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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 November 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 novembre 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we'll have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2022, on the motion for 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): Further debate?

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm delighted to share my time with my colleagues the members from Brampton East and Scarborough–Rouge Park to speak to our government's proposed Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022. It's a bill that's necessary and timely.

This bill, if passed, would be yet another step forward in making Ontario work smarter for business and people. The proposed legislation builds on the government's strong track record of reducing red tape. Since 2018, we have reduced regulatory requirements by 6.5%, saving individuals and businesses \$576 million in annual compliance costs.

We have come a long way, but there's no room for complacency. We know there's more work to be done. The global supply chain crisis brought on by COVID-19, shifts in demand and labour shortages are impacting Ontarians and our economy. Reducing red tape on individuals and businesses is a key element of post-pandemic recovery and economic growth. To this end, our government is committed to making Ontario better for people and businesses by removing unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that hold us back.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022, outlines 28 new measures to achieve these objectives. They include proposed legislative and regulatory changes as well as policy announcements. I would like to highlight some of the key initiatives in the proposed reduce-red-tape

package in two aspects: supporting Ontario's supply chains and cutting red tape for Ontarians.

Modernization measures for the agriculture and food industry are a central piece of the proposed legislation. Last week, we released the Grow Ontario strategy, the province's plan to build consumer confidence and support farmers and Ontario's food supply. The strategy will promote Ontario-grown food, attract an innovative talent pool and stabilize the food supply chain. Increasing commercialization and adoption of innovative new technologies and practices also play a key role in the strategy.

The proposed legislation includes amendments to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act. Our intent is to help members of feeder cattle cooperatives expand their businesses and create more jobs. This will support the sector's capacity to deliver safe, healthy food products to all Ontarians.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would also modernize the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario—ARIO—Act to reflect current and future agri-food research and innovation needs. The proposed amendments to the act will allow for more research that accurately reflects the evolving nature of agri-food research today and in the future.

Speaker, we all know that transportation is an important pillar that supports Ontario's supply chains. There are several proposals in this package that would make the transportation sector more competitive. Firstly, we are upgrading Ontario's Highway Corridor Management System to provide a seamless and integrated online platform for approvals and permits along provincial highways. Work is ongoing to allow applicants to submit, track and receive all Ministry of Transportation approvals online, saving time and money.

Each year during the spring thaw, roads become weaker and susceptible to permanent damage caused by vehicles. To help protect road infrastructure during this time of the year, local authorities have the power to temporarily reduce vehicle axle weight limits. We are giving municipalities a new option to optimize the timing of this reduced load period, which will help improve competitiveness while protecting Ontario's road infrastructure.

Our province has one of the largest and most complex energy sectors in North America. We are proposing to simplify our gasoline volatility regulation to reduce regulatory and administrative burden on the petroleum industry by aligning with national standards. This will increase the competitiveness of our energy sector.

We are also proposing to amend the Oil, Gas, and Salt Resources Act to reduce barriers through carbon storage

technology. This amendment, if passed, will reduce red tape as a first step in creating a framework to regulate and enable permanent storage of carbon as a new tool to help reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions.

Speaker, one of the most common concerns I hear from my constituents is the red tape and regulatory barriers they face in their daily lives and business. Our government has heard their concerns. One of our government's top priorities since 2018 has been to remove unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that are holding businesses back. We know that there are more things our government can do to cut red tape and make it easier for people to interact with the government.

To improve government transfer payments, we are establishing an efficient, transparent and coordinated approach through a standard online digital platform. This will reduce paperwork and administrative burdens for government-funded organizations. Also, we will work with Indigenous businesses and communities to address barriers to accessing government business support programs and procurement opportunities.

0910

To enhance our province's occupational health and safety system, we are proposing amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that would improve the operational efficiency of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The amendments, if passed, would ensure injured or ill apprentices receive loss-of-earnings benefits at the same amounts a journey person would receive; ensure government documents are consistent with, not duplicative of, other government directives; and streamline requirements for office lease transactions.

The proposed legislation also continues review of the Ministry of Transportation's co-operative performance rating system in the evaluation of bids for engineering services. Focusing more on the price and technical proposal when evaluating bids for engineering services will make it simpler to administer and fairer for all participants.

For the court system, we will increase court capacity and efficiency to help address the COVID-19 backlog in criminal cases. We are doing this by temporarily increasing the limit of the number of days retired judges can work and allowing court clerks to reopen certain proceedings.

We're also proposing to make jury questionnaires available online and test the feasibility of moving away from providing a paper version. This will reduce administrative costs and make it easier for prospective jurors to participate in the court system.

Speaker, I wish I could speak more on this important bill for Ontario, but I'm mindful of the time. So, in short, this bill, if passed, will streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government and multiple sectors of Ontario's economy. This will lead Ontario to more economic certainty, confidence and stability, and it will help to ensure our province continues to be competitive in the global market.

And may I invite all the members of the House to vote in favour of the bill and join me in looking forward to a stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to rise in the House today to discuss Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

From the moment our government took office, one of our top priorities has been removing unnecessary, redundant, outdated regulations that keep people and businesses from reaching their full potential, and we have come so far over the past four and a half years. I know the 28 cross-government initiatives within this proposed legislation build on the progress we have made by increasing Ontario's competitiveness, building a more robust supply chain and making it easier to interact with government by cutting red tape. Simply put, we are taking swift action to build a stronger Ontario, where people thrive and businesses prosper, now and into the future. We are focused on leading Ontario to greater economic certainty, confidence and stability. And during our uncertain times, these items cannot be taken for granted.

The Ministry of Transportation is committed to reducing the burden on Ontarians, modernizing its programs and supporting businesses in the transportation sector. We know that in today's world and economy, a well-functioning transportation network is key to helping get products to market and get people where they need to go. A transportation network depends on having the right investments, the right maintenance and support, but beyond that, it also needs the right regulatory environment in place to help respond to the needs of the public and businesses.

I want to spend some time talking more specifically about some of the specific items that the ministry is bringing forward this year. First, we are making improvements to Ontario's highway corridor management system to provide a seamless and integrated online platform for approvals and permits along provincial highways. The Ministry of Transportation is also responsible for reviewing and assessing land development proposals, permit applications for signs, building and land use, and for entrances, encroachments and utility management adjacent to provincial highways. In total, MTO processes between 5,000 to 7,000 permits for work along provincial highways annually.

In June 2017, we launched the Highway Corridor Management System to support Ontario businesses, stakeholders and members of the public in securing permits to conduct work along provincial highways and save time and money. Madam Speaker, in fact, over the past five years, the Highway Corridor Management System has reduced wait times, and the time to complete the application process is reduced by an estimated 500,000 hours, saving over \$12 million for businesses and members of the public.

Work is ongoing on a new land development review module that will enable developers and municipalities to submit, track and receive Ministry of Transportation approvals for their land development applications and all online applications. The targeted release for the land development review is the summer of 2023, which will provide immediate value to users. Following this release,

subsequent phases are planned and will include enhancements based on our user base. When released, the module will be available for anyone to use, including municipalities, developers and the public.

The ongoing and planned enhancements of the Highway Corridor Management System will provide a simple, easy, efficient and more convenient way for businesses, stakeholders and members of the public to submit, track and receive MTO permits and MTO development approvals in a manner that is more transparent and more accountable. The Highway Corridor Management System improvements will better support economic development proposals of Ontario's businesses and municipalities, as well as provincial priorities such as Open for Business, bringing new housing supply to the market, and providing government services faster, better and easier.

We are taking action to improve the ability of municipalities to protect road infrastructure while ensuring that vital goods can continue to move on our roads. Each spring, roads become weaker and susceptible to permanent damage caused by heavy loads. To help protect road infrastructure during this time of year, the Highway Traffic Act provides local authorities the ability to reduce vehicle axle weight limits for a period of time, known as the reduced load period or the spring thaw period. Madam Speaker, reduced load periods are typically in effect annually from March through the end of May or June and are only applied to designated secondary and tertiary roads, including a limited number of secondary highways in northern Ontario. The province enacts reduced load periods on some roads, but, for the most part, the reduced load period is enacted locally by municipalities via bylaws.

The Ministry of Transportation, in partnership with the Ontario Good Roads Association, is creating frost depth prediction models that will provide municipalities with the option to optimize the timing of reduced load periods, including shortening the period when conditions permit. The model uses data from MTO's Road Weather Information System, including 20 sites with frost depth and moisture sensors across the province and breaks down geographic zones established across Ontario with local adjustments for micro-climates. The model will provide seven-day advanced notice of the onset of reduced load periods using real-time and forecast temperature input for the geographical zones. This will allow municipalities to shorten the duration of reduced load periods, which will help support the supply chain and cut red tape for the agriculture, agri-business and trucking industry, while protecting road infrastructure.

0920

The ministry is also reviewing the use of the corporate performance rating system in evaluating bids for engineering services to improve the fairness and efficiency of the procurement process. Corporate performance rating is a measure of past performance on ministry assignments. Engineering service providers are currently selected based on weighted evaluations of a firm's corporate performance rating, the price of their bid and the technical quality of their written proposals.

The recent reviews of the corporate performance rating system have found that the criteria for evaluating service providers' past performance have become somewhat subjective, resulting in little distinction in the ratings between high-performing and low-performing firms. So focusing more on the pricing and technical proposal when evaluating bids for engineering services would make the procurement process simpler to administer and fairer for all participants and help ensure the best value for taxpayer dollars.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, the Ministry of Transportation and the government takes seriously our role to remove unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that are holding businesses back. Reducing red tape on individuals and businesses is key to post-pandemic recovery and our economic growth.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government has taken more than 400 actions to reduce burdens since 2018 without compromising service levels, health, safety and the environment. Our efforts to eliminate unnecessary red tape and burdens and open doors to economic activity will ensure the province is one of the best places in North America to raise a family, work and operate a business.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Now we'll go to questions.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member across for his submission—to both members for their submissions.

I guess my question would be specifically to the Juries Act, that particular portion in the bill. In particular, the Ontario trial lawyers, who I met with last year, were calling for an end to the use of civil juries. Civil juries have often-times led to exorbitant amounts of time in the delays in the court system. In Canada, there's no constitutional right to a jury trial in most civil matters. Ontario is one of the last Canadian jurisdictions to grant parties the right to choose jury trials for most civil matters.

So my question to you would be: If most of Canada is actually moving away from civil jury options, why, through this modernization of the Juries Act, are you leaving this behind, when it clearly is a simple way of cutting red tape?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member for asking the question. Our government is on a mission to drive efficiencies and reduce red tape, so moving governments to a digital-first model and modernizing outdated processes are some of the many ways that we are cutting red tape to lower administrative costs. So why does the member not understand that?

And we also need to reduce administrative burdens and lower costs to the taxpayer; that's good for Ontarians. Cutting red tape across government has many benefits: It makes interactions with the government easier, it reduces our dependency on postage and it improves our environment by reducing our dependency on paper.

Also, it's not just about eliminating regulatory burdens. It involves modernizing processes like moving programs and services online. These actions being taken by our government will make it easier for prospective jurors to—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We're going to go to the next question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is in regard to some of the changes at OMAFRA. What is the ministry proposing to change under those rules about animal health preparedness?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As I mentioned in my remarks, this bill takes a whole-of-government approach in reducing red tape. This particular bill contains 28 actions, including items that are part of multi-ministry items from 11 different ministries, and that's why our strong record of reducing red tape is there to protect, starting from health, towards safety, and all the way to the environment. And this bill will definitely have a comprehensive approach that we started in 2018, to make sure that we are making Ontario's economy more competitive and enabling businesses, enabling public transit users to make sure—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you for the answer. Next question?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This omnibus bill makes changes to the Provincial Offences Act, the Juries Act, the Courts of Justice Act, but none of these items address femicide rates across Ontario—rates that are rising. It is fine to do housekeeping legislation like this; however, it also has to come alongside real and meaningful measures to prevent violence against women.

My question to the member across the aisle: I am wearing this purple scarf today, like so many in this chamber, to raise gender-based violence awareness. So why are we talking about housecleaning bills today when we should be passing legislation that makes life safer for women and girls across the province of Ontario?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Our government, on this side, and our members in the middle right there, we take action to protect all Ontarians, to especially stand against gender-based violence and protect our Ontarians, protect the public transit users, protect Ontario businesses, because we believe in taking action, not just words. That's why this bill contains 28 action items—not 28 words, Madam Speaker, 28 action items—to enable the potential of Ontario's businesses. It's a perfect way to recover the economy after the pandemic.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: As an individual who has dealt and worked within the courts system for a number of years, I was very happy to see a modernizing of the juror system with respect to the composition. I continuously get calls from constituents asking about this specific issue. So the ministry recently identified two issues that have affected the composition of jury rolls in Ontario. How are you working to prevent these errors from happening in the future? Is this the right time to implement further changes to the jury system?

Mr. Billy Pang: Our government is committed to continuous improvement of the jury system and ensuring Ontario has the most robust jury selection process in Canada. The Attorney General has directed the Ministry of the Attorney General to take all necessary action to address

these errors and ensure that the jury roll is accurate, secure and in compliance with Ontario's legal obligations. The previous issues that affected the composition of recent jury rolls in Ontario have been identified, and MAG has implemented a more stringent monitoring and auditing system around the process.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: As I was listening to the comments from my friends in government this morning, I'm mindful that we are living in a climate emergency. We just had an international conference talking about the need for everyone to take up their responsibility.

I'm looking at schedule 5 of this legislation that's talking about the capture of CO₂ as a solution. I'm wondering if either one of the members who spoke could comment about what either of these initiatives are doing to meet our climate emergency targets, because what I've seen so far is a government ripping up the greenbelt, suing the federal government unsuccessfully around carbon mitigation measures. I've seen them literally tear EV charging stations out of GO station transit and now promote them later. I see a government caught in contradictions on climate change.

0930
I'm wondering if either member could explain to me what schedule 5 does to get Ontario back on track to take the climate emergency we're living in seriously.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Our government is taking strong action to reduce unnecessary red tape. But in 2017, under the Liberal government, supported by the NDP, Ontario had the highest cost of compliance in Canada, totalling \$33,000 for businesses. That is \$4,000 more than any other province across Canada.

They're always in favour of more cost. They are in favour of more delays and more red tape while our government is trying to bring more accessibility, more convenience and less redundancy so that we can enable our businesses to have a thriving work environment, especially during these tough times. That's why I urge members across the aisle to support this bill to help Ontarians and to help Ontario businesses.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We have time for one quick question.

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is to either of my colleagues: What is the government doing now to support Indigenous people and businesses?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for the question. Today, the Ontario government introduced the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, which, if passed, would implement measures to increase Ontario's competitiveness, strengthen provincial supply chains and make government services easier to access and interact with. The highlight is about increasing capacity and efficiency to improve services, including for Indigenous communities. Ontario's agri-food sector has always been a cornerstone of the provincial economy.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Before we go to further debate, I'll recognize the member for Barrie—Innisfil on a point of order.

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

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. The evening meeting is cancelled.

We'll go to further debate.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I heard the members opposite talking about "smarter for business and for people." I'm not sure about the "smarter for people" part. Government services faster, better, easier—it depends on which services you're talking about.

The WSIB is part of this bill, and there are some references made to it. First of all, I'm very proud to say that the very first injured workers' support group was founded in Thunder Bay in 1985 as a way to support injured workers, because, even at that point, the WSIB was actually undermining the health and well-being of injured workers. It required a support group that is ongoing, and there are support groups now across the province and the country that have become absolutely essential to survival for people with permanent disabilities.

In terms of the experiences of workers who get hurt or ill through their work, we have seen the first part of what was one of the original social safety nets, workers' compensation, now known as the WSIB, turned into a short-term disability scheme that largely abandons workers who experience work-related permanent injuries.

Created over 100 years ago, Sir William Meredith, the one-time leader of the Conservative Party and father of workers' compensation in Canada, laid out key principles known as the Meredith Principles. These are compensation as long as the disability lasts; collective liability—the employer pays into the fund; no fault; an independent agency; and non-adversarial.

The reason for this compensation board was to remove the need for employees to sue their employers. It was far too costly for employers and employees, so this compensation system was set up. It was meant to be no-fault and always to be there to support workers so that they could live out their lives in dignity.

Meredith believed that if you treated workers fairly, especially when injured, social and economic stability would be the result. Unfortunately, these principles have been systematically eroded and, increasingly, workers are calling for the ability to sue their employers for injury and disease, so we're back to where we were 100 years ago. The evidence is overwhelming that people with disabilities face major barriers to employment, with some 50% of people with disabilities not able to find paid employment.

Deeming was introduced into Canadian law starting in 1979. It is a departure from human rights norms on income security. Deeming allows the adjudicators of employment injury benefits to cut income security benefits. These decisions are based on laws that permit the assumption of employment when, in practice, injured workers have not secured any employment and remain unemployed. Deeming permits dramatic cuts to employee injury benefits and causes economic hardship for people with disabilities while employers pocket the savings. Deeming laws are

based upon stigmatizing people with disabilities. In Ontario, stigma is institutionalized in law based on the idea that people need to be incentivized to return to the job market—I'd like to hang on to that word "incentivized."

Employment injury benefits are critical lifelines to ensure that people living with work-acquired disabilities are able to live a life with integrity and dignity. Employment injury benefits have, for over 75 years, been recognized by the United Nations multilateral system as an indispensable and irreplaceable type of income security that is an essential element of social security.

The International Labour Organization's Philadelphia Principles on income security provide a baseline, defining what constitutes dignified treatment in employment injury benefit systems, and yet cost containment for the business community is continually prioritized over a human right to essential income security. Indeed, the workers compensation system envisioned by Meredith and practised in Ontario for most of its history has been utterly changed over the last 25 years. Instead of being there to help injured workers access support, the WSIB now functions like a private insurance company doing its utmost to deny claims in order to return money to employers, but this was never the intent behind creating a workers compensation system.

Just to remind the members on the other side, we're talking about incredible red tape, regulation after regulation, barrier after barrier, after being forced to appeal before somebody with a permanent disability can access any form of support. They can't work, they have no income—it takes six months to get on ODSP, which we know is not enough to survive on—and so on. The barriers are endless and cause enormous distress in families, enormous psychological distress, and, of course, physical abandonment. People don't have the money to live. They can't pay their mortgages. Families break down. The consequences are very, very significant.

Many workers who experience permanent injuries while on the job are, indeed, forced into poverty and homelessness because the WSIB has a routine policy of turning down claims, forcing injured workers to launch appeals that take years to resolve. How do they survive in the interim? Their lives have been utterly changed because of the injury or because of being poisoned in the workplace, yet, instead of getting the financial support they need and are entitled to, they are forced to apply for ODSP, and, as I said, even that can take up to six months.

Costs that should be borne by businesses through the WSIB are off-loaded onto the public. Injured workers are abandoned and the public picks up the cost. I think the message is quite clear: When a worker becomes permanently injured, they are disposable. When people have disabilities acquired through birth, accident, disease or through the workplace, they are treated as social pariahs, as fakers unworthy of income support. I don't believe this should be the case in a society as wealthy as ours—it shouldn't be the case in any society—but it is the norm, and a norm that this government continues to propagate.

0940

After years of appeals, if an injured worker finally does get support from the WSIB, they can then be blindsided by

having their claims drastically cut through the practice of deeming. The member from London North Centre spoke about this yesterday in his discussion of Bill 46, but I would like to reiterate the absurdity of deeming practices.

Let's take the example of a former mine worker with an incapacitating injury who is deemed to be able to work as a parking lot attendant at \$16 or \$18 an hour, or whatever the going rates are in cities with parking lot attendants. As in many other places, a worker in Thunder Bay was deemed to be able to be a parking lot attendant, and his income supports were drastically cut as a result.

But guess what? There is not a single parking lot that uses a parking lot attendant in Thunder Bay. We don't have them.

No matter; the worker was deemed able to do this job, so therefore he had to lose a large percentage of his WSIB income. If you think this sounds like the script for a Franz Kafka theatre-of-the-absurd novella, you would be right. Once you have been deemed, you are dumped, and there is no way out.

Last week, the Minister of Economic Development had the temerity to brag about cutting employers' WSIB premiums by 30%. Then, at the same time as injured workers are being forced onto ODSP, he gave a so-called surplus of \$1.5 billion back to employers.

Imagine if that money was going to injured workers or other people trying to live with a disability. How many more people could live in dignity and remain integrated in their communities? Instead, though, bad actors of the business world receive huge payouts and are continually incentivized to deny that injuries have taken place at their workplaces.

This year, injured workers were betrayed yet again when their cost-of-living allowance was set a full 2% lower than stipulated in law and in WSIB policy. Once again, injured workers support groups are having to rally together and come up with a means to appeal being shortchanged by the WSIB.

Why should they have to do this again and again? Why should injured workers have to organize themselves to fight against the organization that was created in order to support them? There's something very foul about the entire set-up.

This brings me back to Bill 46, a grab bag of different housekeeping changes. While some of these are useful, there is so much that needs to be done to make the WSIB responsive to those it was intended to serve.

It's really, frankly, hard to accept that the WSIB was mentioned at all, because the really important critical elements of the WSIB and its purpose are being ignored and not addressed. Certainly, current WSIB practices are examples of red tape run amok, with injured workers having to hold themselves together physically, financially and emotionally while experiencing the institutional violence that is now the norm for the WSIB.

I must say, there is a lot of excitement in this government about getting more people into the trades, especially young people. But we should be aware that the rate of permanent injuries in Ontario, by the WSIB's own

accounting, is about 15,000 people annually, and I am deeply concerned that many of these new workers won't know what hit them when they discover that, rather than being there to support them in what might be their greatest time of need, the WSIB will be trying to save money for employers by treating them, if they've received a serious injury, as an adversary to be defeated.

Welcome to the trades, boys and girls. Learn worker safety, but if anything goes wrong, there's a good chance you'll be thrown under the bus as yet another disposable disabled person. Is this really what this government wants to be known for?

I was listening to the radio this morning, and I heard an interview with a doctor. He was talking about changes to medical assistance in dying—MAID—that are coming up, that will be making it easier for people with mental health challenges to choose to die. What he said was very, very disturbing. He said that he could get permission for somebody to choose to die in two weeks, and yet people are pushed into those states of mental crisis because they are not receiving the supports they need to actually survive. People are choosing death because they can't afford to live, and that is, indeed, a crime—a crime that is being perpetuated by policies of this government.

Now I want to move—I've got a few minutes. Yesterday, the member from Huron—Bruce said: "The intent of this legislation—our ninth red tape reduction bill since 2018—is to ... ensure Ontario remains competitive in the global marketplace.... That impact is significant, so we need to take a look at our supply chain and determine how we can best build in resiliency."

The member further said that "a made-in-Ontario solution is the best route."

But I'm wondering whether this bill might have been an opportunity to redress something that was quietly brought in by this government during the last session, and that is the dropping of the requirement for Canadian content in manufacturing from 25% to only 10%.

The manufacture of mass transit in Thunder Bay has been a significant contributor to good-paying jobs and economic stability in our community for a very long time, but the boasting about procuring contracts in Japan for mass transit has me questioning this government's commitment to Ontario workers.

When the member from Huron—Bruce spoke about building in resiliency, I immediately thought about how supporting our own world-class manufacturing facility in Thunder Bay could provide that resiliency.

Alstom—the great manufacturer of subway, streetcar and GO trains we enjoy, right at this moment, in this province and in the city of Toronto—is at risk of shutting down permanently by 2024 if new contracts are not in place very soon. Once a contract has been signed, it takes a good two years to put all the pieces in place to have the factory tooled up and the skilled workers sourced and hired. Thinking about maybe doing something at some vague point in the future isn't good enough. They need to be able to bid on contracts now.

Upholding the 25% Canadian content requirement on all upcoming contracts would help Alstom remain competitive and win the contracts they need for future viability. This is something that needs to be redressed by this government, and I regret that it's not in this particular bill. It's not good enough to talk about all the great manufacturing jobs that will be coming up when the government is unwilling to support the manufacturing of mass transit by one of the best facilities anywhere in the country and, I believe, anywhere in the world.

I've got a few minutes left. In the briefing notes, in the preparatory notes to this bill, the government talks about funding to universities. I'd like to point out that this government is claiming to support colleges and universities, but Ontario has the lowest post-secondary funding in all of Canada. It would have to be raised by 46%—not to be first, but just so that Ontario would not be last place.

On a per-student basis, public funding has been on a downward trend in Ontario since it last peaked in 2008-09. Since then, per-student funding has been declining. On a per-student basis, Ontario universities' operating funding is 40% lower than the rest of the Canadian average. Provincially sponsored research funding is 55% lower, which makes me wonder where the innovation is going to come from if our colleges and universities do not have the research funding that they need in order to do proper research.

For years now, Ontario has had amongst the highest tuition fees in Canada for domestic students at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and the highest tuition fees in Canada, by far, for international students.

To make up for low levels of per-student public funding, post-secondary tuition fees have been allowed to increase. The persistent underfunding of colleges and universities ignores long-term planning and investments that are needed to support universities' educational research mandates. The exponential rise in tuition fees is a clear barrier to access. So to further make up for the shortfall in budgets, of course universities and colleges have been directed to aggressively recruit international students.

0950

It's wonderful to have international students in our schools. However, the fees that they are being charged—most of those students actually come because they hope to become permanent residents. So I think it is quite reasonable to say that these are actually head taxes, that these exorbitant fees to attend university or college here—amounting in the \$25,000, \$30,000, \$40,000 to get through a program, which they then have to spend years and years to pay back. They work minimum wage jobs for a few years, and then, oops, they get let go just before they're able to apply for permanent residency status. So it's a pretty twisted scheme, I would have to say.

I'm running out of time. I would love to talk about the fact that universities and colleges are now largely staffed by contract workers—contract workers with PhDs, contract workers with years of teaching experience who are paid basically minimum wage. It doesn't matter what their qualifications are, the pay remains the same. The teaching

load can be 20, 40, 60, a couple of hundred, whatever, and then you reapply every year. It is undermining students' ability to access support from faculty, and it certainly puts the lie to the notion that if you get more and more education, you will get a better job. In fact, the irony is that the people teaching at colleges and universities, who are highly educated, are amongst the lowest-paid workers in any field in the province.

That is something that students then come to recognize, and ask themselves, "What does this mean? I'm paying all this tuition. The people who are teaching me aren't making a living wage." They have no job security, no benefits, and this has become the norm at universities and colleges.

So we have efforts to remove red tape when it concerns a particular part of the business community, but otherwise, we have endless barriers to survival for people with disabilities, for people who receive injuries while working, for people working in white-collar jobs who actually can barely keep a roof over their heads in spite of having received 10, 12 years of education.

I will leave it at that. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll now go to questions.

Mr. Will Bouma: I listened with interest to the comments from the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North. It's interesting. I'm hearing very similar arguments to what we were talking about with the fall economic statement, I think it was just last week, where the opposition members have really no opposition to anything that's in the legislation whatsoever. However, they are providing constructive criticism on what we could be adding to further legislation, which I really appreciate.

Since the members listening to the debate aren't saying anything negative about what's in the legislation per se, I was wondering if we could count on their support to get this passed as quickly as possible.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: One of the things I didn't talk about was the carbon capture section of this, which I think of as probably the poison pill of this legislation because we don't see any scientific evidence, no consultation with environmental groups. We don't actually know what the consequences of carbon capture will be, and that, I think, is a very serious concern.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to talk about an incident that happened in London which was quite disturbing. It happened in December 2020, where eight charges were laid in connection with the incident of Teeple Terrace. It was a four-storey condo building that collapsed under construction. About 40 workers were on site. Two concrete workers—and you mentioned how young workers are—21-year-old John Martens and 26-year-old Henry Harder, and five more were injured.

One of the survivors I met with, Jacob Hurl, is advocating fiercely for changes to the WSIB, which I appreciate that you highlighted that very much in your debate. Jacob is fighting really hard to make these changes, and what he's looking for—and he's asked about this

comment and I'd like to see if you could reply—is he wants a publicly accessible employer registry where employers are required to disclose their history of on-site accidents and any workplace safety concerns and hazards. Would you comment on that suggestion?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think it's an excellent suggestion, but I also worry that, even if we had such a thing, it would not necessarily tell us the truth, because businesses are incentivized to not disclose. Often workers are actually told, "Look, we'll give you an extra bonus if there are no claims, if there are no accidents reported," because the employers, of course, get these bonuses if there aren't any accidents reported.

So I think that we need a registry, but we also need changes at other levels so that, if the WSIB was doing what it was supposed to be doing, employers would not be looking for a way to escape from their responsibilities. They would be paying in knowing that their responsibilities would be covered by the system that was originally intended to do that.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Kevin Holland: My member and neighbour across the floor has made several statements here under the guise of red tape reduction that really are a little bit off-topic. I know the previous government drove over 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of the province of Ontario through red tape hassles. As the mayor of my community for 31 years, and as a business leader and a business owner in the province of Ontario, I can tell you, the 15 years of the previous government, propped up by this official opposition, drove out businesses and made it impossible for small business to thrive and grow and provide jobs to the residents of Ontario that we are speaking about.

We have taken relentless action to address red tape. We have returned all those 300,000 manufacturing jobs back to Ontario. We are making it more effective for businesses to prevail in Ontario. Why does the official opposition not support the government? And why do they not support efforts to reduce red tape reduction in the province that will allow us to grow and prosper?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the question. A number of things: First of all, I haven't said whether I'm supporting it or not. Secondly, during the last four years, small businesses suffered incredibly under the way that the government chose to handle the pandemic, and we saw enormous amounts of wealth going to very large businesses, while small businesses were forced to shut down.

The other piece is that there's no business prosperity without worker safety. One doesn't come without the other—or there's no social prosperity. I could say individual businesses, yes, they can make lots of money, but social prosperity needs a balance between the two.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question?

Miss Monique Taylor: I thoroughly enjoyed the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North's comments on Bill 46, and it raised some thoughts that have been happening in my community, and I'm sure across the province, when

it comes to injured workers. We know that injured workers have had to fight tooth and nail for every dime that they receive, or every benefit that they receive, and so the injured workers coalition has been put into place and this government has been threatening their funding. I believe that they actually had told them they were no longer getting funding. They're now getting it back again on 30-day limits with no contracts. The same people that we need to help our injured workers fight this horrible system is the same funding that this government is cutting.

I'm wondering if the member could comment on her thoughts on cutting funding to be able to help injured workers fight this beast of a WSIB.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes, I think, clearly, these groups do need access to funding. They shouldn't have to be fighting to get support for injured workers, and yet, they do. Another interesting piece is that injured worker members of these support groups used to be able to support other workers in their appeals, but at some point somebody—the law society, probably with some pressure—decided that these advocates were working as lawyers and were no longer allowed to help other injured workers. That's pretty awful, I would say, not to be able to provide peer support. And the fact that funding is then constantly on, off, on, off, prevents injured workers from supporting each other in the way that they need to.

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The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for the presentation.

In 2019, Ontario had the highest cost of complaints in Canada, totalling close to \$33,000 per business. That was \$4,000 more than any other province. That is why our government, since 2018, we created the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, and in the past four years we introduced some other bills and reduced lots of red tape. For example, we can now renew our licence, our health care card, our driver's licence and renew the car's licence online. You don't need to go to ServiceOntario. All of that, the dealer can transfer, and can register the transaction online. You don't need to do the paperwork.

So my question is simple, to the member opposite: Do you feel this is comfortable for you or for the dealer to do the business? If yes, why don't you support this bill?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: There may well be elements in this bill that are worth supporting. The problem is that the government continues to do omnibus bills, and in an omnibus bill you're forced to take it or leave it, even though there may be very significant parts of that bill that are offensive and will not be working in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): One last quick question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I just want to thank my seatmate and my friend from Thunder Bay–Superior North for those comments. And, just mindful for people watching, we have paramedics with us here in the chamber. We have people who put themselves in harm's way every single day

in communities. You spoke very eloquently about the need to have a WSIB system that will be there for workers, particularly when they get injured. And it hurts me to say this morning that there is a \$6-billion surplus at the WSIB. As you said time and again, we have an organization that makes a business out of refuting claims. So do you have a message for paramedics this morning about the fact that—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. For a quick reply—

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you, and welcome to the paramedics. Thank you for being here. Thank you for the work that you do. Yes, we have your backs. The NDP will always have your backs. We've been fighting for improvements—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's all the time we have for questions.

We're going to be moving on to further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to talk about this red tape bill, because there are ways that we always try to work with government despite the, "We're always opposing, we're not proposing"—we certainly are.

We like to have things work smoothly here on this side of the House, and my background is insurance. Insurance is all about systems and how to operate systems so that you get the best performance out of your work. Last night, Intact was here, if anyone went to the reception. I didn't get an opportunity to meet with Intact, but they talked about many efficiencies, and I encouraged them to put those things forward to the government and not to be shy or reserved about it. Because sometimes when we're looking to make changes to systems, we have to open up all topics to talk about those things to make sure that we get the best result.

In this case, the government's intention is to try to cut some red tape to make things better, and there are some things in here that they put through that, you know, some of it makes sense, right? But when we talk about things, what people are looking for today—families are struggling in my riding of London–Fanshawe. There are so many issues that are top of mind, and I have to say that—every piece of legislation is important. It changes people's lives. There are things that come to my riding that people really want to see done. They want systems changed so that their life is better, and a system such as health care is one of those things that I hear about every day. There's nothing on health care in this red tape bill.

I want to read an email from a resident that I got just recently, at the end of November. She said, "I'm a resident in the east end of London, Ontario"—that's my riding that I represent. "Today, while I continue to scour the Web for a family physician, I was brought to a web page that told me that if I had been on the Ontario physician wait-list for an extended amount of time, to then contact a member of Parliament for my district. I'm not sure what amount of time classifies as an extended period of time. However, myself and both my children have been on the wait-list since 2016 or 2017, and still nothing. Thank you for your time, and hopefully there's something you can do to help us with this relentless journey."

Here is a system in our Legislature, in our province—a health care system that we all rely on. It's not to say that we don't rely on some of these pieces that have come in this red tape bill, but we're all going to use the health care system. We have the paramedics here today. They know how important it is for that system to work when they pick up their patients, when they pick up that 911 call and bring them to the emergency room. That system is broken. We've heard from paramedics that it takes hours—20 hours, so long—and they're stuck in that hospital area waiting to pass on their patient. That's a system that I think we need to look at and fix, because there are 911 calls not being answered and people are not getting help.

I mentioned a constituent recently whose wife had fallen twice in the last couple of months. He called 911, and they were waiting for hours. In one of the incidents, a repairman was able to help them, so they cancelled that 911 call.

So it's no fault of the paramedics, it's no fault of the people calling 911; it's the system. The health care system needs to be fixed, and it has been broken for decades.

I urge this government, as they're looking through red tape and as they're coming out with schedules—I think there are eight in this act here—to take the same diligence to look at the systems that are affecting people's health care, affecting the wait times for paramedics to get to their calls and then drop off their patients, do that patient transfer, and to limit that or minimize that amount so they can go back to doing what they're supposed to be doing—to a wait time for someone who has been on the wait-list since 2016-17, and then to be told on a website to contact your member of provincial Parliament. Those are the systems that we need to focus on.

But here we are, today, talking about different red tape systems, and that's fine. That's where the government wants to take the time of the Legislature. I respect that. They have a right to set their agenda.

One of the things that we've been talking about is the Courts of Justice Act that extends the time of judges. I met with the Ontario trial lawyers as well. These are civil cases, but they talked about how there were not enough judges to hear their cases, and they wanted an option of asking for juries in civil cases. That's not in here. They're talking about how jurors will be selected to make that system work better for jury selection, most likely, obviously, in criminal cases. When we're talking about a court system and judges in civil cases—there's not enough of them. The Ontario trial lawyers told us that this is causing a problem, and the ones I was speaking to directly said it was about insurance injury claims—so delays and delays, which is costing the person who's injured, which is costing the system, a lot of heartache.

So if there's an option to choose juries as opposed to the judge having to hear it over and over again, finding those judges—and as I said, there's a shortage of judges—in every sector we've been hearing, people are retiring and they're not infilling the new people coming in. So in this case, we're talking about having retired judges come in and work more hours to try to clear the backlog. And that

is a solution. I have to say it is a solution. But the other part they could also consider is hiring new judges, because that's not going to solve the problem, from what I've heard, in the civil part. And I know with criminal court, with provincial courts, it's also an issue. So let's get new judges, young judges who are coming on and who are very much aware of different issues in society—one of them being the Internet and cyber, right?

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So it's not terrible, like I say, to allow judges to come out of retirement or add in more hours, but we could be looking at other ways to supplement that and hire new judges to fill the ones that are retiring and making sure we have enough judges to put those court cases through in a timely fashion.

And when we talk about systems, again—I don't know if you guys have heard about the Landlord and Tenant Board; that is destroyed. It's so broken. It's so broken not only for tenants but for small landlords. I know you were on that call with SOLO, the Ontario small landlords association. They're representing small landlords, because—for an example, I had a constituent come into my office. They live in the basement, they're renting the main floor, and they're having to wait eight months for a hearing. So tenants who are facing issues with their landlord are having to wait eight months, in a system that is completely destroyed and broken. Small landlords, like the example I used where the couple lives in the basement and they have the rented upstairs, are having to wait eight months, if not longer, to get a hearing.

So these kinds of systems are broken, and I wish this government would, again, not just hire adjudicators in the Landlord and Tenant Board, but look at other ways we can look at the backlog, because small landlords and big corporate landlords are two different entities, and maybe those are pieces of a system that we can help clear that backlog.

Speaker, the other part of systems and red tape that they were talking about is the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Corporation Act. Again, this is acknowledging that when the OSPCA enforcement was ended in 2019, there was a bit of a technical issue, and now they've corrected that so that the society can then be incorporated.

And I want to thank all the farmers in Ontario for all the work that they do.

There are a lot of publications, Speaker, that come into our office. Every day we get magazines and reports from many stakeholders, lobbyists that come here, and I want to let them know that we really appreciate the actual ones that come in my mail, because I do look at them, especially when there's legislation that can relate to these publications that we get into our office.

I just want to point out that the Beef Farmers of Ontario, who sent the publication, were at Queen's Park this year, and it was their 15th annual barbecue at Queen's Park.

We all know that the government has a new strategy for sustainability around agriculture, and, again, I hope that they're listening to the beef farmers.

They captured our MPP Sol Mamakwa—if no one's seen the magazine—in one of the articles here, but this is one of the things they put in the article. They said, "In speaking with MPPs, BFO requested a review of the PAWS Act as it relates to enforcement on farms and removal and seizure of livestock in partnership with agricultural stakeholders."

Again, we have discussions with groups that come here, with lobbyists, with stakeholders that want to give feedback and solutions or criticisms to a system that we set up, to legislation that we put forward, and they're looking for solutions. I hope that this government is working with the Beef Farmers of Ontario to listen to them, to correct—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Of course we are.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, and the Minister of Agriculture has said that of course they are, and that's a good thing.

Speaker, I see that my time is running out, and I will sit down.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Yes. Thank you. I appreciate you recognizing that it is time to move to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEINTZMAN HOUSE

Ms. Laura Smith: Madam Speaker, two weeks ago I had the pleasure of visiting the 50th anniversary of the Artisan Craft Show, featured in the historic Heintzman House, located in my riding of Thornhill. This annual craft show is a special tradition started by the Heintzman House auxiliary, and is now managed by a dedicated group of board members. The event showcases the diverse and creative talents of local artisans, and also features the historic, beautiful 19th-century heritage property.

The Heintzman House has an interesting history, built in 1798 by Empire Loyalists, then eventually purchased by Charles Theodore Heintzman of the Heintzman piano company—Heintzman piano, also known as the Steinway of the north. This brand of piano was a fixture in homes all across Canada. The Heintzman House has also been a venue for a seniors' health club and high tea, Halloween events and its very special seasonal art shows.

Sadly, members of the board, including Bob Wilson, are no longer with us, but their memory lives on through the efforts of current members, including chair Ken Steinberg and previous ones like Roger Jones.

This Sunday evening, the Heintzman House hosts their family carol singalong, a favourite tradition for the community. By the way, Madam Speaker, we are fortunate to have a beautiful Heintzman upright piano right here at Queen's Park. I discovered it last week. It plays at special events and is very much a part of this House, and I would be happy to show anyone interested at the break.

Madam Speaker, our community is grateful for the timeless privilege of the Heintzman House. Like a well-built piano, this House may have a few years on her, but she withstands the test of time and still looks pretty beautiful to me.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today is the fifth day of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. I am so grateful to the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly every day to end gender-based violence in Waterloo region and across Ontario. It is my privilege as the Waterloo MPP to recognize the ongoing work of local women leaders in K-W, including Jennifer Breaton at the YWCA, and the former ED, Elizabeth Clarke; Sara Casselman at the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo; Jen Hutton at Women's Crisis Services; the Feminist Shift; and, of course, Project Willow.

In the callous absence of leadership and adequate funding by this government, these women have stepped up to fight for supportive housing and anti-human-trafficking resources. They have stretched their budgets to support women and children who have experienced unthinkable violence and whose innocence has been stolen. And yet, in Ontario we must fundraise to keep women safe.

When survivors have the courage to come forward and ask for help, the resources should be there for them and their children. Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region reports a 26% increase in femicides in 2021 compared to the previous year. OAITH reports at least 50—50—femicides in this last year, and yet Women's Crisis Services had to turn people away at times, because their 90 shelter beds are full.

This should serve as a wake-up call for this government. My colleague MPP Lindo and I will not rest until we see women supported through the court system, through supportive housing, through counselling, and until all women in Ontario no longer have to live in fear.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: In Canada, a woman is murdered every 2.5 days—144 to 178 murders each year between 2015 and 2019—and in 2021, the rate of femicide was trending even higher across the country. Of the women murdered, 50% were killed by intimate partners and 26% by family members.

Halton Women's Place is the shelter and support system in my own community for women fleeing abuse or in need of immediate assistance. They alone reported 2,200 crisis calls from the region in just 2021. This evidence shows that violence against women continues to be a serious problem, and while we all vigorously work to raise awareness and make changes, there is still so much more we need to do.

That is one of the reasons why November 25 has been declared the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and why the United Nations launched the international campaign from that day—16

Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. It's a time to break down barriers and work together to increase knowledge and end the cycle of violence against women and children.

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It's why I've introduced a motion, to be debated this Wednesday, to ensure that Ontario judges, crown attorneys, section 30 assessors and other professionals in the Family Court system have the knowledge they need to make their best judgment when dealing with child welfare.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: A low-income senior contacted my office because she was trying to make an appointment to get her teeth looked after, but then she was told she doesn't qualify anymore for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program. She was confused as to why she qualified before but no longer does. The feds tried to do the right thing by increasing payments to low-income seniors. They increased CPP payments by nowhere near enough, but enough to kick seniors out of provincial funding qualification. In this case, she has been kicked out because of about \$224 per year. The province hasn't adjusted the threshold, so she has been cut from the program. She was surprised to no longer qualify by less than 20 bucks a month. However, this government isn't surprised. They know, and they're fine to save a couple of bucks, because, ironically, getting them to spend money on real folks and do the right thing is like pulling teeth. Now she needs dentures, and she no longer qualifies for the program. There is no way she can ever afford this without coverage. She shared with my office that she came to Canada for the promise of a better life. She worked hard when she was younger and paid her taxes. She expected the government to fulfill their end of the bargain and care about her in her old age. She is having to fight tooth and nail for what she needs.

This government needs to adjust the threshold so that seniors who depend on the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program aren't being kicked out of it, and then after that, show some leadership and realize that dental care is health care and that teeth aren't luxuries. The government knows that they have allowed the lowest-income seniors to be quietly booted out. While they keep saving money while choosing to drag their feet, they leave low-income seniors in pain and without dental care, when they had promised them that they would have it.

Shame on this government. Please fix this.

MIKE LAPAINE

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an honour rise in the Legislature today in recognition of Mike Lapaine, the president and chief executive officer of Bluewater Health in Sarnia-Lambton, who has announced that he will be retiring on December 31.

Mr. Lapaine began working with Bluewater Health in 2008, as vice-president of operations and chief operating officer, and he has been president and CEO since 2016.

During his time with the organization, he has played a leadership role in many transformational projects, including the 2010 opening of the new Norman Street campus at Bluewater Health—the largest public sector redevelopment project in Sarnia–Lambton’s history—and the amalgamation of Sarnia’s two hospitals.

In recent years, Mr. Lapaine led the redevelopment of Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia, helped secure permanent funding for a local withdrawal-management facility, opened an Ornge Air helipad on the Bluewater Health campus, and spearheaded the efforts to create a stand-alone Sarnia–Lambton Ontario health team.

And, of course, Mr. Lapaine was always available to discuss health care with his local MPP. I enjoyed those conversations very much.

Today, Mr. Lapaine’s family, friends and colleagues are marking his distinguished career with a celebration at the Sarnia Golf and Curling Club.

On behalf of all the residents of Sarnia–Lambton, I’d like to say thank you to Mike for everything he has done for Bluewater Health and the Sarnia–Lambton community over the last 14 years.

Congratulations, Mike, on your retirement. Thank you for your leadership and the lasting impact you’ve made on Sarnia–Lambton.

SHAW FESTIVAL

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to rise today to speak about the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake and to congratulate them on their 60th anniversary.

This past Saturday, I got the chance to go with my beautiful wife, Rita, to see the opening night performance of Irving Berlin’s White Christmas at the Shaw. It was a wonderful show. I even had the privilege of meeting some of the talented cast members.

It all started in 1962, when the Shaw was founded, inspired by the life and works of George Bernard Shaw.

This year, in 2022, the Shaw is celebrating not only their 60th anniversary, but their biggest season yet, with 14 plays in three different theatres, as well as *Outdoors @ The Shaw*, and a series of concerts and outdoor events on the Festival Theatre grounds.

This has been a banner year for the Shaw. They have come back strong from COVID and shown the world they are one of the best destinations for theatre in Canada. Through their impressive fundraising achievements this year and community support, they continue to grow. The Shaw is a shining light for our arts and culture community in Niagara, and something that’s very, very important.

Throughout the entire pandemic, the Shaw has kept all 500 of their employees working. We need to thank Tim Jennings, all the staff, the actors, the board members and the volunteers for such a successful organization.

The Shaw Festival is truly remarkable. It’s a wonderful hub of culture and an important part of what makes our community and our heritage in Niagara so special.

And I want to thank the tourism minister and his wife for coming to the Shaw on Saturday night to help us celebrate our 60th anniversary.

FIRST NATIONS POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Will Bouma: Nearly four years ago, I was honoured to be the first MPP in Brantford–Brant to go on a police ride-along with the Six Nations Police Service. Immediately after the introductions and pleasantries, I asked the Six Nations police officer behind the wheel of the cruiser, “So, where is the on-board computer?” His answer was swift and professional: “We do with what we have. Everything is verbal over radio communication.”

That fateful ride-along will be ingrained in my memory forever, Speaker, and that is what started a chain of events that led to Friday’s announcement. Our government announced more than \$6 million to help First Nations police services across Ontario better protect their communities. That includes nearly \$643,000 directly to Six Nations Police Service in my home riding of Brantford–Brant.

This investment, Speaker, is part of the First Nations policing modernization initiative and will be used to purchase new technology, including mobile workstations, body cameras and automated licence plate readers.

I would like to thank former Solicitor General Sylvia Jones and current Solicitor General Michael Kerzner for making this funding happen. And a particular shout-out to retired Six Nations Police Chief Glenn Lickers and current Six Nations Police Chief Darren Montour for your advocacy for not only Six Nations, but Indigenous police services across the province.

As an active-duty first responder myself, Speaker, my message to every Indigenous police officer across Ontario is: We’ve got your back.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to use my time today to talk about a matter that requires urgent and immediate attention, and that is school safety. The harsh reality is that there has been a rise in violence in our schools and on school property. This is a crisis. Phone calls and emails from residents, and meetings with school boards and trustees make clear that this is a pressing issue that demands immediate action from this government. In my own riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, I’ve got students in grade 8 who are afraid to go to high school.

I want you to hear what a grade 10 student from Woburn Collegiate wrote to me last week. He says, “You are probably aware of the recent tragedy that took place right on my school grounds a couple weeks back—unfortunately I witnessed that shooting, as a student no one should have to witness that kind of horrible incident.... Since the shooting took place, my school has been more unsafe with threats concerning students in my school and the lack of urgent attention, and many violent fights have taken place since.”

“I think if you can sit down and talk face to face with not only a principal or a TDSB director but a student who witnessed this violence daily, you would have a better understanding on this issue of violence. As a leader in my community, many students have asked me to step up and

fix this problem but I need” the assistance of this government “in doing so. Students are crying out for help and we must attend to this problem immediately.”

There it is, in the words of our students. The message to the minister is clear: Lives are hanging in the balance.

Speaker, the TDSB has asked to meet with the minister regarding this issue, and I urge him to do so immediately because lives are hanging in the balance of our youngest learners.

CANADIAN NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Earlier this month, I was proud to host a very special event at Le Tréport in Mississauga to recognize and honour alumni from the Canadian national soccer team, including Dwayne De Rosario, a forward for the Mississauga MetroStars, and the Canadian national team’s all-time leading scorer, with 22 goals in 81 games from 1998 to 2015, and Carrie Serwetnyk from Mississauga, who was the first woman named to the Canada Soccer Hall of Fame. The leadership of these players helped build the game of soccer across Canada. The recent success of our national teams, from the women’s gold medal at the 2020 Olympics, to the men’s team finishing first in CONCACAF, is because of the foundation these players built, although the result in Qatar isn’t what we were hoping for.

1030

I want to take a moment to thank special guests and good friends, including Dr. Nick Bontis, president of the Canadian Soccer Association; Bill Manning, president of Toronto FC; and Bob Iarusci, a former captain of the Canadian national team, who served as our MC that night.

Lastly, I want to thank our outreach director, Joanna Maio, who worked for months to organize this event—the first of its kind—together with our friend, Lucky Raso. We look forward to celebrate together at our next soccer alumni event, and I welcome the soccer world to Ontario as we host FIFA men’s World Cup matches for the first time in 2026.

ADULT AND TEEN CHALLENGE THUNDER BAY

Mr. Kevin Holland: This past Saturday, I had the honour to participate in the opening of the Adult and Teen Challenge community office in Thunder Bay. The Adult and Teen Challenge provides a year-long program for those dealing with addictions. I was fortunate enough to be able to speak with some of the students at the women’s home, where the office is being run out of, about the program. The individuals were more than happy to share their journey with me. I spoke with women that graduated three years ago and are now mentoring others and spoke with others that were a mere two weeks into the program. Regardless of the length of time these students spent in the program, the message was the same: Adult and Teen Challenge saved their lives.

They spoke of the family atmosphere at the facility, along with the sense of belonging that was instrumental to

their recovery. I was able to speak with several men present that are part of the men’s program across town. As successful as the program has been for many struggling with addictions, the leaders of the program, many recovering from addictions themselves, realized that there was more that they could do. They set their sights on those members of the community who were not able to commit a full year of their lives to the live-in program but who were still looking to change their lives.

After many discussions, their vision of a community office was realized, and we cut the ribbon on Saturday to officially recognize the new services in Thunder Bay. The community office is the first point of contact for anyone dealing with addiction. The space provides pastoral counselling, along with family and outpatient small group support programs and mentoring. It facilitates action in the fight against addiction by supporting and referring people to life-changing help and creates a foundation for graduates to succeed when returning to the community.

I want to thank Adult and Teen Challenge for the part they are playing to bring hope and change to the lives of those dealing with addictions. You truly are changing and saving lives. I look forward to continuing to work with this group and others in Thunder Bay as we address this crisis. I want to remind those in need that you are never alone. Please seek help when you need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, that concludes our 90-second members’ statements for this morning. It’s a subtle reminder that we should try to rein our statements in and try to respect that standing order to the greatest extent possible.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Vanthof: Kennedy Dabner is our page captain today. Kennedy’s father, Jamie Dabner, and Kennedy’s grandmother, Val Kennedy, are in the gallery with us. A proud day for them and for Kennedy.

I would also like to recognize Melanie Ducharme in the gallery; she’s the executive director of the Pavilion Women’s Centre in Temiskaming Shores and a newly elected councillor in the city of Temiskaming Shores. Welcome.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I just wanted to take the opportunity to welcome my friends Elena Ricci and Roberta Scott from the Ontario Paramedic Association, here with us today.

MPP Jill Andrew: It’s an honour to welcome Marlene Ham, the executive director of OAITH to Queen’s Park, along with staff members Lauren Hancock, Amber Wardell, Sherece Taffe, and board members Abi Ajibolade, Sue Weir, Melanie Ducharme, Jessie Rodger, Jeanine George, Christy Savage, Tessa McFadzean, Sly Castaldi, Jennifer Chamberlin, Sandy Watson-Moyles and Jyoti Singh. Thank you for being here at Queen’s Park today. I can’t eyeball all of you, but thank you for your work advocating for women’s lives free from violence.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to give a special shout-out and welcome as well to Sly Castaldi, OAITH

board member and executive director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis. Thank you for the great work you do in our community, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'd like to welcome a number of board members and staff from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, who are here to mark their Wrapped in Courage campaign for Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Here today, we have Abi Ajibolade, Sue Weir, Melanie Ducharme, Jessie Rodger, Christy Savage, Tessa McFadzean, Sly Castaldi, Jennifer Chamberlin, Jyoti Singh, Marlene Ham, Lauren Hancock, Amber Wardell, and Sherece Taffe. I really want to thank you so much for all the important work that you do. I look forward to meeting you all on the staircase for a picture to recognize everything that you do.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I am proud to welcome the students from Palmerston Avenue Junior Public School, and a very special welcome to Aydin Bari, son of my dear and old friend Eban Bari. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome to the House today, from Leading Influence, our chaplain, Charlie Lyons, and the national director of Leading Influence, Tim Schindel. Thank you for coming today.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to welcome Jessie Rodger, the executive director of Anova in London, and thank her for all the work she does to advocate for gender-based violence.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I'd like to welcome Laurie Hepburn, executive director of the Halton Women's Place, today to mark the annual Wrapped in Courage event and thank her for her incredible work, and her team and all of the women here, who are working so hard and tirelessly to end gender-based violence.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome the Ontario Paramedic Association, which is at Queen's Park. They're in room 230, if you're interested in having lunch with them today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome back to Queen's Park Clint Thomas, who is representing Bruce Power. They're hosting a reception tonight at 5 o'clock in rooms 228 and 230. Welcome, Clint.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'd like to welcome the northern representative of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Jennifer Chamberlin is the executive director of the New Starts for Women shelter, which serves the Red Lake-Ear Falls district and Cat Lake, Deer Lake, Keewaywin, North Spirit Lake, Pikangikum, Poplar Hill and Sandy Lake First Nations. Meegwetch—thank you—for your work, and meegwetch for being here today.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my great pleasure to introduce the women from Women's Habitat of Etobicoke: Carla Neto, who is the executive director; Alicia Whyte, who is the manager of programs and client services; and Lina Almanzan, who is director of philanthropy, resources and systems. I just want to say thank you for everything you do for the women of our community.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I have three guests to welcome to the House today. The first one is Cyma Musarat, former Progressive Conservative candidate for Humber River-Black Creek. She's also joined by two

other politicians from Pakistan: Mahnish Rehman and Sobia Ahmed. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd Smith: My colleague the Minister of Agriculture introduced Clint Thomas, who is a wily veteran from the back halls here at Queen's Park, but I'd like to welcome all of the members of Canada's Canadian Nuclear Association to Queen's Park today. They do have a reception in 228 and 230 later this afternoon.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today, I would like to welcome the cement industry: from the Cement Association of Canada, Adam Auer, Steve Morrissey and Martha Murray; from St. Marys Cement, Filiberto Ruiz and Bill Asselstine; from Lafarge Canada, David Redfern and Rob Cumming; from Lehigh Cement Co., Nick Papanicolaou; from Concrete Ontario, Bart Kanters and Andy Wallgren; and from Ash Grove in Mississauga-Lakeshore, Marie Glenn and Richard Sluce. I welcome you all tonight to the dining room to see them.

1040

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses for the Wrapped in Courage campaign. I also want to welcome the Council of Canadian Innovators, and I'd like to thank Harry Zarek, Hugo Navarro and Sunita Chander for some wonderful conversations this morning.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I would like to welcome my friend from the riding of Oakville, Sajid Anjum. He is joined by his team from Nisa Homes: Yasmine Yousef, Shiba Anjum and Razan Omar. I look forward to meeting with you after question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I'll keep it short: I would like to welcome representatives from Faye Peterson House in Thunder Bay to the House. I look forward to meeting with you later today to discuss our priorities on ending violence against women. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome Lorris Herenda, CEO of Yellow Brick House. Thank you very much for all the work that you're doing. Welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Expenditure Monitor 2022-23: Q2, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

WEARING OF SCARVES AND TIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services has a point of order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to wear purple scarves and ties in support of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses's Wrapped in Courage campaign to end violence against women.

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

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Vanier on a point of order.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 40(e), five minutes be allotted to the independents as a group to respond to the ministerial statement by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services on the Wrapped in Courage campaign for Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Over the weekend, CBC published new information about the amount of protected Pickering farmland owned by the De Gasperis family, who are powerful landowners and PC Party donors. CBC found another 475 acres bought by the De Gasperis family in 2020 for about \$24,000 an acre. They own at least 1,775 acres of greenbelt land within the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. They bought this land cheap because it was protected as farmland in perpetuity.

How much does the Premier suppose an acre of this land would be worth after the Premier removes it from the greenbelt and makes it available for development?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: At the end of the day, the posting that the government has on the Environmental Registry of Ontario will grow the greenbelt by over 2,000 acres and provide an opportunity for the government to have a minimum of 50,000 homes built to get us closer to our goal of 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

The reason that minimum of 50,000 homes is so important is because our best year in over 30 years was last year, when we had 100,000 starts in the province of Ontario. We made a promise to the people of Ontario during the election that we would table a plan in place to ensure that we get to that goal. That's exactly what the government has done.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: In 2016, the Ontario government sold 425 acres of Pickering greenfield in Seaton for about \$383,000 per acre. If the De Gasperis family's landholdings within the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve were suddenly made available for development, they would likely be worth at least what the Seaton lands were in 2016—probably more.

How much speculative profit is the Premier giving his friends and PC donors by removing their Pickering farmland from the greenbelt?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on his language. We can't impute motive.

Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'd withdraw the question.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I withdraw.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, our motive is clear: We need to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. In fact, Speaker, based on the new immigration targets by the federal government, that will be even higher. We know that of the 500,000 new Canadians who are coming to Canada, over 60% are going to come to our province, many of whom are going to be in the GTA. So we need to ensure that the plan will get us closer to that goal.

We are in a crisis, Speaker. We needed to take bold and transformational action as a government. That's why our building homes faster act puts a plan in place to make sure that we do this. And this is exactly why the government has posted on the Environmental Registry the comment period regarding these lands. We have a plan to grow the greenbelt, to add over 2,000 acres of protected land into the greenbelt, but at the same time, having that minimum 50,000 homes in the ground by 2025.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, again to the Premier: Once the De Gasperis family's 1,775 acres of Pickering farmland are removed from the greenbelt, land worth about \$24,000 an acre as protected farmland would be worth at least \$383,000 per acre as developable greenfield, based on what Seaton land went for in 2016. If you do the math, we find the Premier is about to instantly transfer nearly two thirds of \$1 billions in speculative profit to his friends and PC donors, just by removing their Pickering farmland from the greenbelt.

Does the Premier finally understand how corrupt this looks?

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, former mayor of Pickering Ryan was very clear to the government when he indicated that he wanted this land out of the greenbelt and to have it as developable land.

The current mayor, Mayor Kevin Ashe, in Pickering has said it better than I could, Speaker. I'll quote him now. He said that that land was put in based on "political science," not "real science." That is exactly why the government has put forward a plan that will grow the greenbelt and that will add urban river valleys, which I think all members of this House will support. It will add property in the Paris-Galt moraine.

But at the end of the day, we'll have an opportunity to build a minimum of 50,000 homes. I'm with former mayor Ryan. I'm with Mayor Ashe. I'm not going to deal with political science. We're going to deal with real science on this side of the House.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On November 16, the minister said he spoke with developers prior to announcing that lands would be removed from the greenbelt. The minister needs to clarify his remarks. Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share with any landowner information about the government's plan to remove lands from the greenbelt before it became public?

Hon. Steve Clark: I watched this member on CP24 yesterday. I've heard her in the House. She mischaracterizes Bill 23 often.

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Withdraw, Speaker.

Our government was crystal clear with Ontarians during the election that we wanted to build more homes, provide more choice, give mayors stronger powers and have a plan in place to build 1.5 million homes.

I've said in this House countless times that I will meet with anyone—a municipal official, a not-for-profit, Habitat for Humanity, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, people who build one home a year, people who build 1,000 homes a year. We need every partner non-profit in the public space, every partner in the private space if we're going to build—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I couldn't hear the minister.

Supplementary.

1050

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: Last week, the CBC reported that a group of land speculators purchased 37 hectares of farmland outside Ottawa's urban boundary last year, and then, earlier this month, the minister overrode the city's official plan and put these lands within the urban boundary, making these very lucky speculators instantly richer. Coincidentally, these speculators, together, donated more than \$12,000 to the PC Party last year and this year.

My question is to the minister. Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share with any landowner information about the government's plan to add lands to Ottawa's urban boundary before it became public?

Hon. Steve Clark: This member looked in the camera yesterday and said that Bill 23 cut affordable housing dollars—not true. In fact, Bill 23 actually works collaboratively with the Minister of Infrastructure to create a new attainable housing program on government-owned lands, something that everyone can agree on.

I'm not going to take any lessons from the NDP's jiggery-pokery in terms of how we're going to put housing forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're not going to allow "jiggery-pokery." You've got to withdraw.

Interjection.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, what I'm not hearing from you is a no. I'm going to ask again: Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share with any landowner information about the government's plan to remove lands from the greenbelt before it became public? Yes or no?

Interjection.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to respond.

Hon. Steve Clark: That's public. We're encouraging Ontarians to provide comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

The plan is simple, Speaker. The plan is simple. We're going to add to have a net gain of over 2,000 acres to the greenbelt, and the 15 properties involved will provide us with a minimum of 50,000 homes to help get to the 1.5-million home target over the next 10 years.

The government has said—all of the bills we tabled; yesterday was my 10th—that we we're going to put forward a plan that's going to get us closer to that. Every policy, every posting, every opportunity we're providing for comment in this Legislature puts us closer to that 1.5-million goal to allow the families who want to realize the dream of home ownership, the seniors who want to downsize and the new Canadians who want to have a home that meets their needs and their budget—that's what every policy we're putting forward as a government gets us closer to.

HEALTH CARE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the Premier. In two days, on December 1, the Connect-Clinic, a virtual-only health clinic, will have to close its door entirely to its 3,500 trans patients who live across rural and urban Ontario. These individuals need gender-affirming health care.

Connect-Clinic's lead physician and founder, Dr. Kate Greenaway, wrote to me: "Because of the changes to the physician services agreement, we will no longer be able to provide our life-saving care. We are expecting to need to close the clinic in response."

Speaker, will this government help save the clinic? Will they help deliver the alternative funding plan that's needed to stop the cut to ensure that gender-affirming care continues in Ontario? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member opposite for raising this question prior to question period. I want to be clear with the people of Ontario that we are not eliminating or forcing individuals to close virtual care clinics. What we are doing is we are equalizing to make sure that people have access to their family physicians in person.

It is a change that we have negotiated with the Ontario Medical Association, who took it to their members and voted on it in support. I might add, it's the first time since 2012 that we have had an agreement with the Ontario Medical Association without the need for arbitration. This is a good system of balancing the need for in-person care with the important use of virtual care.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm desperately pleading with the minister to help me keep the lights on at this life-saving health clinic. The government's new limited virtual care billing fee will not cover the clinic's operating expenses. Clinic patients come from across Ontario—rural and northern Ontario—they cannot all travel to Toronto. They come from Sudbury. They come from Sault Ste. Marie. They come from across this great land.

Although the physician services agreement is finalized, this government must reverse the funding cuts to Connect-Clinic through an alternative funding plan. It's an option before the government.

I'm looking for an answer. We have two days to save this clinic. We have two days to save this health service. Will the government help us do this?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I want to reinforce that virtual care absolutely has a place in the province of Ontario. What we are doing is equalizing it to make sure that individuals also have access to their primary care in person. We've done that through the OMA agreement.

The member opposite raises an important issue, but there are other opportunities, like community health clinics, that provide specialized service. Those types of services will continue within the province of Ontario, because we understand how specialized services offer unique opportunities for people who have special skill sets to work with a specialized population.

We're continuing to do that, but we need to reinforce that having individuals access their primary care physician in person, as well as virtually, is an important part of how we provide appropriate care in Ontario.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Andrew Dowie: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones. La francophonie ontarienne contribue à notre richesse culturelle et à notre croissance économique. Sa promotion au-delà de nos frontières est essentielle pour que sa prospérité continue.

L'Ontario a récemment signé un protocole d'entente avec la Wallonie-Bruxelles après le Sommet de la Francophonie en Tunisie.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle nous en dire plus sur les opportunités de partenariat à l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie et les bénéfices qui en découlent?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie mon collègue pour cette question excellente.

La participation de l'Ontario au sommet de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, aux réunions connexes et à son forum économique donne à la province

l'occasion d'explorer les liens de coopération internationale et aussi de promouvoir les atouts économiques de la province auprès des États et des gouvernements membres de l'OIF.

L'Ontario désire ainsi tirer parti des opportunités de partenariat avec les membres de l'OIF et aussi de leurs délégations afin de :

—poursuivre nos discussions avec nos partenaires, tels que la Wallonie-Bruxelles, avec qui nous avons signé un protocole d'entente;

—explorer des échanges bilatéraux dans les domaines commerciaux, éducatifs, touristiques et culturels; et aussi

—appuyer nos efforts pour soutenir l'entrepreneuriat francophone.

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

M. Andrew Dowie: Merci à la ministre pour cette réponse. Je suis heureux d'entendre parler d'initiatives qui contribuent à promouvoir la francophonie ontarienne.

La communauté francophone mérite un environnement propice à son épanouissement afin qu'elle puisse continuer à participer activement à la prospérité de la province.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle nous en dire plus sur la Stratégie de développement économique francophone de l'Ontario et sur les possibilités de partenariats internationaux?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Le Sommet de la Francophonie internationale apporte la preuve irréfutable que le français est une des langues les plus parlées au monde.

L'avenir de la langue française est grandement lié à la prospérité des entreprises francophones. C'est pourquoi, par une stratégie de développement économique francophone de l'Ontario, nous allons continuer à soutenir la francophonie ontarienne avec l'entrepreneuriat et l'innovation francophones, une main-d'oeuvre qualifiée bilingue et aussi la promotion de la francophonie ontarienne comme atout économique.

Notre présence au sein de l'OIF nous permet de mettre en valeur la francophonie ontarienne. C'est ainsi, en élargissant le cercle de nos relations culturelles et économiques au-delà de nos frontières, que nous allons continuer de contribuer à la croissance et à la prospérité de l'Ontario.

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GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the finance minister. Speaker, this government has a history of under-spending on the public services that people rely on. Today, the independent, non-partisan Financial Accountability Office released their second-quarter update, and it's no surprise to see that, once again, the province is spending less than planned in key areas, including \$859 million less in health, \$413 million less in education and \$244 million less in children's and social services.

Why does this government have such a hard time investing resources that they promised to?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: If we look at that FAO report, it shows that we invested over \$3.6 billion more than was invested in the same period last year. That means more than \$1 billion extra in health care, \$879 million in education, \$518 million on children and social services.

The member opposite knows that this is a snapshot in time. It does not take into full consideration the investments that have been made and are going to be fully realized in hospitals and school boards across the year. This was shown through our public accounts, which showed that this year we made the largest investment in public health, an over-\$5.2-billion year-over-year increase to support our health care investments across the province.

The member opposite knows this, the FAO also acknowledges this, and we'll continue to make sure we have the investments and supports there to ensure that Ontarians and members across this province receive the care they need.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is such a shocking disconnect that this government has from the lived experience of people in this province. At a time when our pediatric hospitals are over capacity due to an early respiratory season, it is indefensible that public health spending was \$500 million less than planned. That is money that could have been spent on a comprehensive, widespread vaccination campaign, including an advertising blitz and pop-up clinics to keep our province's children safe.

Speaker, budgeting is about choices. The government at one point acknowledged that this money had to be spent. There was a need for it, and they failed to do it. Why did the government choose to underinvest in public health by half a billion dollars?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Every step of the way, this government has put forward record and historic spending into health care, as we saw last year. It's unfortunate that the members opposite, the NDP and Liberals, have voted against every single one of those measures.

The largest increase to health care spending in this province: The members voted against that. That was shown in the public accounts. They voted against hospitals in Brampton. They voted against hospitals in Mississauga and Windsor. All across this province, Mr. Speaker, they voted against increasing and supporting medical schools so we have the doctors and nurses of tomorrow. The members opposite voted against every single one of those investments.

Year over year, we put in \$5.2 billion more than the last year in health care spending, the largest increase in the entire country and the history of this province, and we will continue to ensure that we make the necessary investments to support health care across—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order.

The next question.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Will Bouma: Ongoing labour shortages, global shipping disruptions and declining processing capacity are significant concerns that continue to impact our agri-food sector. In my riding of Brantford—Brant, I am proud of the over 1,400 agri-food businesses that all serve a critical role in contributing to the province's economic prosperity and job creation.

With one in every eight jobs in Ontario coming from the sector, expanding and enhancing the agricultural industry should be a priority for our government. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs please share with us how our government is growing and supporting the agri-food sector in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Not only do I appreciate the amazing work that the member from Brant offers his constituents and the agri-food industry, but I very much appreciate the question, because I'm pleased to share with you that after the agri-food industry in Ontario has been ignored for years through the Liberal government and their friends on the opposition benches, I am absolutely pleased to share with you that our plan to grow Ontario forward has been incredibly well-received by all stakeholders in Ontario's agri-food sector.

Ontario is poised to build a secure and stable supply chain, and Grow Ontario is our strategy to ensure that our agri-food sector in this province has certainty in its supply chain. It's the result of conversations that I've had for over a year with our stakeholders, like Food and Beverage Ontario, who told me that the number one challenge is a labour shortage. So, through building a strong supply chain, growing our labour workforce, as well as innovation and research, the future is bright for Ontario's agri-food industry.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the minister for her response. It is great to hear that our agri-food sector has a government that is working with them, listening to them and addressing their concerns. Unfortunately, ongoing global economic instability is adversely impacting the agricultural industry worldwide and at home. This sector needs reassurance that our government will continue to show leadership and take action to remove barriers and lift burdens so that this vital industry can continue to prosper.

Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs please elaborate further on how our government will deliver results in this sector?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Our government, through Grow Ontario, has included measurable targets that will allow us to track the progress to implementing this 10-year strategy, like boosting the amount of food produced right here in Ontario by 30%, by developing 250 more made-in-Ontario agri-food innovations and technology, and we're looking to grow the workforce in this province by 10%. These targets are backed up with amazing investments from our government: \$10 million in the Food Security

and Supply Chain Fund, as well as the \$25-million strategic processing fund.

Our stakeholders are incredibly pleased that they finally have a government that understands the importance of the agri-food industry, and our Grow Ontario plan has real goals with tangible actions. Our strategy represents a bold vision, built on a commitment that is second to none, and it will also raise awareness of the amazing food produced right here in Ontario, not only for our consumers in this province but around the world.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Last week, Global News reported that Metrolinx has sold eight parcels of land since March 2021. None of these lands were used for affordable housing. Seven out of eight parcels went to private companies, including large-scale developers. This is the same public agency that previously reneged on an agreement with the Jane and Finch community to hand over land for a community hub.

It is clear that Metrolinx thinks it can ignore its duty to serve the public interest. Does the Premier think that Metrolinx, a public agency, can ignore its duty to serve the public interest as well?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. Under our realty portfolio under our government's leadership, we are very carefully looking at surplus properties that we can then use for government priorities like affordable, attainable housing, like building long-term-care homes. This is a strategy that our government developed. We are well under way to building more long-term-care homes, as well as more housing in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: As an agency of the province, Metrolinx is mandated to follow the Ontario's realty directive, which has a stated purpose of "effective and efficient management of government realty, including active consideration of provincial interests with respect to social, environmental and economic purposes for realty."

Speaker, it is clear Metrolinx does not care about "provincial interests with respect to social, environmental and economic purposes"—all it cares about is selling off public land to the highest bidder. Will the Premier ensure that surplus lands owned by public agencies like Metrolinx are used for affordable housing or, at the very least, for public purposes?

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my colleague for the question. As the Minister of Infrastructure alluded to earlier, we're looking at every possible scenario to improve housing in the province for the people of Ontario. Through the community renewal strategy, we've invested over \$4.4

billion over the last three years to make sure that housing is available, and in particular to our most vulnerable.

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Through our latest initiative, the bill that passed yesterday, Bill 23, we will have more affordable homes offered to Ontarians. We're lowering fees for Ontarians so that we can get more housing built.

Unfortunately, over the last few years, we've seen both the Liberals and NDP oppose and vote against every single housing bill that we've put forward. On this side of the House, we're for housing, we're for building homes; on the other side, they oppose housing and they will vote against every single housing bill.

I ask them to change their direction and start supporting housing and support Ontarians in our mission to make sure everyone's—

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Many of my constituents in Don Valley West, especially Thorncliffe Park, don't have a family doctor, much like 1.8 million other Ontarians. Health care workers have been saying repeatedly that they are overwhelmed. On November 24, 2022, the health minister said, "We will continue to work with all health care providers...when they bring forward innovative ideas, and we will continue to fund those innovations..."

I don't believe Ontarians are seeing that statement in action. Nurse practitioners have put forward an innovative solution that could provide relief, even if temporary: more nurse practitioner-led clinics.

My question, through you, to the health minister: Is the government, in fact, committed to investing in innovative health care solutions, such as nurse practitioner-led clinics now, to address staffing shortages, to help support health care workers and to create more access for Ontarians to get the medical attention they need?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We are absolutely investing in these innovative practices, but I have to say, it's a bit rich—it's a bit rich—to come from a member representing this party. The previous Liberal Premier admitted that they did not invest appropriately in health care and long-term care—in fact, eliminating 50 residency positions—while we have continued to expand, through health school expansions, the first historic expansions in Brampton and Scarborough, and the first expansions in medical schools in northern Ontario since—wait for it—a previous Conservative government.

So are we investing in innovations? Are we taking those ideas that are coming from our health care professionals? One hundred per cent, we are. I will take no lessons from this party on how—

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: The health minister talks a lot about health care capital investments, yet, despite that, under this government's watch, health care workers are

overburdened, they're struggling. Many Ontarians don't have access to family doctors under this government, they're having their surgeries cancelled under this government, and they are all asking for this government to help.

In October, Ontario's five largest health care unions requested an urgent meeting with the Premier and the health minister to work on real solutions to the crises. As of Thursday, they had received no response. The unions say that "the PC 'plan' is failing miserably." The actions the government has said they're taking to help people who need care are not working.

When will this government listen to the practical advice of health care workers to help Ontarians who need care now?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Did the member support when we issued a ministerial directive to the college of nurses and to the CPSO to expedite the applications, assessments and, ultimately, licensing, when appropriate, for internationally educated graduates? Did the member and the opposite party do that? Did the member oppose, when we added 160 undergraduate seats and 295 postgraduate positions for individuals who want to practise in the province of Ontario—where was the member opposite?

We are making those investments in the short, medium and long term, and I would like to think that, at the end of the day, they will understand that these investments, which should and could have been done 10-plus years ago, are now being done under Premier Ford and our government.

NORTHERN AND INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Ross Romano: Research from the Canadian Mental Health Association reveals that residents of northern Ontario have higher self-reported rates of poor mental health compared to the provincial average.

Under the previous Liberal government, people living in the north had limited access to essential mental health services. Speaker, this is not right nor is it fair.

Access to care in our province should not be dictated by where a person lives. Every Ontarian deserves accessible mental health and addiction services. That is why our government must support the mental health needs of individuals in rural, remote, northern and Indigenous communities.

Speaker, can the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions please share with this House how our government ensures improved access to mental health and addiction services province-wide?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: The member from Sault Ste. Marie is correct: The north has been neglected for far too long. This is why I've been travelling in the north, and I've had the opportunity to visit many of the cities and rural and remote communities.

Just recently, in October, I had the opportunity to meet with Carolyn Karle and Team DEK, a local addiction recovery group, who have lost children to addictions. I was honoured to speak with them to listen to their experiences

and learn more about what we must do to fill the gaps in their community to give better care to individuals. Mr. Speaker, we're filling those gaps as a government.

I was in North Bay last week with the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to announce an expansion of the North Bay addictions centre of excellence at Canadore College. This is an investment of \$4.5 million to build 53 beds not only to help people but to train individuals in the north to provide better supports and build on the continuum of care in northern Ontario.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the minister for that response.

Building more beds and training additional staff are integral to expanding our mental health care system; however, we know that there is no one-size-fits-all approach in supporting individuals with mental health and addiction services. Recognizing the uniqueness of service needs is paramount in northern Ontario and with our Indigenous communities. Unique barriers confront Indigenous communities in accessing mental health care services. That is why our government must support and enhance Indigenous community-based programs that are culturally focused.

Speaker, can the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions please explain what our government is doing to ensure that Indigenous communities receive the care that they deserve?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member for that question.

The trauma that was suffered by Indian residential school survivors, as well as the intergenerational trauma to their families and communities, requires a focused commitment to culturally appropriate services. That's why \$2 million of the Canadore investment will go toward servicing Indigenous populations.

In addition, we're also providing supports to several Indigenous-led organizations to deliver evidence-driven, land-based care—\$3.8 million for the St. Joseph's Care Group and Dilico Anishinabek Family Care to open 34 new beds in Thunder Bay and \$4.2 million to the Sioux Lookout Friendship group for addictions services.

Mr. Speaker, these are just three of the incredible investments and initiatives that are being made as a result of the Addictions Recovery Fund, which is going to open 400 treatment beds, 7,000 treatment spots—and, I might say, 56% of which will be in northern Ontario in rural and remote communities.

We're building partnerships with our Indigenous communities because they've told us, "There can be nothing about us without us." And we're listening.

NURSES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. A couple of weeks ago, we brought up the issue of operational room assistants replacing scrub nurses at Hamilton Health Sciences, but we have seen no action to

date. The Minister of Health speaks of innovation, but this is not the innovation we need. This is reckless gambling with patients' lives to save a few bucks.

1120

When will the Premier stop replacing nurses in the operating room and ensure Ontarians have safe, high-quality surgical care?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Hyperbole is never going to replace facts in this place or in Ontario. For clarity, what we have is, Hamilton Health Sciences have worked alongside and through the innovative partners at Niagara Health and Mohawk College to establish a credentialing program that enables various existing members of the health care team to gain competencies required to practise as operating room technicians and attendants. These HHS team members include medical device reprocessing department techs, health care aides and support workers. This is part of the innovation that Hamilton Health Sciences proposed and we funded.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: This is not what nurses are proposing and what they know is safe in our operating rooms.

Over 4,000 community members have signed petitions calling on this Premier and his government to stop cutting corners and compromising their surgeries. Speaker, when you go into a surgery, you want to know that the right people are in the room to give you the right care when you need it. Ontarians deserve nothing less than experts and specialized nurses on their surgical team.

Will the Premier do the right thing and stop using their Surgical Innovation Fund to replace registered nurses in the operating room?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Oh, Speaker, where do I start? First of all, this is prepping surgeries. This is prepping the surgical rooms. It is not part of the surgical team. It is part of the surgical team in terms of they are preparing the surgical units. They are technically trained and actually making a difference in efficiencies and improving outcomes so that we can do additional surgeries.

Hamilton Health Sciences spent a lot of time working with their partners like Mohawk College to make sure that they can additionally skill existing staff members who are working in the system. We continue to see this kind of innovation making a difference, because we know that there are so many incredibly capable health human resources who are working in the system and want to improve it, unlike the member opposite.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is to the Solicitor General. Minister, I come from a riding with a great deal of hunters, target shooters and gun collectors. I want to make it clear that these are not the folks shooting up cities; gangs and organized crime are largely responsible for that.

On October 27, I wrote to you asking if Ontario will be joining the prairie provinces, New Brunswick and the

Yukon in saying no to Justin Trudeau's gun buyback. I haven't received an answer yet.

Speaker, I've read what the federal government is proposing. It's not worth the paper it's written on, and it certainly will not curb gun violence or crime. I know talking about guns makes some of you uncomfortable, and I'm sure some of you will peg me as some sort of gun-toting Beth Dutton. I'm not, which makes me more credible: I have no interest to protect here. In fact, if an idea was brought forward that would save lives, I'd be the first to stand in my place and vote in favour to help—to help those students like my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood mentioned earlier this morning. Until then, we all need to exercise common sense.

Speaker, to the minister: Will you be saying no to committing Ontario police resources to assist in the federal gun buyback?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. The problem is not with legal gun owners. And to be clear, those who possess illegal guns will not be participating in the C-21 program. This is obvious. That's why we're treating combatting gun and gang violence as a priority. But we're telling our federal government to step it up at the border, because this is a priority.

I did just that when I attended in Halifax at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting, and I will continue to press the federal government: Step it up at the border. This is important now, and we have to keep Ontario safe, because we know that almost every gun that is used in an illegal activity in Ontario is coming from across the border.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thank you to the minister; I'm not sure, though, if that was a yes or no. I'd like to remind the minister that, from a provincial perspective, this is a policing resources issues, not a firearms issue. And I'm glad to hear you say it's not legal gun owners who are the problem.

Speaker, participating in the buyback will remove police from our streets, which will put more power into the hands of criminals. There will be fewer police to investigate domestic violence, homicides and even the real problem of gangs and smuggling.

Feel-good headlines on the 6 o'clock news never translate into good public policy, and in this case it gives the people of Ontario a false sense of security at their very large expense.

I am happy to hear that you want to push the feds to stop the smuggling of illegal weapons into Ontario and join Toronto mayor John Tory in his call for tougher bail reform.

Four other provinces and one territory agree with me. Speaker, to the Solicitor General: I like what you're saying, but are you saying "no" to Justin Trudeau's gun buyback?

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

The Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question, and I'll just repeat again: The problem is not with the legal gun owners. And to be clear, those who possess illegal guns will not be surrendering their guns as part of this program.

I've seen for myself when I toured at the border with the member from Samia-Lambton at the St. Clair River. I saw exactly where the drones came in with the illegal guns. And I went with the member from Sault Ste. Marie to his border, and I saw the proximity between the US and the Ontario border.

The federal government must do more. Our message won't change. We are telling the federal government: Step it up—less talk and more action.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Kevin Holland: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Unfortunately, due to years of neglect and underfunding from the previous Liberal government, many seniors in my riding were left discouraged and isolated. They lacked the resources and opportunities they required in order to stay active, fit and socially connected in their communities.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to support our seniors throughout Ontario and in my riding?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I would like to thank the member for such an important question, and I'd like to congratulate him on the marvellous work he's doing for his riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to share with the House today that under the leadership of their fantastic member, the Thunder Bay Museum, Lakehead Social Planning Council and the township of Conmee will each receive a Seniors Community Grant.

This total of \$62,724 will help deliver programs and support to help seniors to stay fit, healthy, active and socially connected to their community.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the minister for his response and all the great work he's doing on his file.

We know that social isolation can lead to serious health effects and reduce the quality of life for our seniors. That's why our government must provide the necessary resources for our seniors to ensure they can remain active, fit and socially connected to their communities.

Speaker, can the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility please share what our government is doing to safeguard and support Ontario's seniors population?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you to the member for another good question.

We are providing Seniors Community Grants in every single riding in Ontario. Since 2018, we have invested close to \$22 million, providing 1,249 Seniors Community Grants to community groups all across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government is providing the tools and resources for organizations across the province, empowering seniors to continue being active participants in their communities. When we work together, we can ensure that

seniors can access the quality programs and services they need and deserve.

1130

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MPP Jill Andrew: The latest report from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transitional Houses, or OAITH, says there were 52 femicides in Ontario this year. One woman or girl killed, I think we can all agree, is one too many. Each of these losses were preventable through action on the many recommendations this government has at hand to address the systemic issues that make it difficult for women and children to escape violence in the first place: actions on affordable housing, supportive housing included; wage parity; paid emergency leave; and doubling ODSP/OW benefits—because there are folks with disabilities who are victims of violence—just to name a few.

My question is to the Premier: Will this government put their words into action by implementing the many recommendations that the official opposition and community agencies have provided to finally end gender-based violence in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The associate minister.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I thank the member opposite for the question. Precarious, low-paying jobs keep women in crisis and in abusive homes and very dangerous situations. That's why this government is investing in increasing women's economic participation: because it's good for families. We have invested over \$18 million in 35 community-based organizations and educational institutions, to help women facing socio-economic barriers develop in-demand skills to enter and re-enter the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that when women are economically empowered, when women are able to take care of their family, they have the choice and the opportunity to keep themselves safe, and we are doing that in this government. We are investing in women, because we do believe that when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Women cannot be economically empowered if they can't afford rent, food or the basics.

Back to the Premier: Community-based investments like interval and transitional houses save lives, yet they still don't receive annualized funding like many other public sectors do. What this means is that resources that could be put into preventing violence are instead put towards administrative hurdles and the precarity of short-term financial outlooks.

My question is back to the Premier. Will he commit to funding gender-based violence prevention and intervention through annualized funding, so that front-line workers, counsellors, agencies, sexual assault and rape crisis centres, shelters and all the community-based spaces and human beings who are caring for folks who have experienced violence aren't left nickel-and-diming, which squeezes staff and the programs needed, and ultimately hurts women and children?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Again, thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are doing just that. We are investing in the programs and the organizations that are supporting women, like the Investing in Women's Futures Program: \$6.9 million in that program to see women get skills development and access to in-demand jobs that pay very well. Women need the opportunities to be the drivers of their economic future, in order to have the ability to get out of damaging, dangerous homes.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are also investing in child care and addressing the barriers that are preventing women from being economically empowered. We are making these investments. We are going to continue to make these investments and speak to community organizations, to understand what they need, so that we can address them and get women into the driver's seat of their economic future.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ONTARIO

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. One month ago, the Minister of Colleges and Universities spoke about the new agency Intellectual Property Ontario, and how work would shortly be getting under way to support this agency's mandate.

I will keep my question short and brief: Can the minister inform the House on what progress has been made and when can Ontario expect to see some impact of IPON?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. I'm always happy to stand in this Legislature and talk about the amazing work our intellectual property and research sector is doing.

As the member mentioned, I announced last month that IPON CEO Peter Cowan and board chair Karima Bawa would be hard at work this month laying the groundwork for the agency. Just last week, I invited both Peter and Karima to Queen's Park to meet with me and update me on the progress they have been making and how our government can better enable their ability to create a meaningful culture shift in the intellectual property community. I'm proud to say that since the announcement, IPON is well under way in making the concept of an Ontario-first and Ontario-driven intellectual property strategy into a reality.

And 2023 will be an incredible year for our research and businesses, and I cannot wait to see how they join the IPON framework to better leverage their work for the benefit of Ontario and taxpayers.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: I want to thank the minister for that answer. I'm glad to hear work is under way. But what I didn't hear in that first response is what exactly the benefits will be going through this organization. The idea of Ontario-first and -driven sounds excellent, but I want to be able to go back to members in my riding this week and tell them exactly why IPON is something that will impact their lives and how it fits into the government's philosophy of getting it done.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister explain exactly the benefits that IPON is intended to bring to the province of Ontario's taxpayers?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for wanting to know more about how MCU is protecting and promoting Ontario-based research. I cannot underestimate the vital importance of the work researchers and institutions do in making the critical advancements in our knowledge, understanding and capabilities in STEM-related fields. But when we invest in these projects and we invest in our people, we need to be assured that those doing the work and the taxpayers who help fund these projects are the first to benefit.

IPON will work with our research and business sectors to create a more robust culture around protecting Ontario-based intellectual property and how to use the economic and societal benefits of the research to fuel further research and economic activity in this province. In short, with IPON we are putting Ontario in the driver's seat, not only for research ideas but transforming research into new technologies, methodologies and capabilities that will fuel Ontario's future economic and societal prosperity.

NORTHERN EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Lately, in the city of Greater Sudbury, 40% of a paramedic's time is spent waiting to off-load patients to Health Sciences North's overcrowded emergency department. The city of Greater Sudbury is huge. If an ambulance and the paramedics are stuck at the hospital, that leaves the good people of Beaver Lake, of Wahnapiatae First Nation, of Levack up to one hour away from emergency services. Does the Premier think that it is okay to leave the people of my riding waiting up to one hour for paramedical emergency care to arrive?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There is no doubt that paramedics play a vital role in our health care system. We have done some innovative things in the last number of months that are highlighting exactly what the member opposite is referencing: the dedicated off-load nursing program that we have put in place, investing over \$23 million to ensure that hospitals that wish to hire a dedicated nurse off-load position can do so, so that paramedics can more quickly get back out onto the road and into our community. The 911 changes that we have made to ensure that paramedics, with patient approval, can take that individual to somewhere other than an emergency room, whether that is a mental health facility, a long-term-care facility, has really made a difference. We are making those investments because we see that we have an excellent workforce that really understands how, at their core, we can assist patients in our communities.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, paramedic effectiveness is directly linked to the quality of the dispatch system that sends them to the call.

Did you know, Speaker, that Ontario is the only province that does not have 911 everywhere? Every year, in my riding, people in distress find out that 911 is not available. The paramedics are there, but you need to dial a 1-800 number that nobody knows.

When is the Premier going to modernize our province's emergency dispatch system to ensure that 911 is available everywhere in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Solicitor General to respond.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I thank her for the question.

For Ontarians, 911 is a lifeline that ensures access to first responders in an emergency, that responds and keeps communities safe.

As the member knows, 911 services will be upgraded to the next-generation 911. This is something that our government is committed to.

I want to state again that everyone in Ontario has an equal right to feel safe in their own communities. I look forward to seeing the next-generation 911 come to fruition.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: In my riding of Niagara West and across the entire Niagara region, our government has made substantial investments in the GO train network to ensure that commuters are able to go from Toronto to Niagara and back in record time. These investments have expanded our entire GO network across the entire GTHA system. But accessibility is very important, as is ease of access. That's why I know it's so important that in select locations across the GTHA, we've seen the Ministry of Transportation expand the Presto tap program.

I'm wondering, on behalf of the people of Niagara West and the entire Niagara region, if the Associate Minister of Transportation can tell my constituents if they soon will be able to access the Presto tap program in Niagara, and in Niagara West specifically.

Hon. Stan Cho: Thank you to the amazing member from Niagara West, who works tirelessly for his constituents.

He brings up a very good point, because it's not just about building rapid transit, which this government is doing—\$61 billion to expand the grid, a spiderweb of transit; it's also about making sure that riders have a more convenient experience throughout the GTA—

Interjection: Yes, and doubling the cost of the Ontario Line.

Hon. Stan Cho: And it's interesting to hear the Liberals heckling during this question, because they had decades to build transit; they simply did nothing at all.

Speaker, the member asked a very valid question about credit card tap. The rest of the world seems to have this ability to tap with your credit card and go onto your transit system. It's very convenient. It makes life easier, especially when there are lineups at the Presto kiosk.

Since August, 300,000 riders have been able to tap their credit cards on GO, Brampton Transit, MiWay and Oakville Transit, and that's working—including your smart device, which is important to note, because a lot of

people have that ability on their technology. It's coming to the rest of the GTHA next year, and that includes the great people of 905 and in that member's riding.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the response from the minister and the investments that are being made by the Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx in expanding GO train access across the GTHA, including into the Niagara region. It's an important hub, to be able to access, of course, the beautiful sights in Niagara—and for people to be able to have that ease of transport is something that I know I hear from my constituents that they value greatly.

I know it's important, as well, that our government takes a digital-first approach to ensure that we are able to have people access government services in a safe and effective manner that makes life easier for them and their families.

Can the minister explain more about how this program will ensure ease of access to the GO train network and ensure that more people are able to hop on the GO train, perhaps down the road at Union Station, and visit some of the unique sights that Niagara has to offer?

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, that's another great question.

What the member is highlighting here is that it's about choice. It's not just about digital; it's about having the ability to pay by different means and giving the riders of this great province the ability to have that option. That's exactly what we're doing.

Again, it's interesting to hear that the Liberals are still vocal on this issue, because under their watch, they wasted \$470 million in cost overruns and millions more on faulty Presto machines. They not only didn't build transit; when they did, they got it wrong.

Speaker, this government believes in doing things differently. For every dollar we're investing in our transportation network, \$3 is going to invest in transit. This is the only government that's going to get it done for commuters in this province.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Don Valley West has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health concerning listening to health care workers about innovations for our health care system. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

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

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would like to introduce the grade 12 politics class from Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute in Don Valley West.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESS OUTCOMES ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 POUR GARANTIR DE MEILLEURS RÉSULTATS POUR LES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Bowman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 50, An Act to amend the Securities Act to require certain issuers to adopt and make publicly available written policies respecting their director nomination process / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières afin d'exiger que certains émetteurs adoptent et rendent publiques des politiques écrites concernant leur processus de mise en candidature des administrateurs.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: This bill requires issuers whose shares are publicly traded in Ontario to adopt and make publicly available a written policy respecting the director nomination process that provides for the identification of candidates who belong to one or more of the following groups: women; persons who are Black, Indigenous or racialized; persons with disabilities; and persons who are LGBTQ+.

The creation of a policy in this regard is an outstanding recommendation of the Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce assembled by this government in 2020. It is important to see action on this recommendation to advance diversity, because diversity drives innovation, which drives our economy.

I am tabling this bill today to advance the work on this important issue, and I hope my colleagues in the Legislature will give their support.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize the month of November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. Like the members of this House, many Ontarians show their support during November by wearing a purple scarf, like the one I'm wearing today. Since 2013, this symbol has gained recognition through the annual Wrapped in Courage campaign, which is organized by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses to shine a spotlight on the issue of violence against women. The purple scarf is a symbol of the courage it takes an abused woman to leave an abusive partner, seek safety and essentially start her life

over. By wearing this scarf, we can help raise awareness and support survivors.

Sadly, most Canadians, Ontarians and members of our communities know someone who has been abused. That is because one in three Canadian women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. To put the severity of this issue into perspective, approximately every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. These tragedies happen in small towns, big cities and rural communities here in Ontario, across the country and around the world.

According to the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 58 women were murdered from November 2020 to November 2021.

Among these tragic losses are the three women whose deaths were the subject of the Renfrew county inquest earlier this year. Tragedies like these have a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities. We are deeply grateful to the community jury members in Renfrew county for taking part in this difficult inquest and for their important recommendations. We're working across government on a collaborative approach to consider the recommendations—because every woman has the fundamental right to live safely and securely in her home and community. We honour and remember these three women, as well as the many others who have been killed, and our thoughts and prayers continue to be with their friends and families.

November 25 marks the beginning of the globally recognized campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. It begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends on December 10, International Human Rights Day. This campaign, led by the United Nations, calls for global action to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. Woman Abuse Prevention Month and the 16 days of activism are opportunities to draw attention to this very important issue, but reducing violence against women takes ongoing action and commitment.

That's why our government is working to prevent and address violence against women in all forms, including human trafficking, by providing wraparound supports to help the women who have survived these crimes to heal and rebuild their lives.

Last year, we invested \$11 million in violence prevention initiatives and nearly \$200 million in services and supports for the survivors of violence. This investment provides critical services such as crisis lines, sexual assault centres and emergency shelters for women and their children. It also funds programs that connect women who have experienced violence with a wide range of supports, like safety planning, counselling, mental health services, supportive housing, and culturally responsive healing programs—and this is in addition to the \$307 million that we are investing over five years to support our anti-human trafficking strategy.

We know that many young women and girls are at risk for human trafficking, especially those from Indigenous and Black communities and youth in care. The average age

of recruitment into sex trafficking is just 13 years old. At 13, young girls should be focused on a math test, looking forward to an upcoming soccer tournament, or planning a trip to the movies. They should not be focused on dealing with the horrors of being sex-trafficked.

1510

The province's anti-human trafficking strategy takes a comprehensive approach to combatting human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children and youth. It is the largest investment in anti-human trafficking initiatives in Canada's history among all levels of government. Under the strategy, \$96 million is going directly to community organizations that support victims and survivors through the Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports Fund and the Indigenous-led initiatives fund. These organizations are providing wraparound trauma-informed supports and culturally responsive care to help survivors heal and rebuild their lives. Many of these programs are focused on children and youth, as they are at increased risk of being targeted, lured, groomed and manipulated by traffickers due to their young age and vulnerability. These community supports also include programs that are led by survivors and designed by and for Indigenous people.

Speaker, I mentioned earlier that Indigenous women and girls experience increased vulnerabilities to being targeted by traffickers and being trafficked. Indigenous survivors, stakeholders, communities and front-line personnel have emphasized the need for dedicated Indigenous-specific responses to human trafficking. That's why we've worked with our partners to embed culturally responsive, Indigenous-specific elements into initiatives across all pillars of our strategy. This holistic approach to partners responds to the specific needs of Indigenous victims, families and communities.

It is critical that we continue to work together to support culturally responsive interventions and solutions, not only to human trafficking, but to broader issues of violence against Indigenous women.

Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violent victimization than non-Indigenous women, and they are two and a half times more likely to experience spousal violence. To address this startling fact, we are investing \$80 million in the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy. This strategy supports a continuum of Indigenous-designed and Indigenous-delivered holistic programs that focus on reducing family violence and violence against Indigenous women and children, and improving Indigenous healing, health and wellness. Working with our partners, Ontario is committed to healing and reconciliation that is guided by Pathways to Safety, our strategy in response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This important work must and will continue, as will the work to end violence against women across the entire province.

I would like to acknowledge the release of Canada's first National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence earlier this month and our government's endorsement of this plan. The plan was developed collaboratively by the federal-provincial-territorial status of women forum and is

a historic milestone in fulfilling a long-standing commitment of all levels of government to work together towards a Canada free of gender-based violence.

In closing, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the professionals who are working on the front lines to support and comfort survivors of domestic and sexual violence and to help them redirect their lives. It is difficult and often unsung work, but it is life-saving and life-changing.

I look forward to working together with the dedicated network of agencies and professionals to achieve our mutually shared goal of an Ontario that is free of violence and full of opportunity for girls and women to be connected with their community and to live the life they choose.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

MPP Jill Andrew: I want to thank the minister for speaking. I saw that she became emotional, and I certainly know that has happened to many of us in this House, myself included. These are tough topics.

First of all, of course, I want to acknowledge OAITH, and I want to thank them for the 10th anniversary of Ontario's Wrapped in Courage campaign.

I also want to make it clear that while tears, concern and heartfelt words certainly help, it can't be all; it's just not enough.

We need the Conservative government to ensure that every victim of violence who is working can have access to paid emergency leave.

We need to ensure that every victim of violence who is a recipient of ODSP and OW can actually afford to leave. We know that this government has refused to double ODSP and OW rates immediately. That could really help folks who are trying to escape violence.

We also know that paid sick days are equally important, because, folks, when home is not safe, you head into work when you're not well; you're unable to stay home and heal. It's a recipe for disaster.

I also spoke with many staff members and board members from OAITH today who are incredibly proud of their work collaborating with folks across party lines—because this is a non-partisan issue. I want to say that for many of them, staff burnout is incredibly real. In some cases, the staff-to-client ratio is, frankly, untenable. In one case, I believe there were 18 or so clients with one person at the shelter. If some of those clients are moms of single kids and some of those clients are dealing with psychosis, you can only imagine what can transpire if there's one staff member.

I want to also express the need for flexible funding. We heard from OAITH folks that it really worked when the government allowed them to have autonomy over their own budget and recognized that different shelters need different requirements. Not having that option means the difference between losing a staff member and not being able to replace that staff member, which means programming is hurt, which means the people being protected and served through that programming to help eliminate gender-based violence are also hurt by this.

One centre lost funding for their child care respite worker—and I wasn't fully aware of this, but losing that

child care respite worker created a huge barrier for women leaving violence, because if they couldn't get to a job interview, if they couldn't get to court, if the child can't be left alone, if there's no support for the child, they lose that opportunity.

I also heard that Family Court support is overwhelmed. In one particular place, there was one support worker for 260 clients, if I'm correct.

We heard about the needs in different parts of our province. I live in Toronto, but that's not the only place—so we have to think about what's needed for rural and northern communities that are already under-resourced in order to fight against gender-based violence.

We have to think about how escaping violence has to be inextricably linked to having housing—affordable housing; transitional housing; sustainable, supportive housing. What happens is, for folks who are unhoused, who end up on the street or are in fear of ending up on the street, survival, having food becomes one of the only things they can focus on—getting help, not requiring them to come back to a home where they're being abused, where their children are being abused. We need to house women.

Bill 23, as you know, Speaker, is a bill that will directly impact victims of gender-based violence—because if they're not housed, they cannot be safe.

1520

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: November 2022 marks both Woman Abuse Prevention Month and the 10th anniversary of Ontario's Wrapped in Courage campaign. All across our province, people are wearing a purple scarf to show their commitment to ending femicide, as well as all other forms of gender-based violence. The purple scarf symbolizes the strength and the courage that goes into supporting survivors of violence. It reflects our collective commitment to push past awareness and really move to take action to end gender-based violence.

An uncomfortable truth is that gender-based violence often goes unseen. This issue has become even more pronounced under COVID.

Unfortunately, many women and gender-diverse individuals are not aware of the services that are available to them in their communities. That is why every Ontarian can help when it comes to this issue.

This government can act to assist women in real ways, like repealing Bill 124, which has just been deemed as unconstitutional by an Ontario court. We know that many women are affected by this bill that is suppressing their wages unfairly. Women's economic opportunities are directly related to their ability to flee situations where they may be at risk.

This is an issue that hits close to home, as my own riding of Scarborough–Guildwood was shaken by an attempted femicide earlier this year in January, when a woman was attacked and stabbed by two men in one of our communities.

Just last week, the Toronto Police Service were in a school in my riding that has been rocked by violence, talking to students about gun violence, as well as about human trafficking. One third of human trafficking victims are high school students. This amounts to modern-day

slavery hidden in plain sight. These officers gave these students valuable information to protect themselves and their friends at school.

This issue needs more attention. It is up to all of us to make sure that something is done with this information. Action must be taken.

Here I would point out the valuable contributions of many organizations in my riding, like Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services, Strides, the Scarborough Women's Centre, Toronto Police Service 43 division, YouthLink, as well as the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, in their ongoing fight against human trafficking and to protect our young people. These organizations have been steadfast in standing against human trafficking, and their efforts have been critical in advancing safety and security in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood and throughout Toronto.

I think it's also important to emphasize the essential work being done each and every day to support victims of gender-based violence.

In Scarborough–Guildwood, we are lucky to have a very special organization that is dedicated to the well-being and safety of francophone women and their dependents: La Maison. Like other safe havens across the province, La Maison plays a critical role for survivors of domestic and family violence, offering much more than just a safe place to stay. Supports include a 24-hour crisis phone line, individual and group counselling, children's services, community education and transitional planning and support, all in their language of choice—in French, of course.

The services and supports that are provided by organizations like La Maison are absolutely vital to addressing this issue.

This is reflected in the painful truth that there is a reason that we're here wrapped in courage today, and it is really a dark one. We must acknowledge that women and girls face violence—and I agree with you, Minister, that they deserve to live in a world that is free of violence. Every girl should grow up to achieve her potential without this dark issue hindering her.

That is why it is so important that, as a Legislature, we all raise our collective voice and demand more, yes, from this government—because you do have the ability to respond.

Whether it's in housing or it's in the removal of Bill 124, or to support women and girls in other ways, more does need to be done for women and girls in this province to keep them safe.

PETITIONS

NURSES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have petitions that I'm happy to present on behalf of Ontarians close to my riding and served by Hamilton Health Sciences.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas patients requiring surgery have complex care needs, some of which are urgent or life-threatening diseases and under anesthetic can become unstable, unpredictable, quickly change or deteriorate; and

“Whereas a scrub nurse is a member of the surgical team who provides a surgeon with instruments while maintaining a sterile environment, acts on and anticipates their requests, prepares medications, assists with retraction of tissue, communicates to circulating registered nurses (RNs) patient care needs, and responds in emergencies; and

“Whereas more health care providers are needed to address the surgical backlog, but surgical patients need a regulated nurse in a scrub nurse role who has the education, training and qualifications of a diploma or degree and a specialized credential in surgical nursing that makes them knowledgeable, expertly skilled and experienced, and anything less puts patient safety at risk; and

“Whereas Hamilton Health Sciences’s new surgical model of care is to replace nurses who perform the scrub nurse role in operating rooms, with unregulated operating room assistants (ORAs); and

“Whereas Hamilton Health Sciences’s actions to replace nurses with unregulated health care providers erodes the standard of care that patients will receive because ORAs cannot respond to patient care needs and they are not accountable to the public for the care they provide; and

“Whereas the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada (ORNAC) recommends that the scrub nurse role be performed only by nurses; and

“Whereas cutting nursing care in operating rooms means patients can suffer from unnecessary complications or death because of unrecognized care needs, delayed care, miscommunication, or errors;

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

“Immediately stop operating room assistants from performing the scrub nurse role at Hamilton Health Sciences;

“Stop any further plans to cut and replace registered nurses within the operation rooms at Hamilton Health Sciences;

“Cease the new surgical model of care that replaces scrub nurses with operating room assistants because it does not adhere to Hamilton Health Sciences’s mission to provide excellent health care to the community it serves.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. It’s unfortunate. I have over 1,200 petitions here today. I will affix my name to them and give them to page Alex to bring to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE

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

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

1530

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Provide Nursing Students with Free Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Training and Require Hospitals to Have at Least 10 Sexual Assault Evidence Kits and Provide them to Patients Free of Charge....”

“Whereas 39% of Ontario hospitals and health centres reached by She Matters throughout the course of the sexual assault kit accessibility study stated they did not have sexual assault kits available to survivors;

“Whereas many hospitals do not have nurses or physicians trained in conducting a SAEK examination and specialized training is required to gather evidence without further re-traumatizing the survivor;

“Whereas it is not mandatory in nursing and medical schools to learn sexual assault evidence collection and many colleges charge a fee beyond traditional tuition for nursing students who want to take a SANE course on weekends;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should amend the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, to require persons who grant degrees in nursing under the act to provide sexual assault nurse examiner training, free of charge, to nursing students and amend the Public Hospitals Act to require hospitals to have at least 10 sexual assault evidence kits available for patients at all times and to provide them to patients who are in need of them, free of charge.”

Speaker, given what we talked about today, I am going to sign this petition and give it to page Kalila.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to stop Premier Ford's health care privatization plan.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

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

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

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

"—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."

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer once again for providing my office with these petitions.

"Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"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 costs 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 ... 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 are struggling to live in this time 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 wholeheartedly support this. I hope the members opposite are listening. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Ema to bring to the Clerk.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to end postal code discrimination in auto insurance.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas neighbourhoods across the GTA have been unfairly targeted by discriminatory practices in the auto insurance industry;

"Whereas people in marginalized neighbourhoods are penalized with crushing auto insurance rates merely because of their postal code;

"Whereas GTA drivers with clean insurance records continue to be gouged by this unfair practice; and

"Whereas Ontarians are facing skyrocketing costs of living, and auto insurance companies continue to make record profits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to end postal code discrimination and price gouging in auto insurance and pass Bill 12, Ending Automobile Insurance Discrimination in the Greater Toronto Area Act, 2022."

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: "Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government...;

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

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

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 29, 2022, on the motion for 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): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I started my debate this morning—of course, then, it was statements. So I'm going to just finish off the rest of my contributions to Bill 46, which is, essentially, as we know, a cutting-red-tape bill. There's a lot of housekeeping in that bill. Some of those things obviously need to be reviewed.

This morning, I talked about systems. Red tape is a system where we look at what's working and what's not, and try to make things better.

The justice pieces of the cutting-red-tape bill: There are eight schedules. Schedule 2 is about the Courts of Justice Act. Of course, we know there are backlogs in our justice system. One of the things the government is proposing in schedule 2 is to have judges come out of retirement and contribute more hours so that they can help with the backlog of cases, so that people can actually get justice. Yes, that's an important step.

We also need to look to the future. Judges are retiring. We don't have enough judges. I've heard from the Ontario lawyers' society in London that that needs to happen as well. In combination with that piece, I hope the government is looking towards the future and making sure we don't get into this predicament again. Courts were backlogged prior to the pandemic, so let's not keep perpetuating that kind of system, that kind of red tape, so to speak, that disadvantages people who are seeking justice.

1540

The other part with justice in this bill is schedule 3, the Juries Act. Basically, the schedule is providing that a person's jury questionnaire may be obtained, completed and returned electronically. The government's modernization of the Juries Act is—they're proposing to make it easier, so that a juror's questionnaire is available online, and they're testing the feasibility of moving it away from sending a jury questionnaire through the mail. One thing I like about this part is that they are actually—except if you request it by mail. We know that all through parts of northern and rural Ontario, there's not always access online, Internet. That would be something that is a reasonable proposal. They're looking, of course, to cut costs and make it easier for prospective jurors to participate in the court system.

I met with the Salvation Army group yesterday, and in their report they address justice. They're doing a lot of

good work in our communities to help people who are in vulnerable situations, whether it be recovery or pathways to going to school and supporting them. One of the reports that they had for London, Middlesex, Huron, Perth, Elgin county and Chatham—635 referrals were made to adult community justice programs. One of the things they talked about was, again, the system. They only get \$30,000, funded by the government, to create these referrals into the community, and they were saying that they have to raise all the other money.

We don't want people in the justice system if we can redirect them to a better situation and lifestyle. It costs more money, quite frankly, to have people be recidivists, coming back into the system. That's not a goal I think anybody here aspires to.

The other thing I want to talk about when we're looking at justice today: I got a Google alert earlier today that—as we know, there has been a challenge in the court system on Bill 124. Again, there have been a lot of court challenges with this government, so when they're creating legislation and creating rules, they really need to look at the logistics and the legalities of it. This article that I have was published in September 2021. Since 2018, they had 14 challenges in their legislation. I don't know if Bill 124 is part of that one—I don't know, but they've lost that legislation. They've been defeated. Bill 124, according to my Google alert—"An Ontario court has struck down a ... bill that limited wages for public sector workers."

So when we are creating legislation, let's not tie ourselves up in red tape and in courts. Let's make legislation that actually works for workers—if that's what we're doing. Let's make legislation where there aren't constitutional challenges. You're causing your own red tape. You're causing the backlog of the court system—which we don't really need to do.

I was talking about systems and how schedule 8 of this red tape bill, Bill 46, does look at different schedules and what systems there are.

The health care system is also something that needs to be looked at very closely, and there need to be changes.

The government believes in the changes they're making, but they don't work for everybody.

My constituent Tammy has a serious medical condition. She has a visible flap on her head, and she needs surgery to cover that flap. Her doctor gave her a referral, but she has to wait two years in order to get that. Her question to us is, what is the government doing to address specialist wait times? Some people can say that's elective surgery, but if you're the person waiting for that, it doesn't seem elective, and waiting two years is really unreasonable; that's just uncalled for. The health care system does need more help. Like I say, the government is saying that they're helping the health care system, but when you have to wait two years—that is not the help that people are asking for.

I want to also talk about the WSIB—I believe that's the last schedule in this bill. We know that the WSIB is being moved from Toronto to the London area, which we're happy about. The government says no job losses will occur, but we are asking for more transparency around the

bidding process. What's going on with that? Where are they looking? How long is it going to take? It was announced, I think, just around the election—again, that was a surprise announcement.

The other thing is, right now, that property that is owned by WSIB is government land, so it would be nice to know, transparently, what's going to happen to that property. We would like to see it stay in the government's ownership in order to provide affordable housing—affordable housing being maybe some social housing or geared-to-income housing, which would help the people of Toronto tremendously. We know that that is a crisis in the making for many decades, and those kinds of propositions, when there's land available, would be very helpful, because other bills that the government has proposed are opening up the greenbelt, and they're looking at that land or farmland. When you have that asset already in a government coffer, why not use that for proper affordable housing as well?

Speaker, I want to wish everyone a wonderful, merry Christmas, and to wish that everyone be safe, and to say thank you to our first responders, who are going to keep us safe through the holidays. They work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and I think—

Interruption.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I don't know what's creaking.

I think that really makes a difference. When Bill 124 has been repealed, I think they're going to feel better about what they do.

With that, I'm going to conclude my debate. I look forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to questions.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the excellent member for London–Fanshawe for her participation. I always value her concise and yet insightful approach to debate and the ability that she has to contribute in a meaningful way. I appreciated the remarks that she made this afternoon. I know that in the role of opposition, it's important to always look at the legislation before you with that critical eye and provide that accountability, and I respect that.

I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit about the importance of carbon sequestration in achieving our climate goals, and ensuring that we're reducing carbon here in the province of Ontario and are able to also reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit about those changes and how important that is as Ontario seeks to make changes that will ensure future generations have a clean and safe environment to enjoy.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The carbon piece is important, I think, to everyone. Climate change is top of mind, because if we don't have a healthy environment, it actually snowballs into other problems.

The fact that the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act is in here, in schedule 5, and then the Ontario Energy Board Act, under schedule 6—as far as I've heard, I haven't heard a lot of analytical pieces to it; we're still waiting on

the climate change experts we consult with. We are waiting to see what comes out of that. The government has had many turbulent decisions around climate change. Hopefully, when we get that feedback, a little more expertise, we'll be able to see that that is in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for your excellent presentation.

Since we are talking about justice and there are elements of justice being dealt with in this bill, I just want to bring back an issue that was talked about a lot in the last session.

Do you believe that if the government is contemplating justice, we need to talk about repealing the cuts to legal aid? Do you believe, in this system, that there is pure access to justice in a way that's accessible to all, or do you still believe that there are barriers? If we're talking about justice, shouldn't we be talking about some of that stuff too?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, and I think that's where the opposition proposing things—looking at having more judges to try to deal with the backlog is important.

Reinstating the funding to legal aid is going to help the system function better. I don't know about other members, but I suspect that they get calls all the time from people who are desperate for justice. Legal aid is so busy that they're actually triaging people and having to turn them away or delay their access. They have a deadline in court, and that isn't helpful. So reinstating that funding is crucial for low-income people who are in vulnerable situations.

1550

Today is Wrapped in Courage—we know that a lot of women who earn a low income are seeking justice for various reasons, and one is, of course, family matters.

When you can't afford the cost of the courts, which is astronomical—you don't want to go there if you don't have to. Having legal aid supports is extremely important for vulnerable populations.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to my colleague for that passionate presentation.

Since being elected in 2018, our government has taken over 400 actions to reduce red tape while maintaining important regulations that protect people's health, safety and the environment. This has led to savings of more than half a billion dollars in annual compliance costs.

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?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you for that question.

I mentioned earlier that I worked in the insurance industry before I came here, and we analyze everything ad nauseam and always look for details. Anywhere you can make things work better—if there's a cost savings, of course, that's going to improve people's lives.

I think the member said \$500 million—I'm not sure what number he used. That savings—

Mr. Aris Babikian: Half a billion.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Half a million, \$500,000.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Half a billion.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Excuse me. That's good, if that's the case. But I also have to say that when you have court cases that you make legislation—I ask the government to look, when they're creating that legislation, to save those costs as well for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I want to thank my colleague from London–Fanshawe for her debate on this bill.

It's interesting that the government's question was related to justice. I just want to put it out there, for those in the House who haven't heard the news, that Bill 124, which was a direct attack on our front-line health care workers, has been deemed unconstitutional by the courts. When we're talking about access to justice, we know this government has gone to court several times, fighting bills that have been unconstitutional. They certainly keep the lawyers in this province busy, but they do not necessarily take care of the people in this province.

I'd like the member from London–Fanshawe to talk a little bit more about access to health care and the delays that people are seeing in getting surgeries.

Some people might think that waiting a year or two years to get a hip replacement or a knee replacement isn't that big of a deal, but I know, from hearing from my constituents and knowing people who have had to have those replacements done, that it is indeed incredibly painful, and oftentimes they can't function until they get that surgery done.

Could the member from London–Fanshawe talk about how we're seeing issues with people being able to access health care and what we might be able to do to fix that?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I really appreciate that question, because health care isn't something that just popped up and wait times haven't just popped up—they've been happening for quite some time. In London, I remember it was ground zero when we were talking about knee and hip replacements.

Of course, we all know that if you don't get the help you need, you get worse; your quality of life and health deteriorates. It's hard enough to get home care to come and help. So upfront investments that prevent people from waiting years go a long way and actually save the health care system money.

I said earlier today that a person has been waiting since 2016 for a doctor, and that's just unspeakable—I don't even have words. That's what we're doing here in Ontario.

So I hope the government can do better when it comes to wait times for all areas, including access to primary care doctors.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, member from London–Fanshawe, for your presentation. I always like the different perspectives that you bring to this House.

Cutting red tape across government has many benefits. It's making interaction with the government easier, to reduce our dependency on postage, and it is improving the environment by reducing our dependency on paper.

Why does the opposition continually vote against all of our red tape reduction measures and the many benefits they have for the people of Ontario?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I believe in online services and modernizing the way we do work in our everyday lives—not just at work, but at home, too. When you're looking up a recipe, you're looking it up online; you're not opening up a big cookbook.

For me, coming from the insurance industry, where we had files upon files, I tell you, that's the best system for me—when it's reliability—but that doesn't mean the absence of the electronic and saving costs. As you can see, I always come prepared with paper, just in case my laptop doesn't work, just in case the Internet goes down. It is a cost-saving measure that needs to be addressed. Most of the time, it's very reliable. But when you work in insurance and you've got an insurance background, you're always making sure that there's not something around the corner that you can't prevent. So I do appreciate that we need to be online, but that's just my way of working.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you.

We don't have time for other questions, so we'll go to further debate.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's an honour to rise in the House this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 46, Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, introduced by the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. I want to thank him and his team for their work on this bill. I'd like to share my time today with the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

As you know, Speaker, the previous Liberal government doubled the number of provincial regulations, adding over 10,000 new regulations every year. That's an average of 30 new regulations every day for 15 years. Four years ago, when we formed government, we inherited the largest red tape burden in Canada. This red tape added over \$33,000 in the costs per company, far higher than most other provinces. We lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs because Ontario wasn't competitive for business.

As the Minister of Economic Development said last week, Sergio Marchionne told Premier Wynne that her policies were putting Ontario at a disadvantage. I met with Frank Stronach recently, who told me that he told her the same thing. Last week, he wrote in the National Post about the ongoing problem of regulations that do nothing to serve the public interest, while creating costs and frustration for both producers and consumers.

We have passed eight red tape reduction bills since 2018, including over 400 actions to reduce red tape. As the minister said, these were common-sense changes to save time and money while still protecting health, safety and the environment. So far, these bills have reduced costs by

over \$576 million every year for businesses, non-profit organizations and the broader public sector, including municipalities, school boards, colleges, universities and hospitals. The results are clear: Ontario is the economic engine of Canada once again, with one of the fastest-growing economies in North America. In the last two years, we have attracted over \$16 billion of investment in the auto sector alone, including over \$11 billion for the manufacturing of electric vehicles and batteries. And this is only the beginning.

I want to take a moment to thank Andrew Dempsey, Doug Grodecki and Mohamad El Mahmoud, senior executives at Stackpole International, for taking me on a tour of their facilities in Mississauga–Lakeshore on Friday. Speaker, Stackpole is a top-three global parts supplier for hybrid and electric vehicles, and, like many others, now they're looking to invest and expand their foot-print in Ontario. If passed, Bill 46 would build on this record of success, with 28 new initiatives to make Ontario more competitive and to make our supply chains stronger and more secure.

1600

One of this government's first bills four years ago was the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act. This policy would have cost Ontario consumers and businesses billions of dollars every year. But the Auditor General reports the previous government never confirmed that this would actually reduce carbon emissions. In 2016, the Auditor General reported, "These funds may be leaving Ontario's economy for no purpose other than to help the government claim it has met" its targets. As Frank Stronach said, this would do "nothing to serve the public interest."

In contrast, carbon capture and storage technology is already being used to capture over 40 megatonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year, including four megatonnes in Canada, but mostly in Alberta and Saskatchewan. If passed, schedule 5 of Bill 46 would amend the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act to move towards a regulatory framework for carbon capture technology in Ontario. It would provide clarity to the industry and encourage innovation to qualify for the federal government's \$2.6-billion carbon capture and storage tax credit introduced earlier this year in the 2022 federal budget. We know this will have an important role in meeting Ontario and Canada's climate targets.

Dennis Darby, president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, reports that, in a survey earlier this year, manufacturers ranked investment in carbon capture technology as a top priority to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

If passed, schedule 6 of Bill 46 would also amend the Ontario Energy Board Act to exempt consumer-funded transmission lines from certain OEB approval requirements. And as we compete with other provinces and states for investments across the electric vehicle supply chain, this change will help to reduce legal costs and make Ontario more competitive.

Mr. Darby said, "We're pleased that the province continues to listen to our concerns, and put measures in place

that increase regulatory certainty to achieve a cost-effective energy transition and help manufacturers grow."

Speaker, last week, I met with Thomas Barakat and his team from the Ontario Good Roads association about asset management and environmental best practices. For example, each spring in Ontario, our roads are weakened by excessive water during the annual spring thaw. Pavement reductions are up to 70% greater in the spring than any other season. This means the same axle can cause up to eight times more damage to the roads in the spring than any other time of the year. For this reason, the Highway Traffic Act allows municipalities to reduce vehicle axle weight limits in the spring. However, the restrictions needed and the time period they've needed depend on the region and the road conditions each year.

I'm glad to hear that the Ministry of Transportation is working in partnership with the Ontario Good Roads association on prediction models that will allow municipalities to reduce these restrictions when conditions allow. This will improve and strengthen our supply chains in the auto sector, in agricultural trucking and right across our economy while protecting road infrastructure.

Earlier this year, in March, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, now the chief government whip, announced the Building Ontario Business Initiative to strengthen Ontario's supply chains and to provide Ontario companies with greater access to the public procurement operations through Supply Ontario, which is now part of the Treasury Board. The government has set a target awarding \$3 billion in contracts per year to Ontario businesses by 2026 to help drive growth and job creation.

Again, if passed, Bill 46 would help build on this progress. For example, as the minister said, the Ministry of Transportation is now reviewing the use of corporate performance rating to evaluate bids for engineering services. In practice, CPR tends to creep upwards, and the rates cluster together, with little or no distinction between high and low performance.

Some members will remember a case under the previous Liberal government that was highlighted by the Auditor General in 2016. A contractor installed a truss upside-down on the pedestrian bridge on Highway 401 in Pickering. The contractor's performance was so poor, Metrolinx had to take over and manage the \$19-million project. And yet the Auditor General wrote, "Although Metrolinx was aware of this contractor's lack of experience, its poor work ethic, and its unwillingness to improve performance," this same contractor was awarded the contract for the second phase of the project. It then built a stairway incorrectly and caused \$1 million of damage. Metrolinx terminated this contract too, but later awarded the same contractor another, even larger, project valued at \$39 million.

Speaker, as the minister said, giving less weight to CPR would help make the procurement process simpler to administrate, fairer for everyone and, most importantly, it would help ensure value for taxpayers' dollars.

To conclude, again, I want to thank the minister and his team for this work on another important bill that will

improve Ontario's competitiveness, strengthen our local supply chain and make government services easier to access. I would urge all members to join me in voting for Bill 46.

Thank you, and now I will share my time again with the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'm honoured to rise to speak on the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022. Most of my comments will be regarding the impact the bill will have on small business and the business community in general. As many know, I'm a proud small business owner myself, employing hundreds over the years.

Speaker, red tape causes delays and complication every day for governments, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, the broader public sector and individuals alike. Over my many years in business, I have run into too many instances of red tape slowing down processes. Not only can it be frustrating, but also time-consuming. It is a significant barrier to productivity, economic competitiveness and development. Red tape drains valuable resources and takes focus away from doing business.

Our government has heard these complaints from everyone, whether it is individuals, businesses or in the media. We need to quickly act to keep Ontario competitive with other regions in Canada and throughout the world.

One of our government's top priorities since 2018 has been to remove unnecessary and outdated regulations that are holding businesses back. We've made great progress so far, but there is still more work to be done. Over the past five years, our government has reduced Ontario's total regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5%. In addition, we have saved over \$576 million in regulatory compliance costs since June 2018. Those savings have directly helped not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, businesses, school boards, colleges and universities and hospitals. The progress has been achieved through common sense. The changes save both time and money, Speaker. The government has passed eight high-impact pieces of red tape reduction legislation since 2018.

Speaker, there is much more work to be done. Ontario's people and businesses are facing big challenges. On top of everyday difficulties, there are supply chain disruptions that have been made much worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. My business has felt many of these supply chain issues, and they still persist two and a half years into the pandemic.

Every business owner I have spoken with in my travels throughout Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry has felt the immense impact and stress of the supply chain disruptions on their business and relationships with their family. In fact, two thirds of Ontario businesses report that supply challenges have gotten worse this year.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we've seen huge shifts in demand as the habits of people and businesses have changed, often suddenly, putting even more pressure on a fractured supply chain. On top of that, there are ongoing labour shortages that are impacting day-to-day life in Ontario's economy, especially in consumer goods and the food service industries, which my business is in.

More than one third of businesses say that labour shortages will limit their growth.

We know that government can play a supportive role to ensure that businesses develop well-functioning supply chains and solve challenges like what we're seeing with the labour market at this time. There are more things our government can do to cut red tape. Through consultation with stakeholders, we've been creating an inventory of ideas that are continually being assessed and that are driving current and future actions.

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The Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022, is our ninth burden reduction bill since 2018 to cut more red tape. Our intentions are to:

- strengthen Ontario's supply chain;
- support farmers and agribusinesses;
- grow our labour force;
- make life easier for people and businesses by making it easier to interact with the government; and
- ensure Ontario remains competitive in the global market.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022, outlines a series of proposed legislative and regulatory changes as well as policy announcements we intend to make moving forward to achieve these objectives. The bill, if passed, will streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government and multiple sectors of Ontario's economy.

This proposed legislation will lead Ontario to more economic certainty, confidence and stability, something every business owner would welcome in these uncertain times. It will help to ensure our province continues to be competitive in the global market. This bill, and all the actions we will take along with it, will help build a stronger Ontario where people and businesses can continue to thrive now and into the future.

Five guiding principles consistently direct our efforts to reduce red tape. The first principle is to protect public health, safety and the environment. We've worked to ease regulatory burdens in a smart and careful way to ensure that health, safety and environmental protections are maintained or enhanced. The second principle is to prioritize the important issues. Here, we've assessed which regulations cost the most time and the most money, while looking for innovative ways to ensure rules stay effective and efficient. The third principle is to harmonize rules with the federal government and other jurisdictions where we can. We're targeting red-tape duplication and aligning with other jurisdictions where possible to eliminate steps that cost job creators time and money. The fourth principle is to listen to the people and businesses of Ontario. We've committed to hearing from people and businesses on an ongoing basis to learn what we can do to remove obstacles standing in their way. Our fifth principle is to take a whole-of-government approach. We've taken a coordinated approach to make sure everyone is on the same red-tape-reduction page, a broad, informed perspective that would deliver smarter government for the people and higher economic growth to match.

The next set of proposed changes I'd like to discuss support Ontario's workplace insurance and compensation system, or WSIB. The proposed legislation will make a number of changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act in support of Ontario's broader red tape reduction efforts to streamline and modernize outdated practices within our government to make life easier for Ontarians. The changes, if adopted, would improve WSIB's operational efficiency and reduce undue administrative burden to allow the WSIB to focus on key functions, including supporting injured workers and the businesses.

The proposed changes would:

- ensure injured or ill apprentices receive loss-of-earnings benefits at the same amount journey persons 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 a year;

- update the requirements of WSIB governance documents to ensure that 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 Lieutenant Governor in Council approval; and

- ensure the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, does not reference repealed statutes.

The WSIB is one of the largest insurance organizations in North America. Reducing the administrative burden at the WSIB will enable them to operate more efficiently, creating an agile system that is able to better cater to the needs of workers and businesses in Ontario.

With this bill, our government is creating conditions that let businesses and the people of Ontario thrive and prosper. The proposed legislation will grow our labour force and increase Ontario's competitiveness in the global market. As a result, if the bill passes, the legislation will benefit business and people living in our great province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll now go to questions and answers.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'm happy to share a few words on Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

I would like to start by saying that I think it's a good thing—or something that's at least okay—for us to be working with our judges post-retirement. However, I do note that this can create less opportunity for more diverse judges, for younger judges. I'm not being ableist, but I'm just recognizing that there are some justices who may be more attuned to technology, attuned to equity issues than those retired judges.

What I also want to ask the government about is the piece around red tape and mental health—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize for interrupting the proceedings at this point.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be

deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We'll continue, and I'll give the floor back to the member for Toronto–St. Paul's to complete her question.

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We need an answer to the question for the member from Toronto–St. Paul's. The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question.

As you know, it has been very difficult to hire new judges in the court system at this present time because of COVID. That's why we're looking at having retired judges come out of retirement to help us with the backlog that has been going on in the court system.

I agree with you that we have to look at diversity, as well, and younger judges who are more able to use technology over the older judges. Thank you very much for bringing that to our attention.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question?

Mr. Rob Flack: I enjoyed listening to my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry's address to this bill. Both of us, having come from business, understand that to compete in this world, we have to be as efficient as possible, and any time we're going to compete, we have to reduce red tape within our businesses and within our industries, not only locally but provincially, pan-Canadian-wide or globally.

I was particularly interested in your comments with respect to the WSIB and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. We know red tape will reduce the burden of people—will unleash productivity.

My question is, how do the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, support the government's efforts to reduce red tape?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London—that's almost as much of a tongue twister as Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

The WSIB is one of the largest insurance organizations in North America. Reducing the administrative burden for the WSIB will enable them to operate more efficiently, creating an agile system that is able to better cater to the needs of workers and businesses in Ontario. The more efficient WSIB is, the better it works.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the members for their presentations.

They touched on the WSIB and workers. One of the questions that I always hear from folks in Scarborough, in my riding, is—a lot of workers struggle with deeming. I know we talked about this in this House, as well. When they are deemed to be qualified for a job—which, by the way, does not exist, especially in their area. The WSIB

assumes they are able to find this job which does not exist, and then they're compensated based on that—or lack of.

I would love to hear from one of the members who just presented what they think of deeming. Should it be something that we address? I truly believe that it needs to end, and we need to do a better job for all our workers.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member opposite for that.

A case-by-case basis, I think, would have to be understood—to know if they're deeming them into a proper new career in that regard. To me, you need to live within the confines of that employee, so if they have a severe injury, they would be more prone to go into the office work side of things—but I'd need to know each case by case because I haven't necessarily had to deal with that in my business itself.

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The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I know that the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, in a previous life, ran a small business in the hospitality industry.

We all know that the hospitality industry is rife with red tape—red tape to your left, red tape to your right, red tape in front of you, red tape behind you.

In my small foray into business, I also encountered the same problems, which made hiring people difficult, creating jobs difficult, keeping people employed difficult.

My question to the member is this: How is this bill going to help small businesses like the one he ran? How is it going to help them employ people and keep those people employed?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member from Essex for that great question.

It's all about being competitive in business, and I believe the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned that it's about having a competitive edge over your competitors. It's something that, in today's day and age, when we're struggling with the supply chain, when we're struggling with staffing—to be able to focus on the business and what makes money for the business is extremely crucial, to be able to recover from the pandemic and the challenges that our economy has been going through. To remove burden, to remove that red tape that's not needed—a lot of it is duplication—is welcome news for all business owners across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: One of the government members, with a big smile on his face and with the purest intentions, asked our member what carbon sequestration is and if she believes that it is very important moving forward.

To any of the two who have spoken: Tell us about carbon sequestration. Is it something you believe is important moving forward?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

We're working towards creating a framework to regulate and enable the permanent geologic storage of

carbon, also known as carbon sequestration, while also maintaining public safety and safeguarding the environment. I know they're doing great work out in Alberta with this, and I think it's time that we bring it to Ontario, because if we can sequester that carbon, we're all going to be better off, with the climate change that's going on.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Another question?

Mr. Rob Flack: I would like to ask our good friend from Mississauga–Lakeshore what the proposed amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act are and how they are going to benefit your particular community in the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that important question.

Over the years, my in-laws ran small businesses throughout the province of Ontario, and it was always difficult because of how WSIB was set up at that time.

I'll go to a personal story, as well. My father died of asbestosis at the Texaco refinery in Port Credit, and it took us 12 years to fight WSIB, to prove that he had died from asbestosis from that refinery. We did finally win that case, but it took 12 years, and my mother finally ended up getting a pension for it.

Those are the issues that we've had with WSIB for many years, and we have to improve it. With this red tape reduction, we are going to start improving the system of WSIB moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We have time for another quick question.

MPP Jill Andrew: I have one question with regard to WSIB. I'm wondering what the government thinks about the billions of dollars, the WSIB surplus, that is going to employers, to big corporations, as opposed to injured workers. We know 50% of injured workers are living in poverty. I'm wondering if this bill addresses injured workers in a comprehensive way that actually puts money back into their pockets.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member opposite.

With this bill, we're going to make the WSIB more efficient, more streamlined, so that it's as effective as possible. The billions of dollars that did come back to small businesses—in my travels, a lot of small businesses, during the pandemic, really needed that and appreciated that. This isn't about taking money out of the employees' pockets—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's all for questions and answers.

We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Just before I get into my brief submission here today, I want to acknowledge the government member across, my friend, who mentioned that his father passed from asbestos poisoning. May God bless his soul and his memory.

We are dealing with an omnibus bill today. When government members—and I hear this, because most of us here in the chamber are from the class of 2018; I'm not sure if it holds true for today, but definitely, overall, that's really what we are. So when we hear stories of the past,

pre-2018, I always listen very intently. I always love hearing those stories. One of the things I always heard about was the omnibus bill and how the Liberal government of the time would introduce huge swaths of new information. There was a lot of stuff in there, and you would have to make a decision. So why is it significant?

We have a bill before us today that basically amends nine acts; it has 28 items within it. We've seen much larger omnibus bills in the past, but definitely, it's far-reaching. There's a lot of change that's being proposed here. Out of the nine individual acts, two ministries have determined that amendments to their individual legislation may result in environmental impact and have posted proposed notices on the Environmental Registry.

When our lead and my friend talked about this bill and made his big submission and his speech on it, he referred to this bill as a "sleeper bill"; he actually referred to it in a positive way. Well, I don't want to see "sleeper bills" from the government. But it is a welcome change, because a lot of the bills—I have to say, on this side of the House, I wouldn't use the word "sleeper"; it's more of a nightmare with some of the proposed things that they change.

The other thing is, is there really anything that's "sleeper" by this government? Here in opposition, big changes get suggested and made. Government comes in with a slew of changes and amendments to regulations, but what is always underneath this? What lies beneath that? The government doesn't share with us what their priorities necessarily are in very specific ways. We see bills that come here, or motions, and they describe far-sweeping changes, and in a very short time, we get together, we reach out to our own researchers, we do our own research, and we try to figure out, is this something that's going to benefit Ontario or not?

I must say that while it is important to continuously make improvements, if it's to regulations—for instance, the Auditor General is constantly bringing out reports pointing out ways in which government can improve. Certainly, on this side of the House, when there is improvement, we want to see it.

I must mention that there are things that are not being discussed right now, like the health care crisis that we are facing in this province. It's interesting, because the government will talk about housing as a crisis, but they won't refer to health care as a crisis. I think it was called a "situation" before, by the minister. Is it because they feel that they don't have a solution to it? If you ask government members, they say that they have a solution to the housing crisis, but when it comes to health care, they won't refer to it as a crisis.

Last week, I met with several front-line nurses, and they are sounding alarms. They talk about Bill 124. That has led many nurses to leave the profession they love. Bill 124 needs to be replaced immediately if we're going to begin to undo some of the damage that the government has inflicted. Bill 124 was ruled unconstitutional today. I think that's a very clear message to the government that they are going in the wrong direction in many ways.

I have to agree with the comments of a colleague who said the government is often penny-wise and pound foolish, because this government has tied the hands of hospitals with Bill 124. Hospitals had to hire more temporary nurses. In fact, they are spending, we've heard, up to 550% more on temporary nurses, funnelling public dollars into private pockets. This is privatization—and it's a classic Conservative move, because you don't want to properly fund the public system, and if it fails or is struggling, then it opens the door to privatization as a solution. I, for one, believe that's insidious, and I don't think it's fair.

Titles of bills do not reflect the content or intention of legislation within it. Yesterday, we heard the government lament that the province is drowning in red tape. You could just picture the visual: We're strangled in red tape and there's so much of it you're drowning in it. Language like "it's a burden"—when it describes the regulatory functions of law.

1630

It believes that legislation will save money for cities, but then it also introduces legislation like Bill 23 and 39, which will actually increase what cities will have to spend.

Bill 23 reduces development charges and shifts the burden to build important infrastructure to municipalities and, therefore, residents when they pay their property taxes.

Regulations are the details of law. They're the nuts and bolts which transform our ideas into reality. The government has the habit of packaging laws together and sometimes—the devil is always in the details. This bill, for example, has 28 individual items, and it amends nine acts. Regulations keep us safe. Does red tape exist out there? It does. If something is true red tape, we've got to deal with it. But overall, regulations keep us safe.

Yesterday, the minister mentioned, "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 recently heard in the news about an outbreak in an Ontario spa because of a pool. Simply putting up a sign warning people that this could happen isn't enough. There's a duty to prevent harm, and putting up signage to avoid liability and to shift risk to Ontarians is not the answer.

In 1976, we introduced a requirement to wear seat belts, something that is so basic and second nature to us now.

There were regulations that were in place, here in Canada, in our banking sector that protected us, and at the time, there was the big recession that happened in the States with the banking system. Regulations were put in place that—they weren't here in Canada, we would have had a similar fate to the United States.

Walkerton is the last one I'll mention for now. We saw privatization and a number of reasons that led to the crisis and the problem that was there, but one of them was a lack

of provisions made for notification of results to municipal authorities. So here you see privatization and a lack of regulations to allow for the reporting of what's actually going on.

So is everything red tape? I know this government loves to take away all forms of regulation, but I don't know if that's always the answer. Again, regulations define the quality of life we lead. They shape our environment, quite literally.

Take the greenbelt, for example. It can't be replaced. The government thinks it's a zero-sum game to take from one part and add it to another part of the province, but they fail to see that it's about location. Watersheds will be lost. Migratory paths of animals will be disrupted, literally severed. As my colleague pointed out yesterday, Ontario is losing over 300 acres of prime farmland per day, and over the last 35 years alone, Ontario has almost lost a fifth; it has lost 2.8 million acres of farmland. And yet, in 2022, we're talking about the government chopping up the greenbelt.

I want to say this to my friends in government: In 2018, I was knocking on doors, just like you all were, and there was a staunch, lifelong Conservative voter who said to me, "I'm going to vote for you." He said that the mere mention of the now Premier, but the then candidate, saying he wanted to develop on the greenbelt—and then he backedpedaled. I remember, during the campaign, it came back, it went away, it came back—"Maybe we're going to build affordable housing." They've completely abandoned the affordable housing part of it, but they've gone back to the greenbelt. This guy said, "I'm going to vote for you," because he thought it was outrageous. He grew up in those areas.

Do I blame individual members? I know it's not easy. You get questions from the opposition during question period, and the ministers do their best to—well, I have to say this one thing. We ask questions, and sometimes we face condescension from the other side; for instance, "Doesn't the opposition know what supply and demand is?" and "economics 101," and this sort of answer. I get it; some of the questions we ask are not easy to answer. Then when I hear about that, I think, "Do you know what we do every day?" We demand answers from this government on behalf of Ontarians, and they don't supply answers. So even in the basic understanding of supply and demand, in that sense, they don't even get it right.

But the reality is simply this: Do I blame the individual members? I think it must be tough for you, often, in your seats, because we sometimes see what comes here—and I defined it as a nightmare—and it's frustrating to see changes that we think are damaging to the province.

But do I believe that the rank-and-file members of this government who came here to make the world a better place—right? To make change—do they feel that they have the power to do that, even being a banner-carrier for this party? I don't know.

And I know it's tough. Some of the questions are almost rhetorical, because we know the answer: the fact that an individual will buy up tens and tens of millions of dollars

of prime green space in a protected environmental land, and then, mere weeks or even months later, that area is being flipped and it's now for development.

A simple question is, did a conversation with this particular developer happen? How do you answer that? Because I sit here, as a member of the opposition, and I cringe when I hear those questions. I don't know what you must be feeling as individual members, and certainly when the minister has to try and answer a question like that—I know; I know it's tough. But I guess I digress.

What are the schedules that are being opened up? Animal Health Act: The schedule allows the minister to issue a temporary response order to a specific hazard if the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario is of the opinion that any delay in issuing an order will be of significant risk to animal or human health and that immediate measures are necessary to mitigate these risks or stop them from increasing in risk. The temporary response order can be in effect up to 72 hours, and only an extension of 72 hours is allowed.

This seems like a reasonable amendment. Sometimes government questions are, "Do you think that this particular schedule is bad in a bill?" Newsflash—I think you all know this on the government side—is everything that you introduce here a problem? Not everything. There are some things, if you would seek to want to talk to us, consult with us, we all have something to contribute in this House, on all sides—if you were to give us a heads-up that this is the direction in which you're going.

NDP members, countless times in committee, have introduced very positive amendments that you know are a good way forward. But do you choose to take them? Why? Why don't you? So are there things within some of your omnibus bills that are decent? This seems decent.

The question is, is there poison in these larger bills? And then when that's there, we know that your bills are going to pass anyway, but we're not going to play games with you.

But anyway, this seems like a reasonable amendment. As we know, time is often of the essence when it comes to matters that threaten issues of health and safety. There is a direct link between the health of our livestock and health. The food chain must be protected, and this amendment would ensure that swift action be taken to reduce an outbreak.

Courts of Justice Act: The schedule amends the amount of time a retired judge can serve. Currently, a former provincial judge may be designated to serve as a provincial judge on a part-time basis, as long as they do not exceed 50% of full-time service in a calendar year. This schedule amends the amount to 75%, I presume—I think it has been mentioned—to try to deal with the backlog in courts. So it repeals section 87.1 of the act that deals with the continuation in office of provincial judges who are assigned to the civil division before September 1, 1990.

Is this a Band-Aid solution? I can't deny that the pandemic delayed cases, but there was an existing backlog even before. Is the solution to simply hire more judges rather than bring them out of retirement and increase their

workload? The existing backlog is proof that there was an existing shortage of judges. The volume of cases is there and we need to invest in the justice system to ensure it is working, instead of Band-Aids.

A fundamental principle of our justice system is that a person has a right to be tried within a reasonable time. This is not a guideline or soft target, but it is enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms: section 11(b) of the charter, which guarantees the right of any person charged with an offence to be tried within a reasonable time. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that we are administering justice in a reasonable and timely manner.

Schedule 3, Juries Act: The schedule is a modernization measure that would enable the jury questionnaires to move online. Currently, the sheriff mails out questionnaires. The schedule amends the act to allow for electronic procedure for jury questionnaires.

As we know, when we do make steps to modernize, we must realize that not everyone has access to a computer or access to the Internet, so I'm glad to see that a recipient of an electronic questionnaire may request a hard copy be mailed instead. As well, a person who receives either an electronic or mailed copy can request an accommodation for accessibility reasons. It's important.

I also want to echo the comments of my colleague yesterday who referenced a 2018 investigation conducted by the Toronto Star-Ryerson School of Journalism at the time, which found that juries were not reflective of the population. We need to do better. Juries should be as diverse as the population is.

You will find that Ontario is the only province that does not compensate jury duty beyond 10 days. An employer must, by law, grant someone that time from work, but there is no provision to pay.

1640

We know that, with the rising cost of living, people have to make tough choices. From the debate last week on paid sick days, we know that people are often faced with choosing to stay home and be unable to pay bills or go to work sick. In this case, someone who was asked to serve as a juror is being asked to take leave from work but will not be compensated beyond 10 days. This is a gamble that not many can afford to take.

Again, I raise that because you're opening up acts, there are a lot of positive changes that could still be made. It affects who will be able to serve as a juror. It has a direct effect on the composition of our juror pool. We need a deeper look into how juries are selected in the first place. Simply combing through property tax rolls is sure to exclude many from the prospective pool: family members, students, renters and the list goes on.

Schedule 4, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act: The schedule amends the Innkeepers Act so that a lien cannot be placed on cattle with respect to cattle enrolled in the Ontario Feeder Cattle Loan Guarantee Program. In essence, this prevents cattle co-op members from feeding other members' cattle and makes the program less effective than it should be. I'm told this is a welcome change by some. It will make our beef industry more competitive and will strengthen our food chain.

As we know, the price of food in Ontario has skyrocketed beyond 11% this year. One way to combat this is to start by strengthening and investing in our food chain. Perhaps this is a way to do it. Being able to produce more local food is good for the environment, it's good for the economy and it's good for pocketbooks. Transportation is a large part of the cost of food, and if we can reduce the distance that our food has to travel to get to our stores and our plates, we can start to help reduce the cost of groceries.

Schedule 5, Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act: The schedule repeals a section of the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act that prohibits the injection of carbon dioxide for the purposes of carbon sequestration into an area, including an underground geological formation. What is carbon sequestration? It's a process of capturing, sequestering and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in an attempt to reduce the human carbon footprint. So you're trying to create a larger pool or a carbon sink. It's claimed to be environmentally neutral and limited to projects that are engaged in the recovery of oil and gas, and I'll defer to experts to weigh in on this one, because I know that global warming is a real crisis. Decisions that we make today may be irreversible, and it would help that the government is listening and consulting with environmental experts.

As my colleague pointed out yesterday—and this is a simple fix too. One way to deal with carbon in the atmosphere—and it's so simple. What is it? It's to plant trees. Plant lots of them. Protect our environment. Protect our environmental areas. But what does this government do? And I'll remind the government: A long time ago, it was a Tory Premier that had the foresight to establish and empower conservation authorities. But this government today, this version of the Conservative government, is going in the opposite direction. And so if it believes that carbon sequestration is a way to get carbon out of the atmosphere and to deal with it, the simplest way is to protect environmentally significant lands and to plant trees. It's so easy. Do it.

But of course, and I won't get into all the details—you know it and I covered it before—we're going in the opposite direction. We're paving over huge swaths of the greenbelt, something that this government wanted to do over and over and had to go back on it. And here it is; they've come out with it. So that is not the right direction in terms of protecting the environment.

Schedule 6, the Ontario Energy Board Act: The schedule states 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. It expands exemption language in subsections 99(1) and 101(1) to include any exemption that is authorized under the act.

Speaker, I have just about a minute left, and so I won't be able to get into some of these other provisions. But I do want to say this: The government House leader often gets up, and many members get up here, whether it's a minister or others, and they claim that they want our support on bills and what they bring forward. If that was true—and in

reality, do I believe that? I can't impute motive, so I question if they really care or not whether we vote on it, because the reality is, they hold a super majority in this chamber, and they're going to pass everything that they put here, if they wish or not.

But if they truly care about our vote and our support, reach out. Tell us what you're doing. Ask for our opinion. We, just like you, have members who have so much to offer this House, who care about our communities and were elected here to try to build a better Ontario. If you want our support, if you want our bills—I know we're going to see over the four years many omnibuses—let's talk about the contents of it. Let's collaborate. Let's work together. You hold all the power in this chamber, and you can choose to respect all members here or not, whether it's ours or your own.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll go to questions, and I'll recognize the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek for his presentation. Speaker, since being elected in 2018, our government has taken over 400 actions to reduce red tape, while maintaining important regulations that protect people's health and safety and the environment. This has led to savings of \$576 million per year in compliance cost reductions by reducing the total regulatory burden in Ontario by 6.5%.

Speaker, my question is, will the member opposite agree that cutting red tape saves people and businesses time and money so they can grow their business easily?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you to the member for his question. If we can agree upon something being red tape, then we can support it. It's a question of what, in fact, is red tape.

I have to say, this bill seems to be a bit of a channel change. I feel like I'm in a time warp, because when I was elected in 2018, similar to now, bills were coming up—motions and ideas by this government—that were controversial, to say the least. Sometimes I feel like it's a bit of a government by tag line.

I know we're going back to something that they love to talk about, red tape. If something truly is red tape, something that we can agree upon as red tape, we will support that, but it's a question of if any given regulation is in fact red tape or not and who's asking you to make the changes. Is it coming from a good place or something that we should be concerned about?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for London West for the next question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the comments from my colleague the member for Humber River–Black Creek. He talked about the threat to the greenbelt that this government has initiated with the changes that it has undertaken as part of Bill 23. This red tape bill is part of a package with measures including the government's Grow Ontario strategy, which is intended to support farmers and Ontario's food supply. Do you feel that in light of the attack on the greenbelt, in light of the construction of Highway 413, in light of the use of MZOs to pave over

farmland—do you think that this bill, these measures, will actually protect Ontario's food supply?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much for the question. The government really picks and chooses, when it comes to the environment, what are priorities or not. Other members have stated it before, and I've said it in my speech: Every day, we're losing over 300 acres of prime farmland—per day—and over the last 35 years alone, we've lost almost a fifth, 2.8 million acres, of farmland.

Is this a move in the right direction? I don't believe so, and I think history and time will be the judge of the actions you made. Just in the same way that I've heard government members get up and judge the previous government before them, the Liberal government, people will be pointing fingers and you're going to be wearing the bad decisions that you make today and in the days following.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: One of the schedules in this bill talks about animal health. As we know, our American friends just celebrated Thanksgiving this past weekend, and I heard on the news that the price of turkey has gone up by 30% to 40% in some of the states, forcing some families to choose alternative options for their Thanksgiving dinner.

This government is taking actions to enhance Ontario's animal disease emergency preparedness. If a significant animal health event should occur, like the avian flu, for example, quick action is needed to safeguard supply chains and mitigate the risk of further spread. Does the member opposite agree with this particular schedule in the bill?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I certainly agree with this schedule. As I said earlier, it's very important that we act in a very timely manner. I support this particular schedule within the bill. I think that it's a positive move forward. And I'm hoping that in the future when you do introduce these bills and regulations that, again—and I'll say it: Reach out to us, tell us what you're planning, and we'd love to be able to provide the input that we can.

1650

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Doly Begum: Before I ask my question, if you'll allow, Speaker, I want to say that former MPP Bill Walker is in the House from the 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments. It's good to see him here.

My question, Speaker, is regarding one of the things that the member from Humber River–Black Creek mentioned, which was about the diversity we need when it comes to juries. I know there are a lot of lawyers who sit on the government side, so I think they will appreciate this as well. Would the member explain a little bit in terms of the need for that?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you to the member for an important question. Just before I get to it, I just want to say hi to Bill and recognize again his presence here. And I do want to say one thing because this ties into what I had said before. When he was minister and I was critic at the time, on a particular bill that came forward—and I don't agree

where it ended up—there was some conversation, there was some consultation at the time. It was rare under the last session, and I'm hoping that changes under this session. So I do acknowledge him on that as minister.

I want to state for the record that jury selection is important. It has to be more diverse. We're opening up acts. We have the possibility to make changes. I know the government has many lawyers and people that come from that background here. I think you know it's the right thing to do. Let's do it. Let's make sure that access to juries is more accessible and more diverse and reflective of our population. Thank you for that question.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for my friend's answer across the way, but I'm looking for some specifics. The MNRF is working towards creating a framework to regulate and enable the permanent geologic storage of carbon, also known as carbon sequestration, while also maintaining public safety and safeguarding the environment. We're proposing an amendment to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act as a first step of a phased approach towards addressing barriers to the permanent geological storage of carbon in this province.

My question to the member on the other side is: By removing the red tape barriers we inherited from the opposition, our government is introducing new tools to capture and store carbon to protect our environment. Does the member opposite support our efforts to reduce emissions in Ontario and support industries to meet their emission targets?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for the question. Again, I think the government picks and chooses when it comes to the environment. They took away incentives to buy green cars and have them manufactured here. They are going into the greenbelt.

When it comes to carbon sequestration, I will rely on the experts' opinions. But I had mentioned this one thing—and again, it was mentioned by another colleague of mine: The simplest way to develop a carbon sink is to plant trees, is to protect environmentally protected lands. We have so many green spaces that this government is so eager—environmentally protected green spaces, again, under the conservation authorities that were established by previous Conservative governments. If you really want to provide a sink for carbon, plant trees, protect environmentally sensitive green spaces. That is a non-controversial, important way forward.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Another question?

MPP Jill Andrew: Those were wonderful comments from our member from Humber River–Black Creek. Thank you for also talking about juries and the need for diversity within our jury selection.

I recently learned that jury members in Ontario, I believe, are not paid for 10 days on the jury, and I'm wondering if you would suggest to this government that they look into that aspect. If jurors aren't paid, that in itself creates an economic barrier for folks from different socio-

economic backgrounds to participate in the jury system. And I might guess that women and BIPOC folks may be disproportionately impacted by those unpaid days as a juror.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thanks to the member.

Again, it's very important to highlight this issue. Why do we bring it up? Since the government is opening up certain acts, this is something that is very key and very important. We call on members of the public to come and serve on a jury, and sometimes a trial is going to take longer for two weeks. If you're not compensating them for that, how can they simply do their job to help as a juror? It's not easy. I think this is something that you should take back to your ministries; it's something that you should work on—and I think you will find the support of the official opposition. I think it's the right way forward. Let's compensate those jurors, and let's make it more accessible.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The Minister of Agriculture has a point of order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I, too, would like to share my sincere welcome to Bill Walker. I had the pleasure of serving with Bill in the 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments, from 2011 to 2022. Bill was an amazing representative for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He is now back in the House, wearing the very proud title of president and CEO of the Organization of Canadian Nuclear Industries.

It's great to have you back in the House, Bill.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. On that note, we'll move to further debate. I'll recognize the Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Michael Parsa: It's a really tough act to follow—after the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who, by the way, was a mentor to me, and I can speak for so many of my colleagues. He was so helpful to so many of us when we got elected here in 2018—not just inside the Legislature here, but outside as well.

Thank you for your friendship, for your mentorship, my friend.

My honourable colleague, who I have a great deal of respect for and have worked very closely with since we got elected in 2018 here—I had the privilege of being the parliamentary assistant in the ministry; I was in charge of red tape reduction and small business. My honourable colleague talked about the conditions back in 2018, and I can tell you it's so different today than it was back in 2018. I remember travelling the province, listening to entrepreneurs, job creators in the province. We were suffocating in red tape here. Our businesses were fleeing the province because of the inaction by the previous government. Unfortunately, all along the way, the NDP had been supporting them. We were losing jobs—300,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario left.

Fast-forward four years later: As a result of the work of this government, under the leadership of this Premier, and the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, we have jobs coming back to Ontario, green jobs coming back to Ontario. We're going to be a leading jurisdiction for the auto sector and others.

Madam Speaker, I can speak about the great work that the Minister of Red Tape Reduction is doing all day, but I'd like to wrap it up by moving adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The Associate Minister of Housing has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

Mr. Ross Romano: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Point of order?

Mr. Ross Romano: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

OJIBWAY NATIONAL URBAN PARK PARC URBAIN NATIONAL OJIBWAY

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should consider integrating the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve with adjacent lands under the management of Parks Canada to facilitate the creation of Ojibway National Urban Park as part of an overall strategy to protect local endangered species and natural heritage areas, aid flood mitigation efforts, create publicly accessible green space, and further encourage ecotourism in Windsor-Essex.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

1700

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm honoured to rise today to support and to conclude the good work begun here by the member for Windsor West to partner with the federal and municipal governments, Indigenous communities and adjacent landowners to create the Ojibway National Urban Park. I know the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve very well, as well as the Ojibway complex as a whole. These lands are collectively being proposed for inclusion in the national urban park. The initiative to create a national urban park is a good practice, in that multiple sites that are home to a rare but rich biodiversity would be managed as one.

The largest protected parcel in the Ojibway complex is the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. It is a place of renewal and a place of peace. It is bounded on all sides by various types of land development: residential, industrial and commercial, and other parkland. It is home to significant tall grass prairie and oak savannah, which are critically endangered ecosystems in Canada. Less than 0.5% of the original prairies and savannah remain in all of southwestern Ontario.

In addition to critically endangered ecosystems, Ojibway Prairie provides critical habitat for almost 200 rare

plants, insects, reptiles, birds and mammals, several of which are found nowhere else in Canada. In fact, the Ojibway Prairie is listed in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database as a protected area.

The most threatened part of the Ojibway complex is a federally owned property named Ojibway Shores, located at the Detroit River. It has numerous rare and threatened species on site. Despite that, it has been repeatedly vandalized, and it is also a go-to spot for illegal dumping. For 15 years, the federal government resisted protecting this land and actively marketed it for industrial development. The federal government has since had a change of heart, which led to their announcement that the Ojibway National Urban Park would be created.

Nearby Ojibway Park is operated by the city of Windsor and is located across the street from the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. It is not only host to some of the best natural environments in Windsor and Essex county, but also to some of the most passionate and committed champions of biodiversity that we could ever have.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to two incredible stewards of Ojibway, Karen Cedar and Tom Preney, who spend long hours, day and night, working to protect our remaining natural environment throughout the city of Windsor. Their work doesn't stop within the boundaries of protected land. They work hard to ensure that man-made changes to land development areas and municipal projects are completed in a manner that respects and enhances the viability of the precious natural environment that we do have.

Our government is committed to protecting nature reserve lands from harm, and the province has been doing so at the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve since 1977—the province's protection as a nature reserve from adverse human development is the strongest among all regulation nationwide.

As human development continues downstream along the Turkey Creek, a sound management plan for the collective of lands is needed for the existing natural environment to ensure that our conserved areas will not be adversely affected. This is the best outcome for our natural environment, and it would reinforce the significance of the lands that we have here.

I'm confident that this House will see the wisdom in supporting this motion that will demonstrate that the province of Ontario is a willing and supportive partner in the creation, development and governance of the Ojibway National Urban Park, located in both the city of Windsor and the town of LaSalle.

The House previously debated motion 1 on October 25, in which the member for Windsor West solicited support from the House to transfer the ownership of the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve to Parks Canada. The national urban park model set out by Parks Canada is different than existing national parks in that it is proposed to be a way to bring multiple landowners in an urban setting together under a common management plan. Parks Canada has made it very clear that the governance of a national urban park does not require a transfer of the

ownership of lands. In some cases, this may not be the right outcome.

Ontario Parks is already taking part in the partner committee established by Parks Canada, which will initially develop the governance model for the park.

The materials for the November 17 public meeting regarding the park hosted at the Ojibway Park Nature Centre noted the desire of Parks Canada to manage national urban parks under a range of flexible governance models. Potential models being considered include:

—federally administered places, in which the national urban park is administered by Parks Canada, such as the Rouge National Urban Park;

—partnership models, in which the national urban park is administered by collaboration between Parks Canada and other partners;

—places administered by third parties, in which the national urban park is administered by other governments or organizations, which may include municipal, provincial or Indigenous governments or other organizations.

Further, it was reported at the public meeting that, “The national urban park in Windsor will be created under policy, although legislation may be brought forward in future. Policy allows flexibility, suited to a partnership model for the governance of national urban parks in these ways:

“—current land administrators can retain responsibility for their lands, rather than transfer them to Parks Canada;

“—shared park operations and management are more cost effective and efficient;

“—park governance is more flexible, allowing for a partnership model, including co-operative management by Indigenous peoples and the exploration of an Indigenous protected and conserved area;

“—long-term protection can be achieved through a mix of legal and other tools.”

A prospective passage of motion 1 would have signalled that this House disputes the recommendation provided at the public meeting. As the area’s most significant landowner of protected lands, the province of Ontario is a major stakeholder in this discussion, and I took the opportunity to consult with the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to gain a greater understanding of the work of the civil service on this file.

It is vital to support Ontario Parks in its participation in the partner committee established by Parks Canada to complete the pre-feasibility assessment for the park and to discuss a range of models for the proposed national urban park, including shared governance arrangements. The Parks Canada direction does not benefit from being restricted to delivering a specific land management strategy.

Speaker, at the foundation of national urban park projects is partnership. Our colleagues at the government of Canada have acknowledged the importance of, and have committed to, engaging in collaborating with local stakeholders and community partners on the Ojibway National Urban Park project each and every step of the way.

Parks Canada has been working diligently to ensure that national urban parks provide space for Indigenous stewardship, promote Indigenous voices and stories, and offer opportunities for connections to lands and waters

based on Indigenous knowledge and values. The process aims to advance reconciliation with the traditional territory holders, Caldwell First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation, and other Indigenous peoples, including those with historic and linguistic connections to the area.

Ontario Parks already has a significant record of co-managing provincial parks with Indigenous peoples. For example, work is under way to operate Mississagi Provincial Park by a joint foundation that includes the city of Elliot Lake, Serpent River First Nation and Mississauga First Nation.

At Short Hills Provincial Park, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, consisting of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas, has held traditional white-tailed deer harvests since 2013. And the Algonquins of Ontario are working with Ontario Parks to support additions to Hungry Lake Conservation Reserve, Whiteduck Provincial Park and Lake St. Peter Provincial Park. These partnerships protect the ecological, historical and cultural features of value while still maintaining recreational opportunities for people to enjoy.

Speaker, momentum for the Ojibway National Urban Park has continued to grow across our community. Two weeks ago, Windsor West MP Brian Masse’s private member’s bill, Bill C-248, which establishes Ojibway National Urban Park, passed the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and I look forward to seeing even more progress at the federal level.

Parks Canada is currently in the pre-feasibility assessment period in which they will explore the properties under consideration for being a fit within the objectives of the national urban parks program, as well as identification of the appropriate partners and the conducting of relevant studies.

I invite all Ontarians to contribute their feedback to the national urban park. The meeting materials are available right now and submissions will be received at citywindsor.ca until December 15.

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Speaker, in closing, I ask all members of this House to consider supporting the inclusion of Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve in the broader management of the future Ojibway National Urban Park. Our natural environment in Ojibway is special and is irreplaceable. The Parks Canada national urban park model for Ojibway that considers the management of the natural environment as a whole, regardless of individual ownership, is crucial to ensure that our tall grass prairie and oak savannah vegetation communities, together with the numerous rare plant communities and significant species contained within it, will thrive for generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I rise today to discuss the important motion in front of us, creating the Ojibway National Urban Park.

I would like to begin by noting the incredible work that my colleague from Windsor West has done to make the Ojibway national park become a reality. She has worked and continues to work with the city of Windsor, Caldwell

First Nation, the member of Parliament, Brian Masse, constituents and various environmental groups to get this project done.

I truly commend her work, which has paved the way to where we are today, and I want to acknowledge her tireless effort and willingness to work with everybody in this House for the Ojibway National Urban Park initiative that is in her riding of Windsor West. It's a perfect example of a member going into their community, listening, gathering support, working with their federal counterpart and bringing forward legislation that should be supported by all in this House. So thank you for all the hard work that was put into this previous motion. It's always great to see multiple levels of government working together to serve the best interests of their communities.

Speaker, I'd really like to start with something fundamentally important: the protection of the significant environmentally sensitive land. The climate crisis that we face in Ontario, in Canada and right across the world only adds to the urgency of projects like the one in front of us today. The project is going to take several important pieces of land, including the Ojibway Park, Spring Garden Natural Area, Black Oak Heritage Park, the Tallgrass prairie park, the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve and Ojibway Shores, all into 900 acres of national park.

While I know the member from Windsor West has highlighted how many of these areas are significant, the transfer of the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve to Parks Canada will allow this important ecosystem and green space to be properly protected. It will include protecting local endangered species, aiding flood mitigation efforts as climate change increases flooding events, and creating publicly accessible green space that will encourage ecotourism and preserve natural heritage sites. The benefits of this park creation are well founded and hard to not support.

But I know the protection of significant environmental lands is not something this government is too concerned about. We can see that with the passing of Bill 23 and the gutting of our greenbelt in Ontario, including my community of Niagara, because we know that's what Bill 23 does. That legislation will not solve the housing crisis; in fact, it will make the housing crisis even worse, especially for seniors and our young people. It will tear up some of the most important wetlands, farmlands and green space in the country. We saw that through the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Stop the clock, please. There's a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We are speaking today on the member for Windsor–Tecumseh's motion, not Bill 23. I would ask the member to speak to the motion before the House.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. I will ask the member to concentrate his comments on the motion before the House.

Mr. Wayne Gates: We're talking about green space.

It will tear up some of the most important wetlands, farmlands and green space in the country. We saw through the pandemic the importance of our local farmers and

having our own food supply. This bill is a slap in the face to our farmers, and quite frankly, we have an—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Stop the clock; I will interrupt again. There is another point of order.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I appreciate the member's comments about farmland. I'm just wondering where in the bill we're debating today it discusses farmlands.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. The point was made; the member has been advised. I will ask him to continue his remarks.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Quite frankly we have an obligation to hand over a clean environment—clean air, clean water, farmable lands—to our kids and our grand-kids. This legislation would leave our kids and grandkids worse off, plain and simple. I think we also need to be aware of the fact that when we protect important environmental lands, we're protecting areas that draw in tourism.

Speaker, I think we should also really focus on ecotourism benefits that could be created with the passing of this motion. In my riding of Niagara Falls, I've had the honour of living among the most prominent ecotourism destinations in Ontario: the Niagara parks, the stretch of land around the Niagara River. We also have beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake in my riding, and the natural heritage they have preserved is a major reason for tourism. So I've seen first-hand how preservation of natural areas can really boost your tourism industry. This will likely be the case with the creation of this national park.

Speaker, I want to be clear on this. I'd like to wrap up by briefly discussing how hard I know the member from Windsor West has worked on her motion related to this issue. The member from Windsor West worked hard in speaking with stakeholders, with local First Nations groups, with her federal counterpart to bring this bill together and put this before the House. I want to be clear on this, because it has happened before in this House: It's unfortunate that the PC member has ridden in at the eleventh hour to get some attention with this legislation. It's unfortunate that they did not work constructively together with the member from Windsor West. That's what we're supposed to do in this House—work together—and this is a perfect example of how we could've done it a lot better.

Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes of your time.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to further debate. I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Brampton North.

In Essex county, we have a road called County Road 50. It goes down by Lake Erie, and there's a big curve in the road, and when you get to the big curve in the road you get to a place called the John R. Park Homestead. That is located directly on the north shore of Lake Erie. The homestead is a fascinating place. It's managed by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. The curator is Kristin Ives, and she was just recently named president of the Ontario Historical Society.

Now, the John R. Park Homestead has many interesting buildings. They all date back to the 19th century—that's

the 1800s. There's a home, of course, and there's a barn, but the most fascinating part of the homestead, in my opinion, is the sawmill. It's pretty fascinating for a few reasons. First of all, it's fully operational. You can actually start up that saw and cut wood with it. But you might not appreciate how rare that is if you're not from Essex county. Il se peut que vous n'appréciez pas l'importance de la scierie si vous ne venez pas du comté d'Essex.

Les habitants originaux d'Essex étaient des fermiers français. C'étaient les habitants originaux qui ont défriché la terre. Actuellement, il existe beaucoup de fermes actives, mais cela veut dire aussi que les forêts n'existent plus à Essex. Le comté d'Essex a plusieurs petits boisés, mais on ne pourrait pas dire que nous avons des forêts.

La scierie est importante car il y avait un temps dans notre histoire qu'on pourrait construire une scierie et on pourrait faire des bonnes affaires. La ferme John R. Park est importante parce que vous êtes près d'une vraie scierie. C'est une marque de l'époque passée.

Ça, c'est le passé, mais aujourd'hui, Essex est bien différent. That was the past, but today Essex is very different. For example, you can walk about 800 feet from my house, stand at the corner of the second concession and Middle Side Road, and look north, and if you do that at night you'll see some lights in the distance. Those lights are actually 33 kilometres away, and they're the lights on the Ambassador Bridge, which spans the Detroit River and joins Windsor and Detroit. You can literally stand at the corner of the second concession and Middle Side Road and see 33 kilometres without any obstruction. That is how flat Essex county is, and that tells you something about the topography of the area.

1720

As you travel north from that point, you go past the River Canard watershed, and you arrive at what we often call the Ojibway Prairie. That's a pretty unique space, as my friend the erudite member from Windsor–Tecumseh was speaking about. It bears the name of one of the First Nations of the area. That nation was among General Isaac Brock's allies during the War of 1812. It's fitting they should give their name to the area.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about Ojibway Park, according to the Ontario Parks website, because it is an official park. It consists of native prairie, savannah and open woodland. It has layers of sand, silt and clay that cover the bedrock—in some areas, 30 metres deep. That's rare. Many of those layers were laid down 10,000 years ago or more.

In the springtime, it's wet, and in the late summer, it's dry, and that makes it ideal for prairie vegetation. It includes over 500 flowering plants. Some of those are mints, lilies and figworts, and 18% of those plants are considered rare in Canada. It also has interesting fauna, including Butler's garter snake and the bobwhite.

But the extremely important point to remember is that it's already a park. It's a provincially protected park. It was established in co-operation with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the province of Ontario and the city of Windsor. And I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh for his forethought by bringing this

motion, and I'd like to recognize, also, the member from Windsor West for her concern about this issue.

I think this is a motion we can all get behind. I'll certainly vote for it myself and encourage others to do so as well.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to this motion. It's basically like speaking to my motion all over again because, aside from eight words, nothing has changed since my motion.

It's interesting the member from Essex is thanking the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his foresight. Actually, we've been working on this for years now with the community, with my federal counterpart, through environmental organizations and Caldwell First Nation. So really, they're the ones that should be getting the thank you for the work that has happened to get it to the point where it is today.

Speaker, I had a speech prepared, but listening to debate from my colleagues around the House, both on our side and the other side, I just have some thoughts. I have some big feels now that I'm going to share.

When you look at the original motion, the motion I tabled back in August, it said, "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should transfer ownership of the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve to Parks Canada to facilitate creation of the Ojibway National Urban Park as part of an overall strategy to protect local endangered species and natural heritage areas, aid flood mitigation efforts, create publicly accessible green space and further encourage ecotourism in Windsor–Essex."

I'll just read the portion of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh's motion that's different from mine: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should consider integrating the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve with adjacent lands under the management of Parks Canada."

Now, Madam Speaker, my colleague from Niagara Falls was talking about the greenbelt and what we've just seen happen with a bill here in the House. We are talking about a provincially protected space right now, Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. It's under the umbrella of Ontario Parks. Bill 23—and this is the concern of my community. I had a conversation with the leaders from Friends of Ojibway earlier today. I've had conversations with Chief Mary Duckworth from Caldwell First Nation; I just had another conversation with her this morning. I've had conversations with ERCA; I've had conversations with community members; I've had conversations with those from the Unifor Local 444 environmental group. I've had lots of conversations since the government tabled Bill 23.

The concern is that if the province doesn't transfer this land to Parks Canada so that it would be protected under the federal legislation, what we are going to see happen is that this government is going to open up this incredibly environmentally significant land for whoever wants to come along and build on it. There are very real concerns.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The government side can heckle me for this. It's really not an insult to me; it's an insult to everybody in the community that has done the work on this project for years.

Interjection: Including the Indigenous communities.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The Indigenous community: Now, when we're talking—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's preposterous.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's not preposterous. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke thinks it's preposterous that we have Caldwell First Nation putting out some serious concerns about the way this government is going.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, you're preposterous.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Madam Speaker, if you could please ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to stop trying to shout me down.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Order, please. Excuse me. I will ask the members to be respectful. The member has the floor and I would like to listen to what she's saying. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Didn't we pass Bill 23?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you absolutely did pass Bill 23, which is exactly why these organizations are concerned about what you will do to the Ojibway provincial prairie reserve.

Madam Speaker, I want to take an opportunity to talk about consultation. As I said—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize to the member. Stop the clock. There is another point of order.

Mr. Graham McGregor: This is a very serious topic about conserving land in the Windsor area, and I would just hope that the member would take that equally as seriously as we do in our party and put her comments toward this bill and not Bill 23.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That is not a point of order.

I will allow the member to continue.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just had to ask one of their members to stop trying to shout over me, and that's what he gets up on?

Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, this is incredibly important. It is environmentally significant. It is important to my community. We have done years and years of community engagement and consultation.

The city of Windsor is going to be transferring land. The federal government will be transferring land. Caldwell First Nation wants this land protected, and they want to be partners—they are partners, and they need to be treated so.

Another concern that has come forward is the fact that this motion that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh brought forward was done with no consultation with Caldwell First Nation, with the Wildland League, with ERCA, with the Unifor environmental committee, with the Friends of Ojibway Prairie. Any conversations that have happened from the government side have happened after this motion was tabled.

All through this process, whether it was my motion coming forward or my federal riding mate bringing forward Bill C-248, it was community-led, community-driven—their input, every single step of the way, and they're still included. They're still included; at least they are with me. And they're still included and consulted by my colleague the MP for Windsor West.

We have not seen that from the Conservatives to date, and there are very real concerns from all of those stakeholders that, going forward, this is what they will continue to see: a government who treats them as an afterthought. It's something we had to point out yesterday. They treat First Nation communities as an afterthought: "We've passed this bill, and now we're going to talk to them. We've passed this bill, and now we're going to share the spoils of the bill."

Madam Speaker, I cannot overstate how important this is to my community, to the people within my community and to this natural green space, this very significant environmental space. I would hope that the Conservative members, instead of heckling about it, would actually consult with all the affected parties.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to speak in support of my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh's motion today. Notwithstanding that the intentions of the member for Windsor West may be in the best place, she did not get it done because she insisted on doing something that was not going to get done, and that was the transfer of the property to Parks Canada.

1730

My son-in-law is the head of security in the biggest national park in the country, Wood Buffalo National Park, some 44,000 or 45,000 square kilometres. This is not obviously a park of that nature—not an urban national park but a national park.

What I will commend the member for Windsor–Tecumseh on is he did the research to see what was doable and what was not doable. Unfortunately, the member for Windsor West wanted it her way, which is how she acts in this House—always wants it her way. But we know that you've got to work with the partnership.

I want to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for understanding what is actually necessary to get this done. The insinuation, quite frankly, from the member for Windsor West that somehow the way we're doing it, without transferring the property, puts this land in jeopardy—quite frankly, she invents that scenario because it works for her narrative and she's very upset that it's not her motion that is being debated today and that her motion—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize. I'll interrupt the member and remind the members that we can't attribute motive. So I would ask the member to be careful in his remarks.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is the motion that the House will get to vote on today. You know, we're not dealing in the past. We're dealing with a motion today that will protect that land in a very special way, and I want to thank the member for doing that. He listed all of the

criteria. As the member for Windsor West said, her motion was only different in a few words.

Interjection: Eight words exactly.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Eight words, she said. Well, those eight words are important, and that was the transfer of the property to Parks Canada. That's not going to happen. Parks Canada doesn't do business that way. The member for Windsor–Tecumseh understands that, and the House will have an opportunity to create this new urban park today if they vote in favour of that motion. I want to thank you for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to stand here today in support, strong support, of a motion brought forward by the phenomenal member from Windsor–Tecumseh, a motion that would see our government build on our strong relationship with the federal government to deliver the Ojibway National Urban Park for the people of Windsor in a way that integrates the adjacent lands of the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Natural Reserve. I want to thank my colleague for his leadership on this file for protecting this land for generations to come.

Myself, I'm fortunate to represent Brampton North where we have tons of beautiful green space and access to water enjoyed by many of our communities. We have beautiful Professor's Lake, beautiful Loafer's Lake with access to the Etobicoke Creek Trail. We have the beautiful wildlife and scenery at Heart Lake. And that's to say, Speaker, that Ontario is blessed with breathtaking scenery and wildlife that captivates people from all over the world.

One of the best resources we have in Ontario is our biodiversity. What's so important for this motion that we're talking about here today—this is a motion that protects that space for generations. Speaker, I would put forward to all members of the House, we have one planet. We all have a responsibility to be humble stewards of the planet. On this side, on the PC side, we understand our responsibility to be responsible stewards of planet Earth.

Now, the biodiversity with the Ojibway Prairie Complex is no secret. It's home to a variety of vegetation and animal life. This includes a diverse ecosystem of wetlands, forest, savannah and prairie. It's home to a number of rare plants, insects, reptiles, birds and mammals. Among these include some of my favourite animals, which are turtles. The complex is home to spotted turtles, Blanding's turtles, among others. It's also home to my favourite turtle in all of Windsor: the snapping turtle.

As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has said, the city of Windsor, the town of LaSalle and the government of Ontario have already laid the groundwork for protecting these lands. Now it's time to take it to the next level by completing the corridor and seeing the Ojibway National Urban Park come to fruition.

Speaker, this absolutely needs to be done in a way that supports flood mitigation efforts, in a way that protects

endangered animals and in a way that protects natural heritage areas.

Traditionally, Ontario has worked closely with municipalities, not the federal government, in achieving best outcomes for protected and conserved areas; however, our government never shied away working with different levels of government and working with those across the aisle to provide Ontarians the best service and results possible.

I would end it by just making a plea to the members of the House: Don't let partisan politics get in the way of a good idea. We have a real opportunity to protect biodiversity in the Windsor area. I hope you use your voice that the people elected you to—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. Further debate?

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I truly want to thank the members from Niagara Falls, Essex, Windsor West, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Brampton North for their comments.

I really would like to emphasize the importance of collaboration. Being new to this House, I am learning every day. I hope in the future, when the opposition tables a motion, that I'll have the opportunity to collaborate on it before it's tabled and finalized. That gives an opportunity to work within our government to find the best possible outcome.

I do want to tell Windsor–Essex that this government is four-square behind participating in the Ojibway National Urban Park, and I believe the will of this House will be to see this project moved forward and to get the job done.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Dowie has moved private members' notice of motion number 15. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

REQUEST TO THE INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a request by the member for Guelph to the Honourable David J. Wake, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Etobicoke North, Doug Ford, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention. Thank you.

We have a late show, but I don't see the member present to move it.

There being no further business, I declare this House adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1739.

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Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
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Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
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Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
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Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

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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	