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Assembly
of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Lundi
28 novembre 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 November 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 novembre 2022

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Niagara's families deserve world-class health care, and that's exactly what I'm working on delivering with Premier Ford. It's why I was so heartened to see Infrastructure Ontario's market update last week, which confirms how our government is making record investments in health care, long-term care, transportation, education and other critical infrastructure.

In Niagara, this infrastructure includes up to \$1 billion for the Garden City Skyway twinning in St. Catharines, another \$1 billion for a new South Niagara Hospital in Niagara Falls and hundreds of millions of dollars for a new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby.

In addition to the Infrastructure Ontario update on projects in the region, I recently had the privilege of announcing over \$2 million in community provincial supports for critical infrastructure upgrades and repairs at our local hospitals. This funding is part of the government's new investment of over \$182 million provided through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund and the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund to 131 hospitals and 65 community health service providers across this province.

Niagara Health will be receiving over \$1 million while the Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre in St. Catharines will receive over \$600,000 in provincial support this year through this Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund. Additionally, the Oak Centre in Welland is going to be receiving \$41,000, Arid Recovery Homes in Fort Erie will receive \$27,000 and Wayside House of St. Catharines will receive \$29,000 through the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund. In addition to the provincial funding supports for these important investments, the Haldimand War Memorial Hospital is also receiving over \$200,000.

These critical investments demonstrate our commitment to building capacity and ending hallway health care, implementing the most ambitious plan for hospital expansion in Ontario's history.

HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's an honour to rise today to speak about an incredible program in my riding of Niagara

Centre: the Holy Trinity breakfast program. This Thursday, December 1, the breakfast program, which serves meals daily to those in need, will be celebrating its first anniversary.

I was honoured to join the hard-working volunteers serving breakfast when they first launched this program last year. The success of the program can be attributed to the over 200 dedicated volunteers and countless supporters in the community.

Holy Trinity is also getting ready to host their sixth annual Christmas dinner program. Last year, they handed out over 330 meals to those in need and are preparing to hand out over 400 this year.

Beyond the Streets, an organization I have mentioned many times, works in collaboration with the Holy Trinity breakfast program by finding those experiencing homelessness and connecting them to the program. However, with rising inflation and stagnant wages, donations are becoming more scarce. Holy Trinity Anglican Church food bank coordinator Mary Ellen DuPon recently stated, "We can't just rely on our parishioners any longer ... We've never had to do this before, but in changing times we have to change with them ... We have reserves, but we're knocking them back."

Anyone who would like to volunteer or learn more can contact them on Facebook or through their email at holytrinitywelland@cogeco.net.

I hope the members of this House will join me in congratulating Holy Trinity on a successful first year of their program and thanking their dedicated and passionate volunteers. Their community spirit and compassion is truly inspiring and changing lives in Welland.

1020

AMIERA BLACK

Mr. Matthew Rae: Today I rise to congratulate and recognize an amazing young woman from my riding of Perth-Wellington. Amiera Black is 16 years old, lives in Stratford and is an avid swimmer. She recently competed at the World Down Syndrome Swimming Championships in Portugal. Amiera was one of the youngest swimmers on Team Canada and one of the only two teenagers that competed.

Amiera won an outstanding amount of medals, eight medals in total in the junior division: four gold medals in the 100-metre free, 200-metre free, 100-metre backstroke and 100-metre fly events; and four silver medals in the 500-metre free, 500-metre backstroke, 500-metre fly and 500-metre individual medley.

It's important to note that many of Amiera's times would have placed her in the top 10 of the senior division, Speaker.

Amiera will continue to swim in events close to home and, pending a Team Canada decision, maybe in Argentina as well. She is looking forward to the next world championships in Turkey in 2024.

Amiera, you did an amazing job representing yourself, Stratford, and Canada. Congratulations again on winning eight medals at the world championships. I know Stratford and Ontario will be cheering you on for years to come. Go, Amiera, go!

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Chris Glover: On November 26, I attended a ceremony at the Holodomor Memorial at Exhibition Place in my riding of Spadina–Fort York. The Holodomor is a genocide committed against the Ukrainian people by the Soviet government that took place between 1932 and 1933. The Soviet government came into Ukraine, stole every bit of food—they searched houses and barns to find every bit of food—then they sealed the borders and let millions of people starve to death.

At the memorial, we heard from one of the survivors of this 1932-33 genocide: 95-year-old Mr. Latishko. He told us of the horrific crimes against humanity that had been committed against Ukraine.

When Ukraine was invaded by the Russian army on February 24 this year, the people of Ukraine have fought back with incredible courage and resilience because they recognize that this is another generation of a Russian government that has come in to complete the genocide that had begun 90 years ago.

But the attack on Ukraine is not just an attack on Ukraine. It's an attack on democracies everywhere. Democracies around the world are under threat, from both within and without. And the only way that we can guarantee freedom against oppression and against future genocides is to support the government of Ukraine until the democratic government of Ukraine has been restored to all of the borders of the Ukrainian country.

REBUILD FITNESS AND PHYSIOTHERAPY

Mr. Brian Riddell: Today I'd like to share a story about a business in Cambridge that goes far and beyond to assist people suffering from cancer. Rebuild Fitness and Physiotherapy hosts a free eight-week therapeutic exercise program led by this company. For one hour each Tuesday and Thursday, guests of this generous program are instructed in ways that lead to increased strength, stamina and flexibility. The program is designed to combat cancer-related fatigue that results from the disease and its aggressive treatments.

The program began in 2017 and welcomes all fitness levels and is open to individuals who are in pre-treatment, undergoing treatment or post-treatment. I would like to share a couple of comments from people that have gone

through this program. A 49-year-old breast cancer survivor had this to say: "I would say that within the first three weeks I could already see the improvement in the mobility of my arm. It was amazing. It was fabulous."

A 33-year-old lymphoma survivor, whose energy levels hit rock bottom, basically, following six months of chemotherapy, said, "I personally feel 100 times better. I don't think I'd be this good going back to work if I didn't" go through this "program. Thank you for the help."

So I'd just like to have a shout-out for this company and what they've done for the city of Cambridge and the residents.

TOWNSHIP OF ARMSTRONG SEWAGE LAGOON

Mr. John Vanthof: Last week, in a question in question period regarding sewage spillage, the Minister of the Environment said that he believed in full transparency and actually was requesting an audit.

In that spirit, I would once again like to ask the Minister of the Environment for the release of the full documentation of the application and the monitoring documents of a human sewage lagoon located in the township of Armstrong. The people have been asking for the documentation. There have been some legitimate questions raised, starting already with the consultation process. I brought the first issue up more than a year ago.

At this point, we don't want a technical briefing. We don't want a letter that specifies one issue or another. We want the full documentation so people can actually see for themselves that the ministry is doing what they claim to be doing, because so far they haven't seen it. What they're being told isn't the same as what they're seeing on the ground.

Once and for all, please, in the full spirit of transparency, will the Minister of the Environment release the documentation of the sewage lagoon project in the township of Armstrong?

ROTARY CLUB OF SAULT STE. MARIE SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Ross Romano: It's exciting for me to be able to rise and speak about something that was quite a lot of fun. Last Saturday I had the privilege and the pleasure of participating, as we always do as elected officials, in our annual Santa Claus parade. The Rotary Club in Sault Ste. Marie hosts the Santa Claus parade; it's a yearly tradition in our community. Unfortunately, for a couple of years, we weren't able to participate in our parade as usual.

But I was very, very proud that, during the period of the last couple of years, I've been stockpiling these little mini sticks and pucks that we had my office staff put together. I really want to thank my staff in the office—Kathy Beattie, Jen Bellerose and Edie Suriano—who worked tirelessly, putting together all these pucks and sticks. We had 5,000 of them on a trailer and went down Queen Street in Sault Ste. Marie. The look on the kids' faces was absolutely out of this world. They were so excited.

I really want to thank my wife, Heather; my mom, Lina Romano; and my three boys, Jayden, Jackson and Jarrett, who helped in distributing the sticks; and, of course, all of my staff, again, Edie, Jen and Kathy, as well as Carrie Suriano and Steve Shaw, Jaelyn and Paige, and also Mike—special thank you to you all for helping me out.

It was a huge success, although I had to run up and down the street quite a bit. We had a blast. The kids had a blast. It was absolutely outstanding, and so good to have them all back out again.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. John Fraser: I understand the desire of developers to make a profit by developing the greenbelt. The thing is, we haven't been elected here to help developers make a profit. We've been elected to define and uphold the greater public interest. It's our responsibility, it's our duty, it's our job.

It's not our greenbelt to give away; it's the people's greenbelt. The people's greenbelt plays a unique and invaluable role for the people. It provides safe, local farm foods for the people. It protects against flooding and helps filter and clean drinking water for the people. It provides natural space, cleans the air and allows the earth to breathe, for the people. It's the people's greenbelt. It's not the developers' greenbelt, not the government's greenbelt, not the Premier's greenbelt. It is the people's greenbelt.

All of us bear a heavy responsibility to protect the greenbelt for the people. Once it's gone, once it's paved over, we're not getting it back. Because we need to remember: No one is making any more land. We need, all of us here, to protect and preserve the people's greenbelt for the people.

1030

COPTIC AND EGYPTIAN CANADIAN COMMUNITIES

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Over the weekend, I had the honour and privilege to welcome His Grace Bishop Archilidis as the first-ever papal vicar for the Coptic Orthodox archdiocese of Toronto. This important historic event at the St. Mark Coptic Orthodox cathedral was filled with joy and spirituality. May his many years of service be strong, fruitful and peaceful.

As the first elected Canadian of Egyptian and Coptic origins, I am proud to see the Coptic Orthodox archdiocese grow and prosper here in Toronto. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to organize the event and the thousands who attended.

Also, in the last couple of weeks, Canada and Ontario welcomed the new ambassador of Egypt to Canada, His Excellency Ahmed Hafez, and the new consul general, His Excellency Mohamed Fakhry. I had the pleasure of meeting them with the Egyptian community and wish them all the best on their newest appointment. I'm looking forward to our future collaboration to serve Canadian Egyptians here in Ontario and Canada.

Yesterday I was on a Mississauga tour with the active Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and the Mississauga MPPs. He reconfirmed the government's mission to help new Canadians to be able to work in their fields and in their careers. With the current shortage of labour in many sectors, we need to tap into the new Canadians who have the right skills and training and expertise to fill that gap. They are here. We need to accelerate their integration, like the IMGs, nurses and skilled workers. The system is in dire need of their skills after many years of inaction from previous governments. On this side of the House and this government, we did Working for Workers Act 1 and 2. We are the only ones that are getting it done.

I would like to thank the minister and the Premier for their unprecedented initiatives.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this morning. Last Friday, November 25, was the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which starts 16 days of activism and will end on December 10, the international UN Human Rights Day.

This November marks Woman Abuse Prevention Month and the 10th anniversary of the Wrapped in Courage campaign in Ontario. Gender-based violence agencies across our province ask community leaders to wear purple—a scarf or a tie—to show their commitment to ending femicide and all forms of gender-based violence in our province.

I would like to pay tribute to two non-profit organizations that provide critical shelter and support services for the women and their children experiencing domestic violence in my riding of Simcoe–Grey: My Sister's Place in Alliston has provided shelter and traditional services and supports to women and their children in the region since 1987; and My Friend's House has been supporting women and their children in south Georgian Bay, including Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Clearview and Town of the Blue Mountains, since 1991.

I am proud to say that our government provided significant financial supports to both organizations during the pandemic through the Resilient Communities Fund, with grants of \$72,500 to My Sister's Place and \$101,000 to My Friend's House.

The courage of a woman alone is not enough to end gender-based violence. It takes the support of an entire community to end this devastating violence together, and I know that all of us in this House commit to doing that.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize one of my colleagues in elected public service who is a trustee on the Halton school board: Jeanne Gray, who is here. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's good to see you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to introduce Kathleen Woodcock, Nadeem Mahmood and Jennifer McIntyre, all here for their OPSBA lobbying day. As the past president of OPSBA, I'm so pleased that you're here today.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to build on the member for Waterloo's welcome to the members of the Ontario Public School Board Association: Their president, Cathy Abraham, is with us, as well as Kathleen Woodcock, first vice-president, and Elaine Johnston, who is the chair of the Indigenous trustees' council.

I see a variety of other friends: Nadeem Mahmood from York region; Kathy McDonald from Peel District School Board; I also know Lori-Ann Pizzolato from the Thames Valley District School Board, and many others. Thank you for your leadership, and welcome to the people's House.

MPP Jill Andrew: I would like to welcome and thank D. Williams from OPSBA along with executive director Rusty Hick for a wonderful meeting this morning.

I would also like to say that I recognize PDSB trustee Kathy McDonald in the members' area—good to see you as well.

And last week, Juanita Jones came to the Legislature. She is with OPSEU, a health care worker and RPN for over 25 years, working full-time. I want to thank her for coming to Queen's Park last week.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I just want to rise to introduce Bruce Whitaker from Stratford, a newly elected trustee in the Avon Maitland District School Board, who is here, obviously, as well, for the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. I look forward to meeting with you after question period, Bruce.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'd like to welcome, from the Toronto District School Board, trustees Alexis Dawson, Deborah Williams, Michelle Aarts—and other OPSBA representatives: Jennifer Jennekens, Susan Humphries, Karen McGregor, Jennifer McIntyre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome Claudine VanEvery-Albert, a trustee representing students from Six Nations in the Grand Erie District School Board. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm very pleased to welcome all of the trustees from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association today, but especially my own trustee, Alexis Dawson.

I also want to recognize in the House today with us two friends from Napanee: Barb Linds and Eric DePoe, who was the 2022 NDP candidate in Hastings–Lennox and Addington. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the brilliant first-years from the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. They are the future of our province, and I welcome them.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to rise to acknowledge three trustees who I met with this morning: Julia Burgess from the Greater Essex County District School Board, and Lori-Ann Pizzolato and Sherri Moore of the Thames Valley District School Board. Thank you very much for visiting.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome TVDSB trustees Sherri Moore, Lori-Ann Pizzolato and Arlene Morell. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome all the trustees who are here today for the Ontario Public School Boards' Association advocacy day, with a special welcome to two trustees who I met with this morning: Jan Johnstone from the Bluewater District School Board and Martha MacNeil from the Upper Grand District School Board in my riding of Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Harris: I just got a note from Barbara Stevens. I know she's watching on TV. She's really excited and hopes that the President of the Treasury Board gets a question today.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: As the official opposition education critic, it's my pleasure today to welcome trustees from OPSBA for their lobby day, including members of the executive council: president Cathy Abraham, Kathleen Woodcock, Kathryn Pierroz, Arlene Morell, Michelle Aarts, Jaine Klassen Jeninga, Susan Humphries, Donna Danielli, David Green, Elaine Johnston; and Rusty Hick, the executive director. And a special shout-out as well to Lynn Scott and Antang Han from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, whom I had the pleasure of meeting with this morning.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I would like to acknowledge and welcome Kathy McDonald, PDSB trustee, wards 3 and 4. I'm looking forward to seeing you this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm looking forward to a meeting later on this afternoon with Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the members Kate Baggott, Tiya Patel, Julia Burgess and Jack Fletcher. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to welcome students Ethan McQueen, Logan Wolf, Michael Finelli and Hunter Parass, and their mothers, Andrea McQueen and Karen Wolf, from my community. In September, 11-year-old Ethan and his friends held the second annual Sleep Out to shine a light on youth homelessness and human trafficking for Covenant House Toronto. They raised a record \$16,000.

1040

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to welcome all the members of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association for being here today, and I'm looking forward to meeting with some of you this afternoon. I want to give a special shout-out to D. Williams, Alexis Dawson, Michelle Aarts and Jan Johnstone. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce three individuals I met with this morning at about 8 o'clock: Jack Fletcher from Sarnia with the public school board, Arlene Morell from Strathroy and Bruce Whitaker from Stratford, here with the Ontario public trustees.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As we've heard, we have a building filled today with Ontario Public School Boards' Association folks. I'm looking forward to meeting with Debora Oldfield, Emma Cunningham and Rusty Hick, trustees from my neck of the woods. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to introduce Zane Colt, a former staff member at the ministry of northern development, mines, natural resources, forestry and energy, when we were all of that.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I, too, would like to recognize all the trustees who are here from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and, in particular, I'd like to say a special welcome to Deborah Williams, the newly elected TDSB trustee for Toronto Centre, my own home riding, and, of course, Jaine Klassen Jeninga, vice-chair of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and representative for the township of Alnwick/Haldimand, town of Cobourg, township of Hamilton and municipality of Trent Hills. Welcome.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I would like to congratulate Mabel Follis, who is today's page captain. Mabel's family are here with us today. Welcome to her mother, Carolyn; her father, Sean; and her brother, Finnegan, who also participated in the page program in the past—all nice people from the beautiful riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to welcome, from the Rainbow District School Board, a trustee, Judy Kosmerly—she's a constituent of mine from Val Carron—and Ryan Sitch, who is from the Lakehead District School Board. They're here from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, as well as Lee Ann McKenna, who is here for Bill 23.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I have some special guests to introduce from Brampton: a good friend, Nirvair Singh Sidhu; Amarjeet Singh Dhami; and a special guest from Punjab, Professor Gurinder Singh, a retired associate professor who is visiting Queen's Park with us today.

Hon. David Piccini: I just welcome everyone from OPSBA and a special welcome to two constituents of mine, Jaine Klassen Jeninga, who is up in the gallery, and Cathy Abraham. I'm looking forward to meeting with you after question period.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a couple of good friends of mine from Belleville—very good friends: Mitch and Lisa Panciuk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Right now in Ontario, people are being asked to pull out their credit cards to pay for health care. The Auditor General has found that for-profit clinics are pressuring people to shell out thousands of dollars for OHIP-covered services. Why does the Premier think it's okay to force people to pull out their credit cards to access health care in this province?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We've been very clear on this side of the House. While we embrace innovation, while we

want to see those exciting opportunities that will ensure our surgery backlogs and our individuals have access to critical health care in their community—we're doing that. We have also been very clear that it will continue to be an OHIP-funded system in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, she can tell that to the people who shell out hundreds of dollars extra for cataract lenses in this province.

Last week, this government had a chance to crack down on predatory fees in health care. Instead, this government voted down an NDP bill to stop for-profit clinics from charging for services people should be able to cover with OHIP. Is the Premier refusing to crack down on these predatory fees because it would foil his plans to privatize our health care system?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: With the greatest of respect, if the member opposite has examples, then name them. We have a process in the Ministry of Health that ensures if an individual believes they were, for any number of reasons, improperly billed, we do the investigation, we follow up—and in some limited cases, we have gone back and refunded. It is very, very unusual, but we do have a process to make sure that if a person believes they were unfairly charged, there is an investigation and a follow-up.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd suggest she read the Auditor General's report on this because the Auditor General has found that, in fact, her words do not correspond with the actions that are happening here in Ontario. Not only is this government refusing to crack down on upselling and additional fees in health care, the government wants even more surgeries to be going to private, for-profit clinics.

Why is the Premier opening the door to much bigger bills for patients and much longer wait times in pain for everyone else?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I'm going to highlight a recent example I had in Ottawa on Friday with Minister Fullerton and MPP Goldie Ghamari, where we showed an innovation that is happening in the Champlain region, where individuals who are waiting for surgeries can have that surgery in a host of hospitals in that community. Why? Because we see that when we're matching surgeries and patients and hospitals, we get those surgeries done faster. That's the type of innovation that our government is investing in, and that will continue in the province of Ontario.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This government has taken a hatchet to farmland over the past few weeks, removing thousands of acres from the greenbelt and destroying existing urban boundaries. Frankly, it is no surprise to find out that these changes will benefit powerful landowners, like Silvio De Gasperis and Michael Rice, who have donor and political ties to the Ontario PC Party.

Given how suspicious this looks, the least the government can do is be transparent about what has been happening behind closed doors. So I ask the Premier, how did the government choose which lands were going to be removed from the greenbelt?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: The member opposite knows that the consultation that the government is engaged in is welcoming comments from the public. We made it very clear. We were open, transparent and honest with Ontarians when we indicated that, at the end of the day, there would be over 2,000 acres added to the greenbelt. The greenbelt would be grown after this procedure. But at the same time, the criteria for the land that is part of that posting is very specific. It's got to be adjacent to an already urbanized area. It has to have servicing, either on that property or very, very close to it.

The fact is, we're in the middle of a housing crisis and we have the opportunity to, at the end of the day, grow the greenbelt but at the same time have a minimum of 50,000 new housing starts. It's a good day for Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: That kind of answer isn't going to fly for Ontarians. One of these greenbelt properties was purchased only two months ago by Conservative donor Michael Rice. At the time of the purchase, the lands were protected greenbelt and, at least financially, worth little. But now that they'll be open for development, Mr. Rice stands to make millions.

It's all a bit curious, so I will give the government another chance to set the record straight. Prior to the public announcement of changes to the greenbelt, did the Premier or the minister or any of their current or former staff share any information about changes to the greenbelt with owners and developers that was not already available to the public?

Hon. Steve Clark: We made our intentions very clear with that posting. The information that is available for Ontarians is exactly what's on the Environmental Registry of Ontario today.

Again, this person, this party, the opposition have a particular bent against building homes. They continuously talk about the fact that they acknowledge we need to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years, but every time—we're going to see it today after question period, when the time for them to stand in their place and look the next generation of Ontarians in the eye and say, "We've got your back, and we're going to be building for you so you can realize the dream of home ownership"—every single solitary time, they vote against it. I think it's pretty rich coming from that party opposite, the New Democratic Party, to be talking about—

Interjections.

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

1050

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, there is not a shred of evidence that this is going to build a single affordable home,

but there's plenty of evidence to suggest that these wealthy PC donors made a very careful bet against our greenbelt despite the Premier's promises never to touch it.

I have written to the Auditor General to ask for an investigation, but the government could clear the air right now. Will the minister and the Premier launch an independent investigation into suspicious sales of greenbelt lands and make the findings public?

Hon. Steve Clark: I've said in this House there are properties that are part of that posting that local mayors have asked to be developed. The one property in Pickering in particular has been the subject of discussion since the early 2000s. The property the member talked about in York region, at the end of the day, would be an opportunity to build the new Southlake hospital, something that the local council member wrote to me about.

Over and over and over again, there is a chorus of voices—not New Democrats, granted—who actually want to get shovels in the ground and build homes so that new Canadians who are coming to our wonderful province, the best place to live, work and raise a family—I want to make sure we get housing for them, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the House to come to order so that I can hear the member who has the floor or the minister who has the floor.

The next question.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Speaker. *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

My question is to the Premier. First Nations across Ontario have stated their opposition to Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, due to the clear violation of First Nations' constitutionally protected, inherent and treaty rights. Chiefs of Ontario, representing 134 First Nations in Ontario, have said, "First Nations are not stakeholders; we are sovereign nations and are entitled to proper consultation."

Speaker, it's 2022. It is very colonial for Ontario to abuse their power by making these bills without consultation or engagement with First Nations.

Are you going to consult First Nations affected by this bill?

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

To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Our government knows how important it is to work with our Indigenous leaders, to create opportunities for them and meet our obligations to them on our shared priorities.

We're committed as a government to meeting the province's constitutional and other obligations as outlined by the member, and our government is committed to honouring the principles of truth and reconciliation and focusing on Indigenous priorities—specifically, sharing our prosperity with them.

We continue to work with all Ontarians. I appreciate the question from the honourable member.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, this government cannot continue to say “our” First Nations. You do not own us.

People from across Ontario have contacted my office because they oppose Bill 23. Municipalities are speaking out against Bill 23, and now all First Nations across the province have said they don’t want this bill. That is a lot of people to listen to. Will this government start listening to people who are protecting the lands and the waters, instead of their developer friends?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the honourable member’s question. Look, we have an opportunity here, and that is to build more houses for more families. We’ve heard it from more than just municipalities, frankly. We’ve heard it from Indigenous communities. They see an opportunity to invest in real estate properties. They see an opportunity to create better and more homes in their own communities.

This pan-provincial plan that we have to build more homes is for all Ontarians. We continue to honour the duty to consult, Mr. Speaker; there is no question about that. We began in earnest on this bill and we will not back down from the opportunity to share an opportunity between Indigenous communities and municipalities, and for the greater good of this province, to build more homes for more families.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Mike Harris: Ongoing supply chain disruptions continue to adversely affect the global economy. This geopolitical instability has only reinforced the importance that our government should place on ensuring the security of our critical minerals and natural resources.

Northern Ontario can be a worldwide supplier of critical minerals, such as nickel, cobalt and lithium, all essential minerals required to construct new electric and green technology. Speaker, can the Minister of Mines please expand on our government’s most recent announcement about the new investments in the critical mineral sector?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for the question.

Mr. Speaker, last week I was in Timmins to launch the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund. This is a very exciting time for Ontario as we decarbonize our economy. What we’re doing is critical to the future of not only Ontario, but to the globe. This is a two-year, \$5-million fund which will support research, development, and commercialization of innovative technologies, techniques, processes, analytical solutions for critical minerals.

These projects will help increase exploration, mining, development, production and processing capacity of critical minerals in Ontario. Our investment will leverage Ontario’s expertise to tap into new and growing markets

and to ensure we capitalize on the demand for critical minerals.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the minister for his response and explanation of this very worthwhile program. The critical mineral and mining sector continues to demonstrate a solid commitment to advancing economic growth and opportunities in the north. Unfortunately, for far too long under previous governments—and might I add, previous Liberal governments, Mr. Speaker—this sector did not receive the respect and support it deserves. As someone who grew up in North Bay, I’ve seen it first-hand.

This is why our government must show leadership by partnering in good faith with companies that are at the forefront of critical mineral innovation. Speaker, can the minister please tell us how the mining and business community has responded to our government’s new critical innovation fund?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you again for the question. Mr. Speaker, you don’t have to take our word for it. Just listen to what the CEO of Canada Nickel, Mark Selby, had to say: “The funding announced today by the Ontario government is an important signal of its support for Ontario’s mining and downstream processing industries.” They get it, sir; they get it.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are industries that will leverage this fund to partner with Indigenous communities, non-profits or colleges—academics—to ensure Ontario remains a leader in innovation in the mining sector. This will strengthen our Critical Minerals Strategy and help us achieve our goal by creating a supply chain for clean technologies right here in Ontario.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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

Last week I told the minister about the unacceptable conditions for children and youth in the child welfare system. I told her about how kids in for-profit group home Hatts Off are being overmedicated, chemically restrained; how kids are regularly being prescribed psychotropic medication after only five- to 10-minute-long doctor appointments, medication that sometimes made them feel “heavily suicidal” or “like zombies.” I told her about how vulnerable kids receive punitive punishments. I asked her to investigate these serious allegations of neglect and mistreatment. She dodged the question.

Speaker, I’ll ask again: Will the ministry acknowledge how bad the system is for kids in their care and commit to a full investigation into Hatts Off?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: As the member opposite would have heard me say numerous times in the last week, there is no room in our system for providers who are not in compliance with the requirements that are set out. I have said this repeatedly. The time for more reports is over. It’s our government that is taking action on this.

1100

This is a child welfare redesign that has been discussed and consulted across the sector. It is about improving the

inspections. We've increased the number of inspectors. We've increased the number of unannounced inspections. We've addressed the medication—the chemical restraints.

Again, the consent for medical treatment, including youth in care, is enshrined in law. That means it's not achieved through coercion. It means that the homes have to abide by the law. That's why we have the inspections. It's why we have improved accountability. It's why we've improved oversight. It's why we are doing this after decades of neglect by the previous government, supported by the NDP.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The one concrete action that this minister could take today is to launch an investigation into Hatts Off.

The problems aren't limited to Hatts Off; it's an issue across the entire for-profit group-home system. For-profit homes make up a quarter of all operators, over half of all serious occurrence reports and 83% of all instances of the use of physical restraints. Companies looking to make a profit off vulnerable children have no place in our province's child welfare system.

The minister keeps touting the government's welfare redesign. So I'll ask the minister this question right now. It's a yes or no answer: Will the minister commit to abolishing the for-profit child welfare system model and putting the care of children above corporate profit?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I think the biggest question is why the member opposite and her party and her group did nothing and sat on this for decades. Our government is taking action. We want every child and youth to have a safe and loving home. That's why we're redesigning the child welfare system. That's why we've boosted the number of inspections at licensed group homes since January 2022. It's why we've added 20 new staff to support enhanced inspections of children's residential services. It's why we released the children and young persons' rights resource in youth-friendly language to help children, youth and young persons understand their rights and use their voices. And we've backed up this important work with significant investments.

Our government is fixing a long-standing issue that the previous government, supported by the NDP, never bothered to.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Holland: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development. With continuing global economic challenges, concerns persist among our tourism operators, especially those in the north. Last week, the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit took place in my home of Thunder Bay. This critical summit was an opportunity for tourism operators to gather together, strategize and examine ways to address ongoing economic challenges.

Can the Minister of Northern Development please elaborate further on what our government and his ministry in particular are doing to help support this sector as they move forward?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member, my neighbour, for that important question. In my welcoming remarks at the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, there was a palpable excitement around the idea not only that we could be live at the forum but that we could share and celebrate in the incredible opportunities emerging from a post-COVID world—no doubt that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund was there, to the Northern Ontario Recovery Program. We used words like “planning,” “renovating,” “enhancing,” “repairing,” “refurbishing” and “reopening. Mr. Speaker: an expanded partnership with Indigenous Tourism Ontario and a commitment to tourist operators that, at every step of the way in a post-COVID world, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, the Ministry of Northern Development and this government would stand with tourist operators in northern Ontario.

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

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's encouraging to hear about our government's commitment to supporting the north and its tourism sector. Because of our government's investments, businesses will be able to expand their operations, create jobs and contribute to our economic prosperity, helping to attract more visitors.

While these investments and the summit meeting are vital for northern Ontario's economic success, we must ensure that our government continues to advocate for this sector and region year-round. What further actions is our government taking to support economic development for communities across the north?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I announced \$4.9 million in the latest tranche focused squarely on communities across our vast 800,000-square-kilometre region known as northern Ontario. We're drawing up plans for an event centre in Red Lake. We're planning with Garden River First Nation to connect the Ojibway Park trail to the Trans Canada Trail. We want to reopen Silver Islet General Store for retail, food and educational tourist destinations. Kapuskasing's golf and recreation club is going to be revamped. We're going to support the town of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands in refurbishing the recreation centre. The Blind River Curling Club is going to get a new roof.

These are all small, in some respects, but very important announcements for those communities as they open their doors back up to all the people who want to come and celebrate what we already know what's great about northern Ontario.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Premier. We understand the urgency of getting affordable housing built in Ontario. Families are struggling to pay their rent and find an affordable home. However, folks in Niagara and across this province are perplexed by this government's move to address this crisis by allowing the Premier to

hand-pick and install regional chairs, whenever he pleases, to do his bidding.

In Niagara, Regional Councillor Wayne Redekop recently said, “This is the second election in a row that this government interfered with the election of the chair.... In 2018,” they “revoked the right of the residents of Niagara to elect the chair directly. Now in 2022,” they are “revoking the right of the elected representatives of the residents to select the chair.”

Why won't this government work collaboratively to address the affordable housing crisis and stop this ham-fisted and insulting power grab?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, that's exactly why we want to have some consistency and work with a great chair like Jim Bradley in Niagara to ensure that the extension of strong-mayor powers is smoothly done at the regional level and, as well, that we ensure that all of those regional governments that we'll be dealing with have the opportunity to meet our provincial priorities and get shovels in the ground. At the end of the day, this is all about building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years and having that consistency at the regional level while we're working through the strong-mayor powers is so very important.

Again, Speaker, it's a bit rich from this member who served municipally to be calling into question our motive in ensuring that Jim Bradley works with us. Shame on you.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, over the past week, I've had the opportunity to speak with a number of Toronto city councillors who are outraged by this government's move to give mayors the power of minority rule. In a democracy, a mayor, a Premier, a Prime Minister or a President must earn the votes of the majority of legislators to pass laws in the name of the citizens who democratically elected them—but no longer in Toronto. Now the Premier and the mayor can pass laws that serve their own agenda from behind closed doors with just eight in favour and 17 opposed.

Churchill once said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all others. Why do the Premier and John Tory prefer the other ones?

Hon. Steve Clark: Well, three words: stability, continuity and efficiency. We're working to look at all of those areas at the regional level. That's why we've extended the strong-mayor concept to those six regions in Bill 39. But at the end of the day, what we're doing in Toronto and Ottawa—I've said earlier this summer with our very first bill. One third of the projected growth in Ontario over the next 10 years will take place in our two largest cities of Toronto and Ottawa.

We need to ensure that we give those mayors the tools they need to be able to ensure that our provincial priorities are met. We've had great conversations with Mayor Tory. Unlike the NDP, we support our great mayor here in the city of Toronto, Mayor Tory. We want to work with him, and we're glad that he wants to help meet those provincial priorities for building more housing.

1110

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Adil Shamji: My question today is for the Minister of Health—

Interjection.

Mr. Adil Shamji: —on behalf of all of the patients in Ontario who currently face the worst health care system performance in this province's history. Patients are tired of empty words. They're tired of hearing about inadequate preparation for this respiratory season.

We've heard this government crow about restarting the CPSO's practice-ready assessment program—the same program they cancelled in 2018. We've seen them pat each other on the back for asking hospitals to make surge plans—the same surge plans all hospitals make every year, whether a minister asks them to or not. We've heard them celebrate being in a position so dire that they have to ask SickKids staff to train nurses in community hospitals outside of their scope of practice. And we've heard them claim they're keeping students in school, even though tens of thousands of them miss class every day because of respiratory illnesses. All the while, ER wait times get worse and worse.

Will the Minister of Health admit that this crisis has slipped out of the government's hands, and instead present a real plan?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I am proud to talk about the innovation and the changes we have made because, bluntly, our health care system was not looked after during the previous administration—15 years of ignoring Auditor General reports talking about a lack of family physicians that will be needed in northern Ontario. What did we do? We have initiated two new medical schools in the province of Ontario, historic investments in health care.

The member opposite has a lot of audacity, when his party was the one that cut residencies in the province of Ontario. What has our government done? We've increased those positions. We've made sure that there are opportunities for people who want to practise medicine in the province of Ontario to have those opportunities. We will continue to do that and we will proudly communicate that message.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: First I'd like to thank the member for Brampton North for his enthusiasm for my question.

Next, I'd like to remark to the Minister of Health that—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Speaker is standing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Speaker is standing because I can't hear the member for Don Valley East, who has the floor, because a number of members are interrupting him.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And he rightly has the floor. Come to order.

Start the clock. Member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to point out and thank the Minister of Health for reminding us that, as far as I'm concerned, this government was elected in 2018 and they are the previous government—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'm sorry; that's not something to be proud of.

I'm still struggling to understand how this government continues to cherry-pick their stats to defend the state of our health care system. They brag about starting two new medical schools, even though they haven't moved beyond the planning stages for either. Why should we believe they can deliver on those when they can't even deliver on licence plates? They also talk about their—

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

The Minister of Health, to reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I will proudly put the investments and our record in the last four and a half years against the 15 years of inaction that happened under the Liberal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To suggest that we have not made those investments does not speak to what we are seeing on the ground: over 50 different capital investments in our health care system, whether it is new hospitals, whether it is expansions, whether it is badly needed renovations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Why? Because the previous government didn't get it done. Our government is doing that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order.

The next question.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Experts predict that Ontario's population is expected to increase by 30% over the next two decades. With this growing population, our infrastructure must grow with it. Modernizing our public infrastructure and building a seamless transportation network will help Ontario meet our current and future demands and will help strengthen the economy. Unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, the people of my riding endured years of delay and neglect when it came to building essential projects.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please update the House on our government's progress in addressing our infrastructure needs?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Our government's capital plan is one of the most ambitious in the province's history. We're building Ontario like never before. We've dedicated over

\$159 billion in the next 10 years to support priority projects such as transit, highways, schools, hospitals and long-term care. In fact, this quarter's listing includes 39 projects in active procurement and pre-procurement. By building these projects, we will finally build a subway system that will help residents travel across the city more easily and affordably. By building more highways, we will ease congestion and help with the delivery of goods, and address capacity challenges faced by our health care and long-term-care sectors.

As the member mentioned, the people of Ontario gave our government a strong mandate to build Ontario, and that is exactly what we will do.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank to the minister for that answer. It's great to see how our government is taking decisive action by building the critical infrastructure needed for our communities.

When building for today and the future, we can't allow the mistakes made by the previous Liberal government to impact us as we move forward. Under the previous Liberal government, they delayed, neglected and closed critical infrastructure, when we needed investments to be made.

Can the minister please share with the House what our government is doing to deliver effective and resilient infrastructure for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Building Ontario means ensuring we are laying the foundation for a stronger and more productive Ontario. We're building a hospital in Brampton, thanks to the hard work from the members from Brampton West and Brampton South. We have shovels in the ground when it comes to building transit in the city, something which previous governments failed to do. We are opening new and improved schools, unlike the Liberal government, which was busy closing schools across the province. We are connecting every single community to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025, and we are building long-term-care homes at a rapid pace, completing construction in Durham of a long-term-care home within 13 months as opposed to eight years.

Mr. Speaker, we are building faster, smarter and better because the people of this great province are depending on us.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier. During question period, the parliamentary assistant for health said that she was "tired of listening to people trying" to instill fear "by using words and expressions like 'the worst crisis in generations'...." I'm wondering if she's including health care workers like Pam. Pam is a CUPE nurse in Oshawa emergency. Pam says that this is the worst crisis in generations. Pam has been a nurse for 36 years and told me that she can't do this anymore. She said, "This is the worst I've ever seen it. I don't know why we're still here. I guess it's because we love the people

who need us. It's not because of how the government treats us."

My question is, why does the Conservative government think they know better than health care workers like Pam?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: From the very beginning, we have seen incredible resilience and commitment in our health care system, particularly with our nurses, personal support workers and all of the individuals who really stepped up during the pandemic: first, of course, when we didn't have vaccines; and then, ultimately, really assisting in the vaccine rollout, whether those were community paramedics working, going directly into buildings and talking to residents to explain to them the benefits.

There is no doubt that our health care workers in the province of Ontario have gone above and beyond in the last three years, which is why our government will continue to go above and beyond to make sure they have the appropriate workforce, the appropriate workplaces, safe workplaces, to continue to do this important work.

1120

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

MPP Jamie West: Back to the Premier—I hope I get an answer from the Premier: Nelson is a CUPE building operator at Oakville hospital. He told me that Halton hospital had people waiting in emerg for 12 and a half hours because they had no nurses at all. They called Oakville for assistance, but Oakville couldn't help. They had 50 people lined up at their emerg, and they only had one triage nurse.

Nelson said, "In the past two years, 30 people have quit. Nobody wants to work here. It's never been like this. It's never been this bad."

Speaker, will the Premier finally listen to health care workers like Pam and Nelson, admit Ontario's health care is on life support and be part of the solution by investing in public health care and repealing Bill 124?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is exactly the health care workers who we are listening to when we put forward programs like the dedicated offload nursing program, to make sure that our community care paramedics, our paramedicine experts can go in, have that dedicated offload nurse help to stabilize the patient and have that paramedic turnaround.

It is exactly why we are listening to paramedics when they say, "We can do things differently if you only change a few policies," and we've done that with the 911 change, where instead of always having to go to an emergency department, they can, with the patient's approval, take them to a long-term-care home, a mental health facility, other opportunities. We are listening to the experts in the field, the experts on the front line, to make sure that we provide better care.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Andrew Dowie: My question is to Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

The sacrifice, hard work and dedication of the Ontario worker has made our province economically sound, prosperous and strong. Unfortunately, Ontario is not immune to the impacts that geopolitical instability, high inflation and supply chain disruptions continue to cause to the global economy.

In my communities of Windsor and Tecumseh, ongoing economic challenges are adversely affecting our business and manufacturing sectors. It's imperative that our government continue to stand in support with the Ontario worker during these uncertain times.

Speaker, what is our government doing to support those whose jobs have been affected, and what programs do we have in place to assist them?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for that question and all the work he's doing to bring the concerns of the people of Windsor to Queen's Park.

Auto workers are the backbone of Windsor and Ontario's economy. These are good-paying union jobs, with pensions and benefits. These are jobs where you can buy a home with a two-car garage, raise your family and take your kids to hockey practice at the end of your shift.

Speaker, when our automotive industry suffers, we all suffer. Last week, I joined the member for Essex in standing shoulder to shoulder with Unifor Local 444 president, Dave Cassidy, in Windsor. Together, we announced more than \$550,000 for employment action centres to support more than 800 auto workers and their families. We're leaving no one behind.

I'll share more in our supplemental.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the minister for that answer. The ministry support for laid-off workers from Stellantis and Syncreon was truly groundbreaking and appreciated. It is encouraging to hear that our government is standing with our workers.

With roughly 13,000 jobs unfilled in our region, including Windsor and Sarnia, skilled trades jobs are in high demand and favourably looked upon. Our government must continue to show leadership in advancing the vital importance of skilled trades and manufacturing job opportunities in our province.

Speaker, my question is once again to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development: What is our government doing to invest in our employment services to help our highly skilled workers?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, to the member, thanks for that question.

To build a stronger Ontario that works for everyone, labour, business and government must work together. That's why I was honoured to stand with our partners to announce employment action centres for their workers. Working with Unifor Local 444 and Local 195, our action centres are supporting affected workers by hosting job-searching sessions, organizing individually tailored career planning, providing one-to-one peer counselling and mental health supports, and supporting resumé and cover letter writing. All of these services are focused on helping workers to re-enter the workforce quickly.

Mr. Speaker, it's this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, that has the backs of our auto workers. We're helping them find new good jobs today and preparing them for better jobs and bigger paycheques tomorrow.

To build Ontario, we need all hands on deck.

HEALTH CARE

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

Last week, the government sent a letter directing primary care organizations to offer clinical services seven days a week, including evenings, due to high-volume pressures across our health care system. But starting this Thursday, people with children will have to pay.

Here's what Gail Kirk had to say:

"I guess my Christmas presents to my four-year-old granddaughter and my four-month-old grandson will be a \$290 annual subscription to KixCare.

"Gramma who lives on CPP and OAS will have to do the government's job of ensuring access to health care.

"If this is your idea of improving access, then get out of politics."

What would the minister like to say to Mrs. Gail Kirk?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The memo that the member opposite is referencing was actually not sent to family doctors; it was sent to organizations, and the point was to encourage them to do what so many of our family physicians, our nurse practitioners, primary care have been doing, and that is stepping up and looking after their patients. We want to make sure that everyone has access to those primary care physicians as quickly as possible. It does ultimately take some pressure off the emergency department.

I want to reinforce that this is an agreement that was reached with the Ontario Medical Association—voted upon by their members—and it will ensure that while virtual care continues, it will be appropriate. We don't want to replace in-person care with 100% virtual care. We've seen that there is value in virtual care in the province of Ontario, but we also need to make sure that there is a balance—to have individuals access their primary care physicians. That's what the OMA agreement has done.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mrs. Gail Kirk is not the only one. Sara from Nickel Belt lives with a disability. She wrote to me because she is concerned about these changes. She wrote:

"My kids are away at school, my parents are elderly and live in a rural area with no WiFi"—Nickel Belt—"I can't emphasize enough how much we depended on phone GP appointments....

"I'm really concerned my very ill parents will contract COVID at their doctor's office, and that seems unnecessary and ludicrous."

Speaker, is decreasing access to telephone consultations during a time of urgent system pressures ludicrous,

or is it other proof that the minister is trying to push patients to private services where they pay out of pocket?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will remind the member opposite that this is a three-year agreement reached with the Ontario Medical Association.

I very much resent the suggestion that virtual care is appropriate in 100% of cases. We need to make sure that that balance is there. We need to make sure that we have individuals having access to their family care physicians, their primary care physicians, nurse practitioners—all of those organizations that are providing care in our community. That work will continue.

Virtual care in the province of Ontario will continue. What changes is an agreement that was reached with the Ontario Medical Association, voted on by their members and supported by their members—a historic agreement that did not have to go to arbitration. That never happened under the Liberals and the NDP.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

As we know, the Ontario Disability Support Program was not a priority for the previous Liberal government. Unfortunately, because of their inaction, the most vulnerable in our province were forced to deal with an outdated system. Ontarians that rely on this program deserve better.

1130

In our recent fall economic statement, our government has implemented a modernized approach to better address and support individuals who receive support through this program. Speaker, can the minister please update the House on how our government is transforming social assistance and what the reaction has been?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston for the very good question. He is absolutely right: Our government is making a long overdue transformation of the ODSP, a program that has faced challenges for many years. Earlier this fall, we made the largest increase to ODSP rates in decades. But our work was not done there, and we knew it. That's why, two weeks ago, we announced the first-ever annual alignment of ODSP rates to inflation. Each of these measures will make a real difference in people's lives.

This year's increase in rates is putting money in the pockets of people who need it most to cover life's essentials, and tying rates to inflation means people can be assured that their ODSP rates will keep up.

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

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the minister for her response. Our government's track record of supporting those who depend on social assistance is clear. In response to our recent program transformation, the CEO of Community Living Ontario, Chris Beesley, stated that these changes are "a signal from the government, that they are

listening” and that “this is a definite step in the right direction.” While these words are encouraging, we all know that there is more to be done to support those on social assistance.

Speaker, once again, can the minister please explain what further actions our government is taking to improve the experience of people on ODSP?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, thank you to the member for his good work. In addition to the positive changes I mentioned in my first response, I'd like to mention our government's fivefold increase to the ODSP earned income threshold. This will encourage people with a disability who want to increase their work hours to do so, without losing their benefits. We've worked with municipalities to create a shared vision for a modernized ODSP, and we're also making it easier to access support with new digital tools and modern service options, including an online application form, an expansion of the MyBenefits platform and new communication channels to allow two-way digital messaging between clients and caseworkers.

Speaker, this is important work and our government will continue to do it.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. On three separate occasions just recently, families in Scarborough Southwest have had to rely on calling 911 because their family member was going through a mental health crisis—and that is only in the hope that they might get professional support for mental health. I heard from one parent whose daughter has been waiting, after immense trauma, for 18 months to get mental health support. Another parent called me in tears, feeling guilty that she had no choice but to call 911 for her son. This is the terrifying reality across our province to get mental health support.

My question is very simple: What will this government do so that families do not have to rely on 911 emergency services or wait for more than a year to get mental health support?

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, we recognize the impacts that the pandemic has had on the well-being of children across Ontario. As a result of that, we have made investments and have continued to make investments: \$20 million, for instance, on an across-the-board 5% increase in funding to increase all core mental health supports and addictions services for children and youth. This includes \$2.7 million for new hubs in Guelph, Renfrew, Timmins and Windsor. The youth wellness hubs are actually providing immediate support to children and youth so that they can have a place that's safe and culturally appropriate to go and get help.

Through our Addictions Recovery Fund, as well, we have invested \$8 billion to another eight hubs to continue

to increase capacity for children and youth. These sites have helped over 12,000 people—children between the ages of 12 and 25, with low-barrier addictions and mental health supports.

We know how critical the supports are for our children and youth and we are making investments to ensure that they have the help they need, where they need it.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the minister for his response. I appreciate the investments they have already made, but I'm asking, what will the government do, especially in areas like Scarborough?

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, the number of people waiting for mental health supports has increased by 135%, with an increase of 175% in the number of people who need urgent assessment and support and who may be at risk of homelessness. The CMHA has only received a total funding increase of 3.9% over the last 11 years, nowhere close to the rate of those seeking mental health supports, especially in my community and communities across this province, or to the level of mental health and addictions support necessary.

Will this government commit today to consistent annual increases to meet the need of mental health and addictions support services across this province?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thanks again for that question. Our commitment couldn't be clearer. There is a minister responsible for mental health and addictions. There is a commitment of \$3.8 billion and \$525 million in annualized funding, and we are looking at building continuums of care, not only in the city of Toronto but across the province of Ontario.

We inherited an incredible situation when we came to government and I have some questions that I ask myself all the time. For instance, why were the Liberals, with investments at \$11 million, sending children with eating disorders to the United States, rather than building continuums of care here in the province? In 2010, there was a report from the standing committee where there were recommendations that were made. How many of those recommendations were put into practice? Zero.

Speaking about the NDP, who stood beside them, 13% of Ontario mental health beds—9,645 hospital beds across the province—were closed under their leadership—

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

HOUSING

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Ontario's population is projected to grow by as much as six million over the next two decades, with the greater Toronto area experiencing the most significant increase. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp., Ontario has seen over 7,200 housing starts for October. While this is a positive development, more needs to be done to help reach our goal of building 1.5 million homes in the coming decade. Can the Associate Minister of Housing please share what our

government is doing to increase housing construction in our province?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my honourable colleague the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for the question and the great work that he does on behalf of his constituents.

It's no secret that a lot is currently at stake with the global economic markets. Inflation is high and food prices have skyrocketed out of control around the world. However, when it comes to housing, we are doing everything we can to deliver on the promise that we made to Ontarians. We have taken important steps forward through legislation like strong mayors, the More Homes Built Faster Act and the Better Municipal Governance Act to get shovels in the ground faster than ever before.

To give an example, we have removed development charges for affordable housing units and provided discounts for rental housing options because we are committed to solving the housing crisis. We believe every single Ontarian deserves to have a home.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the associate minister for the answer. It is great to hear how our government is taking decisive action by removing unnecessary barriers and excessive red tape that is delaying further housing construction.

While the leadership we have shown is encouraging, the people of my riding are concerned about their ability to own a home in their local communities and neighbourhoods. They want to see all levels of government working together to address this issue. Once again to the Associate Minister of Housing: How is our government providing immediate support for Ontarians looking for a new home?

1140

Hon. Michael Parsa: Again, I thank my colleague for the question. The short answer is, yes, we are in a housing crisis, so we have to look at existing homes and structures so that we can provide more relief to Ontarians. Ontario is expected to grow by more than two million people by 2031, so all options are on the table that will help us add more existing housing supply.

We are already looking at options by introducing as-of-right zoning. Ontarians are now able to create and rent up to three units in their existing home. This will not only add to our provincial housing supply, but will also help pay for the high interest rates Ontarians and others around the world are forced to pay.

We will continue to look for other solutions that will help us add more homes to the market and help us build 1.5 million homes across the province. As we've said time and time again, letting Ontarians down, on this side and in the middle there, is not an option.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Health care workers are urging MPPs to support my bill, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, to give Ontario

workers 10 permanent paid sick days. This government's temporary three COVID-related days to last over a pandemic that will soon be entering its third year are doing nothing to address the health care crisis that is overwhelming our pediatric hospitals. What would help are 10 permanent sick days to enable low-wage workers to stay home if their child is ill, perhaps with RSV, without losing their paycheques.

Will this government listen to advice from health care workers and vote to pass my bill today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care and government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Look, the honourable member knows that private members—

Interjection: We can't hear you.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I've never been accused of not being able to be heard before. That's a first.

The member knows that, of course, members are free to decide on any of the private members' bills, and after question period, I'm sure members will make the decision on the bill put forward by the opposition House leader.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, as you will know, this government was one of the first governments in the entire country to protect workers' jobs during COVID. We also, thanks to the Premier, brought in a billion-dollar program to ensure that workers who were impacted during COVID were protected and had a nationwide-leading sick day program at the same time. We're very proud of the record, and it is one of the reasons that we did so well during COVID.

The people of the province of Ontario ensured that we got through this together and we'll continue to work with them and with all of those front-line heroes.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Premier: This government's record is nothing to be proud of. They cut the two paid sick days that workers had in Ontario.

Ontario is now falling behind other jurisdictions that are implementing permanent paid sick days. British Columbia has legislated five paid sick days. Federally regulated workers will soon have access to 10 paid sick days. Governments are doing this because they know that permanent paid sick days are good for workers, good for the economy and good for public health.

This government could finally show that "working for workers" is more than just an empty slogan by passing my bill to legislate 10 paid sick days. Will this government do that?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, this was a government that led the way in terms of protecting workers during the pandemic. Of course, we still do have paid sick days. The Premier was the one who led the federation, ensuring that the federal government participated in our nationwide-leading sick day program.

You know what else is good for workers, Speaker? Jobs. Jobs are good for workers. That is why the investments that this government is making—later on today, the

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has a bill that we will be voting on which will bring over 1.5 million homes to the people of the province of Ontario. That includes good jobs for people who will be building the 1.5 million homes.

If you look at what the economy has been able to do, even despite COVID we are leading the nation in terms of job creation. We've brought back all of those jobs that the Liberals lost in their time in office—over 300,000 jobs that need to be filled.

Jobs are good for workers, and we're going to continue to fight for those workers each and every day.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Red Tape Reduction has informed me that he has a point of order, and I recognize him.

Hon. Parm Gill: I just want to take a moment and introduce Donna Danielli, our school trustee for wards 1 and 2 from Milton. Welcome to the Legislature. Thank you for your leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton West on a point of order.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Kathy McDonald, school trustee from wards 3 and 4 in Brampton.

DEFERRED VOTES

MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT, 2022

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put 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): 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, Mr. Clark moved third reading of 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.

On November 24, 2022, Mr. Quinn moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Quinn's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Harris, Mike	Rickford, Greg
Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian
Bailey, Robert	Holland, Kevin	Romano, Ross
Barnes, Patrice	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sherof
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Kanpathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Byers, Rick	Ke, Vincent	Saunderson, Brian
Calandra, Paul	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Dixon, Jess	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Piccini, David	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan	Yakubski, John
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew	
Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to Mr. Quinn's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stiles, Marit
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 73; the nays are 27.

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

Mr. Clark has moved third reading of 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.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On November 23, 2022, Mr. Clark moved third reading of 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.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Tabuns, Peter
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 74; the nays are 31.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK
ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 PERMETTANT
AUX EMPLOYÉS MALADES
DE RESTER CHEZ EUX

Deferred vote on the motion for 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1201.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On November 24, 2022, Ms. Sattler moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to paid leave.

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

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Tabuns, Peter
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	

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

Nays

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

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 31; the nays are 74.

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

Second reading negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EARLY YEARS AND CHILD CARE WORKER ADVISORY COMMISSION ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LA COMMISSION CONSULTATIVE DES PRÉPOSÉS AUX SERVICES POUR LA PETITE ENFANCE ET LA GARDE D'ENFANTS

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 49, An Act respecting the establishment of an Early Years and Child Care Worker Advisory Commission /
Projet de loi 49, Loi concernant la création de la Commission consultative des préposés aux services pour la petite enfance et la garde d'enfants.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to invite the member to briefly explain her bill, if she wishes to do so.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, thank you. The bill establishes the Early Years and Child Care Worker Advisory Commission, which will be composed of early years and child care workers, as well as organizations that support them and child care experts. The commission will develop recommendations on how to support the early years and child care workforce and address staffing shortages, including through increased wages, a salary scale, and decent work standard. The work also requires the Minister of Education to meet with the commission to discuss their recommendations.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm honoured to be able to present this petition to the House to raise social assistance rates.

"Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising cost of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and soon \$1,227 for ODSP;

"Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

"Whereas the recent small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens well below the poverty

line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates continue struggling to live during a period of alarming inflation;

"Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a basic income of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP."

I am honoured to affix my name to this. I will send it down to the table with page Kennedy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly for a meaningful climate action plan.

"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 develop GHC reduction targets based on science that will meet our Paris commitment, an action plan to meet those targets and annual reporting on progress on meeting the targets...."

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Joel Harden: "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."

Speaker, I'm happy to sign this. I'll be sending it with page Yusuf to the Clerks' table.

CLIMATE CHANGE

MPP Jill Andrew: "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 couldn’t agree more with this petition. I’ve affixed my signature and will hand it over to Havana for the Clerks.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank Leadnow for sending these petitions in. This one reads:

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas 60% of Ontario workers do not have access to paid sick days, and therefore must sacrifice income to stay home if they are sick; and

“Whereas low-wage and precarious workers who can least afford to miss pay are the most likely to be denied paid sick days; and

“Whereas employers benefit when sick workers can afford to stay home, limiting the spread of illness to co-workers and customers, and allowing 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 mandating employers to provide paid sick leave through the Employment Standards Act ensures that workers have seamless, uninterrupted access to their pay; ...

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately provide 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.”

1310

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank Leadnow for collecting these petitions.

“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 fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it with page Yusuf to the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to repeal Bill 124:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 124 caps salary increases at 1% at a time when inflation and interest rates are at historic highs;

“Whereas the nursing crisis has compromised patient safety and the functioning of our health system;

“Whereas emergency rooms are closing and even more ICUs are now at risk of having to close because of a health care staffing shortage;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 124 as a step to recruit, retain and return nurses to the health care system, and allow for fair wages for nurses and health care workers.”

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

HEALTH CARE

MPP Jill Andrew: This is entitled “Stop Ford’s Health Care Privatization Plan.” I would like to thank the

community members from St. Paul's and across Ontario for signing this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas" the Premier and the health minister "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;

"—making education and training free or low-cost for nurses, doctors and other health care professionals;

"—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 thank our community for this petition. I have affixed my signature and will hand it over to Kennedy for the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled "Stop" the "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 your wallet;

"Whereas" the Conservative government "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;

"—making education and training free or low-cost for nurses, doctors and other health care professionals;

"—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 thank the signatories of this petition, and I'm glad to support it.

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to "Protect Kids from Vaping" and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas very little is known about the long-term effects of vaping on youth; and

"Whereas aggressive marketing of vaping products by the tobacco industry is causing more and more kids to become addicted to nicotine through the use of e-cigarettes; and

"Whereas the hard lessons learned about the health impacts of smoking, should not be repeated with vaping, and the precautionary principle must be applied to protect youth from vaping; and

"Whereas many health agencies and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada fully endorse the concrete proposals aimed at reducing youth vaping included;

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

"To call on the Ford government to immediately support efforts addressing the dangers of vaping for youth."

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled "Raise Social Assistance Rates." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and woefully inadequate to cover the basic costs of food and rent;

"Whereas individuals on the Ontario Works program receive just \$733 per month and individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program receive just \$1,169 per month, only 41% and 65% of the poverty line;

"Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates" meaningfully "since 2018, and Canada's inflation rate in January 2022 was 5.1%, the highest rate in 30 years;

"Whereas the government of Canada recognized through the CERB program that a 'basic income' of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned ... petition the Legislative Assembly to increase social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works, and to increase other programs accordingly.”

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to stop the health care privatization plan. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas” the Premier and the health minister “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;

“—making education and training free or low-cost for nurses, doctors and other health care professionals;

“—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. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Yusuf.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ONTARIO ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT

Mr. Gill moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to enact one Act and amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 46, Loi visant à édicter une loi et à modifier diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction to lead off the debate.

1320

Hon. Parm Gill: It’s an honour to lead off the debate on the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Niagara West, and also with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Red tape, of course, is the result of rules, regulations and policies that cause frustration, expense, delays and complications in everyday life. It is something that we are all too familiar with—a barrier to our economic productivity, competitiveness and innovation.

When we formed government in 2018, we inherited a province that was strangled by and drowning in red tape. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said we had the largest regulatory burden of any province in the country. We heard that message loud and clear from people, from businesses, and from a wide range of stakeholders right across this great province.

That’s why one of our government’s key priorities has been to remove unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that hold our province back. We’ve made great progress so far. Over the past five years, we’ve reduced Ontario’s total regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5%. This has led to \$576 million in annual savings for businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, school boards, colleges and universities, and hospitals since June 2018. That’s half a billion dollars each year that isn’t being spent on filling out government paperwork, paying fees to remove licence plate stickers, or complying with duplicative regulations that exist across multiple levels of government. It is the result of eight high-impact red tape reduction bills since 2018, and packages containing more than 400 individual burden-reducing actions.

Of course, there is much more work that needs to be done. That’s why we have continued to consult with stakeholders as part of a whole-of-government approach to reducing regulatory burdens.

Together with our partner ministries, we have assembled a package of solutions to address the challenges Ontario is facing today. The package is the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act and related regulatory and policy changes, adding up to a total of 28 various measures. The intent of this legislation—our ninth red tape reduction bill since 2018—is to strengthen Ontario’s supply chain, support farmers and agribusinesses, grow our labour force, make it easier to interact with government, and ensure Ontario remains competitive in the global marketplace. The bill, if passed, will continue our work to streamline and modernize Ontario’s regulatory system across multiple areas of government and multiple sectors of our province’s economy. It will lead Ontario to more economic certainty, confidence and stability.

With my time today, I am going to briefly discuss the 28 individual items in this proposed red tape package.

A central part of the package is five modernization measures for the agriculture and food industries. I know the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will speak to some of these items in detail shortly, but allow

me to offer a brief overview. Earlier today, I was with the minister. We were at the Ontario Food Terminal to release the Grow Ontario strategy. It is the province's comprehensive plan to build consumer confidence and support farmers and Ontario's food supply. Our goal with these measures to support Ontario's local farmers, food processors and agribusinesses is to strengthen our food supply chain and help us attract and grow a strong labour force.

The legislation we are debating today also contains proposals to:

- amend the MAFRA Act to permit co-op members who are part of the feeder cattle loan guarantee program to custom-feed each other's cattle;

- update the current legislative framework for the veterinary profession to open the door to a new standard of veterinary medicine in Ontario;

- modernize the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Act to be more relevant to today's agri-food sector and support its ongoing competitiveness; and

- amend the Animal Health Act to provide authority for the minister to take temporary action to protect the health and well-being of the public and animals when faced with a potential animal health crisis.

These changes will help ensure Ontario has a reliable, safe and stable food supply now and into the future.

The next set of proposed changes support Ontario's workplace insurance and compensation system. The proposed legislation will make several changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that align with Ontario's broader red tape reduction efforts. The changes, if passed, would improve the WSIB's operational efficiency and reduce undue administrative burden, allowing the WSIB to focus on their primary function of supporting injured workers. The proposed changes would:

- ensure injured or ill apprentices receive loss-of-earnings benefits at the same amounts journeyworkers employed in the same trade would receive;

- provide more flexibility regarding how often the WSIB board of directors must meet, by changing the requirement that they meet every two months to a required minimum of four times per year;

- update the requirements of WSIB governance documents to ensure they are consistent with and do not duplicate other government directives;

- streamline the requirements for WSIB office lease transactions by excluding them from the requirement for LGIC approval, like other government agencies; and

- ensure the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, does not reference repealed statutes that are no longer in force.

The WSIB is one of the largest insurance organizations in North America. Reducing red tape will enable them to better meet the needs of Ontario's workers.

Now I will speak a bit about one of the more exciting initiatives in this legislation. Speaker, our government is working toward creating a framework to enable and responsibly regulate carbon capture and storage technologies right here in the great province of Ontario. As the

first step in this process, we are proposing an amendment to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act. We expect this technology will play an important role in managing Ontario's carbon emissions and producing low-carbon hydrogen. And importantly, this measure will facilitate the alignment of this future regulatory framework with other Ontario and federal initiatives, so businesses can take advantage of existing incentives and funding opportunities that are available to them.

Now I would also like to discuss the ways in which we're cutting red tape and supporting the competitiveness of Ontario's energy sector.

If passed, the proposed legislation will make it easier to build electricity transmission lines by exempting customer-funded projects from the Ontario Energy Board's leave-to-construct process. Proponents of these projects will continue to have the right to apply to the OEB to cross a highway, railway or a utility line in circumstances where an agreement cannot be obtained.

Our government is also proposing changes that would simplify the gasoline volatility regulation, aligning Ontario's regulations with national standards.

1330

Speaker, the proposed Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022, also includes several changes that will improve customer service and make it easier for Ontarians to interact with the justice system.

First, our government is proposing to amend the Provincial Offences Act to help reduce the backlog at provincial offences courts by allowing court clerks, rather than a justice, to reopen certain convictions if appropriate conditions are met.

Second, we are proposing to create more judicial capacity and alleviate backlogs in criminal cases at the Ontario Court of Justice by temporarily raising the limit on the number of days that a retired judge can work, helping to address backlogs and ensure faster access to justice for all Ontarians.

Finally, the proposed legislation will also reduce administrative costs and make it easier for prospective jurors to participate in our court system through updates to the Juries Act. The bill, if passed, would introduce a pilot program that makes the jury questionnaires available online. In all cases, recipients will still be able to request a paper version of the questionnaire if they so choose.

Speaker, we're also proposing new legislation to confirm the continuation of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals so that the charity can continue their work—they do, obviously, very, very important work—and benefit both animals and the public. The legislation would confirm the OSPCA's corporate status and associated regulation-making authorities, which would support the charity to continue to deliver important community support services across our great province, as it has since first established via government legislation back in 1919.

We have also proposed regulations that will reduce red tape for operators of certain types of hotel spas and hot tubs, such as in-suite hot tubs or tubs on a private balcony

or a deck intended for the exclusive use of its guests, by exempting them from the public pools regulation. Signage requirements, of course, will remain in place to ensure the public is aware of any potential risk.

We have also listened to concerns raised by stakeholders and have amended the Mandatory Blood Testing Act and the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to speed up application processing for victims of crime, first responders, correctional services staff and others.

We are also proposing to remove the costly and resource-intensive tissue-testing requirement under the Public Hospitals Act regulations—based on scientific evidence and health sector stakeholders' recommendations, of course.

And we have proposed to provide authority to local medical officers of health to order rabies testing of deceased animals that were under observation after biting a person, and to recognize rabies vaccination status from other jurisdictions that have similar rabies standards to ours. This means a bite victim may no longer have to undergo unnecessary post-exposure rabies vaccinations, since a deceased animal's rabies status will be known, and animals brought in from other jurisdictions need to be revaccinated in Ontario.

This brings me to the improvements we have been making to some of the essential but often invisible functions of government.

First, we're bringing many government programs and related IT systems onto the Transfer Payment Ontario system, to reduce paperwork and administrative burden for government-funded organizations.

We've also extended certain temporary corporate governance rules to the end of September 2023, while the government continues to analyze consultation results and explore potential permanent changes. These temporary rules were put in under legislation including the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act and others, as well as the Condominium Act. Of course, all of this allows meetings, votes and elections to be conducted virtually under certain circumstances. It allows notices to directors, shareholders and members to be sent electronically, and allows a corporation to store records electronically and also have them examined electronically. It's important that we continue to provide corporations flexibility, while taking the time needed to consider changing these governance rules permanently.

We have also heard from our Indigenous business and economic advisers that information about the full range of government support and services available to them is not widely known and at times is difficult to obtain. That's why our government will work with Indigenous partners to better understand how we can increase awareness of, and allow them to make sure that they have proper access to, government initiatives.

Finally, I am going to speak a bit about the proposals in this package that help make the transportation sector more competitive.

We are making improvements to Ontario's Highway Corridor Management System that will provide a seamless and integrated online platform for approvals and permits along provincial highways. Work is ongoing to allow applicants, including home builders and municipalities, to submit, track and receive all of their Ministry of Transportation approvals online, saving time and money. The Highway Corridor Management System has already significantly reduced the burden on Ontario's businesses and individuals by streamlining the permit application, review, and approval process. These new improvements will further reduce red tape for businesses and organizations interacting with the ministry.

We're also reducing the weight given to a corporate performance rating when the Ministry of Transportation evaluates bids for engineering services, to improve the fairness and efficiency of the procurement process, ensure value for taxpayer dollars, and make the bidding process more competitive for all participants.

Also, during the spring thaw, some Ontario roads are designated and signed to limit the weight of trucks that can use them. This reduced-load period, of course, helps to limit the damage that might otherwise occur to a roadway weakened by the spring thaw. That's why MTO is partnering with the Ontario Good Roads Association to improve frost depth prediction models that will allow municipalities to optimize the timing of these periods on our roads. This could include, of course, shortening the period when conditions permit, enhancing our supply chains by allowing more goods to reach more places during the spring months.

1340

Speaker, I am proud to have introduced the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022. Through the 28 different initiatives introduced in this legislation, which I've just outlined, our government is creating the conditions that let businesses thrive and people prosper. We are making government services easier to access and less expensive. We are growing our labour force, developing a strong supply chain, and increasing Ontario's competitiveness in the global market.

I am now going to turn things over to my parliamentary assistant, the great member from Niagara West, one of the hardest-working members, who will share more details about our track record of reducing red tape and our plans to move the province forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour again to be able to stand in the Legislature and speak to important legislation that has come before this House.

I want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for the incredible work and advocacy that he has put into this legislation today and for leading off the debate in a vigorous manner to ensure that all members in this House hear more about the important work that's happening.

I also want to start by acknowledging the incredible work of the team at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, those who have spent a great deal of time in the past and

present and going forward reaching out to community stakeholders, hearing from people, from businesses, and from all those who are involved in ensuring that we are reducing red tape in a responsible and respectful way here in the province of Ontario. And that's exactly what this legislation intends to do.

I also want to acknowledge and thank my beautiful wife, Keri, who I know is watching the debate this afternoon. I have to say, there are not always people who take the time to tune in to the Legislature on a Monday afternoon to watch a discussion about red tape—but Keri is, so I'm very thankful for her.

I'm also thankful to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to important legislation that builds on a strong foundation. The foundation that we as a government have worked on over the past four years and are continuing to work on is a foundation that aims to make life better and more affordable for families and for job creators here in the province of Ontario. That's why I'm proud today to be speaking to Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to attracting good jobs and investments right here in Ontario, and they're doing that by making it less expensive, faster, and easier to do business here.

Since June 2018, when we formed government, we have reduced the total number of regulatory requirements that businesses must comply with by 6.5%, a not insubstantial number, especially when you consider the tendency—as people may have heard—of governments to grow the number of regulations and to increase the amount of red tape, as opposed to reducing it. So it's no small feat to not only curb the tide against job-killing red tape but in fact to pull back some of those onerous and burdensome regulations that I'm sure we all hear about from our constituents.

Since that 2018 election, when we made a commitment to Ontarians that we were going to take swift action to move forward on this crucial file, to save businesses in the province of Ontario some \$400 million by March 2022, we stepped forward and we took action. And we didn't just meet that goal of a \$400-million reduction by March of this year—no, we didn't just meet it, we didn't just strive to hit the bar; we strove to go beyond. In fact, we exceeded that goal by well over \$170 million—incredible savings for the people and businesses of this province.

Our red tape reduction measures today are saving businesses, they're saving not-for-profit organizations in each and every one of our communities, they're saving municipalities where we all live, school boards where our children go to school, colleges and universities, the hospitals—the things that we rely on—the community and social services that each and every one of us as taxpayers and the people who we represent care about. We're saving them—listen to this number—\$576 million, not just once, but in annualized savings. That means, each and every year, as we move forward, hundreds of millions of dollars in savings for the people of this province. Achieving this was no easy task. It took leadership. It took leadership

from Premier Ford. It took leadership from Minister Gill. It took leadership from so many others. It took leadership from so many members in this House who came together to support good legislation throughout the past four years that—wait for it—cut red tape, something that we were elected on, as a commitment in the 2018 election.

Going forward, we are continuing to demonstrate our commitment to cutting the burden on businesses, cutting red tape.

When we came to office, there was a broken system here in the province of Ontario. We inherited a broken regulatory system from the previous Liberal government that meant that Ontario had a reputation as one of the most difficult places to do business in North America; frankly, in the world, you could argue. But don't just take my word for it, Speaker.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, an organization that advocates for our job creators here in the province of Ontario, estimated that at the time we took government, red tape was costing every business in Ontario \$33,000 every single year, \$3,000 per year higher than any other province or territory—a 10% cost premium just for doing business here in the province of Ontario. That was absolutely unacceptable.

That's why our government took action. It's why, since 2018, Ontario introduced and passed eight red tape reduction bills and nine red tape reduction packages, consisting of more than 400 individual measures to reduce burdens. These changes have included changes to regulations, to legislation, to policies, all with the common goal, as Minister Gill spoke about, of making it easier for people to live, to work and to do business here in the province of Ontario, while simultaneously protecting health, protecting workers, and protecting our vital environment.

And yet, despite all that work, despite all the effort, our province continues to face big challenges. We're facing continued supply chain disruptions, some of which started during the COVID-19 pandemic and were exacerbated by that pandemic. We have seen seismic shifts in habits as people change their demands and as businesses have had to change to evolving situations. There are ongoing labour force disruptions, and these are beginning to impact both day-to-day life and, frankly, here in Ontario as well, our economy. In fact, nearly two thirds of Ontario businesses reported that their supply challenges got worse in the past year, and more than one third of businesses said that labour-related expenses or obstacles will continue to limit their growth.

Speaker, we know that governments can and must play a supportive role in reducing the red tape that can inhibit supply chains and ensuring that we have a well-oiled economic machine here in the province of Ontario. We need to solve challenges like those seen in the labour market, and one of the best ways we can do that is by continuing the efforts that we've already made so far to reduce red tape.

That is why we've brought forward this legislation. It's why Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, contains 28 measures that will strengthen Ontario's supply

chain, support farmers and agri-food businesses like those in my riding of Niagara West and in so many ridings across this great province, grow our labour force to ensure we have people who are able to meet the careers of today and tomorrow, make life easier for people and for businesses by making it easier for them to interact with government—ensure that government works for them—and ensure that Ontario also remains competitive in the global economy.

This bill, if passed, will continue our ongoing work to streamline and modernize Ontario's regulatory system across multiple areas of government and across multiple sectors of our economy. I'm confident that this proposed legislation will lead Ontario to more economic certainty, confidence and stability. It's going to help ensure that our province continues to be competitive in the global market.

I want to take a few moments, before I delve into some of the specifics of this legislation, to also reflect on some of the past initiatives we're building on with the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

Our government's first red tape reduction bill was in the fall of 2018, when we passed the Making Ontario Open For Business Act. It established, for the first time in Ontario's history, the rights of workers to take up to three days off for personal illness, two for bereavement and three for family responsibilities. This also addressed the backlog in Ontario's skilled trades—a huge area of concern—by replacing Ontario's outdated, old-fashioned model with a 1-to-1 journey person-to-apprentice ratio for every trade in which ratios apply. This change allowed us to better align Ontario with other provinces and territories.

1350

Then, we continued. We built on that work by introducing, in April 2019, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, with 31 actions to cut red tape in 12 different sectors, along with regulatory changes. The legislation cut business costs, harmonized regulatory requirements with other jurisdictions, ended so many unnecessary duplications, and reduced barriers to investment. And we weren't done that year.

In December 2019, the Legislature passed the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, which was part of a broad suite of changes, with 80 actions to cut red tape and modernize regulations, making life easier for families and businesses.

Interjections.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Absolutely. This legislation contained support for so many different sectors: agriculture, trucking, construction, forestry, mining. It streamlined and consolidated rules and requirements for quarries, for farming, for waste management, and created a one-stop shop for trucking safety and emissions inspections and hydroelectric dam approvals—the nuts and bolts of those people, those hard-working men and women, who ensure that the goods are able to get from here to there, and those who keep the lights on.

We weren't done. In July 2020, even in the midst of a challenging pandemic, we were able to bring forward the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act. It was the first step

in our government's plan for growth, renewal and recovery. It was designed to get crucial infrastructure projects built faster, while positioning Ontario as a modern regulator. To help address infrastructure backlogs for businesses and communities, this act cut red tape by also streamlining and modernizing the environmental assessment processes. Through this change alone, approval timelines for some projects that had been as high as six years were cut in half, to three years, and a greater number of important infrastructure projects can move forward because of this legislation. In fact, there are projects that are under way today because of the changes that act made.

To reduce delays for sewage and stormwater projects, crucial in all of our communities, that act was updated to also provide a single consolidated environmental compliance approvals process for low-impact municipal sewage collection and stormwater management projects. This change is allowing simple, routine changes by municipalities, such as alterations, extensions, enlargements or replacement projects, to be preauthorized so that construction can start without needing separate approvals for each and every single project—as there was before.

In addition to helping people and businesses in the construction sector, this act made it easier and faster to update the building code, to ensure that we're reflecting the changes that are needed. Streamlining the building code development process, supporting harmonization with national construction codes and allowing Ontario to respond faster to the needs of the construction sector helped keep more people working and communities operating safely across this province during what was a very, very difficult time.

In November of the same year, 2020—a year I'm sure few of us will forget—the Legislature passed the Main Street Recovery Act. This was part of Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan, which was supporting small businesses and modernizing rules that would help them innovate and pursue new opportunities. The purpose of the bill was to support the small and main street businesses, the ones that are in each and every one of our communities—in Fonthill, in Fenwick, in Campden, in Jordan, in Vineland, in Beamsville, in Grimsby, in Smithville, in my riding of Niagara West—that fuel our economy and bring life to our communities.

One important measure in the Main Street Recovery Act, 2020, was making sure that 24/7 truck deliveries to retailers, restaurants and distribution centres were permanent. There had been temporary changes that had been brought in to keep store shelves full through the first wave of the pandemic, when many retailers were experiencing low supplies.

And you know, Speaker, one of the important changes that we made, as well, was that, from this act, we allowed an increased diversity of products to be sold at the Ontario Food Terminal—a very appropriate mention, given the important announcement that was made there this morning by the Minister of Agriculture and Minister Gill. Of course, thousands of small businesses, including independent shops and restaurants, rely on the terminal for their

supplies, so this was a crucial measure to ensure that Ontario's agri-food economy was supported.

We brought forward three red tape reduction packages to better support small businesses in 2020.

In December 2020, the Legislature passed the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, which strengthened Ontario's economic recovery and supported businesses. Changes included requiring gas and electric utilities to adopt Green Button technology so utility consumers could better understand their energy consumption and reduce costs. It allowed single traffic studies for an entire specified highway corridor or area to reduce duplication and enable developers to get shovels in the ground faster. It made it easier to get environmental information that home builders needed by moving from a manual paper-based process to a much faster digital delivery platform—as well as cutting red tape for inter-community bus carriers to improve transportation options in rural communities and in northern Ontario, making it easier for workers and families to access more transportation options.

Last year, in June 2021, the Legislature passed the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act. This comprehensive package that contained over 90 legislative and regulatory actions helped position businesses for new opportunities as the economy reopened. The bill launched innovative pilot projects that supported our autonomous vehicle industry, brought more ServiceOntario services online to make life easier for people accessing services, and supported the not-for-profit sector and other corporations by allowing them to hold virtual meetings. It also removed the requirement for high school students to submit paper-based forms on community involvement activities. By allowing students to submit this important diploma requirement activity online, we've saved time and frustration for students and administrators alike. It's a great example of a simple fix that just makes sense, and it shows how regulatory modernization and burden reduction can really benefit all Ontarians.

In December of last year, the Legislature also passed the Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021, which made it easier for people to become volunteers by providing free police checks. And it laid the groundwork for licensed restaurants and bars to extend their outdoor patio spaces last year, when they needed it most. I heard from many small businesses, especially in the restaurant and service sector, that really appreciated that change. It also enabled additional supports and a simplified application process for the Second Career program—a program that helps those looking for employment train for occupations that are in high demand.

Speaker, the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, 2022, introduced in February, was our eighth red tape reduction bill. The package brought financial relief to millions of Ontario vehicle owners by removing the requirement for and providing refunds for licence plate stickers and renewal fees. It gave drivers in Durham region a break by removing the unfair tolls on Highway 412 and 418, an issue long advocated for by the member for Whitby—tolls that were unwillingly imposed on those communities by

the previous Liberal government. It also began the process of establishing a single window for business, including the development of service standards so businesses will be able to know how long it will take them to get the information they need from government, as well as the Building Ontario Business Initiative, which will strengthen supply chain resiliency and provide Ontario businesses with greater access to public procurement opportunities through the Supply Ontario agency.

Finally, in the 2022 budget, we responded to calls by the CFIB to track burden reduction for citizens by committing to cut more red tape to support individuals—and I know that this is a passion for the Premier and for our whole team at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, including Minister Gill. We are starting to track these achievements. Beginning in September 2023, the government will ensure that we are tracking every reduced administration burden for citizens and publicly reporting on this progress, to ensure greater accountability and reduced regulatory and administrative burdens.

Speaker, as I've already talked about, the reductions that we've brought forward as a government and as a team have saved Ontario businesses, since 2018, over half a billion dollars each and every year. And while we're proud of these savings and the impact that they will have on Ontario's competitiveness, we know that there is more work to do.

Smart, modern regulations that can improve how people go about their lives and that can make it easier for them to interact with important public services are important. That's why, through the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, we continue to update regulations and reduce burdens in ways that save people time and money.

Speaker, I can't stress enough how many people and businesses in Ontario have benefited from our efforts to reduce red tape and administrative burdens since 2018.

Dennis Darby, the president and CEO of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said, "Unnecessary, duplicative processes and red tape can plague all critical elements of doing business in Ontario—from hiring, to building a new facility or exporting. It has been refreshing to see the government of Ontario set a specific objective for regulatory burden reduction—\$576 million over the last four years, and then meet that objective."

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Nadia Todorova, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, said, "RCCAO commends the government of Ontario for continuously working to streamline and modernize regulations and facilitate economic competitiveness in the province."

Ryan Mallough of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said, "Great to see" the government's "continued commitment to reducing red tape! Positive measures in the package on going digital/streamlining processes. Great to see they're pushing the red tape portal..."

That reminds me of an important point. In recent months, both the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and myself have been consulting with stakeholders. We've

been trying to help identify and solve the burdens that they face while operating their businesses. I hosted a series of round tables focused specifically on addressing the challenges in Ontario's supply chain. That work helped inform the important measures in the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

But we're always looking for new ideas and solutions to make Ontario a better place to live, work and start a business—and we know that people and businesses are those who are best positioned to bring forward lasting solutions. It's why we've relaunched the province's red tape reduction portal, which can be found online at ontario.ca/redtape. Go there with your ideas. It's a quick and easy way for people to share their concerns, ideas and, most importantly, solutions directly with our ministry, the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. I also encourage all members in this House to share this link with their constituents and gain that feedback.

The 28 initiatives in this legislation will bolster Ontario's competitiveness, build a stronger supply chain, support agri-business, shore up our workforce, and make it easier to interact with government by cutting red tape.

I now look forward to hearing from the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who will speak about the Grow Ontario strategy within this legislation and the other measures in this package that will build a stronger agri-food supply chain.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I want to thank both my colleague the Minister of Red Tape Reduction as well as his parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara West, for all the great work that you have done. It's a pleasure to partner with you on this important piece of legislation, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act. This bill and the items that it represents are yet another example of our government's commitment, if you will, as well as our concrete action, in making sure that business is easier in Ontario.

You can't mention business in Ontario without recognizing our province's agri-food industry. The agri-food industry in this province is a \$47-billion sector, and it supports one in 10 paycheques across this province. Ontario's food and beverage industry is the largest manufacturing sector. You simply cannot grow our economy without recognizing that when our provincial economy is growing, that translates into growth in our agri-food sector as well.

I've said for some time that the future is bright for farming and our agri-food industries across this province, and I look forward to seeing how we, as a government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, continue to remove hurdles and barriers to allow our farmers and our agri-food businesses to grow.

I would also like to recognize that we have a labour shortage in this province and limited processing capacity, and it has made our overall supply chain a little bit challenging. But I have to tell you, there is such desire to realize efficiencies, and there's such desire to grow

Ontario. We are all working across ministries to make sure our agri-food sector is second to none and churning on all cylinders.

We've seen first-hand, over the last couple of years, delays in things like computer chips for tractors, or delays in the delivery of equipment for dairy parlours or even inputs for crops. That impact is significant, so we need to take a look at our supply chain and determine how we can best build in resiliency.

I might dare suggest, as you've heard time and again in this House: A made-in-Ontario solution is the best route. How are we going to sustain that solution? By cutting red tape. That's why it's such a pleasure to join the debate today.

Across the province, farmers, industry, government and the 750,000 Ontarians who are proud to go to work each and every day in our sector share a commitment to make sure that we have a bright future, as I mentioned before, and that we have the proper supports in place.

Based on the leadership of Premier Ford, as a government, we're working together to take steps to cut red tape. The fact of the matter is, we are saving the agri-food sector already over \$3.5 million and countless hours of unnecessary paperwork, and that has been incredibly well received to date.

As of today, speaking in this House, I can tell you with absolute certainty that we've launched thoughtful and timely programs to continue the reduction of red tape, to continue our efforts to support farmers to be outstanding in their field, and to support our agri-food businesses to be processing the most nutritious, safe and greatest-quality food not only in Ontario but across Canada, throughout North America, and around the world. Just earlier today, I heard farmers saying that we set the standard. I really feel that through this red tape legislation we continue to push the envelope in the spirit of setting standards as well.

Something I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on is the manner in which our government was very dexterous and had the ability to move swiftly, and that's with regard to how our supply chain was impacted by the supply of fertilizer—and not only the supply of fertilizer, but the soaring prices associated with that limited supply. We moved in a very exact method to address that and to introduce and incent people to come forward with made-in-Ontario solutions. Our government is investing \$2 million in a fertilizer challenge to support, as I mentioned, made-in-Ontario solutions so that we're shortening the supply chain, bringing those much-needed goods closer to our farmers, and incenting industry at the same time to increase and develop new fertilizer options, alternatives and, most importantly, new technology.

It's targeted investments like these that are helping to set the Ontario food sector apart from other jurisdictions, but more importantly, it's setting our sector up for success.

I want to take a moment to recognize some of the growth that we've seen in this sector. For example, in farm tax receipts there was an over 5% increase in 2021, and the total value of capital on Ontario farms has grown by about 40% since 2016.

We've seen increases in crop production as well, year over year. For instance, let's take a look at corn production. The average bushel per acre of corn produced in 2002 was 113; by 2004, it was 131. Last year, in 2021, the average production in terms of bushels per acre for grain corn was 175; that was up from 167 in 2016.

I'm smiling because, through new technologies and new best practices, our production around the province is increasing.

Within the last couple of weeks, Ontario Pork visited Queen's Park, and it was awesome to hear one of Ontario Pork's provincial directors talk about his average of corn harvest this past year. In eastern Ontario, that gentleman harvested more than 200 bushels per acre in corn. That's phenomenal for eastern Ontario. We are adapting our technology to soil types, we're adapting our technology to growing seasons, and we're adapting because the world needs Ontario to be its most productive.

As far as trade goes, it's also interesting to note, in the spirit of talking about Ontario Pork, that Ontario's pork farmers are sending their products to 41 different countries—41. That's phenomenal. Over 70% of all produce grown right here in Ontario greenhouses gets exported.

Again, the world is looking to Ontario to continue the path we're on, and by reducing more red tape and introducing opportunities for more efficiencies through the embracing of new technologies and adopting new strategies, we're going to continue to grow.

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It leads me to touch on the amazing work that the MPP from Chatham-Kent-Leamington is doing as parliamentary assistant to OMAFRA. He is strongly rooted in our greenhouse industry.

To give you an example of how we're shortening supply chains and thinking about the produce that Ontarians value year-round, we're now seeing, through the adoption of new technologies, the production of strawberries, right here in Ontario, year-round, and they do taste really good. We challenge people to beat that flavour.

Seeing new innovations in the greenhouse sector is just one example of how we're moving the bar and setting new standards, because there are so many opportunities in this province.

As I recognized before, there are ongoing challenges facing the sector, like concerns with processing capacity and labour shortages. They're top of mind for me, and we hear about them time and again from our stakeholders. But our government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder—and we will do our part to ensure the future is full of opportunities to shine a spotlight on the amazing careers that can be realized through Ontario's agri-food sector. Whether it's computer science, soil science or working hands-on on a farm, there is an opportunity for everyone.

That's why I'm so pleased to have released, just this morning, along with my colleague the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, our Grow Ontario strategy, which is part of the fall red tape reduction package. We're supporting this effort by debating the bill today. I have to tell you, this

morning was a great success. I want to thank all the stakeholders who joined us at the Ontario Food Terminal for this great news. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction and myself were joined by another amazing MPP, the MPP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, because the Ontario Food Terminal is located right in her riding. It's one of the largest food hubs in North America. They want to grow, and so we're going to stand with them and make sure that, by reducing burden and reducing red tape, they can help their vendors grow and, by extension, grow the terminal as well. This is important because Ontarians absolutely need to have sustained confidence in our food supply, and the rest of the world is looking to us as well.

Our Grow Ontario strategy aims to build that consumer confidence even more, support farmers and Ontario's food supply, drive research and innovation, and, most importantly, grow a strong workforce in the spirit of strengthening our supply chain. This strategy has been informed by voices throughout the sector, starting last year, and I really value the input from our farmers, our stakeholders and all of the players throughout our supply chain, because they've taken a lot of time—from our food summit through our innovation summit and all the round tables in between, voices were heard and voices were respected. We're going to act on their asks in terms of reducing burden, in the spirit of reducing red tape, so that they can continue to grow.

From grain farmers in my neck of the woods, the counties of Huron and Bruce, to pork farmers in Perth and Wellington counties, to beef and dairy producers in northern and eastern Ontario, through to the fruit and vegetable growers in Northumberland, Essex, the Holland Marsh and Niagara—the list could go on and on, but I'd be remiss if we didn't note that we also are strong and need to look at barriers and red tape that need to be reduced for our food and beverage manufacturers throughout the GTHA, as well. The informative discussions that we had helped to create our vision in Grow Ontario for what our sector can be.

The strategy is divided into three pillars. The first pillar is our plan to strengthen agri-food supply chain stability. Our goal is to increase the production of food grown and prepared in Ontario by 30%, and our farmers and our stakeholders are telling us this can be done. We're also going to be looking to increase food and beverage manufacturing by 10% and boost Ontario's agri-food exports by 8% annually by 2032. As part of that pillar, I'm pleased to share that our government will also be opening applications for the \$10-million Food Security and Supply Chain Fund to provide investments for projects that will help secure the supply chain from disruption. Again, that is a program that was informed by consultation, and it too will be well received. I look forward to receiving people's interest as a result. At the end of the day, we're taking action to open up international markets with the goal of ensuring there is a stable supply chain, both domestically here in the province of Ontario, and across Canada, North America and globally for Ontario's agri-food sector.

A few weeks ago, I had the honour of speaking at the Toronto Global Forum, an international conference that

brings together leaders in industry to foster dialogue on national and global issues. The theme of this conference was the new economy, and one of my very first messages to this forum was that the Ontario agri-food industry always has been and always will be a cornerstone of Ontario's economy. Without farmers, processors, veterinarians, transporters, grocers and everyone else along our supply chain, Ontario would not be the economic powerhouse that it is today. And I'm working closely with the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to open up international markets for Ontario's agri-food industry.

Our second pillar is our plan to increase agri-food technology and adoption. By advancing technology and innovation, we will continue to make the lives of those in our agri-food sector easier and support new best practices. And in my recent travels, I've been lucky to see this pillar already in action, I dare say, in the spirit of the future of farming. And what will the future look like under this pillar? It's one where autonomous vehicles are able to step in and give farmers the data they need to make decisions not only for their soil but for their crops, like we saw at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show; one where students like the ones at Durham College are learning how to grow commodities like lettuce and garlic vertically to enable more abundant operations in urbanized areas—and we also saw how Ontario has become the clear leader in agri-food business and operations.

Our third pillar responds to a challenge that I have heard about over and over again, no matter what the commodity or sector is. That final pillar is our plan to attract and grow Ontario's agri-food talent. Our goal is to increase total agri-food sector employment by 10% by 2032; increase awareness of the amazing, modern, high-tech agri-food careers and opportunities for mentorship and hands-on job training; and support efforts to increase, for example, veterinary capacity throughout the province.

We heard at a recent round table that our Premier participated in that labour is a top concern across the sector. Chris Conway of Food and Beverage Ontario said, "Labour is our top priority. Despite concerted recruitment efforts by food and beverage processors there are not sufficient people working in our sector today to even maintain the status quo. Unchecked, this labour crisis will worsen as we face a record number of retirements in the next five years. We need to recruit and retain thousands of new employees to ensure Ontario families have a reliable supply of food and beverage products."

I'm pleased to stand with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to help realize that opportunity to attract new people to our sector as well.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: You're welcome.

Speaker, we're taking action—like the launch of a labour campaign and new training opportunities across the province.

We will also be taking steps to increase the number of large animal vets in Ontario, which leads me another initiative included in this fall's red tape reduction package.

The outdated Veterinarians Act is one that has limited our province for a while now, and it's time to bring it into the 21st century, so that farmers and pet owners alike are able to access the care their animals need. We have launched consultations to modernize and reform the Veterinarians Act, and I'm very pleased that our colleague and friend from Elgin–Middlesex–London is going to be leading those consultations. He will do an amazing job. I want to share with you that it's very important that we do not keep outdated legislation holding back vets and vet techs from being able to work as effectively as possible across this province. That's why the consultations to modernize the Veterinarians Act are very important at this time.

Our goal is to introduce legislation that, if passed, would equip vets and registered vet techs with the tools they need to meet today's demands. For instance, our veterinarian on our farm is just a text away, and that's invaluable. It gives us confidence in how we care for our livestock as well.

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I think there's much to be said about this amazing piece of legislation introduced and being debated today. The Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act is another example of how our government is standing with our agri-food sector and building an even stronger, more secure sector that Ontarians can have every confidence in.

Another thing is modernizing a really important piece of legislation that talks to how we allow custom feeding amongst feeder cattle co-op members. To quote Jack Chaffe, president of the Beef Farmers of Ontario: "The proposed change to the ministry of agriculture and rural affairs act is a positive step that will help create new opportunities for business activity within the feeder cattle loan guarantee co-operatives"—or, as I know it, feeder finance—"reduce risks to lenders, and provide custom feeders with access to competitive financing." This is so important as we try to attract new people to that sector, especially young and new farmers alike.

We're also proposing changes to the Animal Health Act, which will allow a minister such as myself to take immediate action to protect animal and public health on the advice of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario in response to an animal health crisis, much like we faced with the avian flu situation.

I want to quote the chair of Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Murray Opsteen. He said, "The health and safety of animals in our care is top priority for Ontario's chicken farmers. This proposed amendment to the Animal Health Act will enable us to have greater confidence that during an animal disease emergency, our flocks and the Ontario food supply are protected."

Speaker, at the end of the day, it is such a pleasure to see ministries, under the leadership of Premier Ford, working hand in glove, because reducing red tape and reducing barriers is what businesses in Ontario need. It's our government that has been listening. It's our government that is standing up every session—fall and spring—to continue to reduce red tape in this province. And because of that, our businesses will be stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Barrie–Innisfil has a point of order.

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, and it's specific to schedule 2.

Earlier this fall, a number of lawyers from every law firm in the city of London sent a joint letter to the Attorney General about the crisis in civil litigation trial backlogs in London. Trials of over two weeks have been told that there's no prospect at all of being heard until 2024. As the minister would know, these civil cases affect many of the business concerns that you are supposed to be interested in: business disputes, banking, bankruptcy, employment and labour, contract disputes, property disputes etc. Those lawyers called for the appointment of two more Superior Court justices in the region and two more justices in London.

Is schedule 2 the answer to London's crisis and court backlogs—to increase the time for retired former provincial judges to serve?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my honourable colleague on the other side for that important question.

I do want to highlight the fact that our minister, the Attorney General of Ontario, obviously has been doing a tremendous, tremendous job over the last four and a half years modernizing our justice system.

I'm sure the member opposite would understand that the previous Liberal government, for 15 years, and the mess they left us with—obviously, it does take a little bit of time to clean all of that up. I would also point out the fact that we all know that the opposition spent most of those 15 years supporting the Liberals' inaction on a lot of those items.

As I mentioned in my remarks, the province we inherited when we formed government in 2018 had the largest regulatory burden in the province. So, yes, we are working each and every day diligently, and we are working to address some of the challenges that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the member from Niagara West. I want to thank him, Minister Gill and Minister Thompson for their presentations on this particular legislation. When you take it together—I think it's going to allow people to thrive and businesses to prosper. I'd like the member from Niagara West, because his riding is so diverse—a mixture of rural and downtowns and small businesses, our job creators—to speak about what he sees to be the effects within his riding.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for Whitby for being such a strong voice for his community and for asking this question.

When I think about some piece of this legislation that really applies to my riding—and specifically, the diversity that he's referring to, where I have urban cores alongside

quite rural areas, of course bordering two Great Lakes—I think about the changes to the Veterinarians Act. When the Veterinarians Act came into effect, people didn't have as many pets as they do nowadays, but they had a lot of farm animals and they had a lot of horses that they used for transportation and for various reasons. One day, vets in my riding are treating important pets to people and their families, and the next day, they're on a farm, treating in an industrial type of setting, to make sure that we're eating safe food. The changes that we're bringing forward in this act will update and modernize that act to ensure that we're reflecting the changes in Ontario and the needs of animal welfare.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to everyone.

I'd like to pose my question to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who stated, regarding corn yields in the province—I believe they're averaging 200 per acre, which is great, but we lose 319 acres a day. If you take 365 times 319, you get 116,435 acres. If you multiply that by the bushels of corn, it's 23,287,000 bushels per year that you're losing. If you multiply that by boxes of Corn Flakes, it's over 1.2 billion a year that we're losing in boxes of Corn Flakes. Does the government think that's a significant loss in food production capacity in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I don't know if I want to get into a whole discussion about the crop yields this year, although I do understand that they have been quite good, and I think that's great for all of the cash croppers we have in our ridings as well. I'm not sure if everyone is going to be living on Corn Flakes. I understand most of this is cattle corn—going towards corn that we're probably not going to be consuming, although it's as nutritious as anything. I guess if Corn Flakes in the morning are what gets him going, I'm glad for the member opposite. I think, really, what he's trying to do is to undermine the intent of the legislation, which is, of course, to ensure that our agricultural sector is being promoted, that our agri-food supply chain is also being stabilized. That's something that we understand, over the course of the past few years, is incredibly important.

We saw labour disruptions impact our supply chains, and we're taking action to make sure that doesn't happen again, but we're doing so in a way that protects our environment, protects workers, and protects the health of the people of this province, and we're going to keep doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank Minister Gill and Minister Thompson for joining me at the food terminal in Etobicoke–Lakeshore for your announcement this morning. Thank you for coming to the great riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

My question is around animal health preparedness and what the minister was talking about with veterinarians. With my vet bills, I might as well have a whole farm,

because my dog is at the vet so often. When you are talking with veterinarians—I'm just wondering if you are planning on doing some consultations. And what do we plan on getting out of the consultations, if there are any? What I've been hearing is that there are not a lot of vets. We're lacking veterinarians, and we're also lacking vet techs. Will these consultations and these changes help get more people into that field?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the important question. I'll also say that it was really an honour to join her this morning at the Ontario Food Terminal for the important announcement with, of course, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the PA to the minister.

It's an important question about the consultation. Absolutely, consultations on any changes that our government proposes to introduce are a big part of our mandate. Her question is related to the consultation to do with the veterinarians. Of course, we will be holding very comprehensive consultations, and I hope that each one of our colleagues in this Legislature can play a role in them. Any input that can be provided, whether it's from stakeholders or whether it's from industry leaders, is always welcome. We always look forward to it because, ultimately, individuals who deal with situations on a day-to-day basis are obviously the best ones to provide us input so we can get the best bang for the buck.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: With regard to the government's bill, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act: I see that the government has tinkered with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I'm wondering if the government's bill has any changes that will actually help protect the 50% of injured workers who we know are living in poverty. I'm wondering if this bill actually brings back any of those billions of dollars of "WSIB surplus" into the hands of injured workers, as opposed to billion-dollar corporations.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: We obviously recognize, as a government, as all Ontarians do, the value of the WSIB. It's one of the largest insurance organizations in North America. But we know that it's important to ensure that more dollars are always being able to go to the workers and not to administrative burdens. That's why reducing the administrative burden for the WSIB will also enable them to work more efficiently and to create an agile system that is better able to cater to the needs of workers here in the province of Ontario. Codifying the WSIB's long-standing operational practices is going to eliminate any operational confusion that might have come about between employers, workers and service providers alike.

While these changes are coming into effect—they're going to align WSIB's operational practices, but no substantial implementation steps are going to be required to support these amendments. It's really going to ensure that we're reducing some of those redundancies and codifying the practices that exist.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour to rise today to speak on behalf of the official opposition on the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act. I will say it's interesting timing—that this bill is coming forward at this current time, since in recent memory we've seen attacks on democracy, attacks on the environment, dramatic overreach with suspending the charter, and a continuation of the devaluing of female-led professions under this Conservative government. To me, it's really no wonder that they're trying to change the channel with this legislation. They're trying to change the conversation. It's almost as though they're undergoing some sort of image rehabilitation with Bill 46. I suspect that this is the purpose of the bill entirely.

It seems as though there are some acceptable measures contained herein, but, as always with this government, there's a great deal missing and so much lacking. It's almost as though they recognize that there are issues but they actively choose not to solve those issues. It's like they're applying Band-Aids, sometimes expensive ones. For that reason, I find some of the suggestions a little odd.

Before my consideration today, I want to turn to the comments from the honourable members across and also take a look at this government's backgrounder.

The backgrounder says, "The Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act builds on the government's strong track record of reducing red tape which since 2018 has saved businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, universities and colleges, school boards and hospitals \$576 million in net annual regulatory compliance costs."

This government, through this legislation, is claiming to be helping municipalities, but instead we've seen them weakening municipalities, with Bill 23 and Bill 39. It's going to cost the city of London alone \$97 million—because of some of the actions of this government.

What I'd like to add to debate today is a letter from the strategic priorities and policy committee from the city of London. They recommended that council endorse the position of calling upon the province to refer the proposed legislation, Bill 23, to the Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team, the HSAPIT, to allow the necessary time for a fulsome review to mitigate the potential of unintended consequences, and to find solutions to improving housing affordability across the province that meet local needs. That would be a way in which this government could respect municipalities—not jumping all over them with Bill 23 and allowing minority rule.

This government also claims that they're helping non-profits in their backgrounder, but they've caused chaos for non-profits, with funding cuts, a lack of consultation, and general neglect. Transfer payments with non-profits amounts to tinkering around the edges. These organizations need provincial support, they need provincial respect, and they need provincial funding, not simply a portal.

Back in 2019, it was reported that the changes that the Ford government made with non-profits caused tremendous upheaval. In fact, 30% of non-profit agencies said

they faced funding cuts. They're operating in a climate of growing uncertainty and volatility. The report also read, "Organizations aren't just worried about having their funding streams cut, but also the speed and uncertainty of the decision-making process, as well as the lack of information, details, and engagement with the sector by the provincial government." Cathy Taylor, executive director of the Ontario Nonprofit Network, said the speed at which the changes were made, the government's reversals on some changes, and the financial cuts, together, made it difficult for non-profits to operate. Speaker, 30% of non-profits saw their budgets cut.

So we see them, through this legislation, claiming that they're supporting non-profits, but to support non-profits, you need to also support them with funding; you need to listen to them; you need to implement the changes that they need. A portal is simply not enough.

Also, quite strangely and ironically, this government is claiming to support colleges and universities in their backgrounder to Bill 46. Ontario has the lowest post-secondary funding in all of Canada. It would have to be raised by 46%, not to be first; just so that Ontario would not be in last place. If this government does want to support post-secondary education, as they have said, I recommend that they make sure that their operating costs are covered by at least one third; right now, it's 30%. It's ridiculous.

Also, this government, at a time when we see hospitals in absolute crisis—we see the five major public sector health care unions coming to speak to the minister and her refusing to speak to them—is claiming that it's helping hospitals cut red tape. Red tape is not what has this system in crisis. What has the system in crisis is pieces of wage-suppressing legislation like Bill 124 and the continued disrespect of female-led professions such as health care workers. We've seen overt attacks and a stubborn ideological reluctance to repeal a bill that has driven nurses out of the profession in droves. We also have seen a reluctance of this government to implement a true health care human resources strategy. It's shocking that they're claiming to help, when they're denying hospitals and health care workers the help that they're calling out for at this time.

Furthermore, in the hospital sector, we've seen really penny-wise and pound foolish ways of spending money. We've seen that hospitals have to rely on temporary workers because of the lack of human resources, the lack of nurses who are willing to take those jobs—spending up to 550% more on temp nurses, who aren't going to be able to deliver the same quality of care as somebody who is in that institution, someone who spends their day in and day out to build those relationships. And it's really a form of privatization. It's a stopgap that we've seen this government allow to continue—one that I think is absolutely unconscionable. It makes one wonder whether this is just simply another means for this government to increase the level of privatization in the health care system. They want to make a system that is going to be in absolute crisis—even worse—so the people will have no other options but to pay out of their pocket to get the health care they require.

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This government could also really make sure that they're making great improvements to the wages of health care workers across fields. We know, in the Auditor General's report—nurses are paid vastly differently, whether it is in home care, whether it is in hospital, whether it is in long-term care, so that has made such a crisis in all of those different fields. It means that people don't want to work in certain vital parts of our health care system. That's a shame, because we need to make sure that there are people across all the different areas.

When people get the home care that they need, they're less liable to go to the emergency room. Because the home care system is largely privatized, they don't care about people's wages. They care about profits. That is the mandate of our home care system. They're looking to squeeze money wherever they can, and that amounts to a lack of care and a lack of respect for the nurses and health care workers who do such a phenomenal job caring for people where they should be: in their own homes.

What I also find very strange, and the reason I started off with the backgrounder, is that I also see the news release that this government posted—and what I find very, very interesting about that is that in their news release, they don't say the same things, and I find that very curious. It has to do with one hand saying one thing and one hand saying something else. In the backgrounder, they claimed to be supporting non-profits, post-secondary education, hospitals etc., but in the news release, they only talked about businesses. It's like they didn't want the media questioning them about their lack of support for non-profits, for colleges and universities, and for hospitals, so instead, they left all that out. It's like there's one story for the media and another for the chamber.

We also heard members opposite go on quite a bit about the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. I know all members in this chamber who worked through the pandemic understand what a disaster that was for so many different businesses. So many people applied. They would receive information one day, then they would receive different information, then they would find, often, that they were turned down for reasons that they were never given, and there was no appeals process for them to indicate that this was a mistake. On the opposition benches, we brought those forward to the government. Sometimes we could get results, but a lot of times there were people who were let down. One of the questions that we still have is, has the minister undertaken a review of this program, as the Auditor General has recommended?

We also take a look at the Ontario Together Fund. A contract worth \$1.8 million was awarded to a company with known fiscal risk, and they went bankrupt eight months later. There were also perceived conflicts of interest that have never been addressed by this government with the Ontario Together Fund. The CEO of a company that received \$2.5 million was a member of the ministers' COVID-19 vaccine task force, as well as an additional staff member from that company who sits with Minister Fedeli on the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council—

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Point of order?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm just trying to figure out what this has to do with the bill that we're discussing today. The relevancy—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Thank you. I'd ask the member from London North Centre to focus his remarks on Bill 46.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker.

Like the members of the government before me who were talking a great deal about all the wonderful things about the Ontario Small Business Support Grant—I find it only fair that we delivered an accurate portrayal of what people experienced, who were denied support when they needed it the most.

At this point, I will dig into each schedule of the act itself.

Schedule 1 amends the Animal Health Act. It allows the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, upon the advice of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario, to issue a response order effective for up to 72 hours to address urgent hazards threatening animal or human health. I think this is something that makes a great deal of sense. It means specified biosecurity measures restricting the movement of live or dead animals or related products or waste material. I think this is something that is easily supportable. There is a vital relationship between animal health, human health, food safety—one that we can't deny. The livestock and poultry sectors have been increasingly concerned, not only about the risks, but also the costs that happen with outbreaks, whether it be African swine fever or avian influenza in poultry, and I think what is necessary here is a timely and effective response. As I said, Bill 46 is a curious assortment of a whole bunch of largely disconnected issues—but ones that are not entirely unsupportable. I think this schedule will help to safeguard supply chains, and it will also mitigate the risk to human health and animal health. It makes a great deal of sense, listening to the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario.

As we approach schedule 2, the Courts of Justice Act, it's interesting, because it extends the allowable time of service for retired former provincial judges serving on a part-time basis from 50% of full-time service to 75% of full-time service. I think this is an important thing, because we do need to clear the backlog in our courts as quickly as possible. But what I remain concerned about is that this is a band-aid measure, and it's an expensive band-aid measure. It's not necessarily going to clear the backlog. And what does it pose for the future? What is the long-term goal of this measure?

I want to thank the member for London West for bringing up the very important letter that a number of London lawyers wrote to us in September 2022, and I want to add their words to my debate today. They indicated that vacancies were unfilled and it's an untenable situation. What they also told us was that London stands alone in the province in failing to hold civil trials at all until the fall. It's absolutely unconscionable, when you think about

matters of Family Court—some motions in court had to be cancelled. What is also deeply concerning is that the regional senior justice has declared in a ruling that ready trials of over two weeks have no prospect of being heard until late 2024. Even the Ontario Court of Appeal criticized this time frame, and they criticized what was happening in London. So I urge this government to also listen to that letter—because the Attorney General can make the recommendation to the Chief Justice in order to make sure that we have the judicial appointees we need in the city of London.

As I've said, this in and of itself is simply a Band-Aid. We need to make sure that we are hiring more judges full-time—ones who will be there for the duration.

It's curious to me, as well, that they're looking at a single issue within our justice system and they haven't looked at some of the other actions. If you're interested in clearing the backlog right now that is in our court system, you could reinstate funding for legal aid. That is something that helps the legal system function.

We also need to fix the backlog at tribunals. It's curious to me that we see the Landlord and Tenant Board only hearing matters of above-guideline rental increases, when we know it is a system that is not working for anyone on the housing spectrum.

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Schedule 3 turns to the Juries Act. The schedule provides that a person's jury questionnaire may be obtained, completed and returned electronically—finally. It's nice to see this chamber moving in a modern fashion. It makes a great deal of sense.

I would like to make some recommendations on changes to the Juries Act—because we have seen some changes, but we need to see yet more representation on Ontario's juries, because the opportunity to be judged fairly by a jury of one's peers is a foundational tenet of the criminal justice system.

There was a Toronto Star-Ryerson School of Journalism—at the time—investigation, back in 2018, that found that juries did not represent the people we serve accurately. They found that there needs to be more of a fair representation of the diverse communities in which we live. Some of the reasons that was not happening was that Ontario is an outlier—it stands alone as a province that does not compensate anyone for jury duty until after 10 days. By law, employers, as you know, must give people time off work if they're called for jury duty, but they don't have to pay them. That can be such an obstacle for people who have intersectional identities, people who are racialized, people who are possibly subject to precarious work, people who are working contracts, people who are self-employed—if they are unable to serve, it makes one wonder about justice itself. So, as we take a look at schedule 3 and the Juries Act, we need to make sure that we're not simply modernizing it in the way in which they can indicate their availability; we also need to look at the ways in which we are asking people to serve. I think it's important to note that only asking people who are on property tax rolls is one way of excluding folks, which is

deeply concerning. Someone who might be a spouse, someone who might be a renter, someone who might be a boarder, someone who might be a student—they would all benefit from serving on a jury but simply have not been asked.

As we turn to schedule 4, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act—it exempts feeder cattle enrolled under the feeder cattle loan guarantee program from section 3 of the Innkeepers Act. The Innkeepers Act currently gives stables a lien on boarding livestock, which has the effect of preventing cattle co-op members from feeding other members' cattle, and it really does make the program less effective than it ought to be. It is something that I think is easy to support. I think people should not be upset about it. It will prevent custom feeders from having a lien on the cattle, and it will prevent them from being able to seize and sell cattle for unpaid services. Custom feeders will still have the normal legal process, so taking this away won't be something difficult. It will, however, remove the burden on producers, it will strengthen our supply chain, and it will make the beef industry more competitive. So I think the amendment to schedule 4 is something that makes a great deal of sense and is imminently supportable.

I'd like to turn next to the Grow Ontario strategy. It is indicated that it is to increase production and consumption of food grown in the province by adopting new and innovative technology. This is a matter where we seem to be changing the channel, because we've seen a tax on the greenbelt; we see it being cut up; we see it going, in a very curious way, to developers who had only bought it in recent memory. They bought it just a short while ago as an investment piece of property, and it has gone up exponentially to tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars. And yet, now, what we see in this legislation, Bill 46, is suddenly appearing as though it's supporting our agri-food industry.

This government is talking about investing in technology. It's talking about innovation. But that's only going to be a drop in the bucket when you compare the reduction of the greenbelt, when you see watersheds—when you see developers claiming that they can replace natural areas, it's just simply impossible. It's shocking to me that this is even being considered in this House.

Ontario is losing around 320 acres of prime farmland per day, and over the last 35 years, Ontario has lost almost a fifth—it has lost 2.8 million acres of its farmland. And yet, in 2022, we're talking about this government chopping up the greenbelt.

You cannot re-create a wetland, despite developer claims. You will not have the same biodiversity. You will not have the same ecological impact and effect.

We've also seen weakening of conservation authorities, those experts who are able to advise. That's deeply, deeply concerning. Yet we have the Grow Ontario strategy trying to change the channel.

I turn to schedule 5, the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act: It makes a technical amendment and defines the minister as “the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry,

or ... executive council” for the purposes of the act. The repeal of subsection 11(1.1) would allow for the injection of CO₂ into geological formations as a type of carbon capture—a long-term, permanent underground geological storage of carbon dioxide in deep bedrock formations. The changes under schedule 5 are to allow that action. It's almost the inverse of fracking, where widespread agitation of geological rock formations or shale is done in order to access natural gas deposits. The proposal seems to narrow the prohibitions here to only projects that are also engaged in the recovery of oil or gas.

In the government's discussion paper, they state that in response to the evolving energy needs and priorities over time, Ontario businesses have been interested in pursuing new underground geological storage projects that may share the same space as oil, gas and salt resources but were not contemplated when those regulatory frameworks were developed. Schedule 5 allows for those carbon injections in association with oil and gas recovery. The ERO claims that this change, right now, is environmentally neutral. I do look forward to more environmental stakeholders at committee providing their concerns and what they would like to recommend in terms of schedule 5.

Schedule 6 concerns the Ontario Energy Board Act, and it clarifies that proponents of projects that are exempted from the requirement to obtain leave to construct from the Ontario Energy Board may apply to the board for an expropriation or the authority to cross a highway, utility line or ditch. Again, this is a housekeeping regulatory change.

Schedule 7 concerns the OSPCA.

Just recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Humane Society of London and Middlesex, which is doing phenomenal work. They're looking at expanding. They have a really brilliant plan, and I would love to invite some government members to come see what they are doing as they expand. They're looking to work in collaboration with Fanshawe College, with veterinary technician programs.

Also, this government needs to take a look at the lack of veterinarians who are available in this province now and make sure that we are providing some incentives or expediting that process—because, quite frankly, it's becoming a real difficulty in this province, at this current time.

The majority of my comments today are surrounding schedule 9. Now, I will unequivocally say that I am thrilled that the WSIB will be relocated to London. I've said that on the record many times.

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I'm also pleased to report to this House that I have been talking with different stakeholders, and I understand that there has been more communication with the relevant agencies—because the last time when I introduced remarks about the WSIB, there had not been any communication whatsoever, Speaker—so I'm quite thrilled about that.

But when we see this tinkering around the edges of WSIB, there is little help for those workers. There's little

help for people who need to access those benefits. It seems to me that—I wonder what’s behind this as well, because right now, we’re talking about a property that is in downtown Toronto that is 75% owned by the crown. Its size is 60,000 square feet. It’s at Front and Simcoe Streets. It’s a hugely coveted and very lucrative real estate deal. Some have even suggested it might be worth in the neighbourhood of \$600 million.

Now, I would also like to ask this government what their plans are for that location. Do they wish to address the current issues that are facing our province by converting that into affordable housing, into supportive housing, into something that will really meaningfully address some of the major issues within our province right now? I’m not certain. I think, as well, we also need to take a look at WSIB processes themselves, because WSIB has been in trouble for so many years.

I’d like to read on the record today something that I think the government could easily adopt. This was introduced by the MPP for Niagara Falls: “Section 43 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act ... is amended by adding the following subsection:

“No earnings after injury

“(4.1) The board shall not determine the following to be earnings that the worker is able to earn in suitable and available employment or business:

“1. Earnings from an employment that the worker is not employed in, unless the worker, without good cause, failed to accept the employment after it was offered to the worker.

“2. Earnings from a business that the worker does not carry on.”

This, Speaker, has to do with the WSIB’s penchant for engaging in the process of “deeming,” or deciding that somebody is able to do what is known as a “phantom job,” a job that did not exist, but one that they are content to tell people—their doctors—that they are able to do.

I also, in my discussion of WSIB, want to talk about the whistleblower report that exposed WSIB’s interference in medical care. This was from the Ontario Federation of Labour, in which doctors alleged that injured workers are revictimized by the compensation system. In this report, called *Prescription Over-Ruled: Report on How Ontario’s Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Systematically Ignores the Advice of Medical Professionals*, it included six registered psychologists and many other medical professionals and injured workers who came forward to share similar stories about the WSIB’s failure “to heed medical advice regarding readiness to return to work, insufficient treatment, blaming ‘pre-existing’ conditions for ongoing illness, or using independent medical reviews which proclaim patients to be healed, despite the evidence of treating practitioners.” It’s quite a shocking exposé, Speaker, and this was in 2015. We recently had the seven-year anniversary of that report.

In this, I’d like this government to please take note: “The red tape is tangling up legitimate claims and preventing injured workers from getting the coverage they need,” said Sudbury-based rehabilitation psychologist Dr.

Giorgio Ilacqua. “Behind every claim is a real person, with a family that has been turned upside down by a workplace injury. They deserve immediate and consistent care, not bureaucracy and red tape.”

The title of this bill is reducing red tape to build a stronger Ontario. Dr. Giorgio Ilacqua suggests that WSIB is regularly engaged in red tape, in denial, in telling people that they could do a job that doesn’t exist.

Part of this was the work of Dr. Brenda Steinnagel as well. She filed a lawsuit against her employer and the WSIB, alleging that she was fired from a clinic that she worked for because the WSIB requested it, because she refused to change her medical opinion to the one the board wanted to hear. In the statement of claim, Dr. Steinnagel says, “In a desperate effort to reduce claims paid out, WSIB” has “been conspiring to deny legitimate claims in a shocking display of arrogance and corruption.”

Also in *Prescription Over-Ruled*, they state, “Ontario’s compensation system is mandated to provide wage loss benefits and health care benefits to workers who are injured on the job. By law, injured workers are barred from commencing lawsuits for their work injuries and must instead seek benefits from the WSIB. Legally, workers are entitled to treatment from the health care provider of their own choosing.”

This is important, Speaker, because back when the WSIB was formed, workers gave up their rights to sue their employer because the WSIB was going to be there to help them. The WSIB was going to be there to assist them. Instead, it has become a completely different system.

Major stakeholders have also come out discussing what is happening at the WSIB, and there are grave concerns. The Canadian Medical Association—and this goes as far back as 2007—raised concerns about workplace-injury-related costs being shifted to the public system. The WSIB, in denying people their claims, leaves no one to support them except for that person themselves, with their inability to work, and the public system. It’s a foolish, foolish thing.

The report cites the then WSIB president and CEO, David Marshall, who bragged and boasted that the WSIB now pays for results and not process. We end up paying the tab for the WSIB not doing the correct job. Many of the people who have been injured at their workplace and are unable to work will often rely on the Ontario Disability Support Program or sometimes even worse. Then, as we know, it takes quite a long time as well to access even those benefits.

I would like to add into the record here today Karen’s story, from *Prescription Over-Ruled*. Karen’s name has been changed: “Karen was an active young woman with an exceptional employment record when an accident at a mine seriously injured her shoulder and head. In the years since, it has been a constant struggle to acquire the physical and psychological therapy her medical team says she needs, and the wage loss benefits she should be entitled to.

“Before her accident, Karen was active in a number of sports and hobbies. She enjoyed horseback riding every

week, and was involved in training dogs for competition. She was also part of a competitive mine rescue team, a very gruelling sport that requires intense mental and physical stamina. Her co-workers and supervisors have often noted that having her on the crew is good for morale, and she says she has received positive letters of recommendation from every employer she's ever worked for.

"In June of 2013, Karen was driving a truck in the mine. As she was stepping out, her overalls got caught on one of the steps, causing her to lose her grip and fall, landing hard on her head and her shoulder.

"After her accident, Karen developed nausea, headaches, dizziness, muscle strain, anxiety, and depression. She has been diagnosed with a number of conditions, including traumatic head injury, cervical strain, neck and shoulder injury and 'concussion-related mental impairments.' A whole range of treatments were suggested by her health care team, including medication, physio, massage and therapy with a psychologist. It was suggested she would benefit most from a gradual, WSIB-sponsored return to her pre-accident job. When many of these treatments were not offered, she did the only thing she could and tried to return to work. Her attempt to go back was short-lived, though, as she was unable to successfully complete the tasks she was assigned, and many of her symptoms began to worsen. Still, the WSIB interpreted her effort to return as a sign that she was capable of employment, and cut off her wage loss benefits, even though several health care professionals had indicated she should not be working due to dizziness and muscle damage.

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"Karen has had two previous head injuries, but had recovered from both and was living a normal life when her mine accident happened. Even though the evidence shows that her current symptoms arose only after the newest injury, the WSIB claims that her diagnosed symptoms are the result of"—ready for it, Speaker?"—"a 'pre-existing condition.' In response to the request from her psychologist, the board said they began reviewing Karen's file in April 2014. Despite multiple requests from her medical team and seven letters written by her legal aid lawyer (none of which received a response), no decisions have been made. The fact that no decisions have been made means that Karen cannot move through the appeal process. Karen is therefore stuck in limbo, and has been forced onto social assistance."

This limbo is completely unnecessary. This is yet more red tape that has been created by the WSIB. If this government was true to their word with Bill 46, they would truly look into it.

The report also talks about the inadequate services offered by the WSIB because approval for services can take months when patients' needs are often immediate. Also, treating physicians' referrals for psychological therapy are often denied, even in dire situations. The WSIB will refer an injury claimant to a specialist but will not fund sufficient time for a proper assessment and report.

The WSIB also demands frequent progress reports that it will not pay for and the recommendations of which are frequently ignored.

I can go on and on about how the WSIB does not stand for workers. Despite medical opinions to the contrary, the WSIB often attributes illness or injury to pre-existing conditions and refuses to fund benefits or care. What's also concerning is that they don't listen to the doctors who are actually seeing the person in-person. The WSIB will often seek second opinions from their paper doctors, who simply look through the file; they don't ever meet the patient. Dr. Brenda Steinnagel alleged that the WSIB inappropriately pressures these doctors to deliver dishonest reports so that they can avoid paying benefits.

It then goes and pressures workers to return to work, even when their treating doctors recommend that they need more time to heal. And if those workers have well-meaning attempts to return to work, they are used against them as evidence that they are employable and healed even when those attempts fail, which, of course, results in a loss of benefits.

I recommend that all members read this report. It is absolutely shocking. It also has greater impacts in the world at large for so many people. If people have work-induced disabilities, they frequently suffer mental health concerns that are elevated after their injury and the stress of dealing with this board and the way in which they stonewall and ignore people.

I was recently dealing with a constituent. We've tried, again and again and again, to get a hold of a human being at the WSIB, and it is near impossible. If that weren't bad enough, many doctors—it's already difficult enough to find a health care practitioner, but many of the health professionals refuse to take on WSIB claimants as their patients. Do you know why? Because they know that their advice is going to be ignored and they know they'll be unable to provide the care that they know the patients need. That should be a huge, huge concern.

Some of the resolutions for this government and the recommendations, and this goes back years:

- have Ontario's Ombudsman launch a formal investigation into WSIB's treatment of medical advice, particularly the way in which health care providers' professional advice is not considered and the lack of explanation offered;

- collect and make public statistics on how often injured workers' health care providers' advice is disregarded;

- create a protocol that regulates rapid response time for requests from the injured workers' health care team. For example, requiring a decision within 48 hours when an urgent request for care is submitted to the board;

- eliminate the use of so-called paper doctors who render decisions about care without ever meeting the patient;

- give proper weight to the opinions of the medical professionals who know the injured worker best, their own health care team.

The problems at WSIB are many, but I also want to now discuss a new organization who are quite a phenomenal

group of people, the Occupational Disease Reform Alliance. They have also said that they went to make changes to WSIB system. This is from Sylvia Boyce, who's the USW District 6 health and safety coordinator: "Workplace illnesses can affect anyone—from cancer, respiratory disease or hearing loss. The challenge with occupational disease is that people who are sick may not connect their symptoms to exposures they had at work."

This can often be a very tricky one. It's bad enough that—we heard stories like Karen's when she had a legitimate fall, when she injured her head, when she injured her shoulder and when her own doctor was talking about this injury itself. When we take a look at occupational disease, it can be a little bit more nebulous. I'd like to commend the Odra for all of the work they're doing. It's not just based on someone's opinion. They also continue, "The demands are simply compensation for occupational disease claims when workplace patterns exceed levels in the surrounding communities, expand the list of diseases presumed to be work related, use the proper legal standard, not scientific certainty, and expect that multiple exposures combined cause disease."

It makes a great deal of sense. I know that the minister will be speaking and apologizing in, I believe, two days' time to folks who were exposed in the McIntyre Powder Project, so I think these are vital changes that need to happen within WSIB.

I'd like to also add the voice of Robert Storey. He is a labour scholar, and his father died of an occupational illness. It's heartbreaking. His father was a drill press operator at International Harvesters in Hamilton and he used a white cutting lubricant that was revealed to be a carcinogen. He used it for about 34 years, and I believe that he died very, very quickly after he retired, which is such a shame. You work your entire life to get ready to enjoy that time with your family, to pursue your hobbies, to pursue the things you love, and then you pass away.

Storey points out, quite importantly, that the WSIB system was set up in 1915 and it was set up with the principles of Sir William Meredith, often known—he was a former chief justice and author of the Meredith Principles. At its conception, it was believed that workers should get payment for as long as their disability lasted. Those are principles that I don't believe are upheld to this day. We see so many examples of workers who are denied, workers who are caught up in red tape, workers who are rejected, ignored and denied the benefits that they require, and this dates back also to the 1990s. I think we can all remember Premier Mike Harris and one of his snitch lines, his hotline, where citizens could go phone in and report that they thought injured workers were taking advantage of the system. It's shocking. It is shocking, Speaker.

I'm glad to see that the WSIB coverage will be extended, but we have to make sure that the coverage itself—that there is a system change, that there is an understanding that this has gone from an organization that was established to protect the rights of workers and to assist workers when they need it, and it's become something quite different.

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Rose Wickman, who is a former UNIFOR president who was at Ventra/Pebra Plastics in Peterborough, Ontario said, "Workers gave their lives for these companies, and the WSIB is ignoring [them]."

Now, on occupational diseases, Bob DeMatteo says, "The WSIB has a legal obligation to conduct investigations into occupational diseases, and it's not doing its job. Where is the concern for human health? They've been so lax in not recognizing the health effects of things like metalworking fluids and a whole series of toxic exposures, and have not altered or lowered the Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs) to reflect the science, and need to invoke the precautionary principle in the face of scientific uncertainty, and to ensure more stringent enforcement of exposure standards."

DeMatteo goes on to say that "there's a sense in which there is more interest in protecting the companies on a financial level than making sure that these workplaces are safe and healthy."

I see my time is beginning to run out, Speaker. I'd like to also point out to this chamber that the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association have joined in the campaign pushing for changes to the WSIB system. They've joined with the Occupational Disease Reform Alliance. Now, the Odra comprises miners who inhaled the McIntyre Powder, as I said, between 1943 and 1980, as well as construction workers at the Weyerhaeuser pulp and paper mill in Dryden, steel mill workers in Sault Ste. Marie, and former employees of now-closed Neelon Casting, which made brake parts in Sudbury.

Doug McLennan, who is the president of Local 162, said that "firefighters fought for and received the benefit of presumptive legislation for occupational cancers." Even though these are the people who are going into the most dangerous places—places any other one of us would run from—they're being denied. They're being denied by the WSIB, being denied by the organization that is supposed to support them after they've been exposed to so many different carcinogens and have, unfortunately, engaged in the fight of their life—which should be fighting cancer, but instead of fighting cancer, they're fighting WSIB.

"All too frequently these claims are denied by WSIB"—and this is what McLennan has said, this quote—"despite evidence of the multiple toxic exposures these firefighters faced while doing their jobs."

"We must see WSIB expand the list of presumptions and ensure they are more broadly applicable to all workers."

So the Odra has made four demands to the Ministry of Labour:

"(1) Grant entitlement for occupational diseases when they exceed the level circulating in a community.

"(2) Use available evidence of occupational disease in the workplace—including that gathered by workers and communities—as the standard for evaluating claims.

"(3) Expand the list of compensable diseases that are presumed to be work-related, and possibly using the firefighters presumption list as a template.

“(4) Recognize claims diseases resulting from multiple exposures, carcinogens and irritants, rather than focusing on a single exposure or occupation.”

As I begin to finish off my remarks, I think it's important that we take a look at the intended consequences, at what this legislation could potentially do.

We've heard that the WSIB is frequently wrapping people up in red tape.

I also want to add comments from the former labour critic, when they were in opposition, from February 2014. They indicated: “As we know”—by the way, I'm glad to see you, Minister McNaughton—“Bill 146 is a large omnibus bill. In my opening, I talked about the different acts that are going to be altered because of this bill. Certain elements tend to get lost in the broader reform context. I respectfully, again, submit that this has happened in Bill 146.

“We are reminded of the comments of an opposition member and former leader in this Legislature a number of years ago in response to a government omnibus bill. I'm going to quote this former political leader:

“I have a real problem with omnibus bills. I'm not going to be able to deal with my problems in the last two and a half minutes I have. There is just so much in this bill. It should not be presented as one, large omnibus bill. I'm beginning to think this government only knows about omnibus bills. It's not just that we can't deal with everything in the course of the debate of the evening, of the day. It's because the omnibus bills—the parts we miss, the parts we couldn't debate, the parts that the public wasn't aware of—come back to haunt us.”

He finishes his quote by saying, “That's from Hansard, on November 19, 2002. That was the member, back then, for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the former leader of the Liberals, Lyn McLeod.”

He then goes on: “Speaker, going back to Bill 146, to schedule 5, and what this bill will actually achieve: I would say, agreeing with former Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, that this bill could come back to haunt us, will come back to haunt the government of Ontario, the WSIB and, ultimately, the taxpayers and the people of Ontario.”

Those were Minister McNaughton's words when he was the official opposition labour critic, upset about omnibus pieces of legislation.

Here again, we have another piece of omnibus legislation that tinkers at the edges. It has an opportunity to reform some vital institutions, such as the WSIB, but it really falls short. It is such a shame.

We also take a look at its inability to address one of the most pressing issues in Ontario right now, which is our health care system, which is falling apart at the seams, which is in a terrible crisis.

In London, just recently, as I've introduced to this chamber, the Children's Hospital sent out a notice letting parents know that surgeries that children had waited for for a ridiculous amount of time were now being cancelled because of capacity, because of the inability to have enough people.

We've seen announcements from this government about investments in hospital furniture, in hospital buildings, but not in the health care human resources that we need.

I think my feelings on this Bill 46, Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, are largely agnostic. There are some things in here which are good and some things in here which I think need a little bit more scrutiny, but overall it's not entirely negative.

I will say, though, that the sum total effect of Bill 46 seems to be a desire to change the channel; a desire to distract; a desire to possibly not acknowledge what the actual issues facing Ontario are but instead to change things up in the media, to undergo an image rehabilitation.

As we look at the stated intention of this government, when we look at the backgrounder, when we look at the news release, it's shocking that they would talk about their strong track record. I would say that they have a strong track record on denying small businesses the grants that they needed to survive COVID. They have a strong track record on underfunding not-for-profit organizations and leaving them to deliver vital, life-saving services without support. I would say that they have a strong record on literally just putting municipalities in a bigger financial hole than ever before.

Universities, colleges, schools, hospitals—do any of them think that this government has a strong track record of supporting them?

Speaker, I think this government, whether it's through schedule 4, to try to distract from the fact that they are covering up the greenbelt, to distract from the fact that they are taking ecological land which cannot be replaced due to its biodiversity and its importance in our ecosystem—and are trying to pretend that's not happening. It's like a magician saying, “Look at this hand, not this hand down here.”

1530

We have the Grow Ontario strategy, but this government hasn't addressed that we're losing almost 320 acres of farmland per day or that we've lost 18% of our total farmland.

Lastly, I just want clarification. What is this government planning on doing with its asset—what is it going to do with that 60,000-square-foot WSIB headquarters? Are you going to do the right thing? Are you going to convert that to affordable housing? Or are you going to reward some private developer who has smiled at you nicely? Are you going to give them a sweetheart deal? Does it depend on who is in the backrooms? These are all questions people in Ontario deserve to know.

I also want to remind this government, in their desire to sell off public assets—many of the biggest companies in the world cannot exist without a balanced ratio of assets and revenues. It's not prudent, in the long-term way, to sell these off.

So many of these in this bill—I see some band-aid solutions; ones that aren't terrible, but ones that aren't good for the long term.

I hope that this government will listen to the recommendations of many people who have been crying out for years for cutting the red tape that is the WSIB—finally supporting workers who deserve respect, who deserve health care, who deserve to be treated fairly. These are people who went to work and who did not choose to become injured.

Let's stop the prejudgment that WSIB often has on people. Let's make sure people can live their best life, their healthiest life, by giving them the supports that they need when they're injured at work. Let's stop shutting them out.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

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 / 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.

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER
ONTARIO ACT, 2022
LOI DE 2022 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It's now time for questions.

Ms. Doly Begum: I listened to the member attentively, and I want to thank him for the compassion and care that he has for workers across the province, but especially in his riding in London. I know that there are some good amendments that are being made in the legislation.

One of the things I want to specifically talk about is schedule 8, which I think is done with the intention of creating efficiency.

A few months ago, we found out about the decision to close down our courts in Scarborough. Everything will be moved to downtown Toronto. A lot of people, especially people in the legal system, were outraged because we know the type of community members we have and the difficulty they have when it comes to travelling, for example, and the type of cases that we face. So I want to see if the member has any remarks about that—especially when we're talking about investment in our court system and efficiency within our court system.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for her important question.

Yes, access to justice is vital across our province. It's so unfortunate that we see some attempts at improvement within Bill 46 and yet we've also seen a government that is cutting legal aid. I remember attending the opening of the courts, and never before have I seen Chief Justices and people who are in positions of legal authority condemn a government so strongly because of their dramatic cuts to legal aid. Those cuts to legal aid meant that so many people who are refugees, people who are new Canadians, were struggling with access to the courts, and it has caused an overall problem. We need to do more to make sure that our courts function as effectively as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member from London North Centre for his presentation today. And I would love to take him up on his offer to visit his OSPCA. I always like to see good people caring for our animals—something near and dear to my heart.

What I actually want to talk a little bit about today is the justice system.

Throughout COVID, we moved 25 years in 25 days to make sure that we can cut red tape across government, and that has many benefits to people—people in our communities who were able to get to the justice system; quicker, better access; people who can't get from A to B, so they're able to learn online.

You intend to vote against our red tape reduction measures, but they do have many benefits for the people of Ontario, especially those with lower income. I'm going to ask you a little bit about this bill—cutting red tape to help out those lower-income earners, to make sure they can get justice faster. I just want your thoughts on that.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I, for one, would love to host the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore at the Humane Society London and Middlesex. Wait till you see their plan; it's absolutely brilliant.

I'm an animal lover myself. I think that says a lot about you, as well, as a person.

Access to justice is critical. Frequently, when we hear this government talk about pieces of legislation that the opposition voted against—it's because they often include that poison pill. They include things that we cannot possibly support. You hide that poison pill, often, within some reasonably decent measures.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Answer through the Chair, please.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Omnibus legislation should not exist like that.

We've also been recommending hiring more adjudicators to the Landlord and Tenant Board to make sure to clear that backlog, because access to justice is vital to a functioning democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from London North Centre for that really thoughtful presentation. I want to zero in on his comments about the WSIB.

The bill that we're talking is about supposed to be about red tape, but sometimes I think, embedded in this omnibus legislation are red ribbons—gifts, in fact, to some very powerful bullies in our province, and the WSIB is one of those bullies.

I want to give you an update on a case I've talked about in this House. I'll leave the gentleman's name out of it. We've been working, as you were, with a first responder who was critically injured at work and was fighting the WSIB for years. His marriage has fallen apart. He moved back to the riding to live with his mom. I've brought this case to this government several times—no help. Guess what role he played last February? He was a major organizer in the convoy occupation movement, because he was convinced that the Prime Minister hated him and that this House hated him, and the only weapon he had was to paralyze our city and create chaos.

I want you to reflect, as you did in your remarks, on what happens when we leave people behind. What happens when we abandon people to the WSIB bureaucracy?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his impassioned question.

The evidence has clearly been shown, through numerous reports, through the Ontario Federation of Labour, through the Ontario injured workers support network, that when people are denied the support they deserve, the supports they require, not only do they have a physical injury, but they will also have worsening mental health conditions, and I think it's no wonder. You go to work; you're going to provide for your family. Nobody asks to be injured, and they need that vital support. They need somebody to recognize that they're not just making up some story. Instead, the WSIB does the exact opposite. It's in the claims denial business. It's trying to look at its bottom line. It's the difference between publicly delivered health care and privately delivered health care. What is your mandate? Is it care or is it profit?

1540

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite from London North Centre for his comments and point out that it has been a big part of this government's mandate to bring jobs back to Ontario, to eliminate red tape, and to jump-start our economy. Over the past five years, we've brought over 370,000 jobs back to Ontario. During that same period of time, we've seen the agri-food industry jump ahead as our number one GDP gross intake, ahead of the automotive sector.

This government is proposing greater efficiencies for Ontario's beef farmers that will improve their competitiveness and strengthen our supply chain.

Does the member opposite not agree that supporting the supply chain of Ontario-raised beef and over 51,000 jobs is a worthwhile endeavour?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Simcoe-Grey for his very important question.

The supply chain is absolutely vital.

I'd like to return to the comments from the member from Ottawa Centre. He mentioned the occupation. Earlier, we saw this government completely stalled as the Ambassador Bridge was occupied. We saw this government refuse to call a provincial emergency and refuse to acknowledge that there was \$300 million of vital trade going across that bridge every single day. There were so many workers who were sent home because their employer could not pay them. There was no work to do.

I think your comments about the supply chain with beef farmers are important, but I also think this government needs to walk the walk when it comes to actually standing up and making sure that we have not only the rule of law but that we have vital trade.

The example that happened at the Ambassador Bridge went on far too long and was absolutely unconscionable. It impacted so many families, and it should never have happened.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My colleague talked a bit about WSIB. We've heard the term "access to justice" being thrown around. We know that injured workers are often deemed to do phantom jobs that don't exist just to push them off of WSIB. They then try to get on to ODSP and get into low-income housing and have trouble there. And they don't have access to the Landlord and Tenant Board, because this government has decided that giving above-guideline rent increases is more important than tenants—or landlords, frankly—being able to have discussions about the rental of a unit.

We know that it's low-income, racialized people who are disproportionately represented within our justice system.

Is there anything you see in this bill that will actually address the Landlord and Tenant Board issues or the WSIB issues that we are seeing in this province?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Windsor West.

You are absolutely right; we have heard that the Landlord and Tenant Board is only meeting for above-guideline rent increases, when there are so many other issues.

I hear from tenants, of course, who have great concerns with their landlords. I also hear from landlords who are saying it doesn't matter who is right or wrong in this scenario the Landlord and Tenant Board is completely stymied. It is completely unable to function correctly. That needs to be addressed. It is not addressed in Bill 46; it ought to be. We need to hire more adjudicators.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Graydon Smith: It's a pleasure to rise today and talk to you for the next little bit about—kind of a nerd-out time for us to talk about carbon capture and storage, but I think it's going to be an enlightening 20 minutes—or possibly 10; my staff just gave me a triple espresso before I got here, so I'm not sure how fast I'll ultimately end up talking this afternoon.

What I am going to talk about is a very important thing. I'm pleased to be standing here today to talk about Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, and the carbon-storage aspect part of the bill, which is just one of the many ways that this government is cutting red tape.

I want to start off by commending the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and his staff for their work on this important piece of legislation. They've really done a great job.

This is a comprehensive piece of legislation that will help our businesses here in Ontario compete in the global market. It will help us continue to build a stronger supply chain, which, we've learned from COVID, we need to make sure is resilient. We know that we need to be ready for challenges we may face from around the globe.

I know that we have heard a little bit of everything in this bill, whether it be about eliminating unnecessary regulations regarding hot tubs or making legislative updates to allow for a new standard of veterinary medicine in Ontario. However, I did want to take the time that I've been allotted to talk about the part of the bill that directly pertains to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Last Wednesday, as part of this legislation, we proposed an amendment to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act. As part of this red tape bill, if passed, it will remove the prohibition related to carbon storage in the province.

Now, you may be asking yourself, "Just what is carbon storage?" Carbon storage, which is sometimes known as carbon sequestration, is a technology that involves injecting carbon dioxide into deep, underground rock formations for permanent storage. You take the carbon dioxide emitted from a power plant, from a steel mill, from a large industrial process, and you capture it. From there, you can pressurize the carbon dioxide until it becomes liquid, where it can then be injected into porous rock formations. Instead of having the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, this process ensures that it never gets the chance to get into the air.

Removing the prohibition of carbon storage is just one tool that's being considered to manage Ontario's emissions. Geological carbon storage can also help transition to lower-carbon fuels as part of the production of low-carbon hydrogen. While this particular piece of legislation in the government's newest red tape bill is just an initial step to build the carbon storage sector here in Ontario, it signals the industry that our government is serious in our intention to support geological carbon storage and that we're taking a phased and thoughtful approach to regulate the activity.

The business community that would be directly impacted by this proposed legislative amendment has responded with overwhelming enthusiasm to this proposed change. Enbridge—who I know many of us and our constituents have a relationship with, because we rely on them to heat our homes and power businesses—had this to say about the change: "We are pleased to see the government of Ontario signal next steps to explore carbon capture, utilization and sequestration"—also known, for the acronym lovers, as CCUS—"opportunities. [It] offers

an important path to reduce carbon emissions from energy-intensive, hard-to-abate industries, including those located in southwestern Ontario, by capturing them where they are produced and storing them permanently, deep underground. We look forward to continue working with government, industry and local partners to explore next steps for CCUS and to leverage opportunities to drive economic development and job creation."

The Ontario Chemistry Industry Association of Canada had this to say: "Enabling geologic storage of carbon is an integral step to decarbonizing Ontario's chemistry sector while improving our ability to win new investments and create well-paying jobs that are going elsewhere. Carbon storage is already operational in western Canada and key US jurisdictions."

That part about attracting investments is just so very important. Historically, when this government has sent a signal to the rest of the world to come here and invest here, people heed that call. Businesses heed that call. When the Premier or the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade talks about making Ontario a leader in the manufacturing of electric vehicles, the world takes notice.

We saw it when Stellantis announced over \$5 billion for a battery plant in Windsor-Essex to build the batteries that will power electric vehicles of the future. We saw it when Umicore announced plans for a \$1.5-billion investment to build a first-of-its-kind, industrial-scale cathode and precursor-materials manufacturing plant in Loyalist township. We saw it when Honda announced their \$1.4-billion investment to retool their Alliston plant so they'd be capable of building electric vehicles.

With this carbon storage plan that we have set in place, we are inviting global investment to Ontario. We are creating a sector that doesn't currently exist in the province and letting the world know that this is another way Ontario is open for business.

To revisit some of what we've been hearing from industry, right here in Ontario, Stelco, one of Canada's largest steel companies, had this to say about the plan to allow for carbon storage: "As Stelco advances towards the aspirational goal of net-zero carbon emissions, we appreciate and value the support of the Ontario government. Their efforts to provide a full suite of tools, including the recognition of geologic carbon storage, is a valuable step in support of our collective work to mitigate carbon emissions and fight climate change."

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Another steel company, ArcelorMittal Dofasco, which is the Hamilton region's largest private-sector employer, had this to say about the proposed changes: "The proposed amendment to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act provide[s] a path forward to enable geologic carbon storage in Ontario. Carbon capture utilization and storage will play an important role in the decarbonization of the steel industry in Ontario."

Speaker, here we have the two biggest steel manufacturers in the country saying that this is going to allow them to decarbonize their operations here in Ontario, and

that is huge. We're not sacrificing our manufacturing sector like the previous government did; we're making sure we give them the tools they need to respond to important actions like emissions reduction, so we can compete with the rest of the world.

I don't want to laden the House with endless instances of support for this initiative, but boy, there's a lot of them, and I did want to share just one more quote, this one being from the Canadian Steel Producers Association: "We welcome Ontario's announcement on creating a framework to regulate and enable carbon sequestration in Ontario. These regulatory changes represent an important step forward and support our long-term decarbonization strategy." Speaker, these strong endorsements show that Ontario is on the right track with this proposed legislation.

As part of the first step in our plan to allow carbon storage, we've also released a road map, and this road map outlines Ontario's path forward for creating a framework to regulate and enable the permanent storage of carbon as a new tool to help reduce emissions in the province and support businesses and industry, while encouraging sector innovation and safeguarding people and the environment.

There is currently no regulatory framework to authorize geological carbon storage projects in Ontario, and some projects are currently prohibited under the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act. The amendment we have proposed to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act, if passed, would clarify existing rules and facilitate future alignment of Ontario's regulatory framework with other provincial and federal initiatives that are currently under way.

The federal government has signed various international agreements pledging to reduce their emissions, the most notable one being the Paris accord. They already recognize that carbon capture will play a key role in net-zero emissions aspirations by the federal government. I know we don't always agree on things with the federal government, such as the carbon tax, but on this particular emissions reduction strategy, we do agree, and I'm glad that this is something that the federal government understands is another tool in our collective tool belt to help reduce emissions.

The government of Canada is currently working on a carbon capture, utilization and storage strategy that will set the groundwork for carbon storage across the country. However, even though that strategy isn't ready just yet—which is disappointing, I know—I'm looking forward to what this strategy entails. We know that some provinces, like Alberta and Nova Scotia, have already started work on this, but it will be great to have a federal strategy that will help signal to the world that we as a country are serious about this.

With that being said, the federal government is already supporting carbon storage projects through the Office of Energy Research and Development. It is my hope that, as we fully develop our strategy, industry will be able to access this federal funding, which will lead to more jobs and increased investment here in Ontario.

I think it's also important to note something that was brought up earlier in debate, and that's the fact that no new

requirements would be placed on businesses through the first phase of the proposed amendment. That's pretty significant under the context of this being a bill to reduce red tape. The last thing we want to do is eliminate one regulation that will actually lead to the creation of a bunch of other regulations at this stage in the road map, when we're just in the infancy of investigating places where carbon storage makes sense.

This amendment also supports the government's Open for Business Action Plan by responding to requests made by key stakeholders and businesses interested in carbon storage as a tool to reduce their emissions or as a new business strategy.

As I just mentioned, the federal government sees carbon capture as important. There is a growing worldwide acceptance of the important role carbon capture storage can play in economically achieving a net-zero emissions global economy. Our research indicates that in 2021 there were over 130 carbon capture and storage projects at various stages of development worldwide by the commercial sector. For example, in the United States, there were around 12 commercial facilities already in operation and an additional 50 projects in various stages of development.

Western Canada also has commercial facilities in operation at this point in time, with several other facilities at various stages of development. Alberta, in fact, currently has a fantastic example of this that's already in operation known as the Alberta Carbon Trunk Line system—again, for the acronym lovers, ACTL. The ACTL has multiple participants which capture industrial emissions, they then deliver CO₂ to mature oil and gas reservoirs for permanent storage. This one initiative alone sequesters approximately 20%—20%—of all current oil sands emissions.

Now, Ontario doesn't produce nearly as much oil as Alberta does, and we're very different in terms of geology, we know that, but in Ontario we have a lot of manufacturing here, whether it be for steel, whether it be for electric cars, whether it's for materials that we need to build 1.5 million homes as part of our housing supply action plan, we can utilize technology like this to make sure we can keep industry here while we strive for net-zero emissions. In addition to commercial projects like the one I just mentioned, there are many pilot and demonstration projects under way worldwide.

We can't be playing catch up. It's very simple: If we don't have the regulations and the business environment to allow for carbon storage opportunities to happen here in Ontario, they're just going to go elsewhere and it will adversely affect emissions-intensive industries that need to find ways to start lowering their emissions sooner rather than later. We will lose out on good-paying jobs and investments in our communities and, if you ask me, we just can't let that happen. I think if you ask anyone, we just can't let that happen.

In January of this year, my ministry posted a discussion paper that explored enabling carbon storage in Ontario,

and, through this engagement, we heard about the importance of acting quickly to remove barriers to carbon storage in the province so that our jurisdiction does not lag behind. We also heard about the need to ensure access to all available geologic storage resources and to maximize economic viability of these projects. Our government is listening to what we've heard in response to that discussion paper and we're advancing the first phase of our plan, which proposes to remove the existing prohibition of carbon sequestration in the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act as a first step.

We're sending a clear signal to industry that we're committed to supporting carbon storage by developing a regulatory framework to provide greater certainty to businesses and industry here in Ontario. In phase two of the road map, we plan to develop further amendments to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act to enable projects—initially only on private land—to demonstrate new activities such as carbon storage. In phase 3, we plan to develop and consult on a framework to regulate commercial scale carbon storage projects on both crown and private lands in Ontario. Development of these future phases are expected to take place in the next two years and would include multiple opportunities for review and input from interested stakeholders.

Enabling carbon storage projects through these future phases will also better position businesses here in Ontario to take advantage of federal incentives and funding opportunities while outlining a clear path forward needed for greater investment certainty. Future phases are expected to encourage sector innovation of carbon storage technologies, which will play an important role in reducing emissions and help businesses to meet emissions targets.

Carbon storage also plays an important role in Ontario's Low-Carbon Hydrogen Strategy in which the Minister of Energy has set out the government's vision for a low-carbon hydrogen economy in our province. This strategy is allowing us to develop a self-sustaining sector in Ontario, evolve the energy system, create local jobs and attract investment while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We know that carbon storage is new to Ontario, and we want to ensure the activity is undertaken responsibly, with measures in place that make sure it's done in a way that is safe for people and doesn't have adverse effects on the environment.

1600

Future phases of our plan would increase government oversight of carbon storage while maintaining public safety. And as the ministry accommodates new activities and technologies, additional protections may also be considered to ensure the continued protection of people and the environment. During each phase, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is pledging to work with stakeholders, to work with Indigenous communities and organizations, and, of course, to work with the public to ensure we design a framework that works for Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to talk about the important work our government is doing to usher in a

new era when it comes to enabling carbon storage here in Ontario. These are very, very exciting times. And I think all of us, whether you are on any side of the House and any seat of this House, think that we need to reduce our emissions quickly and find creative solutions to reduce them.

We can't tell manufacturing to shut down. We'd just hemorrhage jobs and plunge workers and businesses alike into complete chaos. It's a time of global economic uncertainty. We're all trying to get our feet back under us, and this will help achieve that. But we also need to be striving towards net-zero emissions. There's no doubt about it. We have to be bold. We have to work together to make sure that we meet our international obligations to reduce our emissions.

This change to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act will help us do that. This proposed change sets us on a course to ensure that we keep jobs here in Ontario while creating new ones, and making Ontario an even more attractive place to do business. This ambitious plan that we have announced as part of the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act will help in our efforts to reduce Ontario's emissions and cut red tape for business and industry, while safeguarding the people of Ontario and the environment.

So I really do hope—and I think, again, this is something that we can all get behind and support because the outcomes are all something we want to achieve. I hope all the members of this House will join us, support this important change that will help allow carbon storage in Ontario and vote in favour of this government's latest effort to cut red tape for individuals and businesses alike. This act, if passed, will help our economy, help companies like Dofasco and Stelco, help other large emitters and other important manufacturers and energy providers meet their emissions reduction targets.

Again, it is something we can all get behind, something we should all get behind. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for your comments today. I know you've been talking mostly about the schedule of this bill that deals with carbon capture, but I want to ask you for a sort of general commitment on another schedule, schedule 8, which is the Provincial Offences Act. It deals with streamlining—or not streamlining; I'm still trying to figure it all out—with provincial offences and with how they're dealt with.

What I'm looking for—I do a lot of work with a group that deals with human trafficking, and some of the survivors of human trafficking are stuck with government fines. There was one woman, while she was being trafficked, she—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, I'll try to ask it really quickly. Anyway, she created a disturbance to escape, and she was charged with creating a disturbance. After she did

escape and she became a survivor, she ended up with a provincial fine and she still owes that money. So what I'm looking for is your support to talk to your caucus to have fines for survivors of human trafficking eliminated as part of this bill.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Obviously, as part of this bill, we're trying to accomplish a lot of things, not only what I talked about today, but a number of other measures that have been included in it. When it comes to human trafficking, again, that is something that we can all agree on through all sides of this House, whatever party you may be part of: that there is no place for that in Ontario and that we want outcomes, if there are situations, to be positive, or as positive as possible for everybody involved.

I appreciate the question, again, from the member opposite, Speaker. We'll look forward to maybe learning a little bit more about that specific situation and reflect on that when I have a moment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Minister Smith spoke in his remarks about carbon storage. I'd like to learn a little bit more about why it's critical to establish a clearer framework to regulate the activity, and if he could speak particularly, Speaker, through you, about what the outcomes would be, please.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Well, again, I thank the member for the question. As I went through the remarks I made earlier, I hope that there was one theme that was abundantly clear: that there is an opportunity to decarbonize Ontario to a pretty significant degree; that large emitters have an opportunity to really transform their operations into ones that are still successful, still employing or investing in creating more jobs and being here in Ontario and contributing to our economy, but, at the same time, they can reach their goals—we can reach our collective goals—of decarbonization.

This is something new for Ontario but not something new, as we've seen it in other jurisdictions. Ultimately, this is going to be great for the economy in Ontario, but it is also going to be great for the environment in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Under schedule 5, which makes changes to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act, I appreciate the conversation around carbon capture. There's lots of new information and technologies available to us and lots of interesting conversations about environmental benefit but also impact.

I did want to ask, though, because as we are repealing the subsection that will allow for the injection of CO₂ into geological formations as a form of carbon capture, and the government's discussion paper about this talked about the opportunities for business—"unregulated business environment" currently and whatnot. My question is, what is the rationale, or walk me through—the proposal in this

case seems to narrow the prohibitions here only to projects that are also engaged in the recovery of oil or gas. "Only" involved in the recovery of oil or gas: Can you explain to us why?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Again, thanks to the member for the question. This is really the beginning of a conversation, and I referenced the framework that we're laying out to move forward. The first step is to remove this prohibition, but there's lots more to come, Speaker, including enabling a demonstration project. If you look at the information that we put out, you'll see that that's anticipated possibly in the winter or spring of 2023. Then look at other components of this one-step-at-a-time approach as we work through this, receive feedback on this—of course the ERO posting is open right now. But ultimately we want to design a framework to regulate commercial-scale geologic carbon-storage projects on crown and private land.

Again, the initial step is being taken now. There are many more steps to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

1610

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, for that wonderful presentation. As part of the red tape bill, we heard so many things. Thank you for all that important information you have provided to this House.

The level of carbon in the atmosphere has been consistently increasing. Greenhouse gas emissions are a huge issue, and this is damaging the environment. You talk about carbon capture storage. These are very, very important new concepts to Ontario. Could you explain, please, Minister, more about what are the economic, health, social and environmental benefits through this bill?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you very much for the question. Again, I want to highlight what we see as some real, solid and tangible benefits, which are industries and emitters which we know strive to reduce those emissions yet at the same time protect the jobs that they have and the investments that they've made and potentially any future investments. We want to work with them to enable a framework, to take that carbon that they're emitting, again, go through those many steps that create a safe and environmentally responsible framework to capture that carbon and then store that carbon. Thankfully, in Ontario, we have the geology for it that will allow that to happen. So we're uniquely positioned here in Ontario to be able to support industry that way, and there will be some great outcomes, both, again, environmentally and economically.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's disheartening to see changes in schedule 9 to WSIB while the government is still allowing long-standing gaps for injured workers. Again and again, workers and worker organizations bring up deeming, a practice that allows the WSIB to reduce wage loss benefits based on deemed earnings from a job the injured worker does not have.

My question is to the member opposite: Why is this government not taking the solutions proposed by the member from Niagara Falls to stop the practice of deeming?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Again, thank you to the member for the question. And again, I think it's an opportunity to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for putting a bill together that tries to recognize that there are a number of things in Ontario that need attention and that attention is being provided to. That is really, again, an opportunity for us to ensure that Ontario looks at our entire economy, looks at opportunities to move our economy forward, looks at opportunities to reform certain areas and actions that have been lagging behind and really catching up and doing the very best we can. So whether that is WSIB or whether that is the topic that I've spoken on with the last 20 minutes—which I think everyone is extremely excited about; I can tell by the energy here in the House—which is carbon capture and storage, this bill is addressing a lot of things that need to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate? The member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair. It's my first time in the House when you're there.

I want to say, it's always a pleasure to stand in my place in Ontario's Legislature on behalf of the good people of Waterloo and bring their perspective to the floor.

This is an interesting piece of legislation, in some regard, Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act. I've had a little bit of time to review some of the stakeholders that have actually provided some feedback. This is from OSPE. They say, "This act, if passed, will implement measures to strengthen provincial supply chains"—this is an interesting component—"make government services easier to access, and boost Ontario's economic competitiveness." I'm going to focus on the competitiveness piece, because I do see this government moving in a direction which actually runs counter to the competitiveness piece.

And I will say that the "working with Indigenous partners" component—and I think that it was really powerful this morning when our member from Kiiwetinoong schooled the Minister of Municipal Affairs and said you can't call Indigenous people "our people." They don't belong to us, and it's an important reminder that language really does matter in this place.

On the assessment from OSPE: A component of Bill 46 is working with Indigenous partners. "The government will work with Indigenous businesses and communities to better understand and address barriers to accessing government business support programs and procurement opportunities."

I found that this is pretty important. I don't know if you remember, but I've recently become very fascinated by procurement because it can really drive the economy. It can diversify the economic opportunities of folks across the province. Yet the government, as I mentioned, sort of runs counter to this philosophy. We heard this morning the

member from Kiiwetinoong challenge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and say, "Listen, First Nations people have not been consulted on Bill 23." So you have a red tape bill that says you're going to listen and you're going to work with Indigenous peoples and then you have a massive, damaging piece of legislation, like Bill 23, on which you didn't even bother to consult First Nations people.

This is the letter that the Chiefs of Ontario wrote to the government and wrote to the minister. This just actually happened on November 23, so just late last week. It reads, "The Chiefs of Ontario express their full support for First Nations leadership in their opposition to Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, due to its clear violation of First Nations constitutionally protected, inherent and treaty rights and its inevitable adverse environmental impacts on First Nations ancestral and traditional territories."

It goes on to say, "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." This is a direct quote from Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare. "Bill 23 will inevitably harm Ontario's environmental heritage and weaken land and water environmental protection."

So you have to wonder why the government bothers to put a very symbolic schedule in Bill 46 when your actions speak louder than a red tape bill ever will.

This letter goes on to say, "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 (IAO) office, which is to ensure collaboration amongst ministries engaging and consulting with First Nations on policy and legislative changes, continues to be unfulfilled."

We would be very supportive of a piece of legislation which actually solidified and embedded a respectful relationship with Indigenous peoples in Ontario.

The letter from the Chiefs of Ontario goes on to say, "Unilateral legislative and administrative changes within Bill 23 without consultation or engagement with First Nations are unacceptable and an abuse of power." Abuse of power—this is from the Chiefs of Ontario. "The unprecedented steps taken by the government of Ontario to violate existing treaties and their will to systemically sell off resources will have dire consequences for First Nations and future generations."

Then it goes on to say—and this follows the questioning of our member from Kiiwetinoong this morning: "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."

Then, finally, just to close this loop of inconsistency of the PC government in Ontario: "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. The

government's requests for after-the-fact commentary from First Nations regarding the conception of Bill 23 do not discharge the crown's duty to consult. To move forward, First Nations require a clear commitment from the government of Ontario to honour its duty to consult and to honour, respect and uphold First Nations' inherent rights and jurisdiction."

They have asked—and they've had to ask after the fact, Madam Speaker. They want to meet with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, the Premier and the minister responsible for Bill 23, "to discuss the impacts ... and the value of protecting Ontario's natural ecosystems, lands and waters from irreversible losses and damage for our future generations."

1620

So there you have it. You have the Chiefs of Ontario basically calling out the PC government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, for being completely inconsistent and disrespectful of Indigenous peoples in Ontario. And why is this relevant to Bill 46? Because Bill 46 actually embeds a component that says that we're going to try to better understand and address barriers. Do you know what they need to understand? It's that Indigenous peoples in this province have a right to be consulted, and the government has a duty to consult. So you can put whatever you want into a red tape bill, apparently, but at the end of the day, when you disrespect Indigenous peoples in Ontario, your actions speak louder than words.

The procurement opportunities that this government says that they want and care about in Bill 46—if you were serious about this, you would have passed my private member's bill, which was diversifying the procurement chain and the supply chain to make those supply chains more local, to make our local economies more resilient, to diversify the people who are interacting with the public service.

At the end of the day, Bill 46 is primarily a series of housekeeping amendments, although we're still waiting for some stakeholder feedback on the carbon sequestration because the government has said that this will be environmentally neutral. Well, we're going to take the word of folks who actually have a track record of believing in measures to address climate change, which this government clearly does not. In fact, they have lost in court on several of these initiatives.

The other thing that the opening preamble for the legislation talks about is that it's going to strengthen the economy. Listen; there is a time and a place for regulations. We sometimes disagree with the government on where they cut regulations because we've seen, and we should learn from, the history of this government on things that they have cut when they've reduced regulatory measures, especially around health and safety. We have the classic example of Walkerton. We should be learning from that example every day.

But on the stated economic goals of Bill 46, I have to say that the economy requires investment in people. What we have seen from this government is that they don't fully comprehend how important people who deliver public

services are. If they did, they would have already repealed Bill 124. Bill 124 is a piece of wage-suppression legislation which is driving health care workers out of Ontario.

We were in committee just last Thursday, myself and my counterpart from London, and we heard first-hand from a nurse who's working in the emergency room in Ottawa. They had recruited 28 new nursing students, but they have lost 42 experienced nurses. So the government can say, "But we have 28 new nurses," but you have 42 nurses who had a connection with that community, who had knowledge that you cannot learn from a textbook. That knowledge transfer, that mentorship that happens in the nursing field, it doesn't seem to resonate with this government.

The other piece, though, is that we do support progressive infrastructure development and investment, I have to say, because we follow the money. We follow the money very closely over here. It is a rare, rare day that I can take a quick quote from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, but this association—I'm going to read their open letter to this government on infrastructure and transit projects, because it really is telling of how sloppy this government is with regard to the finances of the people of this province. This is the letter, and it's a really good parable, if you will:

"Imagine you've hired contractors to do a home renovation project. You've finally saved up enough money to add that second bathroom you've always wanted. What would you do if, halfway through the job, the contractors came to you and said that costs had suddenly doubled, and the only explanation they had was inflation?

"Most people would probably fire the contractors on the spot and look for someone else to do the job. Inflation is a factor, but double?" You cannot rationalize a doubling of the cost of infrastructure projects because of inflation. "And, even if you decided to keep those contractors to finish that one job, you certainly wouldn't hire them" again—but that's what happens in this place. And it turns out that the Premier apparently has no problems with this.

The Premier "decided to put Metrolinx, a crown agency, in charge of overseeing the construction of the government's major new subway projects."

We've heard about a lot of these projects that were carefully drafted on the back of a napkin, and Metrolinx will be leading the charge, even though the agency to date has a—I would not say a very good record. You just have to point to the Eglinton Crosstown project and the public-private partnerships that Metrolinx, as the contractor, oversees. So when these projects were first announced three years ago—at the heart of the plan is the Ontario Line. This Ontario Line is supposed to connect the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place. Let's not talk about Ontario Place today, because it is very, very problematic. I don't think anyone thought it would end up as a spa.

The Ontario Line's "cost was originally pegged at \$10.9 billion. Metrolinx was put in charge of overseeing the project.

"Just a few days ago, news broke that the Ontario Line, which is still at least five years from completion"—if

we're lucky—"is now set to cost taxpayers at least \$19 billion." That's almost double.

"That's a 75% cost increase.

"That extra \$8 billion could have paid for seven brand new hospitals"—it could have.

"The Ministry of Transportation is covering for Metrolinx and blames inflation for the increased costs.

"While inflation has certainly hit the province hard, Ontario hasn't seen 75% inflation over the past three years.

"The Ontario Line is not the only example...."

Metrolinx was tasked by a previous government with "overseeing the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown line through the heart of midtown Toronto." That project is now \$325 million over budget.

"That's enough money to hire over three thousand nurses"—or pay the nurses in Ontario a fair wage. What a concept that would be.

It goes on to say that Burlington and Oakville—municipalities which this government has been, quite honestly, insulting through the course of Bill 23 and Bill 39—decided that they were going to do a rail underpass together, and Metrolinx said that's going to be \$60 million. Well, they just got a quote for \$177 million.

It's the contractor that goes over budget—and you would think that the government would want to tackle this issue, because infrastructure investment does create jobs, but over-budget infrastructure projects that never get done on time or on budget are a drag on the economy. The only people who benefit from these kinds of projects, when there is no financial oversight or accountability, are the people who are at the table, in the backrooms, making the deals and making the money.

The fact that they've claimed that Bill 46 is somehow an economic competitiveness bill, not addressing the importance of accountability and efficiencies in infrastructure development, is not shocking, but it is problematic. A huge reset button needs to be hit on these public-private partnerships, which are not serving the people of Ontario very well.

I'm not going to hold my breath that this government is going to take on P3s. They're very determined to go in that direction. At the very least, though, the Minister of Transportation should take responsibility. You can't outsource your responsibility as a minister of the crown—I guess you can, because she is, but it is not in the interest of the people we serve.

So there are obviously inconsistencies with Bill 46, and we have some concerns with that.

Also, the fact that the government claims that they care about red tape, that they want to reduce red tape, is really an oxymoron, because they just passed this morning—we voted against it, for the record, for very good reason—Bill 23. Bill 23, in the region of Waterloo, is going to create twice the red tape that we've ever seen—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: False.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is not false.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Catherine—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, listen to my rationale.

1630

We have a regional level of government that the government may or may not like—or they may or may not like the hard line that's around the region of Waterloo. We have seven municipalities within that regional umbrella. The government is downloading the responsibility for housing and development to those seven other lower-tier governments. Right now, the region of Waterloo coordinates, collaborates, has the big picture on these infrastructure projects, like housing, affordable housing, not-for-profit. They are missing one part. They are missing the money from the province of Ontario; I can tell you that much. They have found a fairly strong partner in the federal government. Now, because of Bill 23, all those seven little municipalities, who have staffs of 10, 12 or 13 people, are going to have to figure out the planning process for the new housing projections—if it matches the provincial direction, whoever is going to determine those provincial priorities. Is it the Minister of Municipal Affairs? Is it the Premier himself? Is he going to determine what the provincial priority is? Right now, nobody really knows. So this, in effect, is going to create double the work at those lower-tier governments, and it will likely slow down housing developments and housing starts. In fact, the housing starts in the fall economic statement had been downgraded.

All of this comes at a time when we hear members of the government saying fairly disparaging things about these municipalities. My counterpart the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, just last Wednesday, was saying that the township of Woolwich didn't even know that they had \$6.5 million, and that \$200 million was in reserves, and that nobody was spending the money.

So what did I do? I did what I'm supposed to do. I wrote to all of those municipalities, I quoted the member from Kitchener–Conestoga—I pulled out his comments, which were fairly negative, I have to say—and I reached out to those municipalities. You could imagine their surprise, because they have a five-year, capital-forecasted budget for \$6.5 million, and all of it is allocated. I give these municipalities full credit for planning, for doing their due diligence, and for working within a very tight timeline and guidelines that are determined by the provincial government, because they are creatures of the provincial government.

At the end of the day, when you hear back from the municipalities and they say, "All of this money is allocated for five years"—someone in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs just looked at a number and said, "That's outrageous," but they didn't meet with them, they didn't talk with them, they didn't consult with them.

And I have to say, this is a government that has \$4.5 billion in a contingency fund, unallocated. Who does that, especially when the FAO says a reasonable contingency fund is \$1 billion?

So what I see with Bill 46, as I said, is some house-keeping amendments, but you've always got to pull back the layers with this government, because they're always up to more than what appears. What a disrespectful way to treat municipalities in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: My question is for the member opposite. She touched on a lot of various points.

Providing government services faster, better and easier for people and business is what cutting red tape is all about. This means providing end-to-end services that will enhance competitiveness and resilience across all government processes.

So why doesn't the opposition support systems that will provide a simple and efficient way for people to submit, track and receive updates on approvals in a manner that is more transparent and accountable? That's what our government is focused on doing. May the member opposite please answer that question and tell us why she can't support that measure?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is a very interesting question coming from the government, because we have stood in our place now, day after day, talking about the importance of delivering publicly funded health care, for instance—the government says, “Well, we want to streamline,” and they even put out the memo asking local health agencies to work around the clock.

We believe in public services. We believe in delivering services efficiently, and that, certainly, is not happening in our health care system.

So I guess the question is—and this was the theme—why is the government so inconsistent in your treatment of the very people who build this province and really hold communities together?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question in response to an excellent presentation by the member from Waterloo, as we're talking about Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

She rightly highlighted the Ontario Line and the inability for folks to follow the money, and I know that she likes to be able to do that, which is part of the problem with P3s—that with the public-private partnerships, we don't have the accountability. Certainly, she raised the Eglinton Crosstown—but I will see the Eglinton Crosstown and raise her the Ottawa LRT as a perfect example of when things go awry. Remembering that P3s are not about public infrastructure; they're about private profits—these are financiers that we entrust the project to. The province, in effect, is handing over the Ontario Line and saying, “Make it happen.” They'll get it back in the end, and then we'll find out how many years late and how many billions more.

In terms of outsourcing responsibility—I'd love for her to shed a little more light on why we do need accountability and oversight in the province of Ontario

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Oshawa.

The Ottawa LRT is a perfect example of addressing administratively and, through legislation, improving the transparency on these projects. At the end of the day, this

isn't the government's money or the opposition members'—it's the people of this province, through their tax dollars. Once it goes into this massive contract, which is usually a consortium of some magnitude, you lose touch with that project and you lose the accountability factor. And when you lose the accountability factor, things go very, very wrong, as has happened with the Eglinton Crosstown, as has now happened with the Ontario Line.

To see a project like the Ontario Line go from \$10.9 billion to \$19 billion, and then the Minister of Transportation says, “Oh, well, it's Metrolinx. I've told them”—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for Waterloo for her presentation and participation in debate this afternoon, and I appreciate her speaking to the various aspects of the legislation.

I think the carbon sequestration piece is very important. Obviously, I've never been accused of being a socialist, but there are aspects of the NDP that I admire, and one of those is their commitment to fighting for the environment. I believe that's a value we share. We understand the importance of ensuring that we're protecting future generations, especially with regard to climate change and ensuring that we're reducing emissions and protecting the environment that we all hold dear.

They bring forward many bills, they bring forward many motions and, obviously, I respect that as the role of the opposition—critiquing our legislation. And yet, I'm wondering why the NDP haven't brought forward any plans to address carbon sequestration here in the province of Ontario in their own history and why they haven't introduced similar legislation in the past.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, with all due respect, you've kept us pretty busy on a number of other issues. As the finance critic, you give me a lot of material to work with—and you don't make my job hard; you make my job very easy.

I do appreciate the minister giving us sort of his version of carbon sequestration. For us, it's always, who's driving the bus on this legislation? Who's motivating it? In this instance, it does seem like this is coming from Ontario businesses that have been interested in pursuing new underground geological storage projects.

It's amazing how fast a business can get action. Why can't the nurses in the province of Ontario get action?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo for her excellent presentation this afternoon.

Last week, our hospital in St. Catharines actually announced that there were going to be pediatric surgical delays in order to create space and capacity, because our health care is in crisis right now.

So why are we literally talking about anything else right now when our health care is in crisis—a crisis that has

been exacerbated by serious underfunding by this government over the past half a decade?

1640

My question to my colleague from Waterloo is, why are we not talking about how we can improve our health care when it's in a crisis?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much to the member from St. Catharines.

It does speak to priorities.

I was very shocked when we brought forward our opposition day motion to the government to discuss and to plan, to work together, for a human resources health care strategy—because as I said, you can build a bed, you can build a hospital, you can build a long-term-care home, but without the people, it's not open, and it certainly isn't serving the people that we are elected to actually make their lives better.

Housekeeping bills are one thing, but for me, when I read Bill 46, especially on the Indigenous communities issue—not consulting Indigenous communities for Bill 23; having them write an open letter to the minister and to the Premier saying, “You have a duty to consult.” This is the pattern of this government—they put out a press release, but then they do something else entirely.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for your comments today.

You mentioned a number of Metrolinx projects where the initial cost projection has doubled when the project was actually delivered and the delivery was late. You've also talked about those projects being funded through a P3 model, which cost taxpayers—I believe the Auditor General said it's an additional 26% on each of those projects.

This government seems to be wedded to Metrolinx, to rewarding incompetence.

So what is your recommendation to the government as far as getting public infrastructure built?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, it's interesting; when you're quoting the Canadian taxpayers' association, you know it's really bad in Ontario, because we don't agree on that much. But what we do agree on is that when you allocate a budget for an infrastructure or transit project like the Ontario Line, which is still five years away from completion and is now set to cost taxpayers at least \$19 billion, and then the government's excuse is, “Well, this is inflation”—that really is outsourcing your responsibility on infrastructure projects.

My recommendation is to go back to the Auditor General's report, because her recommendations will help you. The question is, do you want to be helped? You seem to be very focused on helping some people—but not the people of this province, I'll tell you that much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I really do enjoy late-afternoon debate. Everybody is kind of settling in at the end of the

day. It's Monday. People are a bit tired; they're a bit distracted. Hopefully, we can liven things up a bit here.

There are things that are good in Bill 46—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Don't go so fast, okay?

Modernizing the courts, clearing the backlog, adding more judges—good things.

Putting jury questionnaires online is a good thing—a long time coming, for sure.

Carbon capture: When we get into that, it sounds to me like cap-and-trade light. I don't want to pick on you guys, but it's like going part way.

Actually, what's in this bill is not what I want to talk about today; it's about the red tape reduction that families need. It's easy to pull off the pieces of tape that are on the top, and every government does it—it's like the annual Christmas present. After the fall economic statement, we've got to get something on paper, so let's put all this stuff together—again, a good thing. But it's what's missing that is the problem.

Here's what's missing: OHIP+. One of the first things this government did when it came in was to roll back OHIP+ if people have insurance. Every child up to age 18 was going to get drugs—like we do for seniors. This government said, “If you've got private insurance, no matter what it is, OHIP+ isn't going to cover you; you're not eligible.”

Here's the thing: If you need an expensive drug—if you have cystic fibrosis, and there's an expensive drug on the market that might be hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, and you have private insurance, OHIP+ isn't going to be there. How is it that it's not at least even the payer of second resort for people who need that drug? That's a serious consequence. And all the way through on OHIP+, it can affect people in different ways—but what it does make people decide to do sometimes is either pay out of pocket, give up their benefit plan to take OHIP+, which creates other problems with their employer, with their other children, and sometimes they can't.

That's the kind of red tape people want us to remove. It's not affecting everybody, but the people that it really affects—it has a real, negative impact on their lives.

I'm still trying to get my head around why we would be the payer of first resort for everybody over 65 and the payer of second resort would be insurance companies. My mom, who's 90, has public service coverage from the federal government—she's got two coverages—but it's not good enough for our kids. If that's not red tape, I don't know what is. That's the kind of red tape the government needs to remove.

On top of that, there was the beginnings of what was called a rare disease strategy. That has been orphaned for four years. This government stopped doing it. People who have a rare disease or have children who have a rare disease—their lives are complicated. It's full of red tape. It's full of trying to figure out who's the next person you have to go to or what's the next thing you have to do. That's why we need a rare disease strategy. I'm glad I hear some noises about the government starting it up again, but

this four-year hiatus just left a whole bunch of red tape for families.

Take-home cancer drugs: How long have we all been talking about that? That's red tape. You get them if you go into the hospital, but you can't take them home with you. Why is that? Is there a good reason? None that I can see—and it has been around for a long time. That's the kind of red tape we need to be removing here in Ontario.

Bill 124: I know you're all going to be excited about this. Bill 124 wrapped our hospitals, our long-term-care homes, our family health teams and our community health centres in a restriction that no other private interest had. What's happening right now is, it makes it harder for all those groups, family health teams, to recruit people, to retain people because they're restricted to 1%. I know the government is going to say, "Yes, but that's all going to end this spring. That's all going to be over." But you sent the wrong message to people by saying to nurses and the front-line health care workers, "You don't get to bargain." I guess you elevated it up to—the next thing you were going to do was just use the "notwithstanding" clause, but then our friends in the construction industry spoke up and everybody dialed back that red tape, which you didn't use. And I want to thank you for dialing that back.

I know the Minister of Labour will be interested in this, because I've talked to him about it on a couple of occasions: People of similar work don't have the same workplace safety coverage. So if you work in a retirement home, which largely is the same amount of work or the same type of work, I should say, as a long-term-care home—if you're in a long-term-care home, you get WSIB. You've got great coverage. In a retirement home, they have to be covered, but not by WSIB. So in the retirement home industry, there's a whole mishmash of people who aren't fully covered. We all want to make sure that we're protected. There's a reason we have the workplace safety and insurance, and that's to protect people. The few people who get hurt and injured at work—we want it to be there for them.

So why will we hedge on people working in retirement homes? But here's the kicker: If you work in a group home that's run by the province, you're covered. If it's a private group home, you're not covered by WSIB. It has to be some sort of private insurance. I don't understand it. People are doing similar work; the risk profiles are the same. The government hasn't changed it. I've been talking to the minister about that. I put forward a private member's bill, and will be doing it again this session, to speak to how we should be allowing people who are doing the same job, being delivered in different places, to be afforded the same coverage by WSIB—straightforward. It's simple: We should all be covered. We should all be covered if we're doing similar work.

1650

Now, I know we're not covered here, but the people working in retirement homes, the people working in group homes, the people working with adults with developmental disabilities or children with development disabilities, autistic kids—they should all be covered by

WSIB. That's red tape around their lives. They're less protected.

Now, of course, Bill 23: We've heard how the member for Waterloo—it's always hard to follow her—mentioned that the government didn't take the time to consult with First Nations, which really runs against the spirit of truth and reconciliation. The government is in such a hurry. What does Bill 23 do? Well, what it does is it takes a lot of red tape off for a few rich people so they can become a little bit richer. The government's own task force said, "You don't need to open up the greenbelt. You've got enough land. You've got enough land, so why are you opening up the greenbelt?"

It's the people's greenbelt. This is what the greenbelt does: The greenbelt feeds people, it cleans water, it cleans air, it provides recreational space for people. It's something that we established here in this province for the people. It's not the Premier's greenbelt or the minister's greenbelt or the government's greenbelt. It's the people's greenbelt.

Hon. David Piccini: They want houses.

Mr. John Fraser: No, what they want is a greenbelt. What they want you to do is to actually build on the land that you have.

Just because the Premier believes it's part of his job to make his already really rich friends a little bit richer, we're opening up the greenbelt. You took all the red tape off for those few very rich people who are going to make a little bit more money, even though your own commission said to you, "You know what? You've got the land. Don't do this. You don't need to do it." But you did it anyway. Why? Because the red tape you were interested in removing was for a very small number of people.

That's not the red tape we need removed. We need red tape removed from OHIP+, a rare disease strategy, take-home cancer drugs, Bill 124, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I'll be happy to take any questions; I'm sure I'll get a couple.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoché): Thank you. I'd like to remind the members of the House that debate has to go through the Chair. Thank you.

Questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I listened intently to the member's comments. At the beginning, I thought he was going in a direction that had something to do with the legislation. Over time, the emphasis of his comments really shifted. He started to get into OHIP+ and some other programs that aren't in this legislation. So I guess, perhaps, I didn't get a very clear picture of where he was coming from with regard to the actual legislation on the floor of the assembly. I mean, he made, I believe, a brief comment about carbon sequestration, but aside from that there were a lot of detours on this road trip that he took us all on.

Really, as he presented, I was hoping to get some clarity around what he actually thought of the legislation itself. So my question to the member opposite is, are you going to actually be voting for or against this legislation? Yes or no?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I'm going to keep that secret until we get there. You know that.

Listen; there are good things in here—that's what I led with—but here's the thing, to the member opposite: I know you don't want families to have a harder time getting the drugs that they need. I know that you want to have a rare disease strategy here in Ontario. I think you would like to have take-home cancer drugs, too; I'll make that assumption.

What I'm saying is, that's red tape in people's lives. And when we talk about red tape—you know, there's nothing wrong with doing what we're doing; we still have to dig into it a bit more, but we actually have to look at what's happening in people's lives. If they can't get the drugs that they need because the government has made up some crazy rule, that's red tape. That should be in this bill. That should be changed. That should be fixed.

It would be easier to vote for the bill if you had something like that in it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to ask the member a question. We had been speaking earlier about the Ontario Line, because as we're talking about Bill 46 and less red tape and a stronger Ontario, I have concerns about the P3 model. The member, who comes from the Ottawa area, perhaps has heard of the Ottawa LRT and is probably familiar with what can go wrong with a P3. What we have here is a bill that wants to reduce red tape, but a P3 project—once the government hands it over and says, "We trust you; please make this happen," there's no red tape behind there. It's just whatever happens behind that curtain happens. We get it back, and then we are left as a province to pay the bills.

So my question is, less red tape—is this government, in its obsession with just having no regulation—are those two things the same?

Mr. John Fraser: If you look at Bill 23 and the stuff that it does to conservation authorities and the stuff that it does to regulation, yes. In the case of procurement for large transit projects, transparency is the best thing. The reality is, though, in some of the models, if you took a look at what happened in Ottawa, if you actually hadn't had a structure in place where you had a consortium, what would end up happening is you would be dealing with different portions of those companies that were providing services, and it would be much more of a difficult conversation, trying to get people to come around to do those things. So there are benefits and negatives to—I call them AFPs; you call them P3s. There has to be transparency around them, and you have to just ensure that there's value for money, because it is actually about mitigating risk. The question is, does this thing that you're doing actually mitigate those risks?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's always interesting to listen to a presentation from the interim leader of the independents, particularly when in 2017, under the previous Liberal

government, Ontario had the highest cost of compliance in Canada, totalling \$33,000 per business. Can you imagine that? In contrast, we're looking to be able to save over \$500 million in annual compliance costs. Will he stand in his place for once and support small—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Please come to order. Members, please be seated.

Member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Why is it so hard for the member across the way to use the word "Liberal"?

And you know what? What would be really nice is if you could save those families that are spending thousands and thousands of dollars on drugs 5,000 bucks a year. That would be a great thing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I have the privilege to rise again today to speak about one of the highlights of our government's ongoing strategies to build a prosperous Ontario: Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

Interjections.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you for that.

The reduction in red tape is directly proportional to the reduction of administrative costs, and that is a major factor that keeps our existing businesses away from thriving and new businesses pushed away to make those investments right here in Ontario.

Let's say, for an example, there's a company with a revenue of \$10, with a cost of \$8. The revenue is more than the cost. That means it's a sustainable business. But when you add red tape, when you add higher taxes, what happens, Madam Speaker? The revenue is \$10, and your cost becomes \$12. Your business becomes unsustainable. And what happens then? Such businesses will not stay here; they will go to places where they can have a lower cost, maybe same revenue or sometimes even higher. We've seen it over the last 15 years, businesses moving to China, moving to Mexico. Under the previous Liberal government—I don't think it's a hidden secret; we all know—supported by the NDP, our province got plagued with a never-ending stream of red tape and higher taxes. You remember the times when Ontario had the largest regulatory burden in the country. This drove away jobs, investments and opportunities from our province. In the last 15 years, we lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and that's a shame.

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Since red tape is a significant barrier to productivity, our work is more critical now than ever. It is challenging our economic competitiveness, development and innovation. When revenue is going to be \$10, we want to make sure the cost is \$8—it's less than \$10, and that is what our government is doing: sustainable business practices. We are making sure the cost of doing business in this province is less, and the benefit is all going to be enjoyed by all of us, by all Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, being a science student, I love Sir Isaac Newton's laws of motion, and I just was thinking: How can I put them together in a perspective in the political world? So I just thought maybe I can try. As you know, the first of Newton's three laws says an object won't change its motion unless a force acts on it. In other words, without someone exerting effort to make it happen, nothing will take place, so the status quo is not an option. That is why, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have created a new Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. I just wanted to acknowledge the minister and the PA for doing an incredible job.

The second law states the force on an object is equal to its mass times its acceleration. The greater the headwind, the larger the bureaucratic inertia, the more effort is required to gain momentum. But once in motion, it does not stop, and that is why our minister and the ministry are doing an incredible job by bringing more and more of these bills, so that we do not stop and we keep fighting red tape and we keep reducing the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario.

The third and final law states that to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. I'm sure, colleagues, you know what I'm talking about. When you take an action on the government side to do something, what do you hear from the other side?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Complaining.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Opposition, complaining—to every action, they are going to complain, but that does not mean we should stop taking action. That is why this bill, if passed, will streamline processes and modernize outdated practices of government in multiple sectors across Ontario. It will increase our competitiveness, strengthen the provincial supply chain, grow our labour force, support farmers and agribusinesses, and make interaction with government services easier. That's what we are doing here: We are reducing red tape.

If we want to achieve sustainable growth, it is essential to remember Newton's three laws of motion. Start by applying a force—the first keyword is “start;” if you will not do it, it will not happen. Once you've got the motion going, keep driving it and driving it hard. That's what this ministry is doing. That's what this government is doing. Finally, always be ready to counteract any opposition that you might face. When leaders stop rowing, the boat stops moving, so if you want to make sure to grow our Ontario, we need to keep working, irrespective of the opposition we may face, and that is what we are doing through this bill.

The burdensome red tape and overregulation, as many of my colleagues talked about, are costing an average of \$33,000, one of the highest in North America. That's \$4,000 more than any province in Canada, but thankfully we have a government, we have a member of this caucus who is standing strong and making sure those dark days are now behind us. We will continue to fight, and we will continue to work together.

Since 2018, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we took significant action to reduce red tape by making a plan

to remove unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that are holding our businesses back. Over the past five years, we reduced Ontario's regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5%.

Interjection: It's a good start.

Mr. Deepak Anand: An amazing start.

The actions we took saved businesses, not-for-profit organizations, school boards and hospitals \$576 million annually. As I said earlier, when you reduce costs, businesses become sustainable, they want to invest more, and they grow more. And when they grow more, they prosper. What prospers with them is our province and our Ontarians.

We've made great progress, and this progress has been achieved through common-sense changes that save both time and money. I'll give you an example. We passed eight high-impact pieces of red tape reduction since 2018. We took more than 400 burden-reducing actions. And guess what? It was all without compromising health, safety and/or the environment.

The result, Madam Speaker? Through these changes, we've been able to reduce—for an example, in July 2020, the Legislature passed the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act to help address infrastructure backlogs for businesses and communities. We cut red tape by modernizing and streamlining a 50-year-old environmental assessment process. What happened? It reduced the timeline for many projects from six years to three years, and a greater number of important infrastructure projects are now able to move forward without unnecessary delays.

I'll give another example: We live in the 21st century, yet our high school students were still required to submit their important diploma requirements through paper. When we made that change, it saved time and frustration for students and administrators alike. As a part of the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, we helped students digitally submit their forms on community involvement activities.

Madam Speaker, every time I talk about community involvement—I just want to take a moment to talk about that. On Saturday, November 26, my wife, Aruna Anand, and I had the opportunity and pleasure to attend the centennial celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, organized by BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. To commemorate his precious words, “In the joy of others lies our own.”

December 7 marks Pramukh Swami Maharaj's, creator of BAPS mandir, 100th birthday. It was held at International Centre in Mississauga–Malton and attended by thousands of devotees. I want to say thank you to BAPS for your Ontario spirit.

Madam Speaker, by the way, do you know who joined me? It was Minister McNaughton, along with his wife, the famous political wife Ms. Kate Bartz, so I want to say thank you to them as well.

Today is also the Shaheedi Diwas, the martyr anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, the ninth Sikh guru, who gave his life to protect human rights. Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's priceless thoughts are:

—respect for all beings is the foundation of non-violence;

—outside of our thoughts, fear does not exist;

—show empathy for all living things because hate causes destruction; and

—great things are composed of small things.

Even after almost 350 years, his teachings remain highly relevant to today's society. We cannot thank Guru Ji enough for his sacrifice and service to humanity.

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Madam Speaker, I also want to mention that it is already November 29 in India, and soon, it will be the 29th here. This is the day when my father, Sardari Lal Anand, a person full of life, left us for his heavenly journey. Born in 1940 in Gujranwala, he was always at the forefront in helping community members, especially helping countless families through bathing the deceased person, a ritual done before cremation. He always believed in providing the help before it is asked, and I just want to take a moment and thank my father for his teaching of the art of giving. I just want to say, Papa, you left us with a void that can never be filled.

And I am thankful to the person who has shown the most strength in the last three years, Madam Speaker, and that is my mother, Santosh Anand. My deepest gratitude and thanks to my mother for being so strong and providing strength to all of us.

Madam Speaker, nothing in life is permanent. I want to give you an example of a hidden gem of Malton, Carlton Chambers. Carlton won a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games in 1994, Olympic gold medal in 1996, world champion in 1997. He's in the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, 2004; Mississauga Sports Council Hall of Fame, 2005; Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, 2006; Athletics Ontario Hall of Fame, 2010; Brampton Sports Hall of Fame, 2016. However, a car accident aggravated his groin, troubling him for the remainder of his career, and he never regained his previous Olympic form and retired. Despite the sudden end, he remains the national high school Canadian record holder.

With the athletic track being built in Malton, I hope this will give Carlton Chambers the opportunity to support the local talent. The last many years have been tough for you, and I hope, Carlton, that God will give you the strength to come back and help our youth.

Madam Speaker, back to the bill: We are taking the whole-of-government approach to reducing red tape with 28 measures from 11 ministries, including actions to drive efficiencies within the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, it is my honour to work alongside the skilled trade professionals and knowledge experts to help ensure that Ontario works better for people and smarter for businesses. We are making sure that Ontarians have better jobs and bigger paycheques.

The proposed piece of legislation would amend the WSIB, Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, to eliminate administrative burdens when reviewing, renewing or

extending lease agreements for the WSIB offices. It is important to know that these potential changes would not apply to the acquisition or disposal of the property, nor would they eliminate government oversight.

The act would update current requirements of the WSIB to ensure they are consistent with other government directives. Right now, WSIB is required to provide both a five-year strategic plan along with an annual business plan spanning three to five years. This is a perfect example of burdensome red tape: Requiring the WSIB to provide both a strategy and business plan is duplicative and only leads to more costs and delays.

To ensure a better and greater responsiveness, we are proposing greater legislative flexibility to the WSIB to align with other large agencies like Metrolinx, the Ontario Energy Board, and Ontario Health. By modernizing and updating the governance structure of the WSIB, we are supporting Ontario's overall red tape reduction efforts to streamline outdated practices that no longer serve a purpose. With the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, we are continuing to meet this commitment.

Madam Speaker, what does that mean really? It means with less red tape, should the unfortunate need arise, we are proposing to give WSIB the ability to determine all injured apprentices' average earnings be equal to those of a journeyman employed by the same employer in the same trade, for the purpose of calculating loss of earnings. It means that an apprentice would benefit from full earning potential if they were injured.

Not only that, this change also supports Ontario's prosperity and economic recovery and aligns with our continued commitment to people and workers. Madam Speaker, I truly believe that all we're doing here is helping our businesses and making sure that we are sustainable. We have seen that by reducing the red tape, there are many, many organizations who have invested into Ontario, and I just want to give you some of the examples of organizations: Borrowell, Wealthsimple, Equinox Gold, Pfizer, Bombardier, Nestlé, Square, Oracle, Fujitsu—all these organizations are making investments because we are making sure that we are reducing the red tape, we are reducing the cost of doing business.

Again, Madam Speaker, when we reduce the cost of doing business, we're making sure that the organization becomes sustainable. They can take this extra money and reinvest back into their businesses and can grow their businesses. Together, when they grow the business, our Ontario grows as well.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, red tape reduction is in high demand. Site Selection Magazine, an internationally circulated business publication, not too long ago awarded Ontario the Canadian Competitiveness Award for the fourth consecutive year, and it was primarily because of the factor of our commitment to red tape reduction.

The proposed legislation will reduce administrative burden and costs in matters linked to 11 ministries through new practices and updates to the old acts.

Let's not forget that members of the general public also benefit when businesses can grow and thrive. A competitive business climate created through the reduction of

red tape brings economic growth, jobs and new investment to our wonderful Ontario.

Minister of Red Tape Reduction and PA for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, I want to acknowledge you're doing an incredible job. You have started a broad public consultation on the potential modernization of countless acts. So I encourage everyone: Please come forward, join us, join the moment and participate in this consultation. Your valuable consultation will help the ministry and your government to give back more to the communities we live in so that we have a stronger, more prosperous Ontario.

Speaker, I will be voting in favour of this tremendous piece of legislation, and I'm looking forward—both sides of the aisle, let's come together and let's rise above the politics and support our Ontario. Let's build a better Ontario, a stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I would like to remind the members of the House to please focus your remarks on Bill 46.

Questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the member opposite, who spent that full 20 minutes breaking down some of the bill, which is an omnibus bill—essentially housekeeping. I think I'm heartened to know—sometimes it's hard as a member in this House in opposition to thoughtfully break down stuff that is fine; there are some pieces in here that are fine. There are other pieces that—we look forward to hearing from stakeholders—may be problematic or we would want to bring forward amendments.

So I would like to ask the member—who talked about lots of stuff, some not even remotely connected to the bill. But connected to the bill, I would like to ask the member: What is he hearing from stakeholders? Real ones—I don't mean the ones that the government minister was talking about at that level, but from his community, his community stakeholders for whom this bill is relevant in their lives?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for that wonderful question.

Talking about my stakeholders in Mississauga–Malton, it's one of the biggest and the best ridings in the GTA. We have 78% visible minorities; 61% of the residents of Mississauga–Malton are born out of Canada.

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There are a lot of small businesses in Mississauga–Malton, and each and every one of them, especially during the pandemic and even before that, because of the burden, has been struggling. Every time we went to them, we asked them, "What can we do for you?" And the first thing, the most important thing they always asked is, "Reduce the red tape. Reduce the government cost." When you reduce the cost with the same revenue, we will become sustainable, and that's what we're doing through this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: As we all know, the effect of the gasoline pricing changes and the volatility are causing the

logistics and all the trucking companies to suffer, causing some of the pricing of the groceries to go up, and every other item which has transportation elements in it.

My question is for the member from Malton. How is this regulation going to affect the volatility of the gasoline pricing? How is it going to simplify these regulations on the gasoline volatility, and how will this affect the pricing of the gasoline?

Mr. Deepak Anand: First, before I answer the question, I just want to acknowledge the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills for your advocacy. You're doing an incredible job for your residents. Some of us call you "Professor," too, by the way.

Madam Speaker, asking about the gasoline volatility regulation: The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks are proposing changes that would simplify the requirement for petroleum refiners, importers, terminals and storage solutions to report summertime gasoline volatility limits in Ontario. This would reduce the compliance risk by aligning with the national standard and reduce the administrative burden and cost, and that's exactly what we're doing, Madam Speaker. We're making sure the cost of doing business is lower. When you reduce the cost of doing business, you have extra money which you can invest back into your business and grow your business. When you grow your business, you grow Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Through you, Speaker: Every family in Ontario is feeling the pinch of inflation in rising interest rates, groceries going up, gas, but especially hydro. This omnibus bill makes changes to the Ontario Energy Board Act; however, it does nothing for families that are struggling right now to pay the necessities.

This is a situation where the government does need to act. They need to immediately be looking at a program of support for those with the lowest incomes, who are going to have the toughest time keeping themselves warm and fed this winter. Why are we debating energy legislation when we should be bringing forward solutions for families in the face of rising costs of living?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to thank the member from the opposition for that important question. Of course, Madam Speaker, the cost of living is extremely important for Ontarians. I just want to say this to all Ontarians: We actually had passed the budget in August, and we just had an opportunity to debate the wonderful fall economic statement. Thanks to the Minister of Finance for all your hard work.

We're making sure your cost of living is lowered by reducing the five cents in gas. We're making sure, through LIFT, that for up to \$50,000 income, you don't pay any tax. And through these measures, Madam Speaker, we made sure that you don't have to pay for your licence plates and that you've got the money back. These are the ways we're reducing.

But at the same time, I want to urge the member opposite: Let's all stand together and fight the carbon tax,

so that we can get more relief to our province of Ontario and the Ontarians in their fight for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

The member from Chatham-Kent.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Speaker, if the member could help us understand an issue very important to my stakeholders and to stakeholders throughout Ontario: Why is the ministry proposing to modernize the ARIO Act?

Mr. Deepak Anand: First of all, I want to say thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent. You're actually the one who's working hard on this bill.

Madam Speaker, this is an amazing action that the member and his ministry are taking. Ontario is working with the agri-food sector to determine current and future research needs that promote innovation and enable farmers to be on the cutting edge of best production practices. Every time I go to Adolphustown, I always see, "Farmers feed cities," so I want to take a moment and say thank you to all our farmers. Thank you for your hard work, and we are all enjoying the benefits in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Mississauga-Malton. You spun a very good tale in this House, I will say this, about that. He did talk about the importance of consultation and working with us across the lines, and I find it a little ironic, I have to say. The member is on finance with me, and I got 20 minutes on the fall economic statement—20 minutes instead of 15 hours.

The consultation piece, though, in Bill 23 I think is one of the most egregious moments for this House, when you did not welcome the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—444 municipalities. The member from Mississauga-Malton talks about how important it is to consult and how to rise above politics, and yet the former mayor of Toronto, John Sewell, at the age of 82, had to disrupt Bill 23 delegations because you shut him down. That's not good practice, and I'm going to give the member an opportunity to correct his record.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Mississauga-Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was hoping you were going to say this is Bill 46 and not half of Bill 23. But I'll still answer that.

I had the opportunity to talk on Bill 23, and I just want to say, from your government to each and every Ontarian, for somebody who's here or who's planning to come to Canada, you have a government who is going to be with you, for you.

We are in a housing crisis, and we will make sure that everyone who wants to buy a house or rent a house has a roof over their head. That is why Bill 23 is making monumental changes so that we can have 1.5 million houses in 10 years.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate it. I listened intently as the member opposite said, why are

we discussing energy? It's not surprising when they bankrolled the previous government's drastic energy price increase through a carbon tax on heating and on fuel. But my question to this member is, carbon capture, storage and utilization are really important. Can you talk a bit more about that? It's so important to work with industry and with everyday Ontarians as we support environmental solutions. I appreciate the work being done. Can you share more with the House on that?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I just want to say thank you to the minister for his incredible job. We are going to make sure that 30% before 2030—we're going to achieve it much faster than the rest of Canada. Thank you, Minister, for your advocacy, telling the other side as well that the carbon tax hurts. If you want to make life affordable, we need to fight the carbon tax.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very proud to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the good people of Toronto Centre, specifically on Bill 46. The title is Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

I read the bill with quite a bit of interest, and I thought, "Hey, this is going to be good, because who doesn't want a stronger Ontario and who doesn't want less red tape?" But here we go.

I found, as I was reading the bill—and I will admit that I haven't had as much time with it as I would like. But as I was reading the bill, I was recognizing that it's actually not what the bill says, it's what the bill doesn't say that seems to be of importance. Although this has been touted as a bit of housecleaning bill, it's a large omnibus bill. I think one thing that I would offer is that I'm not seeing as much of the stronger Ontario in here as I would like to see, because there are some missed opportunities, which of course can always be corrected through collaboration, as the good member was speaking about just earlier: collaboration perhaps at committee; there could be amendments there.

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I want to recognize that we have a framework of discussion on a number of key, important issues that I think the government should be tackling, but there are some missing components that I want to highlight. There are so many to go through, so I will recognize that my time is limited; I won't be able to get through it all.

As the official critic for the Attorney General, I'm going to focus on the justice system changes that are outlined in this bill, which I think are important. Allowing electronic notification, electronic filing, is perfectly acceptable, and I think we should all be welcoming that. We should embrace that wherever we can because that is a good thing to do, but it doesn't seem to go very far beyond that. One of the missed opportunities I would offer is that we can also build up our legal aid system. We can invest in community legal aid clinics to make sure that we can actually provide stronger, more fair, faster access to justice. That clearly is not in the bill. That would probably eliminate quite a bit of red tape.

Studies into legal aid impacts in other Commonwealth countries—I'm going to pull some examples from Australia just because it's got a parliamentary system similar to ours and it's got a legal system that's very comparable to ours, especially through our evolutionary histories as Commonwealth nations. What they have identified is that legal aid is revenue-neutral. Efficiencies that can be found can be diverted from the social justice systems by saving courts some time, making sure that people are adequately represented so that people do not have to wade through what is an arduous, long, red-tape-bounded process. It also means that people who are waiting for justice can get there a lot faster, and then there's the human value and the human cost that is very difficult to measure.

I had a meeting with the Ontario trial lawyers earlier in my term, when I just began—I got here in June, you'll remember, Speaker. I had a lot of people wanting to meet, and one of the groups was the Ontario trial lawyers. What they were offering was what I thought was a very strategic way of cutting through a lot of red tape and that could get us through the process of getting access to justice a lot faster. What they have offered is that the government should end the use of civil juries, not in every single case, but there are enough cases that we should consider it. They built a very strong business case, so it's about efficiencies for cost as well as efficiencies to reduce red tape and a faster pathway to justice.

"Civil litigation," as noted by the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, "involves many types of disputes, but a large portion of those disputes arise from injury claims and mainly involve insurance companies. Claimants are often unable to work and in desperate need of health care not funded by OHIP"—and in desperate need of support. "Some have no choice but to rely on social assistance as they wait for their case to come to trial." In many cases, what they'll be living with is the loss of income as well as escalating medical needs. So they're in the system, they're being dragged out, the clock is running on them, and they're not getting to where they need to go. That's a very obvious red tape elimination that could take place if we actually eliminated the option for civil juries.

The other thing that is critically important for us to note is that in Canada there is no constitutional right to a jury trial in many of those civil matters. Ontario is one of the last Canadian jurisdictions to grant parties the right to choose jury trials for most civil matters. In most provinces, civil trials are presided by judges alone. Even in Ontario, civil juries are eliminated for matters where a claimant seeks \$200,000 or less, or there's a distinction between the claim that's \$200,000 or \$200,000 plus \$1, which seems very arbitrary. How did they come up with that quantum, and then to be able to give us an option that is going to then be bound by more time?

Here's another example of red tape that's not contained in the bill that could be addressed in the bill so you can make things move a little faster and eliminate that red tape. Civil juries actually cost a lot more time than judge-adjudicated trials. They're more costly, and they demand

many more resources from the courts. Lawyers spend extra time preparing and presenting evidence for a jury trial. They have to coordinate the logistics of actually obtaining a jury, and it sometimes could take weeks, if not months, to actually get that jury to come together. There are numerous interruptions that occur throughout the jury trial when a jury is excused from the courtroom so that lawyers can discuss the finer points of law. There are so many other examples that I could draw from, but that is just one piece of the pie.

Finally, I want to bring home the costs and why I think this would be a great example of how the government could use the powers that they have, which is this supermajority, to actually eliminate what is a significant amount of red tape that's literally choking our courts system.

We could consider the burden of jury duty on the individual. Think about it: When you get the notice through the mail—and your average citizen will in Ontario—do they jump for joy when they get this notification that they've been chosen for jury selection? Most likely not, and this is why. Juries are paid nothing for the first 10 days of service and a mere \$40 up to day 49, and then \$100 a day for 50 days of service. They actually have to lose money—they're literally walking away from whatever employment they have to make less than minimum wage to sit through a jury trial. So there aren't a lot of people who are actually jumping up and saying, "Give me this opportunity"—it's not just the lack of compensation for the individual jurist; it's the fact that they're also having to carry additional expenses such as child care. Employers that are relying on those employees while they're serving on juries, with these very long and unpredictable schedules—all of that is red tape. All of that is going to cost taxpayers, ultimately, a heck of a lot of money, and we're not going to get a better, quicker, expedited judicial process for it.

If we're going to name a bill the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, then I would expect more content—and that's why this bill is so difficult. I don't blame my friend across the aisle as he struggled to make some sense of the bill. I was struggling myself, trying to find out exactly what this bill is trying to do and what it is not going to do.

I want to talk a little bit about WSIB. WSIB is actually a reference in this bill, and of course, there's all sorts of things that we can say about it—but there's also the request to move the WSIB headquarters from Toronto to London. Companies move all the time. That's perfectly fine, and we can certainly accept that. But when it's a public agency, there should be some public accountability. You're going to have to explain to the public, why is this happening? What is the business case? Where's the value-for-money proposition that you are using to justify this move? Companies move to Toronto all the time. Companies leave Toronto. But I have nothing in this bill that explains to me why this is happening. So not only will jobs leave my city—yes, I should be concerned, but Toronto is a magnet for employment. Many of your children, many of your family members, friends and family, all come into the city of Toronto to work, so it's

not the biggest concern for me. However, what's left behind? There's a \$600-million asset sitting on the street, at Simcoe and Front, and it's not really clear to me what happens to that asset. Given the government's track record of unlocking government assets and quickly selling them for perhaps not the highest and best use and not necessarily the maximum dollar, I think there is a massive loophole that's there, and I want to be able to rein that back in, or at least to ask questions that the government should, in terms of justifying why is this happening.

If we're going to be talking about WSIB—how are we seeing the impacts of WSIB? What we know is that COVID is still among us, and one thing that the WSIB has been very poorly performing on is how are they taking care of COVID long-haulers, those with long COVID, as they call it. Those are symptoms that are not going to be quick to resolve. They may emerge and they may disappear again, but it becomes a chronic, underlying illness. So now you have Ontarians who have contracted COVID during the global health pandemic living with, now, long COVID that may be coming in sporadically, and there isn't a strategy within any of this act that actually deals with this piece specifically. Ontarians are getting sicker, and there isn't a package or program to support them.

So we're not making Ontario stronger by any stretch of the imagination, and I think that we need to be able to put aside our differences here in this House—ensure they exist.

This is a very serious issue that I think we need to address, especially for the 10% to 20% of the people who have been infected by COVID who are seeing their symptoms last 12 weeks or longer. Some of those symptoms render them unable to work—and this is the important part. They have weakness, they have brain fog, they have elevated risk of strokes—and so what that means is this red tape act that's before us isn't really getting to a better outcome.

1740

I want to talk a little about carbon capture and storage. There has been lots of good discussion about it, and there's a foundational assumption here that it's a good thing. I want to be able to talk about why that is maybe not the best strategy. Carbon capture and storage has been explored for over 50 years, and it still has not shown any meaningful promise to turn the tide on greenhouse gas emissions, but it has been used time and time again as some type of political cover to allow us to keep drilling, keep digging, extract as much as possible. But how can we do that when the whole world is talking about reversing the climate emergency? "Let's move towards CCS. Let's make sure all of that is discussed and we're going to package it up"—because it's nice, meaty language. It's a lexicon that not everyone understands, and if you say it enough times—carbon capture and storage—you sound awfully smart.

What do the smart scientists around the world tell us about carbon capture and storage? Well, what they tell us is that the very best strategy of removing CO₂ and carbon and keeping it sequestered is actually very simple: As much as possible, especially in the age of the climate

emergency, keep it in the ground. But there's another tangent to it: You should also be planting, building and investing in forestation, investing in the ecosystem, investing in trees. That is the best technology that exists on the planet to actually reduce carbon emissions, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to actually reverse the trend of the climate emergency.

And just to quote the Ontario Forest Research Institute: "Forest management offers some means of reducing negative impacts to forests if the anticipated levels of climate change occur. Thinning to reduce moisture stress and early harvesting of stands deteriorating due to stress, followed by planting with more climatically adapted populations and species could help maintain higher levels of productivity. Climatic adaptation could be increased through tree breeding aimed at increasing pest and stress tolerance. Forests are important in their role in absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere. Although not presently a stated goal, carbon sequestration (storage) could in the future become an objective of forest management."

All of that being said, in a very long way, is that—if you plant trees, if you don't go into the ground to extract, which is a very dirty, very earth-damaging process, you actually are better off. You're going to do a better job of protecting the environment. It's also good for the economy, at the end of the day, and there are business cases for that.

I mentioned earlier that Australia has done some really good work, but they've also been looking at this issue for a much longer time. In Australia, they call their carbon capture and storage experiment the Gorgon Project. For the past 20 years, Chevron has been touting their Gorgon Project, and it's sort of their excuse to go into the ground: "We are going to capture carbon; we're going to store it," and the Gorgon Project is their marquee example—as Chevron, the oil company, wanted to put forward—of why they should be given permissions to dig.

What we learned is that despite receiving \$60 million of taxpayer money and three years later, after their first project began in 2019, they are actually seeing significant problems emerge. All the promises, all the claims that this is the way to dig safely and this is the way to offset carbon emissions have been proven untrue. So what we know is that Gorgon emitted over 7.7 million tonnes of CO₂ between 2016 and 2017; that's a 12-month period. They wiped out all the savings made by all the rooftop solar panel installations in Australia that same year. Can you imagine how large this country is? With everything that has gone on, they've installed all these rooftop solar panels—all of that diversion went away.

The Western Australia Environmental Protection Authority then concludes that Chevron should be held accountable for the venting gas from the Gorgon project, arguing that due to the two-year delay in storing emissions, Chevron is likely to fail to meet the requirement to capture and store at least 80% of the project's emissions.

We've just heard that this bill is going to bring Ontario to a stronger place, that by removing this sort of red tape,

you're going to be able to build a stronger economy. I also heard that the government has said, "Businesses want us to do it. All the businesses are asking for this." Well, I'm sure that businesses are not saying to you, "Let's actually let go of the need to reverse climate change so we can get as much out of the ground, and then have a different problem on our hands." The strategy you put forward to offset actually doesn't work. Then the question would be, why are we doing it? Which businesses are asking for this, and who's paying? Ultimately, from what I can see, it's actually the taxpayers who are going to pay for a failed strategy that doesn't work, but then future generations are going to pay because there's not much of an environment left for them to inherit. This could be a very technical conversation. I do have some more notes on it, but I can see that perhaps it's a topic that's not easy to digest. So I want to move on just for a moment.

I want us to recognize that—actually, I will just say it say for myself. I can't speak for everybody in the House, but I've noticed there's a disturbing trend in the House, and that trend in the House—and I've seen it before. Obviously, it's not my first time at the rodeo; this is my 12th and a half year in government. But what I've seen before is that the title of the bills don't oftentimes match the intention of the bills. This is just a great example of a bill that has a lot that's packed in it, that claims to be doing something—because we've heard members of the House on the government side speak to all the great things this bill does—but I can't see a shred of evidence, or at least not a lot of it anyway, that that is what the bill does.

I guess the part that's most challenging for me is, what is the purpose of what I think is a clean-up bill when it opens up a whole new can of worms that we're not going to be able to get to, a whole new problem that we're not going to be able to get to—because this bill is obviously not that exciting. The media is not reporting on it. It's probably going to sail through committee—because, God knows, if there's 10 hours of debate, it's going to go down to 20 minutes of debate. And yet, it actually opens up so much that needs to be answered and is not answered.

I fear that we're going to make some bad laws here—laws that don't serve the people of Ontario, not this current generation or the generation next, but it will be touted as some type of government announcement that they're cutting red tape when it doesn't really do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments.

With this bill, we are helping create the conditions for businesses and people to thrive, and we're not going to stop until the job is done.

One thing the member mentioned was that Toronto is a magnet for employment, and she's right—through you, Madam Speaker. But to be a magnet for employment, we have to create the environment—and that is what this government is doing, by cutting red tape, keeping taxes low and building houses.

Since being elected in 2018, our government has taken over 400 actions to reduce red tape while maintaining

important regulations that provide people's health, safety and the environment. This has led to savings of almost a half a billion dollars in annual compliance costs—\$500 million.

Will the member opposite agree that cutting red tape saves people and businesses time and money so they can grow their businesses and spend more time with family, therefore creating more jobs in Toronto?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the good member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I really appreciate and value your question.

This is kind of why I alluded to the fact that the title and the content don't always line up. Bill 23 is a great example, where the government has said, "We're going to cut red tape so that we can allow for a lot of development, and this is going to save money." Well, it's actually not saving money. What we've heard is that municipalities are going to be paying a heck of a lot more to make up for the loss of revenue, so it's not revenue-neutral.

1750

Recently, I've heard there are mayors who are now putting forward motions and considerations to their council to create a new category within their tax bill and to call it the "Ontario property tax section." So is it saving money—all these proposed gestures? Some would argue that it's not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre for your comments. It's always interesting—I'm always learning when you're speaking.

You mentioned that this bill is not going to get the attention it deserves, because right now the government just passed Bill 23, which paves over the greenbelt, and they've got Bill 39, which overrides the last municipal election results. Now they've got this bill, which is going to promote carbon capture, and you're saying that in Australia, where they tried this project, their government put in \$60 million of taxpayers' money and didn't get the results.

Are you afraid that this carbon capture is actually just a diversion to allow oil companies to continue to drill and to burn oil?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the good member for the question.

That's exactly what I'm saying. I think that the way schedule 5 is written, it looks like a red herring to me. I guess the challenge before us is that we're not going to go through a fulsome debate. That's just a fact of where this bill is headed. I am very concerned that schedule 5 is opening up an extremely large hole in the legislation that you can't reverse. Once the environment is gone, it's really hard to come back. We need to think twice about moving something like this without any type of research debate or any type of background—and it can't be because we've consulted with business. I've heard that time and time again from the government—that you've consulted with somebody, but then there's no document to say, "This is what the consultation produced."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Aris Babikian: Our government has taken relentless action to reduce red tape across the province. The opposition has continuously voted against the actions we are taking, which have saved businesses over \$500 million in annual compliance costs.

Will the opposition finally correct their record and vote in favour of this bill?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for your question. I suspect that you didn't hear my submission today, because if you had heard—I've just explained to you why there are so many challenges within this bill, and it's regrettable that we're bringing down the debate to, "Will you or will you not support my bill? Tell me." It should never be that simple, folks.

This is complicated legislation that's going to have multiple effects—not even just in one act or one piece of legislation, but multiple pieces of legislation, and then you're going to be dealing with years, generations of impact.

I think it belittles the people of Ontario when we actually don't put our heart, energy and grey matter into making good legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The government side keeps talking about reducing red tape. Those of us on this side of the House are very leery when the government—any Conservative government, like the previous Mike Harris government—talks about reducing red tape, because what you often find is something like Walkerton, where people were very ill and died because the Conservative government cut red tape and the water was contaminated.

Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from Toronto Centre to speak a little more about access to justice. She talked about jury duty. I don't think many people would know that if you are called for jury duty, you are not paid for that duty, you lose time at work and pay, and child care costs are not covered. So I'm wondering if my colleague from Toronto Centre could talk about how that, in itself, is a barrier to access to justice—because you're talking about people not being able to keep a roof over their head or food on the table or take care of their children if they actually are called for jury duty.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much for the question.

I just want to start off by saying, whenever there's any talk about red tape cutting, oftentimes that's coded language for deregulation. I'm not going to be fooled—that you can get me to vote for this because you want me to cut red tape—because you're asking me to support deregulation, which I cannot do.

Back to jury duty: For a lot of folks who are trying to get access to justice—the best trial lawyers in the country have said that every other province has moved in a direction where you don't have to have an option for civil

juries. Therefore, why is Ontario lagging so far behind? For a government that talks about modernization and embracing change and about moving forward with innovation—we're one of the laggards. So why be the outlier and not be the leader? This is a great example of how you can eliminate the option for some civil juries to actually cut the red tape and to get us moving faster—not to mention the fact that it's good for business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member opposite. I listened to her speech with great interest.

On carbon capture, storage and utilization: I note that the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States commits over \$369 billion, of which a portion goes to CCUS, and an international panel report on climate change showed that "the potential for CO₂ capture and storage is considerable," and goes on to support this.

To industry that are already doing this and have asked the government to play a leadership role in establishing a framework here in Ontario, like Stelco—what would she say to that industry? Does she feel they have a role to play in capturing CO₂, and what would she say to the workers and union workers on the cutting edge, looking to do this for sustainable capture of CO₂?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the minister for the question.

I really think that one of the best ways for us to go about this debate is not to try to create it into a binary—because when you do that, you actually eliminate what is really at the heart of it. There are going to be some conflicting reports—some of them are actually produced and funded by the big fossil oil companies—that are going to give you one result, and then there are going to be other studies—perhaps our noted scientists and third party reviewed—that will give you others.

What I'm interested in doing here is to actually just raise the question that the premise right now that's in this bill—you're assuming that carbon capture is neutral, but studies have shown us that it's not. Studies have shown us that it has failed to be neutral and it's actually going to have longer ramifications in the future that we can't necessarily undo.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. David Piccini: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Point of order.

Hon. David Piccini: I just want to clarify my remarks on the international panel on climate change. That was done by the United Nations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Seeing the clock at 6, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, November 29, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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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	