic items as canned goods and cereal. Many shoppers are wondering if we are running out of food. Order a product online, and it could take weeks to be delivered. More importantly, some crucial medications and medical devices were also in short supply.

Speaker, in the few minutes remaining, I want to once again share with the House the measures outlined in this bill. This bill will ensure that objects that disrupt critical infrastructure—like trucks and other vehicles—will be subject to civil forfeiture process. Police services and the crown would be able to follow the process under the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, to seek to have removed objects forfeited to the crown. Police would be required to make reasonable efforts to reach those owners or operators responsible for the object while police maintain possession of an object for up to 30 days.

Should the object not be retrieved, or should the object be an instrument of illegal activity, police can maintain possession of objects, pursuant to the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, to allow the Attorney General to decide whether they should start a legal proceeding that would result in the object being forfeited to the crown.

1710

The supply chain problems are clearly causing the cost of goods to rise. When I was in the grocery store just a few weeks ago, I couldn't believe the price of some fresh produce. This was unbelievable: Three peppers were almost \$8. And according to the recently released food prices report, food prices in Canada will increase by 5% to 7% in 2022. Overall, the report suggests that a family of four will have an annual food expenditure of nearly \$15,000. That's an increase of nearly \$1,000 from 2021.

Speaker, I want to thank the Premier, the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and all of those speaking today who are supporting this bill, which I know means so much to my community and to all people across Ontario. I'm very pleased to support Bill 100, and I encourage all members, especially those Hamilton members who sit across the aisle, to step up for your constituents and to vote in support of this extremely important piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My colleague the member for Ottawa Centre mentioned earlier in his remarks the central role that hate had in the minds of those who organized the convoy. I would submit that the rise of hate in Canada and in Ontario is as much a danger to our democracy as the blockage of the bridge was to our trade and our economy, and I would like to know what the government is doing to address it.

Ms. Donna Skelly: As we have been stating all afternoon, the members on this side of the House, this bill was brought forward to prevent the situation that we saw in Ottawa and to prevent another situation that we saw at the Ambassador Bridge over the course of the month of February, and to prevent people unlawfully—unlawfully—protesting and impacting the delivery of goods, having an impact on the economy, stopping people from going to their jobs, stopping families from going to appointments.

Speaker, this legislation is extremely important to ensure that Canadians and people south of the border have confidence in this government and this province to be able to continue to operate their businesses. We are bringing

this forward to prevent what we saw in Ottawa and what we saw in Windsor from ever happening again.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: The province of Ontario borders five US states for roughly 2,727 kilometres. That's more than any other province or territory in Canada. However, some of my constituents in Mississauga–Lakeshore have asked: Isn't maintaining order on international borders managed by the federal government, not the provincial government?

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's always a pleasure to answer questions from the hard-working member from Mississauga–Lakeshore. Thank you for that question.

Speaker, although international border crossings and international airports are under federal authority, local police are for the most part the first responders to situations—we discussed this earlier—of unrest and disruption in communities, including blockades of roadways. At the Ambassador Bridge, due to the size and the impact of the blockade, officers from the Ontario Provincial Police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and services from Brantford, Chatham-Kent, Hamilton, LaSalle, London and Waterloo were required, in addition to Windsor police officers, as part of the response.

The province will continue to work together with its federal and municipal partners to ensure that Ontario's borders are always open for business.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I listened to the comments from the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook intently. I'm reminded of the comments of my colleague from Ottawa Centre, who called this bill—"performative" I think was the word he used—that all of this is fine unless you're not willing to enforce it.

So what I wanted to do was to actually go back to something that the member from Windsor West mentioned in her comments. And I ask for your response to that, which is: If the government wants to provide right now any support for Windsor West—they need economic relief, they need support for the prolonged impacts of that blockade that disrupted those working-class neighbourhoods, that shut down shifts at the big three auto plants and other businesses, and that so far has not been forthcoming. Will the member support the member for Windsor West's request?

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member opposite, the province did incur considerable costs. The OPP response was significant and it was central to bringing the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge to an end safely and professionally. As stated, I just want to say that the measures proposed today—we know that they're narrow in scope and specific to illegal blockades of border crossings. But the intent is to prevent these borders from being blocked and have this profound impact on our economy. To amend the existing legislation and the regulations, it would still leave police in a challenging position and with limitations on executing an effective and timely response.

This proposed legislation will provide provincial offences officers, including police officers, with additional enforcement tools to direct owners and operators of vehicles to remove their vehicles from illegal blockades, to remove and store objects making up an illegal blockade and to suspend drivers' licences for those who are participating.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question? I recognize the member from Don Valley North.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for my colleague's wonderful introduction to this important bill.

Speaker, I want to be clear that this legislation is to make sure that Ontario remains open for business. This proposal is specific to illegal blockades of border crossings only that impact economic activity of international trade, including to good-paying union jobs at risk. As we saw during the course of the "freedom convoy," trucks were used effectively to stop the use of our critical economic routes.

Speaker, my question to the member of Flamborough—Glanbrook is: Does the proposed legislation introduce stiffer fines for those who intend to stop economic activity in the province?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you to the member from Don Valley North for the question. The proposed legislation will give officers the tools that they need in order to ensure that we keep Ontario open for business, and that includes fines. The maximum punishment for breaching any offence under the new legislation, except a failure to identify oneself, is one year imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$100,000 for an individual. Directors and officers of corporations can face up to \$500,000 in fines and up to a year in prison. Corporations can face up to \$10 million in fines. Failure to comply with the proposed requirement to identify oneself: \$5,000 in a fine, which is the default penalty under the Provincial Offences Act.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member of the government for her presentation. She used very strong words in describing the events in Ottawa, so it leaves me with the question: If this is the feeling of the government, why did it take so long to act when it comes to a response in legislation?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would have to challenge that question. I don't think it took our government long to react. I think that what we're doing is actually quite a quick response. We are sitting here now, less than six weeks out of a major international event, and we have introduced legislation to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

As we talked about earlier, we do not have the ability to direct police. I think that the police on the ground in Ottawa were challenged. Obviously, when there is an investigation, we'll see what all of those challenges were. We did see, however, that the same type of protest was threatened in Toronto, but we saw a very different outcome.

We did act quickly. I think that this legislation is proof that we responded as quickly as possible, and with your support, once this legislation is passed, we'll be able to prevent the situations that we saw in Ottawa and Windsor from ever happening again.

1720

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member for her presentation. The province of Ontario borders five US states and spans for 2,727 kilometres. That's more than any other province or territory in Canada. However, some of my constituents have asked, isn't maintaining order at the international border managed by the federal government?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Quickly, although international border crossings and international airports are under federal authority, local police are the first responders to situations of unrest and disruption in communities, including blockades of roadways. At the Ambassador Bridge, due to the size and impact of the blockade, we had officers, as I mentioned earlier, from the OPP, the RCMP and municipal services in Brantford, Chatham-Kent, Hamilton, LaSalle, Waterloo and London who helped Windsor police officers as part of the overall response.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Now we definitely don't have time for another back-and-forth.

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and talk about the issues of the day. And to my fellow travellers on Thursday afternoon, which is locally known as "legislative Friday," I'm glad you're still here to listen.

Today, we're discussing Bill 100, An Act to enact legislation to protect access to certain transportation infrastructure—the popular name: Bill 100, Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act. I have been here all day, listened to all the points, and I'm going to try to make a few different ones.

So where this all is coming from is, after two years of an event that none of us have ever had to deal with before, people were frustrated. Some other people took advantage of that frustration, and we ended up with protests and blockades. There were some very bad actors mixed in with those protesters and blockaders, but there were a lot of regular people too. I know in my riding—and I'm going to talk about my riding as well—there were many different opinions. The bad actors—not everyone had the same attitude as some of the bad actors in those crowds. But there are some things that I think have been misconstrued by some of those bad actors, a lot of them on social media.

On this side of the House—and I heard a lot on that side of the House—we are in favour of peaceful protest. Peaceful protest is a very important part of our democratic society. If there's something going on with the elected government or if something has passed that you don't like or if you're afraid of something happening, you have the right to stage a peaceful protest.

And I've helped stage a few. As a dairy farmer, I was on Parliament Hill during the GATT negotiations. I believe at the time it was Prime Minister Mulroney. Dairy farmers did whatever we could to show the government how important supply management was. I believe there were 40,000 people on Parliament Hill. We came, we bust in, and we went home. That is a peaceful protest.

Now, there's a difference between a peaceful protest and a blockade. There is a difference, Speaker. I also have a bit of experience with blockades. The Sergeant-at-Arms commented on that the last time that I discussed my experience with blockades. I once organized a blockade.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does Uncle Ernie know this?

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Oxford, my uncle, is aware. He didn't approve at the time. But just to explain the difference—in our area, we needed to bring attention to an issue, and we decided to block the railroad tracks for two hours. We blocked the train. We told the police we were going to block the train. We told them when we were going to block the train. We told them where we were going to block the train. And we put 80 tractors on the train tracks and we blocked the train. After an hour, the tactical police—I should ask the Sergeant-at-Arms. It wasn't the local police. It was—I call them the flashpoint police. They got pretty angry at us, and they wanted us off. The local police came forward and said, "You said you were going to go off at such and such a time. Does that deal still hold?" I said yes. So after two hours, we left those train tracks. And do you know what? There was not one chip bag, there was not one pop bottle—those train tracks were as clean as when we came. There was no damage. But it was not a peaceful protest. It was a blockade, for which I was charged, convicted and paid a fine. This bill didn't exist at that point, yet I paid a fine for organizing the blockade. And that was a lot of years ago. Maybe at my age now, I wouldn't have been as pro-blockade.

There is a difference, and I think a lot of people were—and I don't know a better word—misled between what's a peaceful protest and what's a blockade, including a lot of people in the agricultural sector. Agriculture was damaged by these blockades, big time, but some people in the agriculture sector also participated. I have warned many in the agriculture sector that if you are going to be pro something, that if you're going to hit, you also have to be prepared to get hit back.

We'll take the example of Ottawa. I wasn't in Ottawa. I saw Ottawa from the TV. When transport trucks honked horns for 24 hours—and members from Ottawa tell me exactly how many days—for 12 days, and there had to be a court injunction to stop them, some agricultural people, not very many, were very much in favour. My challenge to them—and I've spoken at meetings: What would you think if people parked on a public road outside your farm with transport trucks, financed by someone from another country, and honked their horns for 12 days straight? I know what noise does to animals—and the animals were totally devastated. Your children were totally devastated. That is not a peaceful protest. So you can't condone it on

one side and then expect the government to save you on the other side. A lot of people didn't think that way because they weren't told of the ramifications. They were told that it was a peaceful protest, but it was not. So that's the background to this bill.

Basically, we all know how important trade is to the province. Everyone has made that point, and everyone here, I think, understands how important trade is to this province. I don't think there's any debate on any side on that one. It's incredibly important. But there are some questions, in many cases—some of the things proposed in this bill were possible before, so what is this bill really accomplishing?

As we go through the debate—and there is a majority government—this bill is going to pass second reading for sure, but as we go forward, we need to carefully look at what parts of this bill are different and if they're really going to impact blockades in the future.

1730

I think one of the issues we really have to be very cognizant of, very careful of, is that for this bill, whatever good intentions the government has—I'm not questioning their good intentions. But when you put forward a law and you pass a law, you have to ensure that that law isn't weaponized in the future, and especially when basically there was a huge debate in this country about the federal Emergencies Act. Yet this bill, in some ways, is giving the government powers equivalent to the federal Emergencies Act. Now, I'm not saying that that's not necessary. I don't know. Honestly, I don't know. But it's a step that needs to be taken very cautiously and very carefully. And with some of these things in this bill, I'm not sure that the government has taken the time. Perhaps they have, but, again, we're not sure—I'm certainly not sure that the government has taken the time to fully understand what the ramifications of this bill are. And I'm not sure 100% that some of the supporters of the bill have either.

Again, people who are involved in trade want to keep trade routes open, and we 100% agree on how important that is. But there are a few parts of this bill—we are focusing on the Ambassador Bridge, which caused huge trade disruption, when it was closed, huge costs. But there was also huge disruption of people's lives and businesses in Ottawa. Several times, members on the government side, including the Attorney General, including the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook, have mentioned what this bill would do for situations like Ottawa. Well, I fail to see that it will do anything, and that's a legitimate question, because it's one thing to say it, it's one thing for the Attorney General to say it, but it's another thing for it to be in the bill. And when you're talking about a bill that has powers similar—in many ways, equivalent—to the federal Emergencies Act, you need to take the time to make sure that it's done right.

One of the things I haven't heard a lot—everyone is talking about the Ambassador Bridge. But, actually, in the bill, it talks about how these regulations would prescribe "any particular transportation infrastructure or part of it, or any class of transportation infrastructure, that is of

significance to international trade for the purposes of”—and then the section. I’m asking, is that the Ambassador Bridge, or is that every rail line, every highway in this country? Because our trade infrastructure isn’t based on one bridge. Our trade infrastructure—it takes a highway to get to the bridge. It takes a road to get to the airport. What exactly is the government proposing? Do we want to make sure that we don’t go through the same issues that the car companies went through?

I think, when the Ambassador Bridge was closed, a lot of people who were formerly thinking that this was a peaceful protest got the message that, “Whoa, this is a blockade and this has got to be stopped.” But we need to see in the legislation what that actually means. Because the way I read it, it’s not just the Ambassador Bridge. And really, if you think about it, maybe it shouldn’t be just the Ambassador Bridge, and maybe it isn’t. And it’s not just that we need to know, but Ontarians need to know. The people who actually enforce—we create laws here, but the people who enforce those laws, police and other agencies, also need to know. Because although many times, lately, people have described our province and our country as a tyranny. It’s not a tyranny. If you looked at how the police dealt with the issues, dealt with the blockades, they did a good job. Overall, in my opinion, as a layperson, they did a better job than I could have done. But we need to know what this bill is actually about.

Something else that’s in this bill concerns me—and again, we’re not saying that the regulations aren’t necessary. In fact, the leader of the official opposition, my leader, called for action to be taken on the truckers—not all truckers—who were involved in the blockade under existing legislation regarding their licences. It could have been done, and the government chose not to. They chose not to. We proposed it; they chose not to. Something similar is showing up here, but it could have been done prior.

One of the most concerning things in this bill, to me, is section 16. It’s lucky I brought my glasses today because otherwise we wouldn’t be talking about section 16:

“The minister responsible for the administration of this act shall, no later than 18 months after the day this act comes into force,

“(a) conduct a review of the first 12 months of the application of this act; and

“(b) prepare a written report respecting the review, and,

“(i) table the report in the assembly, and

“(ii) make the report available to the public on a government of Ontario website.”

Now, that’s all fine and dandy. Considering the measures that all the members were talking about—the level of fines—we’re talking about some pretty serious stuff here. And I’m not sure that a review after 18 months with the minister saying everything’s fine is actually what is needed here. How concerned that the people of Canada, many people of Canada, were about the emergency measures act—the provincial government also declared a state of emergency, which they let lapse at the same time as the feds. And they had the ability to call that state of

emergency, so they did call that state of emergency. But now they’re coming forward with legislation that’s basically making some of those measures permanent—a permanent state of emergency. Again, I don’t know if it’s not needed, but I do think people deserve more than a review after 18 months, saying, “Well, all is fine. Nothing to look at here.”

I think Canadians, more than ever, are worried about government overreach, but we all want responsible government. In our social democratic society, it’s not freedom to do whatever you want; it’s an organized society so we can all enjoy our freedom and safety. You need rules and laws to ensure that safety.

But when we’re doing something like this, which is basically taking emergency measures and making some of them permanent, we need to make sure. We need to guarantee that there is oversight, and more oversight than just a report after 18 months.

1740

I think we as legislators and the government, who is proposing this bill—and hopefully, we will amend it—need to take responsibility, because we are elected to protect people’s rights and to make sure that the laws reflect their rights. We are elected to do that, and we’re all sitting here on Thursday afternoon debating that.

I’m not sure that the oversight ability of this bill is strong enough to guarantee that there won’t be overreach of this bill in the future. I am not accusing the government of trying to do that, but we always have to be cognizant that you need to make sure that it won’t be abused in the future, and we see little guarantee that that’s the case. So, as this bill moves forward, it needs the oversight and needs to be strengthened. At the very minimum, the oversight needs to be strengthened so people can be assured that there is no government overreach after these protests.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Our government is introducing new measures to protect international border crossings from unlawful disruptions that hurt people and businesses. When the bridge was blocked, supply chains were seriously disrupted and employees were sent home because parts were not arriving on time.

According to the Michigan Department of Treasury, about 10,000 commercial vehicles hauling an estimated \$325 million use the Ambassador Bridge daily. Given the huge value of goods going through on a daily basis, can you see how this legislation would help ensure we don’t miss a day of this trade?

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to thank the member for that question.

I don’t think there’s any doubt that we need to have legislation to protect our border crossings and our major arteries from blockades. The question is, does the oversight in this legislation exist so that will never be abused for other purposes by future governments?

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I enjoyed being in the House for the explanation and the frame that—the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane explained the difference between a blockade occupation and an actual peaceful protest. On many occasions, I've participated in some of those peaceful protests myself.

Just recently, on Highway 6, a couple of First Nations got together in order to bring attention to a matter that was near and dear and very important to that community, because it didn't seem like it was getting the attention that it needed, both provincially and nationally.

There are tools that are in place where those peaceful protests are actually successful for both sides of the table—for those who are at the protest and for those who are coming to the protest.

My question to the member is, if we have tools that are already in place for dealing with many of these matters—the concern that I'm getting is the overreach, as you had talked to in much of your speech, if we don't have the oversight. Those overreaches—what are the negative impacts that may be impacting many of our communities?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin for that very thoughtful question. Often, the questions from your own side are harder than the ones from the opposition.

The way this bill is written, to me, that section—and again, I'm not saying that this government would do that, but almost any protest or short-term blockade, like the one I was involved in, could be declared something that's stopping international trade. What are the qualifications for what stops international trade? Because anything could be declared that, and that is an issue.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I, too, always have a pleasure when the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane speaks, and it's always a double pleasure when he actually does a bit of a confession in the House here. It's kind of coming to light now, why he's talking about a blockade or a protest. What I would suggest is that when he stands on that side of the House and he challenges us, that would be a protest. But if he can't find a way to move that protest forward and put those good amendments in and vote with us, that's a blockade.

Whether he has his glasses or not, I think he actually can see that there is wisdom in this and that there is value in this, to make sure that we do actually protect the people of Ontario, the citizens of Ontario, and we actually put in rules and laws and order that will truly help us. So I hope that at some point he'll be able to share with us today that he is willing to look at this as a good piece of legislation, and he could possibly sit with us and find a way to make sure that it will apprise all of the things he needs to make it legislation to help and share and protect the people of Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank the member for that question. It was a very good question, and I would like to return the challenge that when this bill goes to committee, when the official opposition puts forward

amendments to actually have oversight and to make it better, the government doesn't do its own blockade and stop those amendments.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: So much of the substance of this bill has echoes of concerns that we've heard certainly throughout this pandemic with regard to overreach, and I know that the member has made a great presentation and touched on that a bit. But as I had mentioned earlier, a lot of what they're seeking to do here, it appears, exists with legislation that's already available to the government, tools that are already available. We see legislation far after the event that basically seeks to provide solutions that may have already been available to this government if they were willing and wanted to actually enforce. Maybe the member could comment on that and if the government at times is, let's just say, performative.

Mr. John Vanthof: Again, thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek. I think an example of that is that in this bill, there are very stiff fines for trucks involved in blockades, but there was legislation before, and some of those trucks lost their licences, but they were just given back, because it wasn't worth the effort to continue with the process. You can have a million-dollar fine, but if you don't proceed with going through the process, again, it is performative, and we have to make sure that that is not the case.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: It's always a privilege to be able to ask and be a part of the discussion when the honourable member takes a stand and shares his thoughts with us. One of the things, Madam Speaker, when I look at the investments that are being provided through this bill, is that the OPP will now have heavy equipment such as tow trucks that can be deployed upon request when large vehicles are requested to be removed. That's really important, I think, in the context of what we're talking about.

Given, Madam Speaker, that the Ambassador Bridge accounts for \$137 billion in 2021, according to WorldCity, and the protection of our manufacturing—you referenced this in your speech—I'm wondering if you and your colleagues would be able to see now the importance of this bill and the importance of being able to put the right pieces in place to be able to protect not just those small but medium manufacturers who provide so much for our economy in our small communities.

Mr. John Vanthof: To the member across the way: I appreciate his questioning. He's always thoughtful, and I appreciate that. I don't think there is any debate here how important it is to keep trade routes from being blocked. I don't think there's any question that, if there's another truck blocking, you need to have the capability to move it. There's no question there.

1750

The question, and what we need to look for in the future, is that if the legislation didn't exist before and now

you're making new legislation which is very powerful—a legislation that, prior to you calling for emergency measures and now basically you're making parts of that legislation permanent—we need to make sure that it has very, very strong oversight. You don't want to just give that away. I think the government House leader would agree. It's very important that the Legislature has the final oversight and not simply a report every 12 months or 18 months.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Regrettably, we don't have enough time for a back-and-forth.

Further debate?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: As always, it's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the people of Mississauga–Lakeshore to support Bill 100, the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, introduced by the Solicitor General. I'd like to thank her and her team, including her parliamentary assistant, my friend from my neighbouring riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, as well as the Attorney General and the Minister of Transportation for working together to bring forward this important bill so quickly after the illegal blockade in February.

Like the Solicitor General, I also want to thank the officers from the Ontario Provincial Police, the RCMP and the local Windsor police for working together to clear the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge as safely and as professionally as possible. They relied on an important tool that our government provided through an emergency order on February 11, including enforcement tools necessary to remove the vehicles and other objects that were used to illegally block the flow of people and trade at the Ambassador Bridge. As the Solicitor General said, it allowed the registrar of motor vehicles to suspend and revoke licences, permits and certificates of people who put making political statements above the economic well-being of the entire province.

But, Speaker, we shouldn't need an emergency order to protect hundreds of thousands of jobs and middle-class families across Ontario that rely on international trade. That's why we've moved forward with Bill 100, so the police can respond immediately to any future blockade at our international border that interferes with public safety, the economy or international trade.

Speaker, before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for their work on the historic commitment yesterday to include the largest auto investment in the history of Ontario: over \$5 billion from Stellantis and LG Energy to build the province's first large-scale manufacturing plant for batteries for electric vehicles, with 2,500 well-paying jobs in Windsor. This builds on the \$1.8 billion investment at Ford Canada's Oakville assembly plant—where I worked for over 31 years—to produce electric vehicles beginning in 2024. As the Premier said, these are the game-changing investments for our auto sector that will create thousands of well-paying jobs across the province and help to position

Ontario as the North American hub for building electric cars and batteries of the future.

Speaker, it was just four years ago that GM cut production in Oshawa, and auto executives like Sergio Marchionne at Chrysler were complaining that it had become too expensive to do business here in Ontario. We lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs under the previous Liberal government, including many well-paying jobs in the auto sector. Now, in 2021 alone, Ontario's manufacturing sector grew by 38,700 jobs, about 5.2%, and it has recovered above 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

Despite COVID-19, it is incredible how much progress we've made in four years. But blockades at an international border crossing, and especially at the Ambassador Bridge, as we had in February, put all this progress at risk.

Speaker, over a quarter of our trade between Canada and the US crosses the Ambassador Bridge. That's about \$172 billion every year according to the WorldCity trade consulting firm. That's over \$470 million every day, almost \$20 million every hour, and at least \$2 million every hour from auto parts alone. On a regular day, about 10,000 trucks drive and pick up about \$50 million in goods from Canadian auto parts companies and deliver them across the border. They return to Ontario with truckloads of parts from Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and even further, from Kentucky and Tennessee.

The supply chains in our auto sector are so connected across North America that auto parts sometimes cross the border a dozen times or more before they're installed in the final assembly line. A week ago, Flavio Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, told the Standing Committee on Finance at the House of Commons in Ottawa that the six-day blockade of the Ambassador Bridge in February cost the auto sector about \$1 billion that can't be recovered. Over 100,000 auto sector workers lost another billion dollars in lost pay and lost shifts as the assembly lines that rely on just-in-time delivery, like the Ford Canada Oakville assembly complex, had to shut down on both sides of the border.

Even more importantly, as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce wrote, blockades like this can undermine our international reputation as a reliable place to invest that's open for business. They warned, "We are already hearing calls to move investment, contracts, and production from Canada because of our inability to guarantee timely delivery to international customers." Some of these come from members of the US Congress who are pushing a new round of buy-American policy, like Michigan Democrat Elissa Slotkin, who responded to this crisis by tweeting, "We can't be this reliant on parts coming from foreign countries...."

"We have to bring American manufacturing back home to states like Michigan."

As the Solicitor General said, this crisis also caught the attention of President Biden. This is very troubling for many auto sector families, including many of my constituents in Mississauga–Lakeshore. The measures in Bill 100 will help restore and protect Ontario's reputation as a safe place to invest. I want to thank the Premier and

the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for delivering this message in person in Washington DC this week.

Speaker, while the blockades affected auto workers across Ontario from Windsor to Brampton to Cambridge and Woodstock, it had an impact on many other sectors as well, from agricultural to steel and other raw materials. About 70% of our vegetables from Ontario greenhouses go to the US, and they depend on reliable access at the border. And in our steel industry, American firms have threatened to withdraw their business from companies like Dofasco and Stelco. Bill Anderson, the director of the

Cross-Border Institute at the University of Windsor, said that up to \$6 billion in goods couldn't cross the border because of the illegal Ambassador Bridge blockade. It hit our—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I regret to interrupt the member, who will indeed have time to finish his remarks another time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the clock right now, it is now time for private members' public business.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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	
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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 civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / 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 (IND)	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 (OP)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
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, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
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, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott
Vijay Thanigasalam
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, Jim McDonell
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
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
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell