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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 November 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 novembre 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT
À ACCÉLÉRER LA CONSTRUCTION
DE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2022, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2022 visant à soutenir la croissance et la construction de logements dans les régions de York et de Durham.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 23.

It is apparent that this government has a deep fear of democracy, because with every bill that has come before this House, the government has attempted to undermine core democratic processes, shifting power and resources away from ordinary working people and their elected representatives to those with deep connections to the Conservative Party.

First, there was Bill 7, which forces people to move where they don't want to live, far away from their families and their support systems. In the north, they can be moved up to 150 kilometres away. But guess what? Since there isn't a single opening in long-term care anywhere in the entire 93,000 square kilometres of my riding, and the law provides the option to send folks even further away, they could wind up anywhere—in Toronto, in Niagara—who knows? How gracious of this government to shove people wherever there is an empty room. Is it any wonder that there are now charter challenges being brought against this bill?

While speaking of disrespecting fundamental rights—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If I'm not mistaken, we're debating Bill 23.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We are indeed debating Bill 23 at third reading.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It sure sounds like a debate on Bill 7 to me.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for your assistance.

I'm listening to the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, who has the floor.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you. There is a pattern in the bills, which connects with Bill 23. We are speaking of disrespecting fundamental rights.

Following Bill 7, there was Bill 28, which tried to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It took the threat of a general strike to wake up the government on this one.

But sadly, even after being forced to rescind Bill 28, this government continues to go full tilt at eliminating democratic rights, with Bill 23 and Bill 39, which really put the politics of bullying into law. We have before us two bills that say, "It's good to rule by minority fiat. Hooray for the iron fist of the Conservative government"—and then there's the destruction of the greenbelt that benefits key Conservative supporters.

I must say, I find it disturbing that members on the government side of the House are so cavalier about democratic rights. You were sent here—we were all sent here—to solve problems, not to appoint yourselves as bullies and enforcers who get to decide which democratically elected representatives will be heard and which will be ignored. What shocks me is that so many of you are willing—

Interjection.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to remind the member that she should make her comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: All right.

Perhaps democracy is something Conservatives are happy to put aside whenever there's a convenient excuse.

Apart from disliking democracy, it's also apparent that this government dislikes science and those with scientific expertise, as the government seems to be determined to cut out the role of conservation authorities in assessing the suitability of lands for housing, and they are doing this in spite of the imminent threat of climate change.

In the case of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, the government gives developers a free ride, removing fees that municipalities and conservation authorities need to fulfill their mandates, thus downloading the costs onto already overburdened municipalities. In fact, this is a repetition of a pattern going back to the mid-1990s, possibly during the Mike Harris years, when provincial governments started downloading responsibilities to municipalities while withholding the money needed to fulfill those

responsibilities. Is it any wonder that so many municipalities, certainly those in my region, are struggling to maintain basic services?

I have received an unprecedented number of briefs from organizations and letters from individuals deeply concerned about Bill 23. These organizations include the association of municipal organizations—an organization that represents 444 Ontario municipalities, which, shockingly, was denied a hearing by this government—the Ontario conservation authority, the Ontario nature conservancy, Ontario Nature, Citizens United for a Sustainable Planet, the hunters and anglers of Ontario, the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists, and the northern Ontario municipal association, along with many individuals who took the time to write extensive analyses of the bill. The feedback has been remarkable in the consistency of the concerns raised and the efforts to be heard.

I would like to read excerpts from a number of these letters and reports.

From Thunder Bay resident Bryan Mackay:

“While I understand the need for additional housing in the province, I don’t feel it should override the liberties of citizens and organizations trying to voice their opposition and appeal decisions being made that can impact their quality of life.

“Bill 23 will restrict the rights of individuals and citizen groups to appeal land use permits. This is a right that I feel I should have under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Allowing Bill 23 to restrict the fundamental freedoms of individuals and citizen groups to appeal legislation is undemocratic and appears to be more authoritarian in nature.

“I’m also concerned when an elected representative of the people of Ontario doesn’t seem concerned at all about taking away their freedoms in the name of economic development.”

And he quotes from Hansard, so this is a government statement: “We would also place a limit on appeals from individuals and community groups, for instance, that would further hinder the progress of official plan amendments and zoning bylaw amendments.” He said, “This comment supports my concerns.”

He also agrees with the concerns of Gravel Watch Ontario about Bill 23, and they wrote, “Shifting the municipalities’ and conservation authorities’ responsibilities weakens the long established regional planning framework and represses the technical expertise which is critical to the review of development applications. In addition, amendments to the Ontario Land Tribunal contravene its purpose to provide justice and fair, principled resolutions for land use planning conflicts.”

He went on and cited a number of other points from Gravel Watch Ontario:

—restricting public access and involvement to the municipal level only, denies public access to legal recourse;

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—restricting access to justice is contrary to governments’ role to protect the public interest;

—allowing appeal rights for “specified persons”—that is, government agencies and major corporate entities—erodes public trust in government and perpetuates land use conflicts;

—arbitrarily awarding appeal costs without request;

—empowering the minister to order an amendment to an official plan if the minister is of the opinion that the plan is likely to adversely affect a matter of public interest;

—removing the two-year moratorium placed on official plan and zoning bylaw amendments from pits and quarries, which, I must say, is a major issue in my region; and

—finally, structuring the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force without representation from municipalities, conservation authorities, environmental groups or the public.

Mr. Mackay concluded by saying: “I am asking you to find a more creative solution to building additional housing that still allows voters to use their democratic right as citizens to appeal planning decisions.”

Another constituent, Kyla Moore, wrote: “Bill 23 eliminates regulations that empower conservation authorities to effectively steward and conserve lands and watersheds to balance human, environmental and economic needs, while shifting massive costs and fees onto municipalities and taxpayers instead of having growth pay for growth.

“Bill 23 disempowers municipalities and undermines democracy by giving the minister the power to override planning decisions, and makes changes to public reading requirements, appeals processes, and restricts the public’s participation in decisions which affect their communities.

“Bill 23 erases and replaces policy which protects our natural heritage systems with policy designed to facilitate development, it rewrites the rules for designating wetlands as worthy of protection” thus ensuring very few will be protected, “and provides a high-risk ‘pay to slay’ option for unproven and historically unsuccessful land trade-offs (e.g., pay into a fund to destroy a natural area on the promise to rebuild it elsewhere).

“Bill 23 represents another broken promise to Ontario’s Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples are connected to nature, including wetlands that support culturally significant plants and species. The provincial government should step back and make a genuine effort to learn from Indigenous approaches to sustainable management of land and waters, and this bill should be redesigned and implemented with Indigenous participation and consent.”

She quotes from the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: “Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, from an Aboriginal perspective, also requires reconciliation with the natural world. If human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete.”

I will now read from another document. This one was signed by a couple of hundred people. I imagine this went to all MPPs:

“In late October and early November, the Ontario government announced two dramatic and fundamental

changes to how we design and build our neighbourhoods and communities, and protect the environment of Ontario.

“Bill 23 (and related regulatory and policy changes) and a proposal to remove 7,400 acres of precious class 1 farmland and natural areas from the protected greenbelt. The Premier claims these changes would build more housing more quickly. He is wrong. The proposed changes would not solve the housing affordability and supply crises. Any new supply of truly affordable housing units would be offset by the loss of affordable units through redevelopment of existing rental housing for other uses. And a new supply of diverse housing types would not begin to meet the rising demand as our population increases.”

I'd like to move to an article that showed up this morning from Rabble media. This is a quote by Phil Pothen, land use planning lawyer and Ontario environment program manager with Environmental Defence: “It would absolutely, without a doubt be an out and out lie by the Premier if he were to go ahead and proceed”—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, is that a quote?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Oh, sorry. I am quoting something—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Just a second.

Yes, I heard it too, just in case you're wondering.

I'm going to ask the member to withdraw. Even though it's a quote, it's unparliamentary, and I ask you to withdraw it.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Continue.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Okay.

I'll continue: “To be honest, it would mean a death sentence to the greenbelt as a whole.”

Apparently, Minister Clark says the class 1 agricultural lands will be swapped out for 9,400 acres that will eventually receive greenbelt designation.

“Used in conjunction with Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act ... which upends conservation authorities' powers and the province's wetland protection system, the Ford government is playing a dangerous shell game with ecologically sensitive areas and precious farmland. Progressives and environmentalists know that this is not going to end well.

“As if those changes weren't bad enough, the provincial government overturned Halton region's official plan amendments ... which contained development within the existing settlement boundary to 2051.”

So the concern that's raised in this article, primarily, is sprawl—the spreading of housing and creating very expensive houses that require more transportation, more infrastructure and more cost to municipalities to actually provide that infrastructure, while doing nothing to actually produce affordable housing and have more dense housing within already existing planning zones

I'll go back to the letter that had so many signatures:

“The government's proposed changes would damage our existing neighbourhoods, towns and cities as well as the farmland and natural areas that sustain them, which in turn, would harm our ability to feed ourselves, protect ourselves from flooding, and address climate change risks.

“Taken together, the changes would:

“—do little or nothing to address the shortage of truly affordable housing;

“—facilitate expensive urban sprawl and inappropriate high-rises at the expense of more diverse housing types designed for all stages of life and ranges of incomes;

“—divert limited construction materials and labour away from building mixed and affordable housing, and direct them instead towards sprawl development, creating fragmented agricultural and natural landscapes;

“—remove from the greenbelt thousands of acres of valuable natural areas and agricultural land, and turn them into sprawl development;

“—undermine the protection of wetlands, woodlands, rivers, streams and wildlife habitat across Ontario;

“—destroy key land use planning processes that Ontario municipalities, conservation authorities and residents need in order to protect, manage and plan for climate-resilient ecosystems and communities.”

I'm going to move ahead to a specific concern from a lawyer in my riding:

“I ... want to bring to your attention the Lempiala gravel application to insert a new industrial use of aggregate extraction next to the cottage/residential uses at Trout Lake.... Removing existing rights of appeal by Trout Lake landowners will mean that our fight against this proposed intrusive use will be at an end, and the peace, serenity and natural beauty now enjoyed at Trout Lake will be forever lost.

“Premier Ford is saying that our multiple-year battle with Lempiala is retroactively wiped out as of Oct 25/22, all for the purpose of building houses faster in southern Ontario. It makes no sense. It is a long-standing principle of planning law in Ontario that neighbours have the right to comment and appeal proposed new uses nearby their lands. Buffering between conflicting uses is an important planning principle that will lose all meaning if citizens lose their appeal rights.

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“Adjacent to the McIntyre River (Trout Lake is the source lake) ... is an area that has been noted as provincially significant wetlands.... The proposed Lempiala aggregate operation will no longer have to set back its extraction operations from the potential PSW lands which are partially found on the Lempiala lands. It is quite obvious that the Ford government's Bill 23 favours land developers instead of residents nearby and entirely disregards PSW lands.”

I will move to conclude. I'd like to think about the International Plowing Match, where we had the opportunity to meet with so many farmers. One of the strong messages that I certainly heard from farmers was the need to protect farmland, to not lose any more farmland to development, and to do whatever we could to stop urban sprawl. We are seeing exactly the opposite of that taking place with Bill 23 and then with Bill 39.

We have a responsibility to our constituents, to our citizens, to be thinking about climate change, to be really

protecting the future—for our children, for our grandchildren, for ourselves—from environmental degradation. Climate change is a real threat. We need more parkland. We need more wetlands; we need to preserve those wetlands. They protect us from flooding. In my region, flooding is a very serious concern, and we can't pretend that it's not there.

So I respectfully request that the government retract those elements of Bill 23 that undermine democratic participation, that undermine commitments made to protect the greenbelt, and that undermine the capacity of communities to manage their own flood lands and land planning processes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North for her address to the Legislature this morning.

When I listen to the honourable member and the members of her party, what I see is a narrative that is very supportive of those groups that raise money being opposed to the government—so they're lining the pockets of their supporters as well.

What I don't understand is why any party that wishes to govern in this province someday would do everything they could to stop the province's and municipalities' ability to build housing for their residents and the residents who are coming here—half a million newcomers coming every year for the next number of years, with the federal government's immigration plan.

We have a housing crisis. We need to build 1.5 million homes.

Why is it that we're the party that wants to see Ontario grow, and you continue to be the party of Ontari-no?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: First of all, I will note that most of the organizations that I cited are run by volunteers.

Secondly, we all agree that there's a housing crisis, but is the crisis an excuse for overriding democratic principles, democratic practices? It should never be permissible to make those kinds of—they're not just compromises; they're breaches of really fundamental principles that are going to exclude the people of Ontario from participating.

We're not opposed to building more housing. We know we need more houses, but we also know that those houses can be built on land that has already been zoned for building.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize. Point of order: I recognize the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting is cancelled.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: In my city of London, council had a special meeting on Tuesday to discuss Bill 23, and staff reported just yesterday that they see a potential shortfall of \$97 million, a hole in the city's

budget. The mayor is asking this government to slow down and take the time to do proper consultation with municipalities.

Effectively, this bill is undermining public participation. Bill 23 is literally undermining democracy.

If the government is not consulting with municipalities like London, I'd like to ask the member, whose interest are they acting on behalf of, and who's giving them the mandate to go ahead and ram this bill through and effectively shut down democracy in municipalities throughout the province?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the question.

First of all, we've probably all read the articles pointing to who owns the different parts of the greenbelt, who seem to be influencing decisions.

I will say that the association of municipal organizations—again, many of us attended their annual conference, something that's seen as very, very important. Speaker, 444 municipalities shut out from being part of the conversation about this bill—I find that shocking and appalling. I know that the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association has also not been consulted at any time. So I don't know who is being consulted when the municipalities directly affected are not given a voice.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member from the other side for providing their information. I am concerned, though—they've expressed their issues with what is trying to be put forth, but I would turn this and ask, what is their proposal to build 1.5 million homes?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think I've already addressed that.

You will find that most municipalities are already saying that they can infill. They don't need to be expanding into wetlands. They certainly don't need to be expanding into conservation lands, which—the bill also requires conservation authorities to identify parkland to suddenly turn over into housing land. The problem almost everywhere is not a shortage of land, and their own advisers have told them that; it is a matter of getting homes built. We do not need to trample democracy and we don't need to use wetlands to fulfill those objectives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was clear, through the member's speech, that we support low-cost family homes and climate-friendly communities. But the part of the bill that takes away the power of conservation authorities to protect our wetlands, to protect our woodlands, to protect other sensitive green areas is going to do a lot of damage in the long run.

Can the member explain to us the activities that the conservation authority is having in her part of the province?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Conservation authorities are responsible for entire watersheds. They're responsible for managing and understanding, on a scientific basis, how water flows, how water is absorbed, what happens when there are extreme rain events and so on. So they do very

important work. They are also there to advise municipalities. That is supposed to be their role, but that role is largely eliminated by this bill. It's very concerning.

We have also been talking about housing, and I spoke yesterday about not-for-profit housing and how I don't see anything in either bill that supports this.

As I said yesterday, we have two shovel-ready projects ready to go in Thunder Bay. They're not for-profit. All the planning has been done. All the permitting has been done. But there's no provincial support, so it remains a large gap in the planning.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Again to the member: One word she gives, "infilling"—I don't know what the NDP thinks—I know they like to be against things, because that's what they are; they're the party of no. They have no plan for actually building 1.5 million homes. Last year, which was the best year in the last 30 years, we built 100,000 homes. I don't know if they think that the tooth fairy and Santa Claus are going to build the new housing here in Ontario.

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You actually have to have a legitimate alternative to what the government is proposing to finally get the barriers out of the way that stand in the way of building more housing in the province of Ontario. We have no choice. The crisis is upon us. And all you people do is say no, no, no—you criticize, but you do not have any kind of viable alternative to reaching that goal of 1.5 million homes in the province of Ontario. Come up with something real or get on board with a plan that will help grow Ontario and give those young people you're talking about a real chance in the future.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I believe the government shut down our proposal earlier this week, so, unfortunately, you didn't get to hear the NDP plan for housing.

What are these barriers? You haven't actually given any evidence at all that municipalities are resisting having development. What they are resisting is having irresponsible development on wetlands, sprawl, and wasting farmland, which is needed to provide a secure food network for ourselves so that we get to survive. We need those farms, and we need that farmland. I've seen nothing in anything that the government has said that actually gives a reason for stomping all over democratic rights and wasting our farmland.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the member for her really excellent remarks. She does such an amazing job representing the folks of Thunder Bay—Superior North—a really excellent MPP. I think a lot of people from across Ontario today will appreciate the care you brought in those comments.

I wonder if you wouldn't mind expanding a little bit more on the question of food production—because this is land that presumably could be used to feed the people who this government says they're building for. We know that

this isn't really what this bill is about, but I wonder if you wouldn't mind commenting a little on that.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Food security is about being able to grow and provide our own food. When we waste our farmland, we become more and more dependent on food that is trucked in from far away, which leaves us all vulnerable to anything—weather events in other parts of the province and so on.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to participate in third reading debate on Bill 23, a bill that is seeing significant and growing opposition across the province. Everyone from municipal leaders, farmers, community organizations, environmentalists and local taxpayer associations are saying no to the government's housing bill—everyone but a handful of wealthy land speculators who are going to turn millions into billions with this bill. Why the growing opposition? Because Bill 23 is not going to solve the housing crisis. As a matter of fact, it's going to make the housing crisis worse because it's going to download costs onto municipalities, increasing property taxes and making our communities less affordable. It's going to force people into long, expensive commutes and unaffordable ways of living. It's going to increase insurance costs because of the risk of increased costs from the damage of climate-fuelled extreme weather events.

I want to speak to the government MPPs: We do not need to dismantle environmental protections, attack local democracy, pave over farmland and wetlands and the nature that protects us, download costs onto property taxpayers, and force people into long, expensive commutes to solve the housing crisis.

The most efficient, cost-effective and affordable way to address the housing crisis is with good planning—zoning changes that allow four-plexes and walk-up four-storey apartments in neighbourhoods across the province; mid-rise apartments and missing middle housing along major roads in transit corridors—clamping down on housing speculation, and investing in deeply affordable co-op and non-profit housing.

We had the Canadian co-operative association here at Queen's Park last night. They are ready to get back to building homes that people can actually afford.

I want to say to the government members, check out Bill 44 and Bill 45, which I put forward to help us solve this crisis, making changes to zoning that allow four-plexes and walk-up four-storey apartments in neighbourhoods as of right. Those are the kinds of solutions their own housing task force said were needed. The task force didn't say that we need more land like the greenbelt and farmland to develop. No. They said we need to make changes to planning—changes like my proposal to allow six- to 11-storey apartments as of right along major roads and transit corridors. That's how we build housing quickly in communities where people want to live and in affordable ways, so we make municipal governments more affordable and we make household budgets more affordable. That's how we solve this crisis—not with Bill 23.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's time for questions. I recognize the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the member opposite: I understand the concern you have about conservation areas, farmland. But is it not about balance? Where are the two million people—1.5 million homes going to come from?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The 1.5 million homes are going to come from passing my bills, Bill 44 and Bill 45, to start. They will actually come from listening to your own hand-picked housing task force. I didn't agree with everything the task force said, but the task force clearly and explicitly stated that we do not need more land to build the 1.5 million homes we need because we already have 88,000 acres of land approved for development within existing urban boundaries.

The government's plan to pave over wetlands, to pave over the greenbelt, to pave over the farmland that feeds us is all about literally a handful of land speculators turning millions into billions.

Let's make housing about the people of this province—building affordable communities where people can live, protecting the farmland that feeds us.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the member from Guelph for his comments. I think we share many similar concerns about this legislation.

Last night, the member from Guelph and I were able to both participate in an online meeting with Water Watchers. I wonder if the member would care to bring some of the concerns that were raised at that meeting to the Legislature and share with the members opposite some of the concerns of folks from across this province.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question.

I participated in a Zoom town hall with the member from Davenport last night—literally hundreds of people across the province, many of them in rural ridings, quite frankly, represented by Conservative MPPs, saying, "Let's solve the housing crisis without paving over the farmland that feeds us and that contributes \$50 billion to the province's economy, without ways that threaten our wetlands that clean our drinking water and protect us from costly flooding events." When Hurricane Hazel hit this province in 1954, 81 people died and thousands of people lost their homes. The province said, "Never again." That's why they brought in strengthened rules for conservation authorities—to conserve things. Conservatives, I guess, used to believe in conserving things; they don't seem to believe in that anymore, with Bill 23. A lot of their own voters were on this call last night, saying, "Can you convince them to do the right thing and shelve Bill 23?"

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Guelph for his comments today. He talked about having proposed Bill 44 and Bill 45, and he talked about intensification into four-plexes and things like this.

You would have to agree that there are things in Bill 23, in our bill, and between all our housing bills that would provide for expansion—granny suites, driveway suites. There are intensifications in current housing models that would help build those homes.

Have you done any actual analysis of how any of the things that you're talking about would actually get us to the number of 1.5 million homes here in the province of Ontario—or is everybody else going to have to live in a condo in Toronto or other metropolitan areas, on the 42nd floor? How do we actually get 1.5 million homes built—the homes that the people want and deserve?

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The zoning changes I'm proposing, studies show, could build 435,000 homes in Mississauga alone—just in Mississauga, Speaker.

Housing experts, including the government's own hand-picked housing task force, have said the kinds of zoning changes that I have put forward in Bill 44 and Bill 45 are the transformative changes we need to build 1.5 million homes in the communities people want to live in, close to their families, close to where they work, in places where they can actually afford to live.

The government is proposing to pave over farmland and wetlands and to force people to live in places where they have to engage in long, expensive commutes, making life less affordable for them—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Rob Flack: I'll be sharing my time this morning with the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Speaker, it is my pleasure and privilege to rise in the House today for the third reading of our government's More Homes Built Faster Act. We've talked about it this morning.

Over the next 10 years, I think we can all agree, there will be two million new Ontarians living in our great province. Most of these individuals will choose the greater Toronto and Hamilton area to make their home. They know, like myself and all members of this House, that Ontario is the best place to live, the best place to work and the best place to raise a family.

However, I think we can all agree as well that we have a serious housing crisis in Ontario. Many Ontarians are struggling to find an attainable home. Whether renting an apartment, obtaining the ultimate dream of home ownership or downsizing for retirement in their home community—that's important—many are struggling to find the right home that suits their life's requirements.

Housing attainability and the need for more housing are daunting issues in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London. The London St. Thomas Association of Realtors is reporting year-to-date average sale prices for a single-family home at almost \$800,000. That's up 16% compared to the same time just one year ago. To make matters even more concerning, the average sale price is up 81% from just three years ago—a staggering increase that has put the

dream of home ownership out of the reach of many of my constituents.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said in this House yesterday, we are displacing a generation of Canadians from home ownership.

This is a tragedy in the making—a tragedy that can be avoided by unleashing the benefits of Bill 23.

We know that finding the right home is all too challenging. Again, we need to act now. Action is needed—defer and delay is no longer an option.

That is why our government is dedicated to getting 1.5 million new homes built over 10 years. In partnership with eight ministries, along with municipalities and industry experts, our government's new housing supply action plan builds a strong foundation for success. If this proposal is passed, it will help cities, towns and rural communities grow, with a wide range of ownership and rental housing opportunities that meet the needs right across our province. Our plan will build more homes in strategic areas—along transit corridors—unlock innovative approaches to design and construction, and get shovels in the ground faster.

I am proud that our government is doing our part by releasing a new action plan every year over the next four years—starting with today's plan—to build more homes and make life more affordable across this province.

Yes, Speaker, attainability and affordability are crucial to our long-term success.

Housing prices are widely out of sync with the reality of everyday folks. Simply stated, we have a supply problem. We argue that in this House, but it seems to be difficult to understand. This should not be a secret to anyone in this Legislature. More demand than supply, coupled with historic low interest rates have created this crisis.

Has there been a softening of house prices lately? Absolutely. Higher interest rates have caused this correction, and we have a supply problem. However, market fluctuation is not in any way going to solve this housing crisis.

Bill 23 addresses these challenges of supply head-on and offers solutions, not rhetoric—it ends defer and delay.

Speaker, on June 2, this province elected a government with an agenda to build more homes faster. That is exactly what this bill does—it gives municipalities the tools to get shovels in the ground faster and meet the needs of a growing province.

This bill brings accountability to our municipal partners as well, to do their part to get shovels in the ground faster and more effectively.

Next year alone, as we've said, there are 500,000 people immigrating to Canada, and we all know most of these folks are going to end up right here in Ontario.

Last year, Ontario saw the most homes built, as we have said, since 1987; 100,000 new homes were built—impressive, indeed. However, we still fell short of our housing supply need by 50,000 homes. For this reason, we need action and we need shovels in the ground today, and fast.

I'd now like to take some time to talk a little bit about infill and densification, which seems to be a popular subject this morning and throughout the last week or so. I think it's safe to say that all of us in this House believe in good infill—build in, build up, and build on repurposed land. Yes, we need to remediate more brownfield sites in our municipalities to allow even more effective infill. Gentle densification makes sense, and this government supports our municipal partners as they accelerate needed densification. However, infill is only one part of the solution. We simply cannot meet our province's housing demand in the next 10 years through infill alone. We need more housing than gentle densification will offer.

How do we accomplish our collective goal? We strategically, we boldly and we confidently pass Bill 23. Our housing supply disadvantage becomes an opportunity with the benefits of Bill 23. This bill has made it clear that there will be a focus on the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, where the greatest need for new housing exists. Developing this area limits urban sprawl by building adjacent to existing settlements.

Speaker, gentle densification is a key part of our government's solution, but again, this alone will not get the job done.

For those lamenting the loss of municipal development fees, our government makes a compelling point. We know that some cities have continued to increase charges in new housing. Municipal fees are adding an average of \$116,900 to the cost of a single-family home in the GTA. At the current interest rate of 5.7%, this adds approximately \$812 to a homebuyer's monthly mortgage. This is simply unaffordable for most Ontarians. Despite the drastic increases, these development charges have only been accumulating in municipal reserves. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing estimates that self-reported municipal development charge reserves, province-wide, total almost \$9 billion. If you say it slowly, it sinks in: \$9 billion in reserves. I wait in anticipation as we experience the benefits of investing these reserves in support of local infrastructure throughout Ontario communities. It's time we did that.

The More Homes Built Faster Act not only makes sense, but it also builds a strong foundation, as I've said, for this province to grow. This Premier and this government have planted a garden of economic prosperity. We need to make sure we nurture this garden to its full potential. By doing so, we will continue to create an environment for people to prosper in this province.

In my riding, the London St. Thomas Association of Realtors reports that year-to-date home sales have generated more than \$533 million in spinoff spending for our local economy, which will benefit us over the next three years.

Just think of the positive economic growth this province will experience in the months and years ahead if this bill passes. New, good-paying jobs have come to Ontario, with even more to come. Skills development and training is taking place with amazing success. Investments in infrastructure, roads, schools, energy and hospitals are being

initiated. And yes, Bill 23 complements this province's growth and prosperity agenda.

In conclusion, I support young families as they find a path to affordable home ownership. I support seniors wanting to downsize and stay in their home community. I support new Canadians who dream of buying a home but who must begin with an affordable rental option as they build their life here in Ontario. And I support special-needs housing development for those who are disadvantaged in our society.

I support Bill 23. Status quoism is not an option—neither is defer and delay. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to say yes to Bill 23.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm really delighted to support this bill.

According to Grammarist, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions"—according to the site, it's a saying that means "that it is not enough to simply mean to do well; one must take action to do well. A good intention is meaningless unless it is followed by a good action." That's not my definition. That's the definition of the site.

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We are in a housing crisis, and talking about the crisis for years and years and years—because it didn't happen yesterday. It has been happening for maybe the past 10 years, I would say. Nobody did anything about that. Nobody addressed that. So when the government takes bold action—yes, we need that bold action. That action is needed. According to that definition, yes, we need to take bold action. We need to do something about it, and we are doing that.

When we look into some of the changes that this bill does to accelerate building—we talk about removing the two-year time-out provisions for new official plans, secondary plans, zoning bylaws and minor variances entirely. This phase by itself is two years. When we did the hearing and we were talking about housing, according to the mayors' association—the person who was doing the submission said that the cycle would take up to 11 years from the day the developer starts the process to apply to build something until that building sees the light. This one change can eliminate two years of that cycle. Just this one item of the bill can reduce two years of that process. We are hoping that we are going to get further than nine years—we are hoping to get shovels in the ground as soon as possible.

Talking about the needs of Ontarians—every year, around 500,000 new immigrants are coming. Even if I assume that only one third will come to Ontario—I assume that maybe more than 50% are coming to Ontario; the statistics are showing that—that's more than 150,000 people, so even that target of 1.5 million in 10 years might not be enough to address the current and the future needs. When we do cross-planning, we need to make sure of this factor of growth. We are planning on this today. Maybe in two years the federal government will decide to get 600,000 or 700,000—we don't know that yet, so even

planning something on the current situation is the bare minimum.

I don't know why the opposition will not be supporting something like that. They were opposition before, when the previous government was here—and neither did anything about that or even talked about that. So this is one item I would like to talk about.

The other item I would like to talk about is affordable housing, which is kind of the focus of the opposition. In every discussion around this group of bills to accelerate the housing or solve that crisis, they're talking about affordable housing—every single time we raise anything, they talk about affordable housing.

When we talk about decreasing the DCs for not-for-profit organizations and for some specific purposes like rental buildings and special affordable housing—I'm not going to use the government narrative, that we know that it's going to encourage more affordable housing; I will use the testimonies from the organizations who are doing that. For example, Simone Swail, manager of government relations at the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, said, "The commitment to waive development charges for all affordable housing developments will have a tangible and positive impact on the ability to develop new, affordable co-op homes in Ontario. We also look forward to engaging with the province in order to reduce the property tax burden on affordable housing providers, include co-ops."

The VP of housing and homelessness at WoodGreen Community Services said, "This bill is a bold thrust to address the housing needs of the missing middle and innovative construction of supportive housing for the even more dire needs of the homeless population." This is not our wording; this is the wording of the specialists, of the guys who are in this area, the guys who know their sector.

Jeff Neven, CEO of Indwell, said, "The proposed reduction in development costs and fees for affordable and non-profit housing will directly impact our costs, and make it easier to allocate resources where they are needed most."

All those organizations are in the affordable and homeless areas, and their testimony is supportive for the bill—so I don't know, again, where this is coming from.

If we talk about just housing which is affordable, the dream of young people to buy a house is getting further and further—more difficult. We know that lots of young people still live with their families because they can't afford to buy a house.

Some of the statistics here show that the development charges for the average GTA single-family home in 2021 are about \$116,900—\$116,900 for a one-family unit. If we assume that this family house would be \$1 million, this is more than 10% of the cost of the house—and it's piggy-backed. The developer is not going to pay that from his own pocket—it's going to be added to mark it up on the price.

Condos—\$100,000 of the price of a condo is a DC. So when we see this removed, that means a reduction in the price of the unit, making it more affordable.

Again, I understand that the opposition keep talking about, “What are the guarantees that developers will download that cost reduction to the end user or the cost of the unit?” I can’t guarantee that. Nobody can guarantee that. But it’s a step, and after that we can talk about the cost and the margins and everything else. But some steps have to be taken first; then we can assess the results and take further steps.

The final piece I would like to talk about is removing the third-party appeal amendment, removing some of the provisions in the bill that would have limited third-party appeals for official land and zoning bylaws.

We have two issues: as the minister said, NIMBY, the “not in my backyard” approach—so anybody can stop a project by going to the appeal process and saying, “I don’t like this building in my backyard or close to my house”—or BANANA, “build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone,” so any developer would have to go to the middle of nowhere to be able to get no problems to build or otherwise every walk of life can walk in and file an appeal and the process will go for another year or so until that gets rectified in the courts or the appeal process. This is an extra cost in the project, because this project, which is on hold—the clock is ticking; the cost is going up. So whatever the developer sold the unit for, or was planning to sell the unit for—in two years, the cost is going to become more, and he will have to mark up for that cost.

The acceleration of housing is not only helping to address the crisis timing-wise, but also price-wise. We have to bring that down first.

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I will close with a quote from the member from University–Rosedale, who said in the House that she urged the government to look at ways that we can fast-track “missing middle development so we can build two- and three-bedroom townhouses and laneway housing.” She is saying the current situation or current solutions we have do not meet the need.

We need to think out of the box. We need to take bold action. We need to take innovative ways to solve some of the issues, to be able to address the crisis.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions and answers.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I was listening carefully to the remarks of both members.

I have a question for the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He mentioned the dropping of development charges. What the government is proposing here will eliminate development charges from the building of these luxury developments that we’re going to anticipate seeing in the greenbelt.

I’ve been talking to lots of people, community leaders in Brampton, this past weekend, and in every meeting I went to, people raised concerns about this legislation, and they raised specific concerns about the dropping of development charges. They wanted to know, and I’d ask the member opposite, would you like this new property tax that will have to be imposed on the people of Brampton to make up for these charges being dropped—would you

prefer that to be called the PCP Ontario tax or the Doug Ford tax?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’ll withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rob Flack: I would say, listening to the member opposite—and I appreciate your question and concern—a couple of things. Number one, let’s get the \$9 billion invested in this province, and let’s not tax people—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Flack: No, you don’t want that? It’s sitting there. Use it.

Number two, I would call your program the defer and delay program, and that isn’t going to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Through the Speaker, please.

Questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members for their comments.

I’m so glad that the member for Davenport raised the question of development charges. The NDP over there talk about affordable housing, but they want to support everything that continues to make housing less affordable.

My colleagues talked about \$800-plus a month in the mortgage payments at current rates. My friend talked about somewhere around \$119,000 being added to the cost of a home.

We have a housing crisis in Ontario.

I want to ask my colleagues, when there’s almost \$9 billion in development charge reserves, isn’t it important that we do every possible thing we can to help lower the cost of building those 1.5 million homes across the province of Ontario?

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. It’s a great question.

Again, I want to emphasize the cost of housing, because of supply shortages, is paramount in this province. I would really like to see the benefits of taking the \$9 billion throughout many of our larger municipalities and cities in this province, to see it invested back into the infrastructure that’s going to support, quite frankly, the new homes that are going to be built, whether it’s roads, hospitals, schools—whatever it may be. We need to invest this money to support this community. Having it sit in limbo isn’t doing anyone any good. It isn’t helping our communities. It isn’t helping new home buyers. It isn’t helping seniors. It is not helping new Canadians who want to have an affordable home.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank both members for their comments.

I want to direct this question to the honourable member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who I actually have a great deal of respect for. We have a lot of disagreements in this House, but that member and I both have farm backgrounds and both represent ridings where food and

farming are very important to the economy, culture and way of life of our constituents. So I know the member cares deeply about the fact that we're losing 319 acres of farmland each and every day in Ontario.

I would ask the member, if there was legislation put forward—bills like Bill 44 and Bill 45—that showed how we can make zoning changes supported by developers, home builders, housing experts and the government's own housing task force, and that would increase housing supply without paving over farmland and increasing property taxes, would the member be open to considering alternatives to Bill 23?

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member from Guelph. I have a great affinity for you, as well, and the city of Guelph. I was born there. I went to university there. I first lived there when I started my career. So Guelph is a special place to me.

I appreciate your question, and if you're asking, am I open to listening and learning—absolutely; anytime, anywhere. It doesn't mean we have to agree, though.

I would point out your concerns, and I hear them—and I'm going to say again, I think it's about balance. Infill gentle densification is not going to solve this problem. We'll disagree on that. On this side of the House, we believe that that is not going to solve the problem. So it's about balance, and I think we've struck a balance here. We don't agree, but I'm very confident that time is of the essence—speed, speed, speed. The one thing I've learned since coming to this place and listening and learning again is that we move on glacial time here; it is not fast. We have a crisis that needs speed and needs action now—and that is exactly what this bill does.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Aris Babikian: One of the most common things I hear from concerned constituents is that their children won't be able to afford a house of their own.

I am concerned about the future of my two nieces. Both of them are professionals. One of them is married. She's a civil engineer, and her husband is a civil engineer, and they cannot afford to buy a house.

We know that adding more supply is key to bringing costs down. This will help first-time buyers as well as seniors looking to downsize.

Besides working to build more homes, what else does this plan do for first-time homebuyers?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thanks for the question.

As I mentioned in my speech, this is an issue that has been dangling for a long time, and we are addressing it. Since this government came into power, we have introduced dozens of new policies under our first housing supply action plan, More Homes, More Choice Act, in 2019, and the More Homes for Everyone Act, in 2022, and the piece of legislation in hand today.

We know that we have to accelerate building. We know that we have to add capacity. That demand and supply is unbalanced, which causes prices to go up and makes it difficult for new families to acquire. We need to have more

houses built fast and cost-efficiently to be able to meet their needs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The member from Mississauga—Erin Mills mentioned that the clock is ticking.

I have mentioned before that there are two shovel-ready, not-for-profit projects in Thunder Bay. We're still waiting to hear or have some kind of response from the government about how they will support those projects.

My question is actually about farming and farmland. You've talked about the increased population that will be coming to the province. What is the province's plan to replace the food produced on the farmland that is being lost? How do you intend to feed this growing population?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you, Speaker. I'm not worried at all, through you to the member opposite, about feeding the people of this province.

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I'll give you a little example. When I started my career, there was very little grain corn grown in eastern Ontario; the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will attest to that. I had a customer in my former career that just took off 200 bushels to the acre of grain corn.

This province is growing immensely in its ability to use new genetics, both in plant and animal. We continue to grow, and we will continue to grow.

We are a net exporter of food in this province. We have, to the north, the northwest Clay Belt. As we open that up in the months and years ahead with good tile drainage—it's the beginning of the Prairies in Canada—we're going to produce even more food. I am not worried about this province meeting its own needs—in fact, it's feeding more Canadians. We will continue to export food throughout the next 10 years, easily, confidently, and with the great farming community we have in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We do not have time for further questions. However, we do have time for further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House—and, today, take part in the debate on Bill 23, a highly contentious piece of legislation. But I think there's one thing that we all agree on in the Legislature and provincially: that there is a need for more housing.

I appreciate some of the speakers from this morning who actually brought up relevant points about how they want to portray this legislation.

Our job in the opposition is to bring up potential problems that the government needs to recognize, rectify and, hopefully, on some of these things, put the brakes on.

I just listened to the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London talk about his confidence in the farming sector. I share that confidence. Where we perhaps differ, and where many farmers in this province differ—including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—is, we put a value on

every acre of farmland, because in the future we're going to need northern Ontario.

I've farmed in northern Ontario my whole life. The member knows that; I bought feed from his company. When I started buying feed, we were a net importer of grain in Timiskaming, and now we're a massive exporter. But saying that we're going to replace the best land in the province with land in northern Ontario and that we can waste the best land in the province by paving it over for houses—I reject that; it's not an either/or. We need to build houses, but we can't ignore every other issue in this province to do it. We have to balance. I reject categorically the government's line that we can only, right now, look at housing—and look away from everything else.

I want everyone in this province and the newcomers to have shelter, to have a home they can be proud of. I also want them to have a home where they don't have to worry about the basement flooding because we ignored wetland rules, or where their sewer backs up because there was a lack of money to install new sewer systems when they built these developments, because not every municipality is sitting on huge reserves.

I was a councillor for a long time in a small municipality. The reserves are there for a reason. If you have a calamity, you need to fix it. If you're going to drain all the reserves, because you are not putting the money in when you put in a new development to build the sewer systems, to build the underground infrastructure, to build where the schools have got to go, to do all those things, and if you're going to put that all on the back of the current taxpayer—there's a reason why the Association of Municipalities Ontario are quite upset about Bill 23. You're just transferring the cost from one group to another, instead of looking, overall, at what the issues are so that we can proceed for everyone—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize; I must interrupt the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane. The time for debate is over.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WINDSOR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Before I begin, I want to say thank you to the government for the news that we've received from the project P3 pipeline that construction of our Windsor-Essex regional acute-care hospital would be accelerated by a year. Under this government, the previous excuses and inaction holding up the project have stopped and commitments made to us have been exceeded. I'm very proud to be part of a government that supports Windsor—Tecumseh.

I rise today to roll out the virtual red carpet for the Windsor International Film Festival. It was another banner

year for WIFF, held from October 27 until November 6 at Windsor's Capitol Theatre, with over 45,000 tickets sold and new second screenings already scheduled. Vincent Georgie and his team have done an amazing job, creating the biggest festival in WIFF history, with over 300 screenings of 177 films.

By coincidence, my wife, Mary, and I ran into the member for Essex and his wife, Jackie, at the back of the line for the film Walkerville's Willistead Manor: The Home that Shaped a Community, directed by Nick Shields, which detailed Willistead's rich and fascinating history.

Other local favourites included Artifice, by writer-director Gavin Michael Booth, and North of Normal, featuring the youngest headliner of the festival, River Price-Maenpaa.

The member for Essex and I were also delighted to announce, on behalf of Minister Lumsden, new Reconnect Ontario funding for WIFF in the amount of \$185,000.

The WIFF board and their volunteers have made "lights, camera, action" a beloved part of our community fabric.

To all the volunteers, we send to you our sincere thanks for all of your hard work.

ASSISTED HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: All MPPs know that there is a lack of supportive housing in Ontario.

My office has heard from many families over the years desperate to find affordable, safe and permanent housing solutions for their loved ones with developmental disabilities.

The Rodger family—their son Patrick has been waiting over 10 years.

Recently, I heard from the family of Christy, a 50-year-old woman with Down syndrome. Christy's parents are in their eighties and nineties and have moved to an assisted-living facility. They have been fearless and determined in providing Christy with all the best opportunities for care for the past 50 years. Now they need our help. They need to find Christy a safe and permanent place to live, but they cannot. The system is failing them.

Caregivers do their best to take care of their loved ones but the reality is, families cannot be expected to provide this level of support indefinitely. People with disabilities need to know that there's a reliable supportive housing system for them. They deserve the dignity and independence that can come from living in those homes, and their families deserve the peace of mind that they will be taken care of.

This government needs to do what is right. Building and funding supportive housing options needs to be as automatic as building any form of housing in Ontario.

The families of Patrick and Christy are feeling left behind and cast aside. This government needs to assure them that Bill 23—building homes faster—incorporates a comprehensive plan to create more supportive living accommodations, to guarantee that all people with living

disabilities don't have to wait for decades for a home they deserve.

EVENTS IN BRUCE–GREY–OWEN SOUND

Mr. Rick Byers: I rise this morning to let members know about the Kiwanis Owen Sound Santa Claus Parade I had the pleasure of participating in last Saturday evening. It was the 77th running of the parade, and notwithstanding 60 centimetres of snow having fallen, it was a fantastic show. Local firefighters, paramedics, Canada Post workers, the Salvation Army and many, many more were there, as well as thousands of hardy families watching from snow-banks. Of course, Santa was there to provide his personal joy and the spirit of the season. I had the pleasure of walking with members of the Owen Sound municipal council, including both new and re-elected members. I look forward to working with them and other municipal councillors in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

After the parade, there was the Festival of Northern Lights, also in downtown Owen Sound. Dozens of light displays were lit up along the banks of the Sydenham River. It is a spectacular display that will keep the downtown lit up through Christmas and New Year's.

Next up for Santa is Grey Highlands, my home community, tomorrow. Then, next week, he's on to Durham, Lion's Head, Meaford, Dundalk, Hanover and Wiarton. He will be a busy fellow.

Speaking of Wiarton, there are now only 71 days before Willie makes his prediction about the arrival of spring. I understand that Wiarton Willie is already starting vocal exercises and linguistic training to make sure his views are well understood.

I look forward to seeing you all in Wiarton on February 2, 2023.

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Many workers who experience permanent injuries while on the job are forced into poverty and homelessness because the WSIB has a routine policy of turning down claims, forcing injured workers to launch appeals that take years to resolve. Instead of workers getting the financial support they need and are entitled to, they wind up trying to survive on ODSP. That's off-loading the financial responsibility of employers onto the public—a free ride for employers and a lose-lose situation for workers and the public.

1020

Yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development bragged about cutting employers' WSIB premiums by 30%—and then, later that year, at the same time as injured workers are being forced onto ODSP, he gave \$1.2 billion back to employers.

This year, injured workers were betrayed yet again when their cost-of-living allowance was set a full 2% lower than stipulated in law and in WSIB policy. While this government thinks nothing of showering businesses

with money intended to support injured workers, they are happy to rip off workers by deliberately shortchanging them on their cost-of-living increase. This is disgraceful and cruel.

Your treatment of people with disabilities is unacceptable.

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I rise today in honor and respect of the Ukrainian Holodomor Memorial Day. On the fourth Saturday in November, we commemorate Holodomor Memorial Day across Canada. On this day, we remember the great famine of the Soviet Union of 1932–33, when millions of Ukrainians were forcibly starved to death by the Communist Soviet government.

The Ukrainian word “Holodomor” means murder by starvation. Under horrifying and unimaginable conditions, up to 10 million men, women and children perished from starvation. Through propaganda, economic control and the tyrannical need for power, the Stalinist government killed and tortured millions of people.

Today, efforts to raise awareness of this tragic genocide against the Ukrainian people are stronger than ever.

My riding of Oakville stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and our Ukrainian community. We share sorrow regarding Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.

In 2016, 3.6% of Oakville residents reported having Ukrainian heritage.

Over the last eight years, millions of Ukrainians have been displaced by war, and the Halton region and Oakville have welcomed Ukrainian newcomers to our community.

I want to thank St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church and St. Volodymyr Cultural Centre, who have undertaken many initiatives to help the victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

This Holodomor Memorial Day, let us remember the millions who suffered and died at the hands of the Soviet dictatorship, and let us also think about the 42 million courageous Ukrainians now living in a country under attack, and the millions more of Ukrainian diaspora throughout the world.

POVERTY

MPP Jamie West: There's a disturbing trend happening across Ontario.

Earlier this year, I spoke several times about educational support workers who work full-time and go to food banks to feed their children.

Earlier this week, I met with SEIU health care workers. They're in a labour dispute at Kerry's Place Autism Services, and one of their concerns is that they work full-time and can't afford to feed their families.

Yesterday, I visited McMaster University's teaching assistants at the CUPE 3906 picket line. One of the workers told me, “I make so little that I can't afford butter.”

Speaker, these are all examples of hard-working individuals who still have to rely on food banks to feed themselves and their families. Nobody working full-time should have to go to a food bank.

If you're not employed, it's even worse—65% of food bank users are on Ontario Works or ODSP. That's because receiving less than nine grand a year is intentional legislative poverty. Nobody can survive on that.

The Conservative government could make things better, but they deliberately choose not to.

It is almost Christmas. Before you know it, Speaker, politicians across the aisle will start encouraging Ontarians to donate to local food banks. But instead of asking for donations, the Conservative government could legislate Ontarians out of poverty. They could fix WSIB. They could double OW and ODSP. They could invest in truly affordable housing. And they could amend the Employment Standards Act to ensure that employment conditions are safe and secure and that they are paid a living wage.

AARON FISHER

Ms. Jess Dixon: I stand today to tell this House about Aaron Fisher, one of Hespeler's own. Tragically, Aaron is now one of Hespeler's lost. He passed away this past Friday after a swimming accident that occurred while he was on vacation in the Philippines—what was, for him, supposed to be the trip of a lifetime. Aaron was only 37. He leaves behind the twin lights of his life, his two young sons, Sammy and Cole.

Aaron Fisher had a commitment and dedication to his community that is rarely seen. I only had the chance to meet him once, but his passion and his devotion to Hespeler in particular was obvious. Aaron served as the executive director of the Hespeler BIA and was the admin on multiple local Facebook groups. He managed the yearly creation and maintenance of the free ice rink in Victoria Park and was a vocal supporter of the Hespeler skate park project.

Aaron was also a champion of citizen-led political engagement. He was the past president of the Kitchener South–Hespeler Federal Liberal Association, and over the years he contributed countless hours of his time to Liberal campaigns, both federal and provincial. Although Aaron and I were on different sides of the political coin, Aaron was an incredible example to all of us of someone who really put in the work behind his words.

Aaron, although we were strangers, I think I can speak for Hespeler when I say that you will be so missed. This message will be recorded and etched forever into the volumes of Hansard. The impact of that may not be felt by all listening, but I believe it would matter to Aaron, and so I'll say his name again: Aaron Fisher.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The greenbelt was created in 2005 to prevent further loss of farmland and natural heritage, to restrict urban sprawl, and to develop

vibrant communities where people can live, work and play. It cleans our air and water, reduces our flood risks, and provides a home for wildlife. And 4,782 farms are protected by the greenbelt, with 68% more revenue earned by greenbelt farms than the average Ontario farm.

Last week, I heard from Peggy Brekveld, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, about Bill 23. She stated: “319 acres” of farmland “are being lost each day. That is 75 million carrots, 25 million apples and 1.2 million bottles of VQA wine”—for those of you who care—“per year. That's why this matters to every single one of us around this table.”

Maybe you remember the jingle, “Good things grow in Ontario”—not without our precious farmland and greenbelt, they won't.

Ontario is supposed to be open for business, but it's time we ask, “Whose business?” Certainly, not Ontario farmers, once this government has its way with the land.

When the trees are logged and the farmland is paved, what will you eat? Where does this end? I thought our province's abundance of farmland producing fresh food and products for us to enjoy and export around the world was something we were proud of. Once it's gone, it's gone; we won't be able to pass a bill to develop more farmland on top of cement.

PS: Developers need to eat too.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask for the attention of the House.

It being 10:29 a.m., as provided by the Trans Day of Remembrance Act, 2017, the assembly shall now pause and observe one moment of silence in honour of trans people who have died as a result of anti-trans violence. I'll ask members to please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

Members' statements?

1030

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

VIOLENCE SEXISTE

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: It is a great honour to rise today to raise awareness of an issue which impacts women and girls in Ontario. The month of November marks Woman Abuse Prevention Month and the 10th anniversary of Ontario's Wrapped in Courage campaign.

Le mois de novembre marque le Mois de la prévention de la violence faite aux femmes et le 10^e anniversaire de la campagne Enveloppés de courage. Nous savons trop bien qu'il faut accorder plus d'attention au problème de la violence faite aux femmes et aux filles dans notre province.

Sadly, since last November, there have been over 40 documented femicides in Ontario—this means 40 intentional killings of women for no other reason than their

gender. Moreover, countless more women and girls are trying to survive in unsafe households, on the streets and in our communities.

The Wrapped in Courage campaign, organized by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, has been helping women since 2013. The campaign has been bringing attention to gender-based violence across Ontario through the wearing of purple scarves. Each year, throughout November, Ontarians are asked to show their support for survivors of women abuse by wearing a purple scarf, which can be purchased from their local women's shelter.

In my community of Peel, organizations like Embrace, the Peel Committee Against Women Abuse, Take Back the Night Foundation and Armagh House are doing incredible work supporting survivors.

I was proud to recently participate in the Take Back the Night march with our Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity in Brampton to show our support and dedication to ending gender-based violence in Ontario.

I would like to encourage all members of this House to wear their Wrapped in Courage purple scarves on Tuesday, November 29, in recognition of Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

BRENN-B FARMS

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to take the time this morning to recognize the tremendous contributions the Brenn family has been making to Ontario's agriculture industry.

Brenn-B Farms has been growing crops and raising livestock on their 2,000 acres in Flamborough for four generations. Brenn-B Farms dates back to 1915, when the property was purchased by Thomas Brenn. Thomas's great-grandsons Chris and Shawn are now running the business.

This past September, the brothers took the Premier, Minister Thompson and myself on a tour of their farm. At the time, they were harvesting potatoes. They have a reputation for growing high-quality potatoes. Brenn-B harvests about 28 million pounds of potatoes each and every year.

They are a leader in food safety and traceability. With the help of OMAFRA, they have invested in technology that can monitor their products for quality and safety, from planting to retail distribution. They sell to every major grocer, right across Canada. Brenn-B has always kept up with the changing technology. They have received recognition for being progressive farmers of the future.

I want to congratulate Brenn-B Farms for continuing their tradition of producing high-quality crops. They have been feeding people across Ontario and beyond for over a century.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the chamber today a former member of the Legislature,

who served as the member for Parkdale–High Park in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st provincial Parliaments, and she was recently invested in the Order of Canada. Cheri DiNovo is here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I, too, would like to give a very warm welcome to my predecessor and former boss, MPP Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale–High Park, who is also the author and lead of the Trans Day of Remembrance bill, which is now law. We mark that date today. Thank you, Cheri.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce some attendees from Intellectual Property Ontario to Queen's Park today. We have Karima Bawa, chair of the IPON board; Peter Cowan, CEO; and Amon Khakimov, senior director of corporate affairs of IPON. Thank you for being here today.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I, too, would like to acknowledge in our House, in her House, former member of provincial Parliament Rev. Cheri DiNovo, who initiated the Trans Day of Remembrance, which we will mark today. She's also the author of the most number of 2SLGBT bills that have ever been introduced in Canada, right here in Ontario.

I'd also like to welcome Rev. Junia Joplin, Pippa Josselyn-Hamilton, Martine Stonehouse—thank you very much for your attendance today—and Susan Gapka from the Trans Lobby Group, who's inviting everyone to the Trans Day of Remembrance flag-raising at 12 o'clock outside of Queen's Park. All are welcome.

Welcome to your House.

Mr. Will Bouma: I just want to take a moment to welcome our chaplain, Charlie Lyons—he has been a great mentor to me—and his mentor, Terry Dorey, from MentorLink Canada. Welcome to the people's House.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to issue a very warm welcome to my friend Constantine Sardelis and his father, George Sardelis, who are here today.

Mr. Rob Flack: I'd like to welcome Elizabeth and Matt Wilson, proud parents of page Scarlett Wilson from the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I'd like to welcome Mayor Fred Mota from the town of Red Lake. Red Lake is probably one of our most westerly communities in the province. Certainly, it's the most westerly town in the province of Ontario, being 100 kilometres from the Manitoba border. He's here in town today to partake in meetings with AMO, as the first vice-president of NOMA. He's a great representative for northwestern Ontario and someone I'm proud to call a friend. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences are here today. That includes: Katherine Tuomi, member of the board; Gregory Toffner, president and CEO; Stephanie Shiplo, chair of the board; Yusuaf Omarkhail, treasurer; Hema Merai, a director; and Keara White, also a director.

Also with us today—I'm happy to welcome JP Hornick, president of OPSEU/SEFPO; Sara Labelle, regional vice-president of OPSEU/SEFPO; RM Kennedy;

Michael Hurley, OCHU/CUPE president; Stella Yeadon from CUPE; Angela Preocanin, Ontario Nurses' Association first vice-president; Bernie Robinson, second vice-president of ONA; Erica Woods, Ontario Nurses' Association; and hard-working Leonora Foster, a nurse from SickKids, also an ONA representative.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I have members of my team joining me here today who I would like to introduce. Natalie Tuysusian, Christopher Martin-Chan and Jenna Bendayan are going to be watching the proceedings with us today, so I just wanted to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Because we have some time, an introduction of sorts—he's not actually here today, but as you know, I have a large family, and tomorrow, my brother Frank, who lives in MPP Byers's riding, will be celebrating his 70th birthday. I don't think I've ever mentioned Frank in this place; I should have sooner.

Happy birthday, brother.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I missed introducing two of my constituents, residents of Parkdale–High Park. Ben Scott and Tian Yue are here at Queen's Park, and they participated in our press conference this morning to call for rent control for all tenants.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll ask members not to make political statements during introductions.

It is now time for oral questions.

1040

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier.

The situation in our hospitals right now is critical. In a rare and historic moment, the five largest health care unions in Ontario have joined together to condemn this government's inaction on the response to the crisis in our health care system. Together, they represent 295,000 front-line health care workers who feel disrespected and undervalued by this government. This government has consistently failed to listen to front-line workers.

Will the Premier and Minister of Health agree to meet with public health care leaders and implement their solutions?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I meet regularly with health care providers and health care leaders in the industry because I want to hear about their innovative solutions.

The investments that we are making and the changes that we are making in the short, medium and long term truly are making a difference. Would I like to see it go faster? Absolutely, but I am not going to shy away from continually highlighting the fact that it is our government and this Premier who have made the investments in the

health care system, including the addition of two new medical schools in the province of Ontario, one in Brampton and one in Scarborough—unprecedented, historic investments. The last time we saw an expansion in medical schools in the province of Ontario was with a previous Conservative government. We had a health care system that desperately needed attention—it is getting that with this government. And we will continue to make those investments.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, to the Premier: We know how little this government cares about front-line workers in our health care system. It appears they're starving the public health care system to manufacture a crisis and create a reliance on for-profit companies. We're already seeing hospitals and long-term-care homes being forced to rely on agency staff and being gouged by the prices that they charge. Instead of investing in permanent, full-time staff, this government has instructed Ontario Health to cut even more resources from staff.

How can the Premier justify reducing spending on health care staff during a health care human resource crisis?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It doesn't matter how many times you repeat a falsehood; it's still a falsehood.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Finish your answer.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The facts spell a very different story.

Where was the member opposite when we were investing? Where was the member opposite when we actually put money in the budget that was going to give a \$5,000 retention fee for our very, very hard-working nurses in the province of Ontario? The member opposite and his party chose not to support those investments.

Where was the member opposite when we expanded the number of residency positions available in the province so that in rural, northern and all parts of Ontario, we would have more family physicians and more health care professionals being able to practise in the province of Ontario? They voted against that.

We will continue, with our most recent budget—a \$5-billion increase in the health care budget—to make those investments. I'd like to see the member opposite—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, the minister can cite all kinds of numbers. Talk to the people who are waiting in the emergency rooms—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Talk to the people in the emergency rooms to find out what's real and what's not real.

Speaker, this government has no intention of listening to front-line health care workers. Unions representing

hundreds of thousands of workers are urgently calling for the public sector solutions that this government is not interested in. We have the space and we have the capacity in our health system; all we need is the political will from this government to repeal Bill 124, to improve workloads, and to incentivize health care workers to remain in the system instead of driving them out.

Will the Premier commit to the solutions proposed by health care workers to improve access and quality of care in Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Where was the member opposite when we directed the College of Nurses of Ontario to quickly review, expedite and license, when appropriate, new internationally educated nurses in the province of Ontario? They did not support that.

Where was the member opposite when we, through a directive, said to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, “We have internationally educated primary care physicians who want to work in the province of Ontario—we want you to assess, review and, when appropriate, license them.” Where was the member opposite? Again, they did not support these changes.

We will continue to work with all health care providers in the province of Ontario when they bring forward innovative ideas, and we will continue to fund those innovations, because we understand the people of Ontario deserve better than what they’ve been getting for the last 20 years.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Yesterday, I asked the minister to do much better for Ontario’s youth in care. This government has known about children suffering in for-profit group homes like Hatts Off for years. In 2018, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth was circulating a draft report to ministry officials, raising concerns about the safety of children in these homes. The report found that vulnerable youth were subjected to inadequate care and inhumane punishments on a regular basis. In 2019, the Conservatives fired the provincial advocate and eliminated the office altogether—curious timing, don’t you think? Even worse, the government’s own inspection reports of group homes detailed bathrooms covered in black mould, smeared blood on walls, and children sleeping on soiled mattresses. This government knew—they’ve known for four years, and yet these vulnerable children continue to suffer under their care.

Why hasn’t the government taken meaningful action to help children living in these group homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The member opposite makes an important point: that our government did know at that time that more reports were not going to be helpful. The evidence was there.

That’s exactly why we are redesigning the child welfare system and implementing very important measures that we

are monitoring and making publicly transparent: increasing the inspections, increasing the number of inspectors, and increasing the number of unannounced inspections. All of these are measures that are making a difference. We’re increasing the data collection in a meaningful way. We’re consulting with the youth and people with lived experience in the system to make the system better. Their voices matter. We are listening to their voices. We are implementing a child welfare redesign. It is very important work, as you have outlined, and we are taking action on this all this time. We will continue to do that very important work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: When you’re talking about transparency—maybe you shouldn’t have fired the provincial child advocate, who raised the alarm bells with you.

For four years under this government, these children continue to be abused. That’s not action on the part of the government; that is neglect. This isn’t just a failure of Hatts Off; it’s a massive failure of this Conservative government. They virtually abandoned these children.

Children in the care system are subject to physical restraints, little to no food, overmedicating and cruel punishments, including prolonged isolation.

Dwayne Ferguson, like Cassidy Franck, was unable to access the care and support he needed at a Hatts Off group home in Hamilton. Cassidy, thankfully, got out, but Dwayne tragically died by suicide outside of a Hatts Off home in 2014.

Yesterday, I asked the minister to commit to pursuing an investigation into Hatts Off, and she refused.

Will the minister commit today to a full investigation into Hatts Off so that no child spends another day in these horrific conditions and no more children die in care? Yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not across the floor of the House.

The minister to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I repeat: This is exactly why we are implementing a new child welfare system. This is part of our child welfare redesign, something that the previous government never did, something that you supported the previous government not to do. So we are doing the work that you never did, and we’re making a difference in the lives of children. We are providing more oversight and more accountability. These are important measures. We don’t need more reports. We know what needs to be done, and we’re doing it—something that you never did.

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

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: While the minister tries to play politics and shirk responsibility, there are children who are literally dying in these homes.

1050

Speaker, I’m starting to see a really disturbing pattern with this Conservative government. They aren’t doing

anything to address the crisis in our children's hospitals. They aren't providing adequate funding to our schools. They aren't addressing the growing wait-list for autism services. They aren't supporting kids in the care system. It's like they don't care about the kids at all.

Will the minister commit to a full investigation into Hatts Off today?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Well, you've definitely identified who's playing politics.

We are putting more money into the child welfare system for the redesign, to address human trafficking, to address sexual abuse, to address the inferior situations in some homes. Some homes have been closed. We are improving the oversight. We're improving accountability. We are improving inspections. We're improving the number of inspectors. We are listening to the sector. We are listening to people with lived experience. We have done consultations. Twenty new inspector positions across the province to support the inspection and oversight of licensed residential placements—we boosted the number of inspections, and we've increased the number of foster home inspections for each licence renewal. To increase transparency, we started publicly posting licensing information, something the previous government, supported by the NDP, never bothered to do.

So don't tell me who's playing politics. I know very well who's playing politics.

Interjections.

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

Once again, I'll ask the members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

The next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. This week, Infrastructure Ontario released a new market update revealing significant cost increases and delays for several of the government's public-private partnerships. The last of the Ontario Line P3 contracts is now expected to be finalized in 2026, an unexplained four-year delay from the date in IO's 2019 market update. Earlier this month, IO signed a P3 contract for the Ontario Line south package that will cost an astonishing \$1 billion per kilometre. Just five years ago, for comparison, the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension cost \$383 million per kilometre—a far cry from \$1 billion per klick.

Why have subway costs gone up by more than two and a half times under this Premier?

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

Hon. Stan Cho: It's an ironic question from the member opposite.

Let's start with the fact that, as the member should well know, construction project costs around the world are facing economic pressures, with rising inflation and supply chain challenges.

I'm glad, though, that the member brings up the Ontario Line, because this government is the only government that is filling the transit gap that was left by the NDP and Liberals for decades. We're taking action to fill that gap and putting forward the largest transit expansion plan in Canadian history, to the tune of \$61 billion.

Let's look at the facts. The Ontario Line will see almost 400,000 passengers every single day. It will reduce crowding on existing subways. This will put 57,000 jobs within 45 minutes—commuting to Toronto, and it will put 227,000 people to work.

We're not going to take any lessons from the NDP on building transit. They simply didn't do it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question. The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the Premier. According to the Toronto Star, the Premier's decision to take over the Ontario Line from the city of Toronto was proposed by Michael Schabas, a private consultant who has embedded himself at the executive level of Metrolinx, a public transit agency. Another embedded private consultant who worked on the Ontario Line was Brian Guest, currently embroiled in the Ottawa LRT P3 fiasco and under allegations of a conflict of interest. The Ontario Line's project director was yet another embedded private consultant named Richard Tucker, whose background is actually in real estate development and not in transit.

Will the Premier admit that there's a connection between the skyrocketing P3 costs and the capture of Metrolinx by private, self-serving consultants?

Hon. Stan Cho: I guess the irony thickens in the supplemental. The reality is, that member voted against every single measure to build transit and now questions when this government actually gets it done. In fact, it was that party who called the plan to build the Ontario Line fiction, a back-of-a- napkin plan. Well, I see shovels in the ground. The reality is, these lines are getting built.

Speaker, that member and that party not only voted against the Ontario Line; they voted against the Eglinton West extension getting us to Pearson airport; they voted against the fine people of Scarborough with the Sheppard East extension; they voted against the Yonge North extension and, of course, the Ontario Line. They even voted against \$1.6 billion in Safe Restart funding to keep transit agencies alive during the pandemic.

The reality is, if the NDP had it their way, there would be no transit in Ontario.

This is the only government getting it done for commuters in Ontario.

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Laura Smith: Mr. Speaker, through you: Like nearly every jurisdiction globally, Ontario is experiencing a labour shortage across almost every sector. At the same time, there are young people in this province who cannot find a job. This is unacceptable.

The skilled trades require more individuals than ever to fill these prosperous and respected careers that will provide stability for those workers and their families. By 2026, it is expected that one in five job openings in this province will be in skilled-trades-related occupations.

Ontarians expect their government to continuously update initiatives and make investments for all students, ensuring they have the skills required to succeed in the modern world.

Can the Minister of Education please update this House on how our government provides the tools our youngest learners need to succeed?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for the question.

I want to build on the passion of the Associate Minister of Transportation in this House by recognizing that this government, under Premier Ford, has a \$160-billion infrastructure plan to build subways and hospitals and schools and transit in every region of this province. To do that, we need a talent pool of young, ambitious people who are ready to take on the jobs of tomorrow. That's why we've brought forth a plan to expand skilled trades training within our schools—because the broader vision for this government is to ensure that the next generation of workers and thinkers and entrepreneurs are financially literate, are emotionally intelligent, are ready for the jobs of tomorrow and have the technological fluency they need to succeed.

We know so many young people still cannot get a job related to their skills. Our vision and investment today expands the Dual Credit Program that will allow more young people to learn within our high schools and get a job at the end of their journey.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the minister for his valuable information. It is a fact that a career in the skilled trades is both in demand and well-paying. I am grateful that our government is making a significant effort to support our young people, which will help our economy prosper now and in the future. It is also encouraging to hear the minister say the Dual Credit Program that our students readily have access to is a priority and properly funded.

To the Minister of Education: Will he please outline how many students will benefit from this program extension and how it will help and provide economic stability in a key sector of our economy?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to note that today, with the members from Scarborough Centre and Ajax, and the Minister of Finance—we joined together to announce a major expansion of the Dual Credit Program, which allows students in high school to take college courses to complete towards their apprenticeship training. This is allowing young people who otherwise likely wouldn't graduate to not only complete their learning but get access to a high-wage career. It is very promising. A 30% increase announced by this government today in apprenticeship learning within our schools—2,200 more young people in

the coming year will benefit from this learning, in addition to a curriculum that finally is labour-market-aligned, ensuring that young people learn skills they can apply and can monetize in a competitive global economy.

Our vision and our mission is clear: We want young people to graduate with the skills necessary to compete and succeed in the world.

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MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Bill 23 is about to eviscerate Toronto's affordable housing construction program. Removing housing services from development charges is going to cost the city \$230 million in revenue. It will restrict Toronto's ability to deliver on its 10-year housing targets, invest in new shelter services, and carry on with several of its affordable housing development and protection programs.

Will the government help Toronto deliver its affordable housing plan and cover the loss in development fees?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Well, without the New Democrats' support, we're supporting Mayor Tory, providing him with strong-mayor powers to help him meet his goal of his share of the 1.5 million homes we're going to be building over the next 10 years as part of our housing supply action plan. And despite the NIMBY chants from New Democrats, we're going to continue to work with Mayor Tory and the city of Toronto so that they can meet those targets in partnership. We're going to continue to provide them the tools to get shovels in the ground faster.

Again, the member has to realize that the most significant changes in development charges are exactly the type of homes that she talked about in her question—the deepest differences in development charges are for affordable housing, attainable housing and inclusionary zoning units. I think we can agree—or maybe she doesn't agree—that that's the type of housing that Torontonians need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: We can protect our democratic norms and build housing at the same time; it's not one or the other.

The money that is received from development charges is already committed, and ignoring the revenue losses from Bill 23 risks virtually every significant program Toronto has to provide affordable housing. Giving the mayor the power to pass bylaws over the objections of two thirds of Toronto's elected council will do nothing to fix that.

What is the government's plan to help municipalities build truly affordable and supportive housing?

Hon. Steve Clark: I just told that member how we're going to incent affordable housing. We've supported our municipal partners throughout the pandemic. We provided, under the leadership of Premier Ford, a historic

agreement that provided our municipal partners with over \$4 billion to ensure that they had the tools.

Again, this member speaks against the strong-mayor powers in Bill 39. I want to remind her that John Tory won a city-wide mandate with over 342,000 votes—36,000 more votes than every city councillor combined. He has a city-wide mandate to get shovels in the ground. We're going to give him the tools to get it done.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Matthew Rae: Under the previous Liberal government, the people of Ontario were subjected to the largest regulatory burden in all of Canada. People in business were overwhelmed by red tape and high taxes. In my riding of Perth–Wellington, unnecessary bureaucracy drove away jobs, investments and opportunities for small businesses and farm families in my community.

Our government must implement better solutions to help people and businesses save time and money. While many regulations are essential to protecting people's health, safety and the environment, nobody benefits from outdated, duplicative or overly complex rules.

What action is our government taking to reduce unnecessary red tape to make life easier for people and businesses in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the honourable member from Perth–Wellington for that important question.

We all know that for 15 years, under the former Liberal government, supported by the NDP, their failed policies drove away over 300,000 jobs out of our province, all thanks to the unnecessary red tape burden they created in the province of Ontario.

Thankfully, those days are behind us. Now we have a government that is truly committed to creating jobs, creating opportunities, and reducing unnecessary red tape burdens. Since 2018, our government has reduced unnecessary burdens and red tape that held back economic growth and prosperity in our province of Ontario. We have reduced Ontario's total regulatory burden by 6.5%, which has led to over half a billion dollars of savings in compliances for businesses.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for his answer. It's great news. I'm proud of our government's leadership that is correcting years of mismanagement and unnecessary red tape implemented under the previous Liberal government.

During these times of global economic uncertainty, it's vital that we as a government take prudent action in providing stability and support to our business community. Reducing red tape on individuals and businesses is a key measure that this government can take to support a robust economic environment, ensuring our small businesses have confidence.

Can the minister please tell this House what is being done to continue to eliminate complicated, duplicative and unnecessary red tape?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague for that question. Again, he is absolutely right about the need to continue moving forward with our work to reduce unnecessary red tape.

That's why I was honoured to introduce the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act in the Legislature yesterday. If passed, this bill will help Ontario become more competitive, will strengthen our local supply chain, and will make Ontario services easier to access and interact with. It includes measures to increase local food production and efforts to ensure our food supply chain. It includes measures to get goods to market and improve supply chain efficiency.

We have been working hard each and every day on this side of the House to work with Ontarians, to work with businesses, to find ways to eliminate unnecessary red tape. We're getting it done.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Health. The Ministry of Health acknowledged in a memo this week that Ontario is facing a difficult and complex respiratory illness season. The government's solution to this? They're asking family doctors to do more.

The minister should know that the health care crisis includes a shortage of doctors. There just aren't enough primary care physicians. More than one million Ontarians today don't have a family doctor, and that is projected to rise to three million, or one in five, by 2025.

What is the government's plan to address the doctor shortage?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Imagine, if you will: When the Auditor General's report came out in 2012 and highlighted the shortage of family physicians in northern Ontario—they needed an additional 200 family physicians. Imagine, in 2012, when the Liberal government was in power, if we had actually actioned that highlight and that concern.

In contrast, I will point to the fact that we have now added an additional 160 undergraduate spots. We've added an additional 295 postgraduate positions. These are positions and opportunities for Ontario residents and individuals who want to practise family medicine in the province of Ontario. They will have that expanded opportunity in the next five years.

I am concerned that the member opposite and the party opposite weren't calling for more action when they had the opportunity to do that in 2018 and the Auditor General was highlighting the issue.

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

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: My constituent Jacqueline and her husband Donald are an aging couple who were left to scramble to find a new family doctor this August after theirs retired. Donald is 90 years old and has been treated for prostate cancer for the last 20 years, and Jacqueline has

been his primary caregiver at home, as he needs supervision and help with everyday tasks. They are scared because they are running out of time to find someone to guide them through Donald's treatment, and they feel that they have nowhere to turn.

The shortage of family doctors in this province is literally a situation of life or death.

How much longer will Jacqueline and Donald have to wait?

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Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite highlights the exact reason why, in the summer, I sent a minister's directive to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario saying that any individuals who have been internationally educated or who have practised in other jurisdictions have the opportunity to get their qualifications assessed, reviewed and ultimately licensed, if appropriate. It is precisely why we have done some of those short-, medium-, and long-term goals—because we understand there are immediate needs in our community today, right now. We also understand that you must plan for the future—which, bluntly, previous governments did not do. We are making those investments now to make sure that this is not an ongoing problem in the province of Ontario.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I wish to bring a very important issue to this government's attention that doesn't seem to be on their radar. Solitary confinement, a process broadly recognized to be torture, is still being used as a disciplinary tool in our Ontario jails. This ineffective punishment is commonly inflicted on inmates with mental health conditions which are worsened by the cruel and disorienting practice of solitary confinement.

Administrative segregation may need to be used occasionally to keep inmates safe, but it should be humane and should not be used as a punishment. We need a much stronger system of accountability, with tribunals to verify whether administrative segregation is the only course of action to keep inmates safe.

My question is, will the government do everything in its power to make sure that our jails are not places in which people are being tortured?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Community safety is a top priority for this government—not just for those who work and support our justice system, but for all Ontario families.

We've been strengthening our justice system from top to bottom, guided by three goals: keeping communities safe, holding offenders accountable, and delivering justice for the people of Ontario. We have been clear that the segregation that was allowed to drag on unconscionably

by the previous governments will not stand under our watch.

The record shows that we have had a four-year moratorium on all correctional officers recruitment instituted under the Wynne-Del Duca Liberals—to thank for those conditions that, now, our government is facing. It is our Progressive Conservative government that has made changes to ensure segregation is not overused. To continue this progress, we have made landmark investments of over \$500 million in the correctional system, including the hiring of 500 new staff and bringing infrastructure and investments to the staff. We are very—

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: People with mental health struggles are dramatically overrepresented in Ontario's prisons, and that's a fact. Part of the problem is that police are the main responders for mental health crises, which results in people with addictions and mental health issues being put into the justice system instead of receiving the care they need. Mobile crisis response teams help avoid this by facilitating partnerships between police and mental health and addictions professionals. Yesterday I met with mental health and addictions professionals who see the heartbreaking effects of this issue every day, and they told me that the funding for these teams is insufficient to address the need for recruitment and retention. People experiencing a mental health or addiction crisis are in need of health care, not jail time.

So what is the government doing to expand mobile crisis response teams for these essential services so we can keep people out of the justice system and save taxpayers' money?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The response. The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. It is something that our government takes very seriously.

As everyone knows in this House, our government is investing \$525 million in annualized amounts to ensure that we build a continuum of care. One of the things that we look at is not just the treatment and the detox; we're also looking at ways that we can divert people away from the emergency rooms and the justice system. One of those methods is to have mobile crisis intervention teams. I can say that under this government we've had more teams established, both under the Ministry of Health investments and under the watch of the Solicitor General, to ensure that these teams are in place, to ensure that people are getting the appropriate treatment when and where they need it, and brought to places where they can truly get help—not necessarily in the corrections system.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the added strain that the pandemic placed on our health care system. This strain is not only occurring in Ontario but is being experienced across Canada.

Because of the policies of neglect and mismanagement from the previous Liberal government, our health care workforce faces huge challenges. To address our current health care system needs, we must expand our workforce, starting with recruiting and training new health care professionals. This is particularly important in smaller communities that often face severe staffing shortages.

Can the Minister of Colleges and Universities please explain what our government is doing to train more front-line health care professionals?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question.

Coming from a rural area myself, I've seen first-hand the challenges that smaller communities have faced because of the pandemic.

While we have seen some of the best and brightest working in our hospitals and health care facilities, we recognize that we can always do more to ensure that they are supported, and that staffing levels are meeting the demands of our system.

Last year alone, we had over 25,000 nursing students studying at an Ontario college or university.

Since 2016, our post-secondary institutions are graduating, on average, 15% more nurses than before.

It's not about getting students in class; it's also about investing in their education. That's why our government is investing \$124 million over the next three years to support the clinical education of student nurses, to get the hands-on training they need to succeed—training that they simply cannot get in the classroom.

The people of Ontario can be assured that the world-class training our grads receive will have them job-ready and able to tackle even the most challenging times in our health care system.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister, for that wonderful answer.

I appreciate what the minister had to say about investing in Ontario nurses, but we must ensure that these supports go toward the regions with the highest needs. Rural, remote and northern Ontario communities continue to face a serious shortage of health care human resources professionals. With retiring health care professionals leaving the field, young people are not filling the jobs needed to maintain the same level of care for residents.

Can the minister please outline what our government is doing to ensure that the residents of rural, remote and northern Ontario communities continue to receive access to health care professionals?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member.

I've been working closely with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Long-Term Care to ensure that we are not only fostering education for health care professionals but that we are also addressing specific regional and community health care needs across the province.

Earlier this year, our government launched the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, which is going to be a huge asset for underserved communities. In the simplest of terms, if

a student enrolls in a school in an underserved community and takes one of the identified programs of need and commits to working in that community in their area of study for two years, the government will cover their education. Through this grant, we are investing \$61 million to support 2,500 new health care professionals, in addition to the thousands more we are supporting through various ministry initiatives. Whether they are in North Bay, Sarnia, Belleville, Thunder Bay or in any other identified communities, local colleges and universities will be training the next generation of health care professionals who will support local health care needs. I'm very excited about the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, and I look forward to sharing an update in this House about its success in the future.

GASOLINE PRICES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Gas prices remain far higher in northern Ontario than in the south. In the northwest, the average cost of gas was 30 cents more per litre than in the greater Toronto area. Even in the north, the price can range drastically from town to town for no discernible reason.

Can the Premier explain to northerners why there are such huge differences in the price of gas across the province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler, the parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Of course, we know that Ontario families and workers are being affected by inflation and high global gas prices; it's particularly true in northern Ontario. Obviously, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had geopolitical consequences that Ontario is not immune to.

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Our government has taken numerous steps—back in 2018, scrapping cap-and-trade, and then, recently, extending the 5.7-cent gas tax cut for another year.

My issue would be the sort of hypocrisy of that question coming from the NDP—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Ms. Jess Dixon: —the question coming from the NDP that seems to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member will take her seat.

Stop the clock.

The member must withdraw the unparliamentary remark. You have to stand up and say it.

Start the clock.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Conclude your response.

Ms. Jess Dixon: The issue, coming from the NDP, where—if the party cared about gas prices, I would suggest turning their advocacy to the federal carbon tax, or perhaps to the member's own party, the individuals of which campaigned on a promise of a 35-cent gas tax

increase, which would cost Ontario families literally thousands—

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The answer is simple: Oil and gas companies that continue to rack up huge profits are gouging people in the north. Just ask the Minister of Northern Development, who said last week, “I can’t explain the price variations” in the north. “It’s a bit of a Wild West phenomenon.”

Will the Premier rein in the companies that are gouging northerners and end gas price gouging in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member opposite: Breaking news, Ontario and Canada are part of the global economy. We’re affected by the global supply chains and the price of oil and gas around the planet.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this: For the eight million drivers in Ontario, many—I’m taking the subway to my next meeting right after this, but many in this province can’t take a subway to take their kids to school, can’t take a subway to work. They have to drive to get to work. We’re providing relief to those eight million drivers.

Mr. Speaker, let me also say this: In the fall economic statement, we’re also helping others, including those on the Ontario disability program. We increased the earning exemption from \$200 to \$1,000 a month. I quote the newly appointed CEO of the Abilities Centre: “Today’s ODSP policy announcement in the fall economic statement is a game-changer. The changes to ODSP clawbacks are the most significant policy change since the creation of ODSP.”

We’re—

Interjections.

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

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Holland: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development.

Because of the leadership demonstrated by our government, we are ensuring that all Ontarians have an opportunity to participate in our growing economy.

We recognize that Indigenous communities deserve reliable sources of energy. They deserve infrastructure that connects them to our province, and they deserve the opportunity to participate fully and meaningfully in our shared economic prosperity.

Can the minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development please inform the House how our government plans to increase economic prosperity across the north?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for the question.

I have some great news today, Mr. Speaker. The community of Kingfisher First Nation, one of our isolated communities in the north—the member from

Kiiwetinoong comes from there—is going off diesel generation. Our government led the charge after a long period of time when the previous government was slow to the mark on this. There are 24 communities in the Watay Power group; 17 of them are isolated. They’re onboarding now. They’re building an 1,800-kilometre line that will help improve electricity capacity and stability in these communities.

Chief Mamakwa, I think, said it best: “Access to reliable energy will lead to many improvements for our people and the community. Schools, households, and businesses have been negatively impacted by frequent power outages. Improvements in health care, education, food security, and technology” are on the way. That’s something to celebrate.

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

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, they drove jobs out of our province and failed to unlock Ontario’s full economic potential, especially for the people of northern Ontario. We do not believe that this is fair.

It is clear that transformational investments in infrastructure will lead to long-term economic growth across all of Ontario and deliver investments for the north.

Can the minister please elaborate further about the importance of supporting Indigenous-led projects and the benefits they will provide for their communities in rural, remote, northern areas of our province?

Hon. Greg Rickford: We have the Watay Power line; we have the east-west tie—what’s next? Well, I’ll tell you about some isolated communities just to the east of the Watay Power communities. They are Eabametoong, Neskantaga, Nibinamik, Webequie and Marten Falls. These communities have a couple of things in common. Yes, they surround the Ring of Fire, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to unleash the potential of the north and be involved in a fully integrated supply chain from earth to electric vehicles—the single biggest environmental policy that any subsovereign government could advance. It’s also an opportunity for the corridor to prosperity to bring the same kinds of things that Chief Mamakwa talked about: better sources of electricity, new opportunities for businesses in that region, so that young Indigenous people have a fair line to a good job.

It’s time to rally behind the corridor to prosperity. Will the NDP stand with us when we make those kinds of investments?

CANCER SCREENING

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

Earlier this week, I was proud to table a motion to ensure that a key test for detecting prostate cancer is fully covered under our universal health care system.

One in eight Canadian men is expected to receive a prostate cancer diagnosis in their lifetime; 28 will be

diagnosed with prostate cancer today in the province of Ontario. We also know that Black men are at significantly higher risk of getting prostate cancer.

This year, 10,500 people will receive the horrible news that they have prostate cancer; 1,750 will die. That means nearly five people will die every day with prostate cancer. But 100% of the people who are detected early with prostate cancer will survive five years or longer. Early detection using PSA tests can save lives.

Will the government move forward on this motion and ensure there are no barriers to early detection of prostate cancer in Ontario?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member opposite for raising this important issue and highlighting the value that we have put, in the province of Ontario, on early detection—because we understand that early detection and ultimately treatment leads to far better outcomes.

Based on clinical guidelines established by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, OHIP currently funds prostate-specific antigen tests for men who are: (1) receiving treatment for prostate cancer; (2) being followed for treatment for prostate cancer; and (3) suspected of prostate cancer because of their family history and the results of their physical exam.

Absolutely, Ontarians who are concerned should be speaking to their primary care physicians, because they can get that test through those conversations, if the family physician clinically assesses and deems that that is appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Minister, in my riding, they're running golf tournaments in Fort Erie to pay for the test. Nobody should have to run a golf tournament to pay for a prostate test in this province.

Back to the Premier: Across our country, currently eight out of 10 provinces and three territories fully cover the PSA test when requested by a physician. That means Ontario is one of the few exceptions across Canada when it comes to ensuring everyone has equal access to this test. This test is an important tool in the tool box for physicians to ensure early detection of prostate cancer. Early detection will save lives and money—upwards of \$60 million in our health care system.

For the second time, I was happy to be joined by Dr. Edmonds from the Canadian Cancer Society to introduce my motion. He was able to discuss the importance of early detection.

Why does the government refuse to join eight provinces and three territories and listen to the Canadian Cancer Society, and cover the PSA test for those with a prostate in Ontario so we can save lives?

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Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I absolutely support the member's advocacy on early detection and having those conversations with your primary care physicians. But most international and national guidelines and recommendations—including the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, the United States Preventive Services Task

Force and the American College of Physicians—recommend against screening for prostate cancer using the PSA test due to the lack of evidence.

We need to have clinicians making these decisions, not politicians. Absolutely, have the conversations with your primary care physicians, but let's leave the clinical advice to the clinicians and the experts in the field.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Donna Skelly: We are hearing alarming reports in the media about a sewage spill in Hamilton. As reported, this spill has been ongoing for the past 26 years. According to reports in the media, the spill was only discovered inadvertently from previous video footage. The people of my riding and all Hamiltonians are concerned now about the soundness of our community's water infrastructure system.

Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. What is our government doing to protect Hamilton's water infrastructure to stop events like this from happening again?

Hon. David Piccini: I want to thank the member for that question and for her important advocacy and leadership for the people of Hamilton.

Speaker, let me be abundantly clear: This is absolutely unacceptable. Upon hearing of the situation in Hamilton, I was angry, like many of the good people of Hamilton, including my family who live there. I was angry for the people who are yet again hearing about how their city and the lack of oversight has failed to protect their waters. I was angry that this lack of oversight has happened for 26 years, even after all that the people of Hamilton have gone through.

I'm happy to report that upon notification of the spill, my ministry took immediate action. We sent an environmental officer over to Hamilton, who's working closely with the municipality to block any further sewage flow, to stop further environmental damage and move immediately to address this situation.

I look forward to informing the Legislature of further action that this government is taking in the supplemental.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's clear that action needs to be taken and that questions need to be answered on behalf of the people of Hamilton. Serious problems related to water infrastructure and environmental safety standards should never take over two decades to be addressed. From media reports, it appears that the system of due diligence and oversight was lacking for an extended period of time. The people of Hamilton deserve better regarding their critical water infrastructure system.

What further action is our government, and in particular the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, pursuing to ensure that this situation is properly addressed?

Hon. David Piccini: I thank the member for that question.

Again, the continued lack of oversight is simply unacceptable.

I had a very good conversation with the new mayor of Hamilton, and I commend her for speaking of being transparent with the people of Hamilton—our government and I agree.

That's why, immediately upon learning of this latest spill and speaking with the mayor of Hamilton, I've instructed my ministry to require Hamilton to audit its entire sewage infrastructure and come up with a remediation plan to clean this mess up.

We're going to work closely with the new mayor and the city of Hamilton to address this so that this never happens again. It's unacceptable. The people deserve better, and thanks to this member from Hamilton, they're going to get it.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

The Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences is here today. They represent radiation therapists, sonographers, and radiological, nuclear medicine and MRI technologists. They are the health care professionals who perform critical diagnostic tests and therapy on the front lines of our health care system. They recently polled their members, who said they are overworked, burned out and facing the same staffing shortages as all professionals working in health care right now. This is a message that all health care workers are trying to get the government to acknowledge, to respond to.

Minister, how long will the government take before they take action to deal with this health human resources crisis in medical radiation sciences?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for raising this important question.

I want to also acknowledge the incredible work that all of our allied health professionals have been doing throughout the pandemic, whether it was prior to vaccines, with the incredible assistance that happened—entire health care systems stepping up and making sure that Canada and Ontario were second in the world in making sure that our citizens were protected.

When will the work start? It started in 2020, when we as a government made an investment and said we are building a stronger, more robust health care system by adding an additional 12,000 health human resources. We're doing it with investments in our colleges. We're doing it with investments in new positions available for young people who want to be in the health care professions. We started that in 2020. We will continue to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences is just the latest group of health professionals raising concerns about understaffing. The backlog of diagnostic MRIs, CAT scans and PET scans will not improve without them.

Today, representatives from 295,000 health care workers are here to try to get the government to pay attention to this crisis, to listen to their solution.

Will the minister agree to listen to health representatives from OCHU, CUPE, ONA, OPSEU/SEFPO, Unifor and SEIU who are here today at Queen's Park? They have solutions. Will you meet with them?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will say that I am open and available to all innovation and ideas that people bring forward.

The Premier and I had an opportunity to have a round table with the representation of nurses and the ideas coming forward. We're now driving those forward and saying: How can we implement that? How can we add to what we've already done with the Learn and Stay program to ensure that young people who want to train as RNs in Ontario have that opportunity, through free tuition and books? How do we expand the opportunities so that we do not have a continuation of the backlogs in diagnostic imaging and other critically important services that the people of Ontario deserve in their communities?

We've done that work. We will continue to have those conversations and listen to those innovations.

I am very proud of the fact that we have health care workers in the province of Ontario who continue to give 110% because they know it's what they can do in their community and it's what the people of Ontario expect.

WOMEN'S SERVICES

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm proud to represent the great people of Oakville North–Burlington, a community that is home to a thriving and innovative economy of entrepreneurs.

Regrettably, under the previous Liberal government, the goal of unlocking entrepreneurship and business opportunities for women was not fully supported. The cost of child care, red tape and taxes quickly spiralled out of control, making entrepreneurship too complex and costly.

Thanks to the investments made by our government, Ontario is now seen as a competitive and supportive place for businesses to invest and create jobs.

Can the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity please explain what our government is doing to help young women entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I thank the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and I commend her for the work that she is doing to bring forward a private member's motion to further the important work to end intimate partner violence.

A contributing factor to intimate partner violence is economic hardship and women feeling like they are forced to return to bad situations.

That is why our government is getting more women into jobs than ever before. We are investing \$117 million in employment and training supports so that women have access to training for in-demand skills. We are making

Ontario the best province to do business, and women are an integral part of that.

1140

As part of our plan to build Ontario, our government is investing a further \$6.9 million to enhance the Investing in Women's Futures Program, and expanding it to up to 10 locations. I'm excited by this expansion. It has helped almost 6,000 women already, and this year hasn't ended.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard me say it: When women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the associate minister for her response. Our entrepreneurs are a critical foundation to Ontario's economic growth and prosperity, but, as we know, starting a business is hard work and filled with great risk.

Unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, the dream of small business ownership was challenging and costly.

Our government is reversing the harmful and destructive policies of the past.

I know that small businesses in my own community of Oakville North–Burlington serve a vital role in the strength of our local economy.

Can the minister share with us what our government is doing to help empower women to unlock their full economic potential through entrepreneurship opportunities?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Thank you for the question. Just look at the name of my ministry—social and economic opportunity. These two things have not been paired by accident. It's because our government knows that for women to thrive and succeed in Ontario's economy, they first need to overcome social barriers that are holding them back, like dealing with gender-based violence, trying to succeed in a field where women are under-represented, or trying to navigate the system and access services. If you have these barriers, you're not going to be able to take control of your economic future. We are working to address those underlying issues so that women can enter entrepreneurship challenge-free and stay there.

I met with Paro, a women-led organization in Thunder Bay dedicated to advancing women and an Investing in Women's Futures Program recipient. Their services were able to help many women, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, pivot from bricks and mortar to the online market successfully and continue to grow their business in the post-pandemic economy.

If we're going to create a successful and robust post-pandemic economy, women must be at the forefront in entrepreneurial and leadership roles.

Again, when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm just rising in accordance with standing order 59 to outline the order of business for next week.

On Monday, November 28, in the afternoon, we will proceed with Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

We will continue with Bill 46 on the morning of Tuesday, November 29. In the afternoon routine, there will be a statement by the ministry by Minister Fullerton on the Wrapped in Courage campaign for Woman Abuse Prevention Month. In the afternoon, we will again continue with Bill 46. In the evening, private members' public business will be private member's notice of motion number 15—the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

On Wednesday, November 30, in the morning, we're back to Bill 46. In the afternoon, there will be a statement by Minister McNaughton on McIntyre Powder; then back to Bill 46—and in the evening, member's notice of motion number 19, standing in the name of the member for Oakville North–Burlington.

On Thursday, December 1, in the morning, we will be back to Bill 26, Strengthening Post-secondary Institutions and Students Act. In the afternoon, we're back to Bill 26. In the evening, we will be dealing with Bill 27 standing in the name of the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

DEFERRED VOTES

HEALTH CARE IS NOT FOR SALE
ACT (ADDRESSING UNFAIR FEES
CHARGED TO PATIENTS), 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LES SOINS
DE SANTÉ QUI NE SONT PAS
À VENDRE (LUTTE CONTRE
LA FACTURATION D'HONORAIRES
INJUSTES AUX PATIENTS)

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

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 and the Independent Health Facilities Act to address unfair fees charged to patients for health care services / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées et la Loi sur les établissements de santé autonomes pour traiter de la facturation d'honoraires injustes aux patients à l'égard des services de soins de santé.

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

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

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

On November 23, 2022, Madame Gélinas moved second reading of Bill 24, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 and the Independent Health Facilities Act to address unfair fees charged to patients for health care services.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Collard, Lucille	Karpoche, Bhutila	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Kernaghan, Terence	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rickford, Greg
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Barnes, Patrice	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Dixon, Jess	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Piccini, David	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Quinn, Nolan	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Rasheed, Kaled	
Gill, Parm		

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 70.

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

Second reading negated.

AMERICAN THANKSGIVING

Mr. Trevor Jones: Can I make a point of order?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it a point of order? Okay.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Speaker, I want to take a brief opportunity to wish our friends, our neighbours, our key trading partners and allies a happy American Thanksgiving.

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

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

The House recessed from 1154 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 24, 2022, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RENT CONTROL FOR ALL TENANTS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LE CONTRÔLE DES LOYERS POUR TOUS LES LOCATAIRES

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 48, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to rules relating to rent / *Projet de loi 48, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les règles relatives au loyer.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Parkdale–High Park care to explain the bill?

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Yes, Speaker. This legislation, the Rent Control for All Tenants Act, would reverse the government's decision to end rent control for units built after 2018 and extend rent control protections to all units.

PETITIONS

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is titled "Protect Vulnerable Road Users." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas vulnerable road users are not specifically protected by law; and

"Whereas Ontario's Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, facing only minimal fines; and

"Whereas the friends and families of victims are unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government's responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to a vulnerable road user;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of

Ontario to commit to reducing the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users; create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users; allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person, in court, by the driver responsible; and pass Bill 40, Moving Ontarians Safely Act.”

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

SOINS DE SANTÉ

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Ashlee Lachapelle de Dowling dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Soins de santé : pas à vendre.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que les » Ontariennes et les Ontariens « reçoivent les soins basés sur leurs besoins et non leur capacité à payer;

« Alors que le gouvernement de » M. « Ford veut privatiser notre système de soins de santé;

« Alors que la privatisation poussera les infirmières, les médecins et » autres travailleurs de la santé « hors de nos hôpitaux publics et ajoutera des coûts aux patients; »

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative « d’arrêter immédiatement tous les plans visant à privatiser le système de soins de santé de l’Ontario et de résoudre la crise des soins de santé en :

« —abrogeant la loi 124 pour recruter, retenir, retourner et respecter les travailleurs et travailleuses de la santé avec de meilleurs salaires et » de meilleures « conditions de travail;

« —certifiant les titres de compétences de dizaines de milliers d’infirmières et d’autres professionnels de la santé formés à l’international » qui vivent « en Ontario;

« —incitant les professionnel(le)s de la santé à choisir de vivre et travailler dans le nord de » la province.

J’appuie cette pétition. J’y affixe mon nom et je demande à Mabel de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“For Meaningful Climate Action Withdraw Bill 23.

“Whereas our planet is undergoing significant warming with adverse consequences for health, for agriculture, for infrastructure and our children’s future;

“Whereas the costs of inaction are severe, such as extreme weather events causing flooding and drought;

“Whereas Canada has signed the Paris accord which commits us to acting to keep temperature rise under 1.5 degrees Celsius;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario to withdraw Bill 23 and to create a new bill to meet our housing needs that is compatible with protecting the greenbelt, creating affordable housing in the current urban boundaries, and meeting our climate targets.”

I’ll just gladly sign this and submit it to the Legislature.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition in support of the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is overwhelming evidence to show that paid sick days significantly reduce the spread of infectious disease, promote preventive health care and reduce health care system costs; and

“Whereas 60% of Ontario workers do not have access to paid sick days, and cannot afford to lose their pay if they are sick; and

“Whereas low-wage and precarious workers are the most likely to be denied paid sick days; and

“Whereas enabling workers to stay home when they are sick without losing pay helps limit the spread of illness in the workplace and allows workers to recover faster; and

“Whereas during an infectious disease emergency, it is unreasonable and dangerous to public health to make workers choose between protecting their communities and providing for their families; and

“Whereas legislating paid sick days through the Employment Standards Act, with transitional financial support for struggling small businesses, will ensure that workers have seamless, uninterrupted access to their pay;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately pass Bill 4, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, to provide Ontario workers with 10 annual employer-paid days of personal emergency leave and 14 days of paid leave in the case of an infectious disease emergency.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition, will affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Camilla.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Marit Stiles: This petition reads as follows:

“Stay Home If You Are Sick Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is overwhelming evidence to show that paid sick days significantly reduce the spread of infectious disease, promote preventive health care and reduce health care system costs; and

“Whereas 60% of Ontario workers do not have access to paid sick days, and cannot afford to lose their pay if they are sick; and

“Whereas low-wage and precarious workers are the most likely to be denied paid sick days; and

“Whereas enabling workers to stay home when they are sick without losing pay helps limit the spread of illness in the workplace and allows workers to recover faster; and

“Whereas during an infectious disease emergency, it is unreasonable and dangerous to public health to make workers choose between protecting their communities and providing for their families; and

“Whereas legislating paid sick days through the Employment Standards Act, with transitional financial support for struggling small businesses, will ensure that workers have seamless, uninterrupted access to their pay;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately pass Bill 4, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, to provide Ontario workers with 10 annual employer-paid days of personal emergency leave and 14 days of paid leave in the case of an infectious disease emergency.”

I am very happy to provide my support to this petition. I’m going to sign it, and then I’m going to hand it over to page Kennedy to table with the Clerk.

1310

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to double ODSP and OW rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas CTV recently reported that at least two Ontarians with disabilities are choosing to die through medical assistance in dying (MAID) because they could not pay for housing that would reduce their suffering from their disability;

“Whereas London, Ontario, ICU physician Dr. Scott Anderson reports seeing more patients asking for MAID because they cannot afford the services they need to accommodate their disabilities;

“Whereas the Center for Justice and Social Compassion estimates that almost half of the 12,000 people in Ontario who are homeless have a disability or mental illness and 216 people experiencing homelessness died on the streets and shelters of Toronto in 2021, more than double the rate since the Conservative government took office in 2018;

“Whereas the Premier and the Conservative government have promised to raise Ontario Disability Support Program ... rates by 5%, to \$1,225, of which \$520 is for shelter and \$705 is for food, clothing, transportation, medicine and other necessities;

“Whereas current monthly ODSP payments are 47.5% short of the municipal poverty line in Ontario and 30% below the province’s poverty line;

“Whereas it is not possible to survive on these amounts in Ontario and therefore, Ontario Works (OW) and ODSP rates kill because they do not provide Ontarians with enough income to live;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take action on the ODSP and OW crisis by doubling OW and ODSP rates immediately so that Ontarians with disabilities have enough income to survive.”

Speaker, I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Kalila.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Karen Dasti, from Val Caron in my riding, for this petition.

“Repeal Bill 124.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 124 removes the right of public employees to negotiate fair contracts;

“Whereas Bill 124 limits the wage increase in the broader public sector to a maximum of 1% per year at a time of unprecedented inflation;

“Whereas Ontario’s public servants have dealt with two years of unheralded difficulties in performing their duties to our province;

“Whereas those affected by Bill 124 are the people who teach us, care for us, make our hospitals and health care system work and protect the most vulnerable among us;

“Whereas the current provincial government is showing disrespect to public servants to keep taxes low for some of our country’s most profitable corporations;”

They petition the Legislature as follows:

“Immediately repeal Bill 124 and show respect for the public sector workers.”

I support this petition, Speaker. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Mabel to bring it to the Clerk.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Ontario Dementia Strategy,” and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it currently takes on average 18 months for people in Ontario to get an official dementia diagnosis, with some patients often waiting years to complete diagnostic testing;

“Whereas more than half of patients suspected of having dementia in Ontario never get a full diagnosis; research confirms that early diagnosis saves lives and reduces care partner stress;

“Whereas a PET scan test approved in Ontario in 2017 which can be key to detecting Alzheimer’s early, is still not covered under OHIP in 2022;

“Whereas the Ontario government must work together with the federal government to prepare for the approval and rollout of future disease-modifying therapies and research;

“Whereas the Alzheimer Society projects that one million Canadians will be caregivers for people with dementia, with families providing approximately 1.4 billion hours of care per year by 2050;

“Whereas research findings show that Ontario will spend \$27.8 billion between 2023 and 2043 on alternate-level-of-care (ALC) and long-term-care (LTC) costs associated with people living with dementia;

“Whereas the government must follow through with its commitment to ensure Ontario’s health care system has the capacity to meet the current and future needs of people living with dementia and their care partners;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to develop, commit and fund a comprehensive Ontario dementia strategy.”

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled “Stop Ford’s Health Care Privatization Plan.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians should get health care based on need—not the size of their wallet;

“Whereas Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Sylvia Jones say they’re planning to privatize parts of health care;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals, making the health care crisis worse;

“Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to further privatize Ontario’s health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124 and recruiting, retaining and respecting doctors, nurses and PSWs with better pay and better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already in Ontario, who wait years and pay thousands to have their credentials certified...;

“—incentivizing doctors and nurses to choose to live and work in northern Ontario;

“—funding hospitals to have enough nurses on every shift, on every ward.”

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

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Kelly and Mike Chadwick from Gogama in my riding.

“Gogama Nursing Station.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Gogama is an isolated northern community with many seniors and residents who need access to primary care;

“Whereas the Gogama Nursing Station provided access to quality primary care for decades but service has been inconsistent and infrequent since early 2018;

“Whereas residents in isolated northern communities in Ontario deserve equitable access to health care;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To ensure that the Gogama Nursing Station is funded, staffed and fully functioning to deliver quality primary care consistently.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Kennedy to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Stay Home If You Are Sick Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is overwhelming evidence to show that paid sick days significantly reduce the spread of infectious disease, promote preventive health care and reduce health care system costs; and

“Whereas 60% of Ontario workers do not have access to paid sick days, and cannot afford to lose their pay if they are sick; and

“Whereas low-wage and precarious workers are the most likely to be denied paid sick days; and

“Whereas enabling workers to stay home when they are sick without losing pay helps limit the spread of illness in the workplace and allows workers to recover faster; and

“Whereas during an infectious disease emergency, it is unreasonable and dangerous to public health to make workers choose between protecting their communities and providing for their families; and

“Whereas legislating paid sick days through the Employment Standards Act, with transitional financial support for struggling small businesses, will ensure that workers have seamless, uninterrupted access to their pay;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately pass Bill 4, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, to provide Ontario workers with 10 annual employer-paid days of personal emergency leave and 14 days of paid leave in the case of an infectious disease emergency.”

I fully support this important piece of legislation and will affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions, but before I can ask for orders of the day, the member for Scarborough Southwest has a point of order.

VISITORS

Ms. Doly Begum: If you’ll allow, Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce Suman Roy, executive director of Feed Scarborough, an organization with many volunteers who serve thousands of people across Scarborough through their food bank, as well as Emily McIntosh to the House today. Welcome to the Legislature.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park I think has a point of order.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Point of order. Speaker, I’d like to correct my record. Yesterday during members statements, I said that the “process of getting approved for medically assisted suicide” when I meant to say “process

of getting approved for medical assistance in dying.” Thank you.

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

1320

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À ACCÉLÉRER LA CONSTRUCTION DE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2022, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2022 visant à soutenir la croissance et la construction de logements dans les régions de York et de Durham.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had the floor. He still has some time, if he chooses to do so. I recognize the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much, Speaker. I’ve been here, I think, 11-and-some years, and it’s still always an honour to be able to stand here, today to talk about Bill 23, a bill that the government is putting forward as one of their solutions to our housing crisis.

I think we all agree that we need more housing in Ontario. I started my presentation before question period on that. I’ve listened to this debate intently throughout, both in the House and in the public realm, and have contributed to it through question period, specifically on the protection of farmland and how it relates to housing, and it’s a big issue.

It was stated in the Legislature by the Minister of Agriculture that the number one issue is labour, and I don’t disagree that it is an incredibly significant issue, but agriculture is like everything else in the province: You can’t look at one issue and not look at the rest. So you need to look at labour. Processors need more labour; farmers need more. You need to look at labour, but you need to look at all the other issues too, because if you’re successful building up your labour force and then you run out of something else, well, your work is for naught. No farm runs like that. No business runs like that. I don’t understand how a government can run like that, saying, “We’re going to focus on one issue and none other at all.”

Although she didn’t say it, it has been—no, I’m going to reword that. For some reason, and I hope people respond to me today on this, the government has been leery even to mention the loss of farmland. And that farmers aren’t concerned with the loss of farmland—I would also like to dispute that. I’d like to read a bit of the presentation of the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario’s largest farm organization. She did

get to speak at the committee hearings for Bill 23; others were denied, but she did get to speak.

This is from Peggy Brekveld, and before I continue, I’d like to congratulate Peggy Brekveld on her re-election as president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. She has been pushing land use and farmland preservation for quite a while, so the fact that she was re-elected speaks to how important that is to farmers. I would like to quote from her presentation:

“There is only one landscape. And everything has to fit, but those basics—food, water and shelter—remain the same as they were a hundred years ago. They are the cornerstones of life.

“What has changed is the actual landscape itself. We have lost farmland by sprawling cities with little regard for where. It likely looks like there is farmland everywhere, it shouldn’t matter. But it does. Farmland is a finite resource.

“When something is rare, we treat it as precious, like a gem or diamond. Agricultural land makes up less than 5% of our province. But we don’t hold it as precious.”

I would agree with the remarks of the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: It doesn’t seem that we hold it as precious.

The member for Brantford–Brant asked a question in questions and answers, and it got me thinking, because I didn’t know the answer. He asked it to another one of our members. But that’s the role of this place: to debate, to put out your ideas and have people challenge them, so you can actually make things better. That’s actually the role of this place. It gets partisan, but that’s actually the role.

There’s 319 acres—point six—but 319 acres a day that we lose of farmland paved over forever—every day. Now, the member for Brantford–Brant asked, “How much of that land that we’re losing is slated for development already?” That’s a good question. I commend him for that question. I couldn’t find the answer, but I did find another answer. And it leads me to another question that I pose to the government.

There are 88,000 acres in Ontario right now that are slated for development—88,000 acres—yet that doesn’t seem to be enough. The government’s own housing task force identified that there was enough land. Some of that is agricultural land—I’m fully aware of that—but it has already been zoned for other development, so it’s not what’s holding the building of housing back. The housing task force said it. I challenge the government to prove or to show that the 88,000 acres that’s already slated for development in the province of Ontario isn’t enough, that the solution is actually pushing farther out—pushing the boundaries farther out—to eat up more agricultural land or more conservation land. I don’t think they have the answer to that. I’d love to see the answer.

It might not be enough to build housing where others want it built, where there’s more profit for it to be built; that, I don’t know. But I challenge that 88,000 acres isn’t enough to take a good chunk out of—between infilling, which is significant—there are some things in this bill that work, that should be more aggressive. There are good and bad things in every bill. In some, the bad very much outweighs the good.

For the members who haven't been here for a long time, usually you put a bill forward or the government puts a bill forward, you actually have a committee process, a few amendments are accepted and actually that makes the legislation stronger. It lasts longer, and it benefits the people of Ontario much more. When you don't do things like that—the members here who were just elected, you have the distinction of being the first government to stand and vote and clap for a bill that used the “notwithstanding” clause, and then have to rescind the very same bill within two weeks. That is a number one; you are number one. And I question how many of you actually signed up for that. Because the way the Legislature is supposed to work—those things don't happen when the Legislature is working correctly.

With these bills, it's the same thing. So my question to the government is, 88,000 acres isn't enough? Show us why you need more than the 88,000 acres that are zoned for development right now. Find out why that land isn't being used now, as opposed to grabbing more land.

Another question, I think, that needs to be asked: development charges. No one wants to pay development charges. No one wants to pay taxes. That's not a new phenomenon. The question is, development charges pay for services, pay for infrastructure, that aren't directly attached, or are in some ways directly attached, to the residence: water, sewer—all of those things, all things you need. So, if the development charges aren't going to be paid by the people building the house, who is going to pay?
1330

Many of you also come from a municipal background, as do I. We had an asset management plan. You have to keep your current infrastructure in good repair—or you try to—and it's always hard. Specifically in rural Ontario, we know, it's always hard. I am assuming in urban Ontario it's equally hard, but I don't have as much personal experience. But I do in rural.

If the new development isn't going to pay for its own services or isn't going to pay its share to increase the services that are needed to service it, who is going to pay? The government's response, from what I've heard so far is, “We'll just eat up reserves.” That's the answer.

I question the business validity of that argument, because when I was a councillor we needed to keep reserves. You needed to keep reserves to be stable. You had to be able to weather something that hit you; otherwise you'd have to run to another level of government and beg for forgiveness—and I know this because I have done this for some other municipalities—for not taking that into account. When something happened you needed your hand out because you didn't account for having to have reserves. Now the government is saying, “Use your reserves. Use your reserves.”

If some municipalities are building up way too high a level of reserves, that isn't across the province. That is not across the province. I believe the number you quoted—\$9 billion—isn't across the province. And if that was so easy, then why is the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who are usually very supportive of the Conservative government—usually incredibly supportive—

why are they raising the warning flags and saying, “Wait a second”? There is going to be a billion dollars, in their calculations, transferred from new development costs to existing taxpayers. They didn't say it was going to disappear. It's not going to disappear; somebody's going to pay for it. That is a question.

I know everyone is trying to put their bill—the government, certainly, and I think every government will do that—in the best light possible. You are demonizing development charges. If we can find a way to lower them and make them realistic—but to just say that they serve no purpose and basically we can just rip it out of reserves, you are simplifying it to the extreme and, once again, to the detriment of the future. You are.

You need to look at those issues. You really do. The land, you need to look at. You need to look at the development charges.

I heard this morning, and I read it as well, about no development charges on affordable housing. I'm not going to complain about that because there is a difference between someone who can afford to pay \$1 million for a house and someone who can't afford to pay \$150,000 or \$200,000. There is a difference. We need to recognize that. I'm not disputing that. But these blanket statements that housing trumps all, that housing trumps wetlands, that housing trumps—I think the insurance industry is going to have a say about this too. When we start without any regard and we just plunk, plunk, plunk houses wherever, and then all of a sudden we start getting more floods, more floods and—pardon me, Speaker, I'm going the wrong way. The insurance industry is already warning, because their costs are going up considerably. They want more houses too, but they want more houses built as safely as possible in as safe areas as possible. I want my insurance company to be stable so if I do have a catastrophe, I can afford to pay it and they can afford to actually reimburse me if something happens. When someone does buy a new house, I hope that they can have faith that their basement won't flood, that planning has been done, and I don't see that in this bill. I don't.

I'm putting that forward—hopefully you can enlighten me and grill me. That's what this place is for. It's really not for quick talking points and calling each other names. I try not to do that, including to the Minister of Labour. Thank you for your time listening to me today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Rob Flack: As always, I enjoy the member opposite's comments. We share a deep love of agricultural and business and all things southern Ontario—and northern Ontario for that matter.

A few comments and then a question: 9,200 acres coming into the greenbelt, 7,000 coming out. We're growing the footprint. That's a good thing. I hope you would agree.

The other thing I'd like to point out, probably, in this House, when I look around: Who here doesn't live in their house, in their home, that wasn't once—even in this city, below this Legislature—a farm at some point in their life? Everybody. Is it good for us so we can afford our homes,

but new Canadians, older Canadians, first-time homebuyers don't get that opportunity? When I grew up, this province wasn't as big. It's going to be a lot bigger. We need the land. I think we need to sometimes put a little balance in our thinking.

Back to the infrastructure: If you don't want the reserves to be spent, what's the use of them sitting there? Why wouldn't we invest those reserves in this province now? We need homes now.

Mr. John Vanthof: I think I heard three questions in there. When you take 7,000 acres out and you pave it over, and you make the greenbelt 9,200 acres bigger, you still lose 7,000 acres of farmland. You still have a net loss of 7,000 acres. Regardless of how much bigger you make the greenbelt, you've got a net loss of 7,000 acres of farmland.

Why we all live on farmland is because cities were once villages and villages grew up around farms. There's no denying that. But just because we did that before, doesn't mean that you can't learn and try to do things better in the future. That's what we're doing right now, or what you're trying to do. We disagree with some of the things you are doing, but I don't disagree you're trying to do things better.

What reserves are—reserves are a buffer. In our township, when we had a huge road collapse, we didn't have to run to the bank, run to the government and beg, we could fix the road because—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his speech. He's our agriculture critic, so I want to ask him: I find it incredible that at a time when we just went through COVID and we learned all of the lessons about supply chains and food security—and we have inflation largely because of those issues—that the government would take the situation where we're losing 319 acres a day of prime farmland and actually speed that process up by taking land out of the greenbelt and using up farmland.

What does that say for the future, whether you're a newcomer or you're a young person today, that we're going to lose all that farmland? What happens if we no longer have food security?

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Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank my colleague for the question. I think what it says—we're losing 319 a day now; the government is grabbing more land that was completely protected. What that says is, this government is extremely short-sighted. That's what it says. And it's not for our own food security, because we can grow food to feed the world. We're one of the few places that has the capacity to grow much more food. But just because you can grow more food doesn't mean you should waste the land you have. There are parts of this that are going to be developed, but it is precious and we should treat it as such, and this government, based on the legislation we're seeing, isn't doing that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite for his debate this afternoon, and I appreciate his concern for farmland. I was born and raised on 100 acres in Niagara. My father did cash cropping and chased hogs as well; we had a mixed operation there. Of course, I understand the importance of that, and I respect where he's coming from and the unique northern Ontario perspective as well.

But I also know that people in my riding, when I hear from young people my age, frankly, most of them can't get into the housing market, and they're very frustrated by the lack of access to housing. They were excited when, in the June election, we ran on a commitment to build 1.5 million homes. I know many people who—some of them had never voted Conservative before, and they voted for the Ontario PCs because of that commitment to build 1.5 million homes.

So the question to the member would be, looking at the results of the June election, wouldn't you say that we have a mandate to build 1.5 million homes and take the actions necessary to make that happen?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a really good question. I would say, yes, you won the election. I haven't got a problem with that. But I'm not sure that you got the mandate—since you brought it up—to change electoral policy in other governments; that, despite the council, the mayor and a third of the council have the power to make decisions. I'm not sure anyone in Ontario voted for that, and you didn't run on that either.

We all ran on building more homes. You didn't run on changing how councils work. You didn't run on appointing municipal chairs. You didn't run on any of those things. You didn't run—the Premier specifically ran on not touching the greenbelt. He specifically ran on it, and that specifically changed. You didn't run on the things you're doing now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a good start to the afternoon, with all people from Niagara asking questions on the bill.

I'm going to talk about a developer named Mr. Rice, who bought 700 acres of land in the greenbelt in September, which was really worthless, but what they did is—under this, it's now worth probably half a billion dollars. I don't know who talked to him to say, "Go buy this land. We've got a bill coming." We do know that he was a donor, certainly a big donor, for the PC Party. He donated to some MPPs. We know very clearly—and the member who just spoke is a young guy. I don't know how he's going to feed his family if we get rid of 319 acres of farmland every single day. There will be no place to get food. If you live in this country or this province, if you can't feed yourself, you're in trouble. We found that through COVID-19.

My question to the member—oh, and by the way, we do have the best farmland in the world. Why do you think that the PC Party decided that it's a good idea to develop on the greenbelt when their Premier, just three months ago, made a promise that he'd never touch the greenbelt?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a tough question, actually. The fact remains that the Premier was on video promising to open up the greenbelt. That video was made public, and then he promised the people of Ontario that he would never, ever touch the greenbelt. It's obvious that his first promise meant more than the one to the people of Ontario. That is very obvious.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Time for one quick question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate that the member opposite, in his response to my previous question, acknowledged that we do have a mandate from the people of Ontario to build 1.5 million homes and to take the steps that are necessary to ensure that my generation—and so many of the people who I hear from in ridings across Ontario, young people who are seeking that dream of home ownership, recognize that our government was given a mandate to make sure that we're taking the actions to make it happen. That's exactly what this legislation is going to do.

I know that the member opposite speaks a lot about farmland. I respect that. I understand that. But I'm just wondering, since he cares so much about farmland, if he could tell me how many of the acres that he refers to which are being taken out of the greenbelt were actually in crop production as of last week.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Final response. You have 45 seconds.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's the toughest question of the day. Since I don't want to give information in the Legislature that might be construed as inaccurate, I will be happy to get that answer for you and report it in the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have no further time for questions, but we do have time for further debate.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: It is a privilege to rise today to speak to Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act. I will be sharing my time with the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is a flourishing and thriving province, with close to 15 million Canadians calling this beautiful piece of land home. Ontario is also Canada's leading and primary economic hub, a place of research, innovation, academia and entrepreneurship—simply put, the economic engine of our country. Ontario is recognized for our cultural and linguistic diversity, where cultures of the world are celebrated and encouraged to thrive while contributing creatively to our multicultural mosaic. Indeed, Ontario is the whole world in one province. Ontario is also known for our rich natural diversity, numerous beautiful provincial parks, the four Great Lakes and the world-famous Niagara Falls, one of the seven wonders of the world. It is therefore no wonder that Ontario is a top destination for immigrants, businessmen and women and entrepreneurs alike.

It is also no surprise that owning a home in Ontario, with that proverbial white picket fence, is one of the most thought-about and talked-about Canadian dreams. Yet,

Madam Speaker, it is just that: a thought, a conversation, a remote dream for many Canadians and Ontarians. Finding a home has become unattainable, far out of reach for many. Whether it be immigrant families like mine, looking for a new start; young couples starting their lives together and wanting to move out of their parents' basement; seniors looking to downsize but still have a place to call home; or, frankly, employers looking to house seasonal or international employees, the road to finding a home has become the opposite of reality, the opposite of affordable or attainable.

Il n'est pas surprenant que posséder une maison dans cette province soit l'un des rêves canadiens les plus pensés et les plus discutés. Pourtant, madame la Présidente, ce n'est que cela : une pensée, une conversation, pour la plupart des Canadiens et Canadiennes, Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Trouver la maison idéale est un défi de taille depuis de nombreuses années. Que ce soit pour les nouveaux arrivants qui cherchent à démarrer et à planter leurs racines dans notre belle et diversifiée province, ou pour un jeune couple qui commence sa vie ensemble, la route pour trouver une maison est devenue le contraire de la réalité.

Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, will not only make it easier, faster and more affordable for individuals and families to buy a home, but it will also allow them to buy the home they deserve. The bill, if passed, would amend the Development Charges Act, the Planning Act and other laws. The suggested modifications are meant to be the next step in our audacious and revolutionary plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

La Loi de 2022 visant à accélérer la construction de plus de logements modifiera la Loi sur les redevances d'aménagement, la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et d'autres lois. Les modifications suggérées sont censées être la prochaine étape de notre plan audacieux et révolutionnaire de construire 1,5 million de maisons au cours des 10 prochaines années.

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Speaker, I want to set the stage today with some statistics. In the year 2000, the year my family and I immigrated to Canada, the average price of a home in Ontario was \$243,000. In 2020, 20 years later, the average price of a home in Ontario increased to \$594,000, making Ontario the second most expensive housing market in Canada, preceded only by British Columbia at \$736,000 per home—governed by an NDP government, unsurprisingly.

In the last two decades, the cost of housing increased significantly in Ontario, with the average resale cost of a home increasing fivefold, or 410%. Today, in 2020, the average Ontario home is costed at a staggering \$943,000, far over the Canadian average of \$717,000. In my city of Mississauga, the average home prices are even higher than that, at \$987,000—almost \$1 million.

Speaker, we are in a housing crisis, and the status quo is simply not going to cut it anymore. With the federal government announcing their plan to bring in 500,000

immigrants per year to Canada, many of whom will settle in Ontario, we must act now to ensure that these newcomers have the appropriate housing and dignified housing conditions when they arrive.

Our government is committed to building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years, and that is no small task. We must use every tool in our tool box, every regulation at our disposal, to make this ambitious goal a reality. And Bill 23 does just that.

The majority of individuals living in Mississauga are immigrants, young couples and seniors. As a result, the city of Mississauga has become one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario. The 2031 municipal housing target for the city of Mississauga is 120,000 homes. That is 120,000 homes that my riding's residents could live in—"could," Speaker, because first these 120,000 homes must be built.

The 2031 housing target for the town of Caledon and the city of Brampton is 126,000. It is an ambitious target indeed, so let's make that target a reality. And Bill 23 does just that.

Our government is committed to reducing costs, fees and taxes. These charges, levied by different government bodies, are one of the few reasons why housing costs have become overwhelming. Temporarily freezing conservation authority fees for development permits as well as proposals will help reduce building costs. That will keep more money in Ontarians' pockets and allow them to afford housing. Rental construction will reduce development charges, with further discounts of up to 25% for family-sized units.

Speaker, we have called on the federal government to address the housing issue and help us build these homes. In addition, we have asked the federal government to work with us on potential GST/HST incentives. This would help support new home ownership and rental housing developments within Canada.

We also know that delays make housing more expensive. For example, the Ontario Association of Architects noted that the total cost of delays in site plan reviews was between \$300 million and \$900 million per year. Furthermore, a 2022 Building Industry and Land Development Association report found that for each unit in a high-density development, a month of delay costs about \$2,600 to \$3,000 in additional construction costs per month. I want to emphasize "per month" because, Speaker, in some regions these approvals and delays take almost 11 years. That is not acceptable. We need homes today, not 11 years from now.

The time to complete development approvals for a four-storey apartment and a 40-storey condominium is nearly the same—imagine, Speaker. Removing site plan control requirements for projects with less than 10 units will save time and money.

Nous avons prévu des approbations municipales plus efficaces. Par exemple, dans ma circonscription de Mississauga, une partie de la région de Peel, les deux paliers de gouvernement ont des politiques d'aménagement du territoire et des rôles dans les

approbations d'aménagement. Cela entraîne non seulement des retards plus importants, mais cela coûte également de l'argent en raison des longs retards.

Madam Speaker, we are at the forefront of technologies that will increase the supply of housing in Ontario and make it simpler for our local partners to meet demand. If implemented, these suggested methods for removing obstacles, simplifying procedures and reducing expenses will further our objective of making housing more affordable and more attainable for all Ontarians.

In Ontario, everyone should be able to choose a house that is ideal for them and their family. Thus, with our suggested modifications, we would assist renters in making the transition from being tenants to being homeowners and expand the number of homes accessible for everyone.

En Ontario, tout le monde devrait pouvoir choisir une maison qui lui convient. Ainsi, avec nos modifications suggérées, nous aiderions les locataires à faire la transition de locataires à propriétaires et augmenterions le nombre de maisons accessibles à tous.

Madam Speaker, we are building homes, roads, schools, long-term care and hospitals in Ontario. Let's continue getting it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the member from Mississauga Centre for sharing her time.

It remains a privilege for me to rise and speak in this House on this bill. It's especially fortunate for me to do that, given the bill has been put forward by my constituency neighbour, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As we all know, the minister has done a lot of work, as have the associate minister and the PA, in consultations and moving this bill to its present state.

As Ontarians face the rising cost of living and a shortage of homes, our government has a strong mandate to help more Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and budget. Everyone in Ontario should be able to find a home that is right for them, but too many people are struggling with the rising cost of living and with finding housing that meets their family needs. Ontario needs more housing, and we need it now.

Our government introduced the More Homes Built Faster Act, which takes bold action to advance our plan to address the housing crisis by building one and a half million homes over the next 10 years. The proposals, if passed, would help cities, towns and rural communities grow with a mix of ownership and rental housing types that meet the needs of all Ontarians, from single-family homes to townhomes and mid-rise apartments. Our plan will build more homes near transit, unlock innovative approaches to design and construction, and get shovels in the ground faster. We have also introduced consumer protection measures for homebuyers and will use provincial lands to build more attainable homes so that more Ontarians can realize their dream of home ownership.

Ontario's housing supply crisis is a problem which has been decades in the making. It will take both short-term

strategies and long-term commitment from all levels of government, the private sector and not-for-profits to drive change. That is why we'll be releasing a new action plan every year over four years, starting with today's plan, to help build more homes and make life more affordable for Ontario families.

This is not just a big-city crisis. I know first-hand, as a father of three smart, highly educated, hard-working adult children that the housing supply shortage affects all Ontarians—rural, urban and suburban, north and south, young and old. Speaker, as the minister shared in this House, “The problem is clear: There simply aren't enough homes being built to meet our demand. And the solution is equally clear: We need to get more homes built faster.”

Ontario is projected to grow our population by over two million residents in the coming decade. That's two million people wanting to join the prosperity this government has and continues to foster and welcome, as we are open for business, Speaker. With the projected growth in our province, these new residents will not only seek to embrace the prosperity we're delivering every day, but these people—like when I was starting out—will dream of the opportunity of owning their own home. That's why I'm proud to be here supporting this important bill, in support of our great minister and in support of this government.

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As a government we are taking the proactive action that has eluded so many others before us. We must not only dream of our future; we must plan for our future. That is why we have made a long-term commitment to get shovels in the ground and build 1.5 million homes in 10 years.

In years past, previous governments have been taking a reactive approach to the province's challenges. This government is engaged in a proactive approach, making decisions for the success of this great province's future. In doing so, we need both short- and long-term solutions to address the housing shortage. That is why, if passed, Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, is so important in the short and long term to rectify our housing needs.

We know that if we reduce delays and get the cost of building homes down, we can lower the price of a home for the average homebuyer. Because delays in building housing drive up costs, delays are contributing to the housing supply shortage, even as we try diligently to make up the time we lost when the pandemic first hit. Throughout the province, we need to significantly increase the speed of new home building in order to meet demand and lower costs for Ontarians.

Study after study has found that development approvals and appropriate zoning are often delayed. Some projects are even abandoned altogether due to upfront cost and delays. Even if the project finally gets the go-ahead, the cost of delay has already been incurred, and it gets passed on to the homebuyer. These barriers include land access in urban areas due to complex land use policies, on top of lengthy planning approvals for new housing. Coupled with high development charges, these issues are driving causes of rising costs and creating delays in building supply.

Think about this: Our current requirements for approvals can add, on average, from 27% to 51% more time

on a new build, based on a 2020 study. This drives up costs for builders, for renters and for homeowners alike, and it's why we're proposing to look at ways we can update and streamline how and when these types of charges are required, in order to help build more housing faster.

There are three main charges levied on new residential developments by municipalities:

- development charges, which fund infrastructure like water and roads;

- parkland dedication fees, which can be either money or land and are used to create parks; and

- community benefits charges, which help build libraries and community centres.

Our proposed changes, if passed, would revise the way these charges are implemented to help spur much-needed development, and we will continue to develop policies that make it easier to get shovels in the ground faster.

Last year, we saw over 100,000 new housing starts in Ontario. That's the highest level since 1987 and well above the annual average of 67,500 starts over the past 30 years. But we know we can and have to do more.

That is why, this past spring, our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing committed to releasing a new housing supply action plan each year for the next four years. With our commitment to continue to strengthen housing policies, we recently named the chair and vice-chair of the new Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team. This team will support improvements to our annual housing supply action plans.

We have to keep the momentum up, especially in these turbulent economic times. That's why, in our new housing supply action plan, we are proposing even more steps to get housing built faster across this great province. If passed, our proposed changes would help reduce unnecessary burdens and red tape that are delaying construction and driving the cost of a home even higher. They would also allow for more homes to be built near transit by encouraging municipalities to update their zoning and help enable more gentle density in residential areas. These changes would also support and protect homebuyers and use surplus provincial properties to build more attainable homes.

The More Homes Built Faster Act contains practical measures and will have a real and positive impact, making it easier for all Ontarians to find the right home for their needs and their budget.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's time for questions.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I will agree with something with the Conservative Party—I don't do that very often. Ontario does have a crisis. We have a crisis in health care. We have a crisis in education. We have a crisis in long-term care. We have a crisis in housing. We have a crisis in affordability—housing, rent, food, gas—so I do agree with you on that.

My question is very clear: How will this bill help my area of Niagara region take on the financial hardship it will likely face from Bill 23 and the reduction of development

fees? In the Niagara region, this is what they're responsible for: policing—something very, very important, as crime has gone through the roof in Niagara—corrections officers, our jails; ambulance, paramedics; long-term care; retirement homes; water waste; our roads. Where are they going to get the resources if we allow developers to make more money, more profit by not paying development fees?

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the member for Niagara for reminding us of all the challenges this government is facing and that moving fast on all of those challenges is so important. In fact, I'll quote the member from Niagara: "The analogy I would use is if your house is on fire, you don't slowly walk to the kitchen and get a glass of water."

This government is getting things done. Development charges: Yes, they are very important and they will continue to be important and they'll continue to be in existence; however, over a 30% increase, \$9 billion in development charge reserves, is not acceptable. They're driving up the cost and they're being directly related and passed on to the homeowner/consumer. That is why this government is taking measures to control those costs and get homes built faster.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to both members for their comments on the bill. My question is to the member for Mississauga Centre. I'm very pleased to see that this government continues to take the housing supply crisis seriously. It's about time, after decades. This is the government's third housing supply action plan, which builds upon the success of the first two, More Homes, More Choice and the More Homes for Everyone plan. More Homes for Everyone was introduced this past year.

Can the member please let us know why the government is moving on this housing supply crisis so urgently and introducing yet another plan?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much for that question. As the member said, our government has introduced two pieces of legislation in our last mandate, the housing supply action plan, More Homes, More Choice, in 2019, and More Homes for Everyone in 2022. These have helped to substantially increase housing starts in recent years, but we know that more needs to be done to hit our target.

Last year, 2021, saw a record amount of starts in 30 years with 100,000 starts. This is very simple math. Over 10 years, if we only build 100,000 homes—and this is the highest in 30 years—we will not reach our ambitious goal of 1.5 million homes over 10 years. This is very simple math. That's why it will take short-term strategies and long-term commitments from all levels of government, the private sector and not-for-profits to drive this change.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, this government and this party will get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll address my question to the member from Mississauga Centre. Thank you for your comments today. You said that your government is taking

all measures to get housing built, and so I've got a two-part question. One is, can you not build housing while respecting democratic rights?

The second part of my question is, what are you hearing from your constituents in Mississauga? We just had municipal elections across this province, and the people of Mississauga went to the ballot box, they elected their councillors, and they expected those councillors to be electing a regional chair. Now your government is going to be appointing that regional chair and allowing that regional chair to make decisions with only one third of the councillors on that body. It's incredibly undemocratic.

My question is, what are you hearing from constituents about the government's anti-democratic actions, and can you not build housing while respecting democratic rights?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much for that question. I can tell the member what I heard at the doors when I was door knocking not too long ago, about six months ago in the last election: that, on housing, the status quo is not going to cut it. I heard from parents who have adult children who are young professionals about my age, in their thirties, still living in their basements and, even with two salaries of young professionals, not being able to purchase a home.

In 2000, when my family arrived to Canada, my mom, as a single mom and immigrant nonetheless was able to put a down payment on a townhouse. Today, that same townhouse is far out of reach for young professionals like me. This is a top concern for residents in Mississauga and across the region of Peel. That's why we're introducing these measures to get these houses built.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. Speaker, you'll know that I have three educational institutions in my riding—Ontario Tech; Trent University, Durham; and Durham College—and I often hear from some of the students from those campuses who are desperate to find housing. I'd like my colleague to discuss what Bill 23 does for students from my riding who need housing.

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you for that question. This government has been putting students first. We've been lowering tuition, investing in research and institutions, and helping to get shovels in the ground to build affordable on-campus rental accommodations.

In addition to on-campus residences, many colleges and universities offer off-campus housing support to students. To help them navigate the rental housing market and their local communities and increase the supply of rental housing, we are proposing to reduce development charges for those units, with deeper discounts of up to 25% for family-sized units.

We're making progress in building more rental housing. Last year, Ontario saw more than 13,000 rental starts. That's the most rental starts since 1991. But we know we need to do more to hit our target of 1.5 million new homes

over the next 10 years, and this government is committed to continue to do this work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to ask my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston about the government's policy of using farmland and greenbelt land for development. The government's own Housing Affordability Task Force said very clearly that the government actually doesn't need more land to address the housing issue. So this is a huge red herring the government has been using; their own task force said they did not need more land. Why don't they listen to the advice from their own task force?

We also have the Premier's adviser on flooding, who recommended expanding the scope of conservation authorities, and this bill is diminishing the scope. So why have an adviser to the Premier on flooding if the Premier doesn't listen to the adviser's advice on flooding?

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. First of all, we need to remember there's a 2,000-acre net gain in this plan for our green space. That's this government's commitment to it. We're not just taking away; it's a 2,000-acre net gain.

And let's not pretend the human race doesn't leave a footprint, because we do. Every one of us lives in a home, and every one of those homes is sitting on land that could be used for agriculture or for green space, so it becomes a matter of balance. That's the way I personally look at it. We have to balance and be responsible for our environment—and for this world in its entirety, actually—and we also have to live within it and have the means to live within it.

This bill takes all of that into consideration. We're building close to transit. We're building close to our places of work. We're building close to the services we need. That in itself will help the environment.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I do not believe we have time for further questions, so I will go to further debate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill again, and this is the fourth housing bill I've spoken about in this House. When this government was first elected, they did promise to build more affordable housing while also protecting the greenbelt, and I would suggest they've broken both of those promises. With each new bill put forward, we appear to be getting further away from achieving either promise.

Bill 23 relies almost entirely on deregulation and cost-cutting for private developers to incentivize the for-profit private market to deliver 1.5 million homes over a decade, but wishful thinking does not make homes appear or make them actually affordable. Ultimately, this bill is at the expense of our environment and is a downloading of costs onto our already struggling municipalities.

I think it's important to remember, Speaker, that this is how the housing crisis started in the first place. My friends across the way like to point to the Liberals for everything, and certainly, ignoring the problem for decades didn't do anyone any favours, but let's remember that this all started

with Mike Harris and the massive downloading of provincial responsibilities to municipalities that happened at that time. This all comes from that—started at that place.

There was a discussion earlier about consultation. I want to remind folks that this government did not run on many of the things, as my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out—they did not run on changing councils, did not run on opening up the greenbelt. Actually, they ran on promising never to touch it. So the things that this government got elected on are not the things they're doing now. And as I've pointed out, they've clearly broken a couple of promises right at the start of the term.

There was a failure to schedule extra committee days that I want to mention. When we were in Brampton, I was part of the committee on this bill, and we tried our best. My friend from University–Rosedale made a motion for more committee days so that we could hear from the people who were lined up to come to Queen's Park to talk. We wanted an extra day, and the government voted that down.

I think it's also worth mentioning that AMO was not invited. I've never before seen AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, not being invited to speak and give their advice and opinion on a bill from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's quite incredible. So we had to schedule our own meeting with AMO, which we did in the middle of committee hearings last week. We heard from them and their concerns, and AMO said very clearly that this bill really was a giveaway to private developers at the expense of municipal budgets and our natural environment. So that's the context of where we are right now.

What we've heard from presenters through committee I think has been very clear. There was a large group that came forward this week, a large coalition building against this legislation. They've said very clearly that this bill transfers very large amounts of taxpayer dollars from municipalities to for-profit developers while doing little to solve the housing crisis. It restricts the ability of municipalities to build truly affordable housing. It removes important planning laws and rules that are needed to constrain financially and environmentally unsustainable and damaging sprawl-like development which is being driven by land speculators. It allows for hyper-intensification in areas where municipalities had not planned for such high density—and my friend spoke about that earlier—straining existing infrastructure and other public services and amenities that people depend on. It eliminates key environmental protections that are needed to stop flooding, protect wetlands, woodlands and wildlife in a time of growing climate change impacts and unprecedented biodiversity loss.

We talked a little bit about how the Premier's own adviser that he appointed to advise him on flooding actually gave the advice that conservation authorities needed a greater role, a greater scope, if we're to protect ourselves from flooding. We heard concerns about insurance costs—insurance companies are even raising a red

flag on this—and that the Premier has done the exact opposite of his own adviser on flooding. It's quite incredible.

The bill restricts the ability of municipalities to require construction of more energy-efficient, climate-resilient housing in neighbourhoods that are truly livable. They've watered that down. It undermines democracy by reducing public participation in planning matters, in urban design and eliminating the public's right to appeal planning decisions. It jeopardizes local efforts to achieve the goal of increasing the affordable housing stock through the design of safe, walkable neighbourhoods. It accelerates the current untenable loss of 319 acres of farmland per day in Ontario at a time—and we talked about this earlier as well—when supply chain disruptions and climate change underline the need to enhance local food security. It's actually absolutely incredible that we're going in exactly the opposite direction that we should be when it comes to protecting supply chains, becoming self-sufficient, protecting our food security for future generations. We're doing the exact opposite right now.

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It creates chaos through the elimination of regional planning, hindering critical long-term coordination of planning and provision of services for housing and hinders short- to medium-term housing construction at the very time it's so desperately needed. My friend from Niagara Falls just raised the issue of development charges and all of the services that depend on that revenue, which is now lost to municipalities.

There's very much a growing coalition against this bill. The government has managed to offend pretty much everyone in Ontario except John Tory and a small handful of others. I would like to read what just came across the wire, actually, which I thought was important to get on the record. This is from the Chiefs of Ontario and First Nations, who are giving their input on this bill, in opposition, and I'd like to read that statement into the record.

“The government of Ontario's tabling of Bill 23 is a blatant violation of First Nations' inherent, domestic, and international rights over their ancestral and traditional territories,” said Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare. ‘Bill 23 will inevitably harm Ontario's environmental heritage and weaken land and water environmental protection...’

“More Homes Built Faster Act is the government of Ontario's latest omnibus bill that, if passed, will have detrimental” effects “on nine different development and environment-related acts under the guise of addressing Ontario's housing crisis.

“First Nations have been given no opportunity, nor the adequate capacity to be consulted regarding the tabling of Bill 23 and its significant changes to Ontario's legislative and policy landscapes. It is deeply concerning to the Chiefs of Ontario that the mandate of the Indigenous Affairs Ontario ... office, which is to ensure collaboration amongst ministries engaging and consulting with First Nations on policy and legislative changes, continues to be unfulfilled.

“Unilateral legislative and administrative changes within Bill 23 without consultation or engagement with

First Nations are unacceptable and an abuse of power. The unprecedented steps taken by the government of Ontario violate existing treaties, and their will to systemically sell off resources will have dire consequences for First Nations and future generations.

“First Nations are not stakeholders; we are sovereign Nations and are entitled to proper consultation based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ... and mutual respect.

“The government of Ontario can no longer avoid its duty to consult with First Nations by delegating responsibilities and obligations to municipalities, developers, and project proponents.”“ That's a pretty damning indictment of this bill from First Nations, and the failure to meet our obligations and consult with them.

I'd like to go on a little more regarding conservation authorities, as this bill further weakens conservation authorities and our ability to protect the environment. It repeals 36 specific regulations that allow conservation authorities to be a partner in the development process and ensure that developments are thoughtful and done with respect to our environment and endangered species. When issuing a permit, conservation authorities are no longer allowed to attach conditions to mitigate pollution or effects on the conservation of land. Conservation authorities will only be able to comment on items related to the protection of people and property and their specific hazard role. They cannot comment on anything beyond the scope of the hazard.

When we asked the ministry what conservation authorities currently provide input on that they would no longer be able to, we were told that observations of species at risk and natural heritage systems were some examples. So conservation authorities are no longer going to be doing conservation.

In the Ontario conservation authorities' submission, they stated, “We are concerned ... that some changes proposed in Bill 23 will... weaken the ability of conservation authorities to protect people and property from natural hazards; and reduce critical, natural infrastructure like wetlands and green spaces that reduce flooding and protect waters in our lakes and rivers.”

The bill further asks conservation authorities to identify any authority-owned land “that could support housing development and get more homes built faster.”

Speaker, why would we build on conservation areas when Ontario is home to the largest number of brownfields in Canada?

As part of the conversation earlier, one of my friends from across the way seemed to indicate that you could take land out of a greenbelt and add land back into it. That really reminds me of a debate that happened in Niagara—my friend from Niagara West will probably remember this—on a development called Thundering Waters in Niagara Falls, which was a huge housing development that they were plopping right on top of a wetland. An argument was made, which reminds me an awful lot of this argument, that you could somehow create a wetland somewhere else. It was openly criticized. It was a ridiculous suggestion to anyone who knows anything about

conservation or science that you could actually create a wetland somewhere else and that would make it okay to pave over a wetland that's been there for hundreds of years in this location in Niagara Falls. So this argument reminds me of the same type of thing.

We all know that many of the lands that the government says are being put into the greenbelt are lands that are already protected. As my friend from Timiskaming—Cochrane said, once you pave that land over, it's gone forever. So, whether the government is adding land or not, the fact of the matter is they're opening up some of the best farmland in the world that is currently protected, that the Premier promised would always be protected, for development and to be paved over.

The coalition that came to Toronto the other day had some things to say about the changes to conservation and about the proposal to remove those lands from the greenbelt. The Premier claims that this bill will build more housing more quickly but most groups say he is wrong. The proposed changes would not solve the housing affordability and supply crisis. Any new supply of truly affordable housing units would be offset by the loss of affordable housing units through redevelopment of existing rental housing for other areas. My friends, especially here in Toronto, have talked about that in their speeches.

The new supply of diverse housing types would not begin to meet the rising demand as our population increases. The government's proposed changes would damage our existing neighbourhoods, towns and cities, as well as the farmland and natural areas that sustain them, which in turn would harm our ability to feed ourselves, protect ourselves from flooding and address climate change risks.

The folks who came to Queen's Park were very clear on what they thought of the proposal to remove lands from the greenbelt, that it will do little or nothing to address the shortage of affordable housing—I think that's perfectly obvious, Speaker—and facilitate expensive urban sprawl and inappropriate high-rises at the expense of more diverse housing types. It will divert limited construction materials and labour away from building mixed and affordable housing and direct them towards sprawl development. It will remove from the greenbelt thousands of acres of valuable natural areas and agricultural land and turn them into sprawl development. I think we know that, on these greenbelt lands, we're not going to have affordable housing being built. That is a ridiculous suggestion.

It will undermine the protection of wetlands, woodlands, rivers, streams and wildlife habitat across Ontario, destroy key land use planning processes that Ontario municipalities, conservation authorities and residents need in order to protect, manage and plan for climate-resilient ecosystems, and it will create an ecologically vulnerable Swiss-cheese greenbelt by allowing land speculators to develop the lands that the government would have removed from greenbelt protection.

This is quite the long list of folks who have gotten together on very short notice, Speaker, from all walks of

life, to oppose this bill. I'm not sure I've seen too many bills that have drawn this much opposition so quickly—some of the government's other municipal housing bills certainly.

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Stakeholder response: I wanted to make sure I got some of this on the record from what we heard at committees, especially the folks who never got to present. We have AMO, of course, who represent all the municipalities in Ontario outside of Toronto—not invited to the hearings:

“For decades, Ontario's housing supply in high-growth regions has been determined by developers and land speculators managing supply to optimize price, and those who view housing units as solely an investment....

“Schemes designed to incentivize developers at the expense of property taxpayers and the natural environment will not get the job done. Previous governments have downloaded costs to municipalities and cut environmental protections to disastrous effect. At some point, the bill will come due and there will be a heavy price to pay.”

We're already hearing from many municipalities about the incredible costs they're going to be dealing with as a result of a loss of revenue and an addition of further costs.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority who I'm glad took the time to come to present at Queen's Park but was not able to do that when the hearings were shut down due to poor planning on the government's part:

“The proposed changes affecting” conservation authorities “and our mandate will have minimal effect in increasing the housing supply and could lead to unintended future consequences associated with the loss of critical natural heritage features such as wetlands. The diminished role of CAs could also lead to more development being located in natural hazards, higher costs in property damage, increased burden on municipal partners, and absolute erosion of the ecosystem approach applied through the established integrated watershed management lens.”

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario: “While RNAO is a strong advocate of ensuring adequate housing is available to all, we urge the government to withdraw this bill. If passed into law, Bill 23, as written, will likely worsen the circumstances of tenants and those who are precariously housed, and will negatively impact multiple social and ecological determinants of health.”

Speaker, a very wide range of opponents to this legislation, and I would say in closing that it's clear from the submissions that we've heard, that this bill is flawed, does not adequately address the housing affordability crisis and that it relies on deregulation and tax cuts to incentivize the for-profit private market to reach its goal of building 1.5 million homes over 10 years, but the strongest proponents of this bill appear to be those who seek to financially benefit from it, and that is the private development sector.

On this side of the House, we believe you can address the housing affordability crisis without exacerbating the climate crisis by paving over the greenbelt, destroying wetlands and further pushing endangered species to the brink of extinction.

This government should focus on new public investments and a new public home builder to do what the private sector can't. We need to build more of the missing middle in Ontario, enact stronger rent controls and implement a more aggressive clampdown on speculation. I hope the government listens to some of the advice that they heard during our committee hearings.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Joseph Mancinelli of the Labourers' International Union of North America had this to say about Bill 23—this is one of the largest unions in Ontario. Bill 23 is “a positive step forward in building a transformational action plan that will cut red tape and invest in critical housing infrastructure while spurring economic development and creating thousands of jobs for our members and men and women across the skilled trades.”

Will the member from Niagara Centre support moving forward with getting our skilled trades and housing connected—yes or no?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank my friend for the question. I obviously do support skilled trades. I think we all do. It's our approach that we differ on. I'm glad Mr. Mancinelli has something positive to say about the government. He wasn't too happy when the government took away collective bargaining rights by violating our charter of freedoms.

I think we all support the skilled trades, but I don't support the skilled trades to pave over farmland or to pave over our greenbelt. People who work in the skilled trades, or any workers, depend on food security for our future, and I don't think that paving over the greenbelt and taking away 319 acres of farmland per day is something that most workers support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll just answer that member's question real quick. Listen, we've always supported unionized workers. We certainly support the skilled trades, and I'm sure the skilled trades and their families, if they were asked the questions, “Should you be building on the greenbelt? Should you be getting rid of our farmlands?”—I'm sure every worker in the province of Ontario, union or non-union, would not say, “Let's develop on the greenbelt. Let's get rid of our farmland. Let's get rid of our food security.” I don't believe there's a worker in this province who would do that, to answer your question.

I've used up a lot of my time—hopefully they were listening over there; I know sometimes they don't—but I want to say you hit it on the nail. This is usually an organization that is quite frank with you guys. Why do you think they never consulted with AMO? And why was AMO not invited to do a presentation? That's a big, big issue, because that represents 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You can make fun of me all you want over there, but it's true—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for a response.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Madam Speaker, I agree with everything that the member from Niagara Falls said.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Eglinton-Lakeshore.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Eglinton-Lawrence.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Eglinton-Lawrence. I apologize.

Mrs. Robin Martin: You talked about development charges, and you always talk about affordable housing. For the average GTA single-family home, development charges added \$116,000-plus. Our government is taking action here. We've removed it entirely for affordable and not-for-profit housing, as well as inclusionary zoning. We've reduced 25% for purpose-built rentals. It's going to make changes so that we can get more affordable housing built. It's incentives for affordable housing.

Ene Underwood, CEO of Habitat for Humanity, said the province's proposal to exempt affordable housing from development charges, parkland dedication and CBCs will provide certainty to all affordable housing projects.

Simone Swail, of the Co-Operative Housing Federation, said, “The commitment to waive development charges for all affordable housing developments will have a tangible and positive impact on the ability to develop new affordable co-ops in Ontario.”

Why aren't you supporting these things? These are great initiatives.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank my friend for the question. There are a couple of issues there. My friend stated earlier that of course we don't think that removing development charges from affordable housing is a bad thing. But as a package, what this government has done with development charges leaves a huge hole in municipal budgets. That's all I'm hearing about right now, and a lot of others as well. I'm sure you're hearing loud and clear from our municipal partners. AMO has tried to tell you loud and clear.

There are billions of dollars—“billions,” with a B—of a hole in municipal budgets because of what this government has done, without consultation, and those municipalities don't know how they're going to deal with it. Throwing municipalities into financial chaos is not a way to promote the building of affordable housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the remarks from my colleague the member for Niagara Centre, and wanted to let him know that London ACORN, which is a tenant advocacy group, held a rally in our city last Friday to oppose Bill 23. They're concerned about the lack of any measures to ensure affordability. They're concerned about the impact on the environment. They're concerned about the impact on heritage.

That rally was attended by five new councillors who participated this week in a council meeting which identified a \$97-million hole in London's budget over the next five years. The city has called on the province to put a halt to the process of Bill 23, so that many of these newly elected councillors across the province, and the city

councils that are going to be so negatively impacted, can consult with the government on this bill.

Does the member understand why the government is refusing to listen to councils?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you for the question. Obviously, they don't want to listen to municipalities and AMO because they know that municipalities are not in favour of the government leaving a giant hole in their budgets and the government knows that municipalities are not going to support these moves.

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I was just on the radio this morning with a London radio station and they raised the very same issue of this almost \$100-million hole in their budget, as well as some real concern over the strong-mayor legislation, which they know is coming their way. Folks in London and folks in municipalities across Ontario are not happy either with this bill or with the lack of consultation or with the government's refusal to listen to their advice and encouragement.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Of course, we know that, with the upcoming coronation of the member for Davenport, the New Democratic Party is, in fact, becoming and solidifying their position as the defenders of the urban status quo—the defenders of those that don't like to work with their hands and, of course, straying far away from being the party of workers, as I know they once were.

My question to the member opposite is that so much of this conversation that we've heard from the New Democrats has been filled with some disgust for developers, for home builders, for those who are engaged in building the homes that we want, and, of course, I don't understand it. I know that there's many hard-working people in his riding who work in the trades or are drywallers, who are framers, who are roofers, who are, frankly, looking forward to seeing more homes built so that they can do that work. So my question: When I hear the derision with which they speak about developers and home builders, what do the NDP have against these hard-working men and women, and who do they want to have build homes if they don't want any of the home builders to do it?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Unlike my friend, I actually have a history in municipal government, where I've made decisions and I've been a budget chair of a large urban municipality. And during the eight years that I worked in those functions, I worked very, very well with developers. You know what we did in my city ward in St. Catharines? We remediated brownfields and we built affordable housing on those brownfields. We didn't pave over wetlands and we didn't open up the greenbelt. As a matter of fact, the council that I was on was very protective of the greenbelt and worked very, very well with developers. As a matter of fact, I think we were the third-highest municipality in Canada in development in St. Catharines, around the 2008-10 time period.

So, you know, walking the walk is important, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I really thought the comments of the member were excellent. I wonder if you could comment a little bit more on the concerns you may have about the impact on food production, and farming in particular, in this province and what the development of the greenbelt is going to mean for those communities?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): You have 40 seconds to respond.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I guess I would just—I have a 14-year-old son. He's actually been a page in this place. Very, very smart—smarter than me, I think. And he talks to me about his concerns about the greenbelt and about food security. All you have to do is speak to young people. They're not just concerned about affording a house, they're concerned about the environment, about climate change, and about having enough food to eat in the future, as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have no further time for questions.

Further debate? I recognize the member for Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry—sorry, Dundas-South Glengarry. Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you, Speaker. It is a tongue twister. I struggle with it on a daily basis.

It is my pleasure to rise for the third reading of our government's proposed More Homes Built Faster Act. We all know there's no better place to settle down and start a family than right here in Ontario. No matter where you come from and no matter what you do, we believe that you'll have a place in Ontario and we want to see you thrive.

An important part of prosperity is having a place to call home, but across Ontario, young people and old people are having difficulty finding a place to call their own. Across our great province, the rising cost of living and the housing supply crisis are preventing folks from settling down in their very own home. This government believes everyone should be able to find a home that fits their needs.

That is why we are proposing immediate action to address the housing shortage with the More Homes Built Faster Act. With this legislation, this government is putting forward a plan to make home ownership a reality for more Ontarians, starting by building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. We need immediate action, as we have not been keeping up the housing supply for decades. The last time Ontario built 100,000 housing units, I was only four years old, Speaker, in 1987. Last year was the first time achieving 100,000 homes, and I'm now 39. Thirty-five years have passed of not keeping up with the demand. I'm not getting any younger, and this problem is not getting any better. Change is needed; 100,000 units a year will help, but it will not solve the problem. It is not enough. I want my young children to know that they will be able to afford a home because this government was willing to do things differently and remove barriers that have been in place for decades that are also driving up the costs.

Through this bill, we recognize that for so many hard-working Ontarians, home ownership has slipped out of reach. By supporting 1.5 million more homes to be built and by removing the red tape that is causing delays and

increasing costs, we are putting forward a plan to address the crisis facing this province without adding unnecessary disruptions to people's lives.

We know that the homes we build need to be accessible for the people who need them. Hard-working Ontarians, even dual-income families, are struggling to find a home. We are firm in our commitment to making housing more accessible for Ontarians across the housing spectrum. This government is reviewing the possibility of repurposing parcels of provincial land in communities across Ontario to put them back into productive use by creating affordable housing options that meet people's needs and their budgets. The repurposing of attainable housing developments using surplus provincial lands is one of the ways that, through this bill, this government is finding creative solutions to a housing supply crisis that have been decades in the making. We cannot keep doing the same thing and expecting different results.

Finally, Speaker, as a small business owner myself, I know that the numbers don't lie, so let's talk numbers. The cost to build a home in Ontario has gotten out of hand. In 2021, in the GTA, municipal fees added an average of \$116,000 to the cost of a home and \$100,000 to the cost of a condo. Speaker, I purchased my first home in Cornwall, a three-bedroom semi, for under \$100,000 less than 20 years ago. Those GTA fees are higher than the price I paid for my home. In fact, average approval timelines have increased by 41% since 2020, and municipal fees and charges have increased by 30% to 36% on average in the same time.

Last month, the Building Industry and Land Development Association reported that each month of delay in a typical high-density project amounts to \$2,600 to \$3,300 in additional construction cost per residential unit.

Speaker, let's be clear: Higher residential construction costs and regulatory fees slow the number of homes being built, and the burden ends up on the shoulders of the hard-working folks trying to find a home. Development charges or the municipal fees that are levied on new home construction, and which add substantially to the cost of a new home, help pay for important infrastructure. We understand their value, but development charges have gone up by 600% in Toronto since 2009, 600% in 13 years; 600% is worth repeating.

Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have already debated for six hours, which is sufficient time on this bill. Mr. Quinn has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

Hon. Ross Romano: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Hon. Ross Romano: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Do we have agreement? Agreed.

1450

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 PERMETTANT AUX EMPLOYÉS MALADES DE RESTER CHEZ EUX

Ms. Sattler moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to paid leave / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les congés payés.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is certainly my honour to rise once again to participate in the debate on the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act. This is a bill that is certainly more timely and more urgent than either of the two times that it was debated before in this Legislature, and I urge all of my colleagues in the House today to vote to pass this legislation, to finally give Ontario workers the support that they need to recover from illness, to care for a sick child, without having to worry about losing their income or potentially even their job.

This is the third time that this bill has been debated in this Legislature. I first brought it forward in December of 2020, as Ontario's deadly second wave was just starting to peak and as workplaces surged to become the most common site of COVID-19 outbreaks. And at that time, they surpassed even long-term-care homes.

The importance of providing workers with paid sick days was reflected in the unprecedented support that my bill received at that time. We had big-city mayors. We had mayors across the province. We had boards of health. We had municipal councillors. We had medical officers of health. We had health care professionals, health policy experts, economists, unions and small businesses and employer networks.

Unfortunately, Speaker, the bill did not pass when it was debated in February 2021, but the government obviously felt the pressure from this near-unanimous call for the government to move forward with paid sick days, and they did move a tiny step forward when they announced the worker income protection benefit in April of that year. That program gives workers three paid sick

days for any COVID-related leave that was taken between April 19 and September 25.

On this side of the House, when that bill was brought forward by the government to establish the worker income protection benefit, we did support it—even though it was temporary, even though it was completely inadequate when COVID self-isolation requirements were at 10 days, and even though the benefit that the government introduced only covered COVID and it excluded all other illnesses. Although the program was recently extended to March 2023, it has not been made permanent. It has not been expanded to cover other sicknesses, other illnesses. It remains temporary, and it remains at only three days, and it remains completely inadequate.

Speaker, many Ontarians have had COVID two, three, maybe even four times. I'm not sure about you, but I myself have had COVID twice already, and the first time, I self-isolated for 10 days. The second time, I self-isolated for five days. And fortunately, I was able to isolate at home over those 15 days without any impact on my salary. I was able to work from home because of the nature of the job that I do. But if I didn't have that ability, Speaker, three of those 15 days that I had stayed home could have been paid under the worker income protection benefit program, but the remaining days would all have been unpaid. And if I had been sick with anything else—like the flu, like stomach flu, like strep throat, whatever—the time that I spent in bed to recover would have been entirely unpaid. There would have been no support from this government.

Speaker, for workers who are living paycheque to paycheque, that could mean not being able to pay the rent, not being able to buy the groceries; it could even mean losing their job if their employer insisted that they come in to work. That is a choice that no worker should have to make.

But within this province, that is the reality for the majority of workers in Ontario. Almost 60% of workers in this province do not have access to paid sick days from their employer, and that figure rises to 75% for workers who are racialized or immigrant or low-income; these are usually workers who are in front-line and essential jobs. They are the workers who clean our buildings, who bag our groceries, who prepare our food, who care for our children and our seniors, who keep our transit systems running and our factories and supply chains going. These are the workers who have been hit harder by COVID than anyone else in Ontario.

We saw in the Toronto Star an investigative report on the impact of COVID-19 on workers through WSIB claims that were filed, and we saw that at least 108 workers in this province died from work-related COVID infections between March 2020 and the end of 2021, and the majority of those fatalities were in manufacturing. They were recorded among workers who were making bubble gum, who were producing baby clothes, who were making plastic jerry cans. These, of course, are workers who could not work from home during pandemic lockdowns but were exposed to significant workplace risks that many of us would have flatly refused.

They cannot work from home if their child has a mild fever or a runny nose. They'll have to take the risk of sending their child to child care or school and hoping they don't get that call to come to pick them up, or they will have to take the risk that their financial security will be jeopardized if they take a cut in pay to stay home with their child. We are in the midst of the worst affordability crisis in decades, Speaker, which means that these workers are put in an impossible position.

And during a global pandemic, of course, it is also a recipe for public health disaster. Early in the pandemic, we saw a study from Peel Public Health that showed that of 8,000 workers who were surveyed, almost 2,000 of those workers—fully one quarter—reported to work sick, including 80 who actually had a positive COVID test result. They did not go in to work sick because they wanted to infect their co-workers or because they didn't believe in public health advice to stay home. They went in to work because they had no choice. They knew that if they missed a day of work, they would miss a day of pay. And for workers, as I said, who are living paycheque to paycheque, that is simply not an option.

So, Speaker, I gave the government a second chance to re-think my bill when we brought it forward about a year ago last fall; still they voted it down. Today, this government can show that working for workers is more than just an empty slogan. They can show that they understand the consequences to worker health and to public health and to our economy when workers can't stay home to recover or to care for a sick child. They can actually do something to address the crisis in our pediatric hospitals and our overwhelmed pediatric emergency rooms and ICU beds. We've heard the Minister of Health talk about the province's plan, but clearly that plan is not working.

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Yesterday, Children's Hospital in London announced the cancellation of children's surgeries because of the crisis in the ER and the ICU beds. The Minister of Health's response is to follow layers of protection: to mask, to keep vaccines up to date and to stay home if you are sick. But this government has failed to show leadership on masking, they've failed to launch a comprehensive vaccine campaign, but today, they can actually do something to enable workers to stay home when they are sick.

We know, Speaker, that paid sick days save lives. We know this from research that was done in the US early in the pandemic from research that the science advisory table helpfully put out that included definitive evidence that paid sick days reduce transmission in workplaces and schools. If parents have access to paid sick days, they can take a sick child to the doctor early rather than to the emergency department and reduce the pressure that pediatric ICUs are experiencing.

Paid sick days, Speaker, are also good for the economy. They make it much more likely that workers will participate in preventive health care. They'll book screening tests. They'll take their children to the doctor to get vaccines. They reduce workplace injury. They allow workers to recover faster and return to work. They reduce

the problem of presenteeism, when workers go in to work and potentially infect their co-workers, but they actually aren't in any condition to be able to do the job. This cost employers and our economy billions in lost productivity.

I want to give a shout-out, Speaker, to the Decent Work and Health Network, to the health care professionals who have advocated so strongly and consistently in support of my bill.

I just want to read from an editorial in the Ottawa Citizen yesterday by two doctors from the Decent Work and Health Network. They say, "As we have done countless times before, we implore our politicians to finally heed the science and choose to protect Ontarians, by passing Bill 4 into law.

"If our government wants to put children first, their families and caregivers need paid sick days now. Paid sick days save lives, protect our medically vulnerable and marginalized community members, and are crucial to supporting the health of essential and front-line workers and their families." Pass my bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It is an honour to rise on behalf of my constituents to support Bill 4, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act. I'd like to thank my colleague the member for London West for bringing forward this important bill once again.

I'd also like to acknowledge organizations like Justice for Workers and the Decent Work and Health Network, among so many others, for continuing to push for paid sick days in this province.

Speaker, there are so many arguments in support of paid sick days, but I don't have much time to speak, so I will raise three key points. The first is that paid sick days are good for public health and are a low-cost, preventative measure to reduce strain on our health care system. And our health care system is under tremendous strain right now. Ontario is in the midst of a health care crisis as respiratory illnesses like the flu, RSV and COVID are spreading. Hospitals are overwhelmed. Emergency rooms are overcrowded. Hallway health care is the norm. Children's emergency departments and ICUs are bursting at the seams.

CTV News reported this week that a four-year-old child with Down syndrome, who was suffering from pneumonia, waited 40 hours in emergency before getting a bed. That's the kind of stress our health care system is under.

Paid sick days are a cost-effective way to keep sickness from spreading and reduce the strain on our health care system. Paid sick days literally save lives. When people can stay home when they are sick, it dramatically reduces the spread of infectious diseases.

My second point is that we need to respect workers. Workers are who keep our province running. Everything we have and do is possible because of workers, but almost 60% of Ontario's workers don't have access to paid sick days. It's disrespectful and harmful to make people go to work when they are sick or to expect them to stay home without any pay. Many workers don't have that choice.

They live paycheque to paycheque and cannot afford to lose pay. Providing all workers with paid sick days would provide them with the respect that they deserve.

My third and final point is that paid sick days are good for the economy. They're good for business. Paid sick days keep workers and customers healthy. When workers stay at home when they're sick, their colleagues stay healthy. Research shows that paid sick days reduce staff turnover, increase productivity and improve worker morale.

I urge this government: Please reduce the strain on our health care system, give workers the respect they deserve and help boost our economy by passing the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act. Let's legislate paid sick days for all workers of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. David Smith: I am pleased to rise in the House today to join the debate about Bill 4, put forward by the member for London West. I want to thank the member for London West for her dedication and representation of her community in this House. I look forward to many discussions that the member opposite and I will have about what we can do to stand up for the workers of this province and their families.

I am pleased to discuss the substance of this bill today because our government has always held the health and safety of our workers as our top priority, without exception. Safe and healthy workplaces are necessary to foster economic growth and ensure everyone can reach their true potential.

The health and well-being of the people of Ontario is our government's number one priority. Our government recognizes the importance of all employees staying at home when they are ill. That is why, when Ontario workers were being hit the hardest by the effects of the pandemic, our government took immediate action. Our government passed the COVID-19 Putting Workers First Act, which introduced our government's worker income protection benefit.

Under the benefit, Ontario workers are eligible for up to three days' leave to stay home if they are not feeling well. Additionally, they can stay home to get a COVID test, wait for a COVID test or stay home with children if they are getting vaccinated. Workers can also stay home if they were getting a vaccine or recovering from the side effects. Our program is working, and our government, under the leadership of the Premier, will always support Ontario workers. Let me make that clear.

As the president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Christopher Bloore, said, "We at the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario strongly support the government of Ontario's welcome extension of the worker income protection benefit....

"The tourism and hospitality industry has been one of the hardest hit by the global pandemic.

"This program will continue to support tourism operators still facing significant revenue losses and help workers protect personal health."

It is important to remember that we are all in this fight together. Until COVID-19 is defeated for good, our

government will continue to stand with workers and our private sector partners to ensure workplaces remain safe.

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While we have taken concrete steps to introduce policies that protect Ontario workers, the previous government failed to act. One thing to also note is that the NDP have always said they stand with workers, but they always refuse to mention or even reference our paid sick days program. Elected officials are obligated to inform their constituents about programs being offered to them, regardless of whether they are in government or opposition. Instead, we have seen the NDP attempt to score political points by piggybacking on workers' suffering rather than helping them learn about programs that are available. Some things should be above politics, but opposition NDP members don't seem to agree with that. It is quite baffling that the federal NDP is supporting federal paid sick days while the Ontario NDP avoids mentioning it.

While the NDP, yes, has played political games, our government has always focused on delivering results for workers and their families. Our government's commitment to standing with workers is the only way we can successfully complete our mission to make Ontario the safest and healthiest place in the world to live, work and raise a family. This is our commitment and the mandate given to us by the people of this great province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: I am proud to rise on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest and speak to this important bill that I know my colleague from London West has brought multiple times now. In fact, I myself have moved a motion in this House asking the government to do this, and I know many of my colleagues have in the previous term, especially in the midst of the pandemic when the pandemic was raging through and COVID was raging through and many lives were lost.

It's very simple. Paid sick days save lives. Let me say this again: Paid sick days save lives. We could have saved so many lives if we'd had proper support for our workers, especially front-line workers, many of whom we all—on this side of the House as well—called heroes during this pandemic.

Essential workers across this province—the majority of them, when we talk about front-line workers, are women: hard-working women, low-income. A lot of them don't have job security. A lot of them make minimum wage and missing a day of work means missing a day of pay, which means whether we're talking about paying their bills, whether we're talking about food on the table, rent support, sustaining their family, their kids—all of that depends on that day of pay. It's very difficult for someone to decide, well, do I call in sick? Do I miss that pay? What am I risking? People risked their lives to go to work just so they could have enough income and to make sure they didn't lose their jobs.

Throughout the pandemic, I have named individuals, hard-working heroes whom we lost, like Christine

Mandegarian, like Sharon Roberts, like Maureen Ambersley, health care workers who were on the front lines, saving other lives and instead lost their lives. I've talked to family members who still feel like they haven't gotten justice because they know there are so many others who end up going to work, risking their lives every single day.

When we have a pandemic like this, and if it ever happens again—and we're still not done with COVID, Speaker, but are we taking the right measures to protect these workers? If we have an individual—and I have so many stories, and I wish I had enough time to talk about them. Just recently, one grocery worker wrote to me and she said, "I live with five others in my family and we live in a two-bedroom apartment, and, for us, there is no isolation or anything. For me to go and risk, and know that I'm not protected and come back, my kids are at risk." There are kids who are ending up in the hospital right now with ventilators, and the fact that we are not providing the support to these mothers, these workers, is risking the entire population, risking the labour force.

But it's also costing us money. I know that maybe the human argument, the emotional argument, doesn't work for this government, but if we're going to talk about the money, if we're going to talk about our health care system, you could do so much by protecting these lives or protecting these workers through paid sick days, and you'll actually be saving money as well.

The other thing I want to mention before I run out of time is that I had a really wonderful event with migrant workers at Access Alliance, just on the border of my riding in Scarborough Southwest. Access Alliance hosted them, and Deena Ladd from the Decent Work and Health Network was there. Along with her and members from the Decent Work and Health Network, we had the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change and the Workers' Action Centre, and they presented these wonderful stories of people who are on the front lines, who are working hard, and what they're going through. I just have to tell you, I wish I could take some of these members on the government side and share with them the heartbreaking stories of so many and what they went through during the pandemic: how people ended up in the ICU, what they have struggled with, especially when we're talking about migrant workers—who, by the way, don't even have job security in the type of work they go through.

In the last few seconds that I have, I want to also mention some specific professionals we actually never talk about in this House. When we talk about health care, we talk about nurses, doctors and PSWs, and they're wonderful and I salute all of them, but today I want to take a moment to talk about the other burnt-out health care professionals who are also exiting the system, and those are laboratory technologists, technicians, radiation technologists, respiratory therapists, laboratory assistants, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and phlebotomists, amongst others. I believe there was a lobby group this afternoon who were here, who were radiation therapists who talked about this. I think it's important to name them,

because they did not get the pandemic pay or the support from the government, but they were also on the front line working hard.

So, please, I hope the government will consider and pass this bill once and for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's an honour as always to rise in the House, and I want to thank the member for London West, my friend and colleague, for introducing this important legislation yet again.

One of the first things this government did when it was elected in the last term was to eliminate the two paid sick days introduced in 2017 before the pandemic. It took 14 years to push the Liberal government to do this, and it still wasn't enough, but one of the first things they did was they ripped that up. It made no sense then; it doesn't make any sense now. Imagine, at the height of the pandemic: When people were sick, many of them were told to stay home and not get paid, or then to hide the fact in some cases, and go in to work and potentially spread illness. This was not good government strategy.

Health care professionals and economists have been saying for years that paid emergency leave is good public policy, not just during a pandemic. When a worker goes to work sick, it takes them longer to recover and the risk of spread increases, raising overall costs. Imagine a child care worker compelled to go to work sick, putting themselves, their co-workers and children at risk. It's easy to understand the ripple effect that can happen when the children become sick, then their caregivers, and it passes on to their family. It spreads and spreads. Think about food handlers at a busy restaurant. The list goes on and on.

These are our front-line workers. In fact, close to 60% of workers do not have paid sick days and cannot afford to stay home without pay, especially now that the cost of living is through the roof. They risk their lives and their co-workers' when they have no real choice but to go to work sick. Paid sick days are critical during a pandemic, and they're always critical for curbing any new waves that come when these mandates are lifted.

Paid sick days save lives, and the bill that we're debating today, put forth by my good friend, does many things. It provides adequate days so that workers, when sick, can be home, not spread illness, not spread infection. When a loved one under their care is sick, it gives them the chance, because that person is relying on that family member to be able to assist them and to stay with them.

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What we have right now is a patchwork of days. We're going to fix that. We want to expand the list of members for whom leave can be given to recognize changing realities here in Ontario.

We also, and think about this, want to prohibit employers from requiring a doctor's note for emergency leave. Think about it: Right now if you want to go see your family doctor, many of them say that if you have flu-like symptoms, stay home. So how are you, in many cases, going to a doctor to be able to get that affirmation that

you're, in fact, sick when many doctors aren't willing to even see patients under these conditions? Someone is not feeling well. They're very sick. They're throwing up. You know what? Let's put them on a bus and send them to a doctor. That is what's going on right now. It's not right. Let's trust our workers.

We do want to call for financial support for businesses and small businesses that are struggling to make this a reality.

And finally—it was mentioned in one of the government members' speeches—they said that the government is playing politics with the rights of workers. That is the absolute farthest from the truth. The soul of the NDP is to fight for workers every day in this House. It is part of our soul and why we're here.

Work with us. Do the right thing. Give the workers the sick days they need to take care of their families, and we'll build a better province. The power is yours.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr. Deepak Anand: That was amazing.

Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on the important things that we do for our Ontarians. We're talking today on Bill 4.

Before I begin, Madam Speaker, I want to say this—and I want to thank the member from London West, who was elected and was a trustee for 13 years and then got elected in 2013, 2014, 2018, 2022. That's over 20-plus years of service, advocacy and representation of your community, so great work, member from London West.

We're talking about this bill today because the members of the opposition can also agree that the health and safety of our workers is a topic of special importance, and it's very close to the heart of this government. Under the leadership of this Premier, we have always held health and safety of the people of this province as our top priority. In fact, our mission as a government is to make Ontario the safest and healthiest place in the world to live, work and raise a family. Especially in the last two years, we've seen how much the workers have done for our province. We can't thank you enough. Thank you for everything you've done to make sure our lives continue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I just want to applaud—

Interjections.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Yes, absolutely, you can applaud here for the workers of Ontario.

That's exactly why our government led the way during the pandemic by allowing people to stay home when they were not feeling well. Along with the paid sick days, something which is very—we go above and beyond. What is more, we're looking at another thing to help our workers: portable benefits. As the world continues to change, our government is working hard to make sure that as many people as possible have access to these benefits. These portable benefits would support millions of workers

who do not have access to benefits right now, including retailers, bartenders, gig workers. To better support our workers, benefits could follow a person even if they move to a new workplace or even a new city within Ontario.

So I just want to say, Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone to participate in our expert panel to make sure the benefits can be extended to those who currently do not have it. This is how we want to support our workers in Ontario. And to the workers, I just want to say, you have a government who will, and continually, be helping to make sure to put your concerns at the forefront of our agenda. I'll give you an example: Our putting workers first act, laid out during the pandemic, passed unanimously, by all of us, and ensured flexible paid sick days—no sick notes needed.

The gemstone of this bill is the worker income protection benefit, which allows time off for illness without the need of a doctor's note. It allows people to get a COVID-19 test, wait for the result, take time off to get the vaccine or take a child to get vaccinated. Simply put, you do not have to take a chance. If you have to pick between staying healthy or going to work, we will appreciate if you stay healthy and take those paid sick days.

As of October 14, Madam Speaker, over 520,000 workers have already used this program, with the total paid of approximately \$200 million. Our government's COVID-19 paid sick days—although it is for three days, right now, as it stands, the average intake is 2.6 paid sick days. That itself shows that the program is working, and we are making sure that our province's workers are at the forefront.

I just want to acknowledge for a moment: I do see the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development here, who has been a champion for workers. Thank you for doing an incredible job.

At this time, I just want to take a moment and I want to say this again, to all the workers of this province: We value your work. We're thankful to you. That is why our worker income protection benefit does not require a doctor's note and includes time off for staying home if you're not feeling well, getting a COVID test, waiting for a COVID test, or if you have to take time to take a child to get vaccinated, going to get vaccinated, recovering from the side effects or time off for mental wellness. We have a program which is there to serve you. If you want to know and learn more about this program, please reach out to us at www.ontario.ca/covidworkerbenefit, or you can reach out to us by calling 1-888-999-2248.

Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, this is a government who believes in our workers and will always make sure our workers have our back. That is why we put together these measures. I just want to take a moment and say we are committed to standing shoulder to shoulder with workers. That is the only way we can successfully complete our mission to make sure Ontario is the safest and

healthiest place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from London West for a two-minute reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleagues who participated in the debate, and in particular my NDP colleagues from Parkdale–High Park, Scarborough South-west and Humber River–Black Creek.

A couple of points were made that I want to reinforce. Our health care system is in the midst of a crisis that we have never seen before. We have an affordability crisis in this province. Paid sick days will reduce strain on our health care system. It will help parents get through this crisis we're seeing in our pediatric hospitals, and it will give families the financial stability they need to stay home if they are sick.

I also appreciate the comments highlighting that paid sick days is an equity issue: The workers most likely not to have paid sick days are racialized workers, are low-income workers, are immigrant workers, are women workers. We need paid sick days to support those workers.

To the government members who spoke to my bill: I want to remind them that their worker income protection benefit is a temporary program. It's going to end in March 2023. It's only for COVID-related illnesses. It won't cover workers who need to take a day off because they have the flu, the stomach flu, strep throat or any number of other illnesses. They can't access those three paid sick days, and it is completely inadequate. We are in the third year of a global pandemic. Workers who used those three paid sick days last year are completely out of luck. It was a one-time three-paid-days benefit.

We need permanent paid sick days legislated in the Employment Standards Act, so that all Ontario workers have access to the financial security they need and are not facing that impossible choice of having to potentially infect their co-workers at work or lose their paycheque if they stay home.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Sattler has moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to paid leave. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1530.

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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
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Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
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	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / 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	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	