

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 36

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 36

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Wednesday
30 November 2022

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Mercredi
30 novembre 2022

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 November 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 novembre 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

WEARING OF SHIRT

Hon. Kinga Surma: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Infrastructure on a point of order?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear my Polish shirt in the House. Poland is playing this afternoon, and I want to cheer them on today, if that's okay.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Infrastructure is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear the T-shirt in the House today. Agreed? Agreed.

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?

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to acknowledge that today is Scottish Heritage Day in Ontario. It's the second time that we've had it, and I want to thank former member Jimmy McDonell for putting it forward as part of a private member's bill. I suspect that Mr. McDonell will be watching at some point today, so I'm proudly wearing Scottish attire. This is Black Watch. It is universal; anyone is welcome to wear it. And I am wearing my McPherson clan tie because I am part of the McPherson clan.

What we're talking about today, though, is red tape reduction.

One of the things that our government embarked upon four years ago was reducing the amount of red tape. When we first were elected, we took a look at how many regulations we have in Ontario. What did we have in comparison to other provinces? We had more than 350,000 regulations in Ontario. As a number, 350,000 could be fantastic; it

might be low—or it might be high. Just looking at it by itself, when you think about the amount of legislation that there is, the amount of things that government has to do, 350,000 could be a legitimate number. But upon further inspection, we found out that the province that had the second most regulations was British Columbia, at 169,000 regulations. We had about 150,000 more regulations than the number two province. I don't think there's anybody who would say that British Columbia has a low standard of living or that British Columbia isn't a safe place to live. They are able to do with 169,000—that's number two. Ontario had the most regulations of any province. When we looked at what those regulations did, what it meant for people in Ontario, what it meant for business in Ontario, we found that a lot of the regulatory burden existed in a way that stifled innovation, in a way that stifled business, in a way that made it more difficult.

I've said a number of times before that government's role is to regulate to the point of integrity but not to the point of interference. I think the Ontario government, over the years, has gotten to the point where we're beyond interference now. It's very difficult for different industries to be nimble.

This morning, I was downstairs, in the legislative dining room, and there was a reception being held by OBIO—an organization that helps start-up companies in health care—and what we heard today was a prime example of that red tape and why red tape needs to be reduced, why we have to cut through so much of it. We have a large number of Ontario-based companies that are innovators in health care, that have done fantastic work. Their products are being sold in the United States and Europe, but they don't meet the procurement requirements in Ontario—where the company exists, where the technology was developed, where the innovators live. They can't do business in their own province because of some of the burdens that government has placed on simple things like procurement.

This is why we have embarked on red tape reduction bills. We can't find ourselves in a position where Ontario has great innovations, where Ontario has fantastic intellectual property, where Ontario leads the world in something, but Ontario will not support the businesses from Ontario that are doing that. That's why there's a need for these red tape reduction bills.

When we were looking at the history of it, we discovered that the regulatory burden for compliance in Ontario in 2017, before we were elected, was about \$33,000 per business. Granted, there are small businesses and large businesses, and the larger businesses obviously are paying more, and the smaller businesses may not pay quite as

much—but when you divide it up, \$33,000 a year in regulatory burden for the average business.

We know that more than 95% of businesses in Ontario are small and medium-sized businesses that employ the most people. The vast majority of companies in this province found themselves in a position where it was costing close to \$35,000 a year, before they opened the door, before they turned the lights on, before a single person walked into the office, walked into the store, walked into the business—\$33,000 a year. Think about that in terms of the small mom-and-pop shop. Think about that in terms of the corner convenience store. Think about that in terms of the landscaping company that's employing a number of students over the course of the summer. Before they turn the lights on, they've got a \$33,000 bill that they have to pay. Through some of the things that we have been doing so far, we have reduced that by about 6.5%. We're making it easier for business to function.

This bill is no different than all of the others; this bill is making it easier to do things—and I want to touch on one of the things, in particular, on it: the Grow Ontario Strategy.

We know that we've got some of the greatest farmers in the entire world. Ontario feeds the world. There has been an expression for a number of years, "Farmers feed cities." It is so true. And why is it that Ontario farms are so productive that way? Because of the innovations. I've talked about some of them in the past: automated milking, robotic milking, high-tech in dairy farming. I've made the statement before; I'll make it again, because it is so true: Happy cows produce more milk.

0910

In my riding of Peterborough–Kawartha, we have a number of dairy farms that have switched over to robotic milking or automatic milking. What all of them have said is, they've been able to reduce their herd by 50%. That's 50% less cattle that are being fed, 50% less cattle that have to be looked after, 50% less cattle that have to see a vet—reducing the operating costs for that farm, but producing as much or more high-quality Ontario dairy products.

This is what can be done in a province when we reduce the amount of red tape that there is. The Grow Ontario Strategy is one of those things that's going to help with that, because it's taking that agri-food business and it's making it that much more efficient. It's going to add to how we produce things in Ontario.

And we're not stopping just there. We're embarking on a tour of northern Ontario. As the parliamentary assistant to northern development, I get the pleasure of being involved with the Ministry of Agriculture and going up to northern Ontario, to the Clay Belt, to see what we can do there to help improve Ontario's ability to feed the entire world.

We've seen what has happened in Russia and Ukraine. Food insecurity is something that exists around the world. It's not something that we've had a problem in producing enough food in Ontario for—but because we produce that extra amount, we have the ability to help with that food insecurity across the entire world.

There are a couple of really interesting things—potatoes, for example. I know; who gets excited about something like potatoes? I'm Scottish, so I don't get excited about potatoes quite the same way that the Irish do. At one point, Ontario produced the most potato seedlings of any province in Canada, and we've got the ability to get back to that. We've got the ability to store, through innovation, those potatoes, so that they can be used year-round, instead of having to go to a southern state to pick up their crop in the winter.

These are all innovations that are done because you reduce the amount of red tape. When we reduce red tape, it means that our businesses have the opportunity to be more innovative, to pivot, to do things that are going to help the entire province, the entire world.

The Ontario government should not be the burden; we should not be the reason why Ontario businesses cannot thrive. With the amount of red tape that has been put out there, the amount of regulations that we have, we are not at the point of regulating for integrity; we're at the point of interfering. Governments need to get out of the way. Businesses will innovate; businesses will improve; businesses will employ more people, giving a higher quality of life to the people who live in this great province, as long as we, the Ontario government, take that step back, remove those unnecessary burdens, make it easier for businesses to thrive, and make it easier for businesses—like in the health care sector—to actually sell their products to Ontario instead of having to rely on foreign markets.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his discussion this morning. He talked a lot about the importance of removing red tape.

We've heard recently at Queen's Park, and last term, about the red tape surrounding getting medications—for cystic fibrosis, for example. Last term, we talked about the red tape surrounding take-home cancer medication. If you're in the hospital, the cancer medication is covered, but if you take it home, you have to pay in advance and get a rebate.

I'm wondering if the member from Peterborough–Kawartha would talk about the importance of removing red tape for people who need medication and have to go through this unnecessary burden of paying for it in advance in order to get reimbursed afterwards.

Mr. Dave Smith: That's a fantastic point that reiterates exactly what I was saying at the very beginning. I talked about OBIO, who are here for a lobby day today, talking to us about how we change things in health care so that those great innovations can get to hospitals, can get to health care, can be used by the people of Ontario. These are all things that we have to do, absolutely; I agree 100%. We need to make sure that the Ontario government's procurement rules do not get in the way of the fantastic work that's being done in Ontario. We're promoting a made-in-Ontario approach for pretty much everything that we've got, and the previous governments made it so difficult for companies in Ontario to get their product to consumers in Ontario.

We're embarking on an entire process. We've worked on it for the last four years, and we'll continue working on it to reduce that burden, so that great innovations from the province of Ontario get to be used in the province of Ontario by the people of the province of Ontario to the benefit of everyone who lives here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member and my colleague for that very passionate speech. He talked about some of the costs to an average business out there—to the tune of \$33,000.

We know that when we inherited government back in 2018, Ontario had the highest burden across the country—and the work that we have been doing over the last four and a half years in terms of reducing red tape.

I'm wondering if the member can speak to some of the items that we have introduced in this piece of legislation—how those might help his constituents and businesses in his riding.

Mr. Dave Smith: In total, we have reduced the cost of doing business in Ontario, through red tape in particular, by \$576 million per year—\$576 million of funding that would have come from businesses, that accomplished nothing more than filling out paperwork.

What we're doing in this bill is, we're taking 28 different actions across 11 different ministries to reduce the cost of doing business in this province, to make it easier—something as simple as filling out a form online rather than having a paper copy of it, something as simple as having jury descriptions being made available online, having the ability to fill that information out. Why is that important?

I'm going to go back a little bit to something that happened with our Minister of Finance—he was actually President of the Treasury Board at the time. Fax machines were something that were constantly in use. Someone had to physically take that paper, feed it into a fax machine, take it from the other side, and then retype it into a computer. Simple things like that make a massive difference in the operating costs for companies, and these are things that we're making changes to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a question for the member, specifically on schedule 9 in the bill.

WSIB is now moving from Toronto and going to London. I understand that there are talks happening, but no one knows what prospects there are of where they're going to relocate. There are also questions around the selling of the property here in Toronto. Is it going to stay in public hands so it can be used for things like true affordable housing?

Can the member talk about why they feel transparency and lack of openness about what's going on in that process is red tape? I'd like to know why we can't have those open discussions to eliminate red tape there.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to talk about my previous life as a software developer. We were in a niche market. All the products that we developed were for the education sector here in Ontario. One of the things that we loved, as

a vendor of record, was, the Ministry of Education would post something that said, "We're going to spend X amount of dollars for software that does this." Guess how much my response to that RFP was every single time? It was \$1 less than what the ministry said they were going to spend to do whatever it was that they were going to do.

What we would be doing is—if we broadcast how much money we're going to spend to do this, all of the bids would come in at \$1 less than what we have said that we're going to spend on it.

Anyone in business knows that when you're going to put a procurement out, you do not lay on the table how much you're going to spend on it. You want a competitive bidding process, where people are bidding to get to the lowest price, to save the taxpayers of Ontario as much money as possible and deliver the best possible service.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

0920

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to our member sitting opposite there. It's music to my ears when I hear how the red tape bill will support and benefit businesses.

I've run my own business before, and there were many times that I finally gave up doing some of the work for the government because of the red tape and the amount of time I had to spend there.

I would also like to know who else will benefit from these changes and how.

Mr. Dave Smith: I like to say that I'm in the productive middle and there are the fringe corners on either side of this side—because our government is so big that we span that entire side as well as a large chunk of this side of the House.

There are so many things that are in this red tape reduction bill that are going to help so many different businesses. I'll touch on two of them.

If you're doing jury duty, for example—if you get called to that, not having to waste your time filling out paper forms for it, being able to go on and do it electronically at your ease, at your comfort, is one of those things. It doesn't sound like it's a big deal, but all of those small things start to add up.

On the agriculture side: Our Grow Ontario Strategy is something that's not only going to help agriculture, it's not only going to help husbandry and livestock, but everyone who consumes all of those. There's an expression in Ontario that one in eight work in agriculture, but I can guarantee you, eight out of every eight people eat what comes from agriculture.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just to your last comment—I don't know if you realize we're losing 315 acres of prime farmland every day in the province of Ontario. If we can't feed ourselves—I thought COVID-19 would have taught us something—we're going to be in big trouble. So my suggestion is, stop attacking our farmers and protect our farmland.

I think we're all happy in here—and I'm talking about all my colleagues—there was an important victory for

workers yesterday. I don't know if you all heard about it. I know the PCs say they work for workers; they have bills for workers. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice has struck down Bill 124 in its entirety.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You guys can clap, too, on that side—the guys in the middle as well.

It violates the fundamental constitutional rights of collective bargaining.

Do you agree with that decision?

Mr. Dave Smith: Since we are talking about a red tape reduction bill and that has absolutely nothing to do with what we're actually debating today, I'm going to talk about the great things that this bill does for the great people of the province of Ontario.

The NDP can virtue-signal all they'd like. They can throw out all kinds of different things to distract from the great work that we're doing.

This is one of those bills that will make a positive difference for the people of Ontario. This is one of those bills that will reduce the cost of doing business, which will reduce the cost to every single person in this province. This is one of those things that's a good-news story.

I'm sorry that the NDP doesn't want to talk about the good things that this government is doing for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to ask a question of the member with regard to the Ministry of Health, the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, and what the ministry is proposing and if there are any financial implications associated—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I want to start, definitely, with Bill 124 and the decision of the Superior Court of Justice. I'm asking the government not to appeal the decision—

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order. We're discussing a different bill today, Bill 46, and I would respectfully request that the member keep his remarks relevant.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Order.

We'll allow the member to start. Please remember that we are discussing a different bill.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: If they would have let me, they probably would have seen where I'm heading with that.

I'm asking the government not to appeal it. The court recognized the unconstitutionality of Bill 124. So make it right. Stop hurting the workforce, and encourage it. We need more hands on deck.

When you look at a title like Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act—well, repealing Bill 124 will help that. ERs are crowded. Surgeries are postponed. Let's cut the red tape for the 15,000 international nurses and have them accredited to work in Ontario and help our hospitals. Why isn't that the plan?

The province is facing many issues at this moment, and this bill does not address any of them—the crisis of

workers in health care, or the multiple issues that First Nations communities are facing, such as boil-water advisories and contaminated soil; shortage of housing; access to benefits under the workers compensation board, the deeming; the need for development of more affordable housing; the backlog with the Landlord and Tenant Board and in our court system.

This government chooses to ignore the proposals of hospital administrators that came from my constituents. They asked for help, they brought help—yet no answers. It has been a year and a half—and still no answer. I asked two questions in the House to the minister, delivered in their hands, asking them to respond—still no response. It chooses to ignore the concerns of the environment while waiting to carve up the greenbelt, by big developers. And they are doing nothing to help alleviate the financial burden of students with their post-secondary tuition fees. We have the highest tuition fees in the country.

This bill is simply a list of housekeeping items and amendments. This doesn't address the immediate needs of Ontarians. I call it a "change the channel" bill.

Ontario is signatory to Treaty 9. This government seems to forget that.

Four years ago, Kashechewan signed a new agreement to relocate the community. When you were elected four years ago—this is one of the changes you've done. You pretty well changed the colour of the agreement and then signed it—still, nothing has been done. Yet, we hear about how fast it's going to go with the Ring of Fire, how fast it's moving ahead. But that community is still waiting. Every spring, they're threatened to be evacuated, and yet we have an agreement that was signed by this government to move this community that are facing—every year, they're threatened by flooding.

Attawapiskat still has fuel contamination. Some of it was fixed, but they still have fuel contamination in their community. The community wants to expand. There's nowhere to expand—because there's a road and the De Beers mine put a bump on it in protest, so now they can't build. That's the only way they can expand. It's on their traditional territories, and yet they're not permitted to expand. The other option they have is to move the airport. The airport is right by the community, and they've been complaining about the fuel and the dust and the noise.

A lot of communities have water advisories. My colleague Sol Mamakwa, the MPP for Kiiwetinoong, has said that the community has a 27-year boil-water advisory. If you want to remove red tape—that's the red tape you need to remove. Fix boil-water advisories. In my community of Attawapiskat, people have to open windows to take showers because there are too many chemicals in the water. That's reality.

If you want to help communities, if you want to do good red tape—these are examples of good red tape. Attawapiskat declared an emergency on the lack of housing that there is on their traditional territories, and yet they're not permitted to expand. You go into First Nations communities, and they've got a stack of mattresses in their living rooms. Tell me that's all right. Tell me that is fair.

0930

WSIB and the deeming: You want to remove red tape that will help? That is good red tape—injured workers who are living in poverty. There is no work. You need to realize that up north, communities are sometimes an hour away and more. So they've been deemed to do, let's say, I don't know—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Park cars.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Park cars. Or hotel clerks. Because the jobs are not available in their community, they've been deemed, so they pay 85% of the difference between the job—not the whole thing. So they're being deemed, when the jobs don't exist in their community. And that's fair?

That is good red tape you could reduce. You need to do better, as a government. You know about this, because injured workers have come to you. They've knocked on my door. I'm sure they knock on your door.

Yesterday, we all met with paramedics. What they're asking for is to have a regulated college for professional paramedics. Right now, paramedics are working outside of their scope, because they've been asked by this government to work outside of their regulations. So they're working unregulated. And you think that's fair? You want to make good red tape reduction? Make that—you'll save \$21 million. We don't hear you on this. Why aren't we hearing this? If something happens to any of these paramedics, guess what? It will be on them, because you'll all wash your hands of it. I think it happened in Windsor, the situation they were telling me—and the paramedic was the one who was dinged for it. Where is the fairness when you're asking paramedics to work outside of their scope, unregulated? Where is the fairness in that for these workers? You say you're for the workers.

I heard one of the government MPPs saying that it's music to her ears when she hears about red tape reduction. Well, it's not music to the injured workers' ears when they're being deemed; I can tell you that much. It's not music to the paramedics' ears when they're being asked to work outside of their scope or in unregulated places and they've been stepping up to the plate over and over and over again. I can tell you it's not music to the ears of First Nations communities when they can't expand their communities, when they have a lack of housing. Two or three generations are living in a house that was only made for a small family, because they have nowhere to go. That is not music to our ears. It shouldn't be music to your ears. And yet, you don't address that red tape. You always play political Ping-Pong—“Oh, it's federal.” I'm sorry, but it's not federal—you're a signatory; we're all signatories to Treaty 9, for that matter. Boil-water advisories should not exist in Ontario. That is not music to our ears. It shouldn't be music to your ears, either.

Do the right thing. Fix boil-water advisories in First Nations. Fix the housing crisis in First Nations. Fix deeming. And repeal Bill 124.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Our government is cutting red tape to improve the WSIB's operational efficiency, and it

will have a direct and positive impact for workers and their families, because WSIB would then be able to focus more on supporting injured workers, rather than dealing with duplicative reporting processes. From the comments made by the member opposite, I assume that this is something he would support because it should help workers and their families.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: What I would support is this government stopping sending WSIB money to companies when we have injured workers who are living in poverty. Workers' compensation was created because injured workers were suing employers. Now injured workers are suffering. They are not getting what they are supposed to get.

Did you know that if you lose hearing in one ear, you're not qualified because you hear in the other ear? And yet, if you hurt a shoulder, they take that into consideration. How does that make sense?

Deeming doesn't make sense. Deeming should be—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Injured workers should be compensated. If the work is not available in their community, they should not be penalized. The government should fix that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Niagara.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise.

In this bill, they're talking about WSIB selling their office in Toronto and moving it to London. And yet, nothing in the bill talks about that money going to injured workers.

My good friend just talked about injured workers. Speaker, 50% of injured workers today are living in poverty. The main reason they're living in poverty—he's right on the money, because it has been brought to this House—is deeming.

You had the opportunity, with a majority government, to pass Bill 119, and you chose not to.

Injured workers go to work every day and get hurt, through no fault of their own. They are deemed, and they are forced to live in poverty. Do you know what happens to them? They lose their family. They lose their kids. They lose everything.

Why isn't that in the bill? Why aren't you helping injured workers in the province of Ontario?

If we remember the last time, under this government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. The member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Great question. Très bonne question. They should invest.

When you look at northern Ontario, because of the isolation—they shouldn't be subject to have to move because there is not work in their community. The government should pass a bill saying that for anything farther than 60 kilometres, people should not be—because it affects the family. They lose their family, unfortunately—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. The member from Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to touch on some of the things that you talked about in your speech—or rather, that you didn't talk about in your speech. You talked about things that weren't in this bill, but I'd like to remind the member that every time we've introduced an omnibus bill, the NDP have objected to it and said that we're piling everything together.

In my speech, I mentioned that we had more than 350,000 regulations in Ontario—the next largest province was British Columbia, at 169,000. Would the member opposite change his mind and support an omnibus bill that wipes out almost 200,000 regulations so that we could get back down to what was in other provinces, and that includes a number of the things he's asking for, if we were to do that?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: When you look across, there's the eagle for the government side, and there's the wise owl—that's our job, to question. For some reason, you don't like us questioning. And if—

Interjections.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Please, you have to understand: We remember Walkerton. So we have to be a little bit—

Interjection.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Yes. It didn't work out very good, as you know. A lot of people died.

Our duty, as the official opposition, is to question—and recommend. We do a lot of recommendations in committee and all this—and how much do you take? Absolutely zero. So I'm sorry, but no, unfortunately, this is our job, and we want to make sure that we tell the government what needs to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

MPP Jamie West: I want to make sure that I compliment the member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay on his conversation. On this side, we regularly talk about the need for boil-water advisories in Ontario and how shameful it is—for a very long time, 27 years, which goes back through multiple governments, so I'm not pointing the finger. But I am saying that the government of the day, the Conservative Party, has been in power going on five years now. This is your opportunity to take just one of those boil-water advisories and fix it. He mentioned that one of them has been there for 27 years. Does he think there's any reason that the Conservative government couldn't tackle one of these and get rid of the boil-water advisory? And would that cut down on red tape and burden for businesses?

0940

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je veux remercier mon collègue de me poser la question, puis je vais te répondre en français parce que c'est beaucoup plus facile pour moi, parler en français.

Définitivement, il n'y a aucune raison. Si on se souvient de Walkerton—j'en ai parlé un petit peu—ça s'est réglé assez rapidement. On a une communauté dans Kiiwetinoong où ça fait 27 ans qu'ils font bouillir leur eau. On ne parle pas, là, d'en dehors, d'un autre pays dans le tiers-monde; on parle—en Ontario—d'une communauté dans le nord-ouest de l'Ontario.

Une chose qu'ils pourraient faire pour le régler : on le fait, et on envoie une partie de la facture au fédéral. On l'a mis dans notre plateforme, nous. Pourquoi le gouvernement ne fait-il pas la bonne chose? Pourquoi le gouvernement ne dit-il pas : « Non, ça fait assez longtemps que ça dure. Le fédéral ne veut pas faire sa part. On va régler le problème. On va donner de l'eau potable à la communauté, puis on va envoyer la facture »? Parce qu'on a beaucoup plus les reins solides—une petite communauté comme Kiiwetinoong. Dans Kiiwetinoong, où ils sont obligés de payer l'eau ou d'attendre, où les enfants ne connaissent même pas c'est quoi—ils ont peur de boire de l'eau potable quand ils sortent de leur communauté. Irresponsable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: By cutting red tape and lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario, our government has created an environment where we are seeing record job creation and growth. These successes are powered by reliable access to energy.

Does the member opposite agree that as we continue to grow the economy, it will remain critical that we remove red tape barriers that prevent access to energy for our businesses and job creators?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je ne pense pas, sur ce côté de la Chambre, qu'on dit qu'on est contre toute la question du « red tape ». I don't think we're saying we're against removal of all red tape. I don't think the government heard that from this side. But we do have a responsibility to tell the government what we believe should be addressed.

I've talked about different points. Deeming should be fixed. We have injured workers who are starving, going to food banks.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No fault of their own.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No fault of their own. Yet we are turning a blind eye to this. But we didn't turn a blind eye to taking billions away from the WSIB and sending it to employers.

If you want to send money to employers, fix the problem with deeming and fix the problem with injured workers. If there's money left, yes, return it to employers, but until then, injured workers come first—because this is what the WSIB was made for: to compensate injured workers so that their families can thrive and they can thrive. Take away the mental stress—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Quick question, quick response?

Mr. Michael Mantha: We see this as a red tape reduction bill, but again I want to point out that there's something that is very much missing, that we know has backlogged a lot of landlords and tenants.

What would it mean to landlords and tenants across this province if we were to deal with the backlog at the landlord and tenant tribunal?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci à mon collègue. Ça voudrait dire qu'on aurait bien moins de monde qui viendrait à nos bureaux pour nous demander ce qui se passe. Ça voudrait dire qu'il y aurait du monde qui se ferait

adresser le problème qu'ils ont eu avec soit des « landlords »—on a les « landlords » aussi; il y a des « landlords » qui ont eu bien de problèmes avec leurs « tenants » aussi. So we have both problems. But if we could fix that problem, it would alleviate so much stress on families, and then maybe we would fix the problem that these tenants are asking—because they are living in conditions that landlords have been abusing, and also being evicted for no reason.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order, member from Barrie—Innisfil.

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Further debate.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I am, of course, standing today to speak about the proposed Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

It's no unusual news to any of us here that red tape causes a significant amount of frustration, unnecessary expense and complications in everyday life, not just for governments, but for regular people in Ontario—for our non-profit organizations, individuals, families etc. It stops productivity, it reduces our economic competitiveness and development, and it also tends to put a chilling affect on innovation.

It's a bit of a niche reference—but what's the point of having the floor if you can't throw in a niche reference here and there? I'm a big fan of Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. When I think about red tape, I'm reminded of the Vogons in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which Adams describes as one of the most unpleasant populations in the galaxy due to their bureaucratic and officious nature. I'll quote it directly: The Vogons “wouldn't even lift a finger to save their own grandmothers from the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal without orders signed in triplicate, sent in, sent back, queried, lost, found, subjected to public inquiry, lost again, and finally buried in soft peat for three months and recycled as firefighters.” That sounds a lot like some of the red tape that we've been cutting through.

To go to another great, Oscar Wilde said, “The bureaucracy is expanding to meet the needs of the expanding bureaucracy.” That is what we are trying to stop here.

It also reminds me of one of my favourite questions to ask when I meet with stakeholders or constituents. I'll say, “We've talked about a lot of the big issues, the overarching academic issues. Now can you please tell me the little tiny thing about a government process that makes you want to bang your head against the wall? Because we don't necessarily know about it, and we won't be able to do anything about it unless you tell us.”

Really, that's what this bill is—this bill is the result of the government having a very clear mandate and acting on that to consult, to learn, to listen and to identify those things that make people want to bang their heads against

the wall. It's about red tape. It's about bureaucracy. It's about not burying everything in soft peat and recycling it as firefighters.

I'm going to talk about a few of the parts of this bill that are of specific relevance to me, whether in my position in energy or some of my more personal interests and projects.

One of the aspects of this bill—I'm parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy—is about the leave-to-construct thresholds. Currently, under the Ontario Energy Board Act, the OEB will review leave-to-construct applications for these electricity transmission projects and will grant leave, or permission, to carry out the work if it's in the public interest to do so, looking at the needs of the project, the proposals, their price etc.

Prior to what is set out in this bill—or what this bill will change, if passed—electricity transmission projects that are greater than two kilometres in length have to go through the leave-to-construct proceedings. That includes self-funded connection lines for generators as well as industrial load consumers such as electric vehicle battery manufacturing plants or mines that are trying to connect to the grid. My ministry, energy, has heard time and time again from businesses and various industry groups that this poses an unnecessary regulatory burden, as these projects don't impact ratepayers, whereas reliability, quality etc., are assessed through other mechanisms. It's important to understand that the costs associated with these proposed exempt projects are not recovered from electricity ratepayers; they are customer-funded. They also remain subject to any environmental assessment processes and other approvals, which is important to understand.

One of the things that's so important about this simplification of the leave-to-construct procedures is, we've made it clear time and time again that Ontario's economy is booming, and we want to keep it that way. Making Ontario a province that is attractive to companies choosing to come here, and attractive to companies that want to have a green initiative, is incredibly important.

0950

I know it can sound dry to hear a Conservative yet again speaking about the economy, but the truth is, it is the economy and the workers and the taxpayers who provide all of the wonderful things that our province has to offer, including the projects that fund those who are struggling, those who are dealing with disease, those who are dealing with poverty and systemic inequalities. It's through our economy, through attracting these businesses, that we become the type of province that is actually able to turn around and make sure that we are caring for Ontarians.

We've heard stories in the past about electricity concerns preventing investment in Ontario, and that's really what we are focused on dealing with. This sort of minor change is a really important part of that, and something we should be proud of. As I said, it's really an example of this government and of the ministry listening and paying attention. But the other aspect of that is, again, when I'm talking about making sure that we are attractive to businesses—this specific project about the leave to construct has a lot to do with electrification. Electrification

is a really essential part of our journey to net zero and our environmental commitments. We won't be able to get down to net-zero energy uses without these types of projects, without identifying these problems, focusing on them, and making sure that we are removing them. So, while it may sound like a somewhat dry topic, the leave to construct energy lines more than two kilometres—it's actually an important fact, and it's definitely evidence of this government listening.

I also want to talk a little bit about two other parts of this bill that have nothing to do with energy but that I find particularly heartening. One of those is the invitation to open the 1989 Veterinarians Act. We are dealing with a significant veterinarian shortage in this province that impacts everybody. It impacts our farmers and our agri-food sector, but it also impacts people like me who consider themselves “pet parents,” who have gone through the struggles of trying to find a veterinarian. We have veterinarians who are struggling or burning out. We have vet techs who are capable of a vast amount of care, who are incredibly skilled, intelligent, caring people, but who are limited by a very archaic—1989—definition of the stratification of work within the veterinary sphere. Once again, this is definitely an example of this government listening. I think the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, back in 2016 or 2017, put out a request for input from their own veterinarians. They've been working on some policy suggestions since then. This, again, is evidence of our government listening to that, listening to stakeholders and saying this is important—“Your opinions are important; your input is important”—and making sure that we are getting that.

Finally—these aren't related, but it's of interest to me, what this bill is proposing to do when it comes to the Provincial Offences Act and convictions in absentia. As many know, I was a crown attorney. I've worked in a couple of small jurisdictions where I was also a provincial offences prosecutor, so I prosecuted Highway Traffic Act offences. In the Highway Traffic Act, you can be convicted in absentia. A trial can be held without you; you can be convicted in your absence. With COVID, we had a very challenging balance between trying to keep cases moving while understanding that there were a lot of legitimate factors that might be preventing people from accessing court services, understanding the process was still ongoing, that type of thing.

What the case was until what's proposed in this bill—if a conviction was registered, the only person who was able to essentially vacate that conviction was a justice of the peace, which put a huge amount of burden on our JPs, who are already extremely overtaxed by the sheer volume of cases in our Provincial Offences Court. What this proposes to do is to give the clerk of the court the authority—obviously, following the same process—to vacate that conviction, which is going to be incredibly helpful. That's something that we did see a lot of during COVID. Again, I'm very pleased to see it, as it's evidence of this government listening and learning.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I really enjoyed the member's comments this morning.

I looked at this bill quite intently, and a lot of it is just housecleaning, and some of this red tape bill will help some individuals.

I looked at the changes that are being done under schedule 4, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act, providing the opportunity for others to be eligible for certain programs. That's good news.

I will go to schedule 9. Here was a perfect opportunity. Many times we raised in the House the challenges that a lot of injured workers are facing in this province when it comes to deeming.

Would a review, would us looking at what deeming is, having that hard discussion—would that benefit anyone in this province?

Ms. Jess Dixon: When we're looking at this bill, we're looking at the things I mentioned that are the comparatively small and niggling issues that make people bang their heads against the wall. The issues that you are raising are obviously things we all care about, but they're not what we are talking about today.

What we're talking about is—I'm almost tired of hearing the words—red tape. It's bureaucracy. It's layers upon layers of regulation. So I think that it's unfair to assess this particular bill against bills that have a much grander scope. This is about red tape. And housecleaning is not something to dismiss as unimportant, as it has a significant impact on Ontario businesses and families.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member for Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from Kitchener South–Hespeler for the wonderful presentation.

Madam Speaker, my colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha mentioned the more than 350,000 regulations and the regulatory burden on businesses, impacting our businesses.

This red tape reduction bill is trying to make things easier for our small businesses, fairly clearly.

There are over 1,800 small businesses in my riding of Markham–Thornhill.

I'd like to thank the minister for introducing this bill, and our government and our Premier.

My question to my colleague: You passionately talked about the energy industry. How would this proposed bill bring changes to the energy industry?

Ms. Jess Dixon: Like I said, I think this is so important. This leads us to construct transition lines over two kilometres. It may sound like a somewhat dry accomplishment. However, it means a lot for a lot of small businesses and large businesses, as well as individuals. Again, what this is about, and what I think that part of the bill symbolizes, is our government listening to people, listening to stakeholders, and going in and making the small but necessary changes that are going to make life easier for Ontario businesses and Ontario families, and also make it very clear that Ontario is a very open and welcome environment for people to start a small business, to bring

a big business to. It's clear that we listen to our families and our businesses and we respond appropriately.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler—and my congratulations on talking about *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* as part of debate.

Very often, the Conservative Party, when they talk about removing red tape—in another cultural reference, I think of Thanos doing the snap and getting rid of half, and the danger of just eliminating red tape.

I think for the most part in this bill, we're just cleaning things up. But when I think back to removing red tape and what happened in Walkerton and the deaths that happened there—how do you ensure a balance between that? Very often, when there is consultation for bills, the notification comes out at the very last minute; people have to register within a short amount of time, and there's only five hours to hear discussion from stakeholders. So how do you ensure that you have good debate, you have good bills, and that the bills and the red tape you're removing don't cause issues like we had in Walkerton?

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Ms. Jess Dixon: My point would be the same: We are talking about a red tape bill. It's not just housecleaning; it's an essential part of government business. It may not be particularly exciting, and it may not make for the best headlines, but this is material that is incredibly important for Ontario. It shows that we are taking our duties to Ontario very seriously and that we are listening.

When we're talking about larger issues—they're valid issues, but they're not the purpose of what we are discussing here.

Again, I would say that it's not just housecleaning, it's not just housekeeping. Those things are actually very important—or we would be living in quite a disaster. That's what we're here to do—to clean house.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler for her comments today on this red tape bill.

She spoke ever so eloquently about the Veterinarians Act, so I would like to ask a question about what the ministry is consulting on—and why is the ministry modernizing the Veterinarians Act? I do understand that it has been 30-plus years since this act has been looked at. If she could comment on that, that would be great.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Thank you for the question.

Yes, it's definitely something I'm passionate about.

You're correct; it has been in place for a very long time, since 1989, when I was two. So it's really time to look at it. What's important to understand is that this is a call to veterinary professionals to give their opinion on a—there is no sort of specification about what, in particular, they must give input on. What we're looking at is streamlining it, making sure there's a reduction of compliance burden for our already overworked veterinarians, vet techs and vet clinics. We're also looking at how we deal with complaints, quality assurances, that type of thing. But ultimately, the overarching goal is improving access to

care for animal owners. This isn't something that's like a top-down imposition of change; it is a request from that community—to say, “What do you need changed? Come tell us.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member talks about housekeeping, cleaning house, all that kind of stuff.

I have to say, schedule 2, the Courts of Justice Act, where they're going to cut some red tape by having retiring judges coming back and helping clear that backlog—that's good. But what they don't understand is that by cutting legal aid by 30%, they've affected the most vulnerable people.

When you talk about saving money and that kind of issue when it comes to red tape—how does cutting 30% from legal aid help the most vulnerable people access a basic right like justice?

Ms. Jess Dixon: Once again, we are talking about a red tape bill. We're not talking about legal aid. I know this because I have come from the courts quite recently. We are dealing with a massive COVID backlog. The courts had to modernize overnight. Minister Downey did an excellent job with that—which I can say, because I was here.

Per diem judges, bringing them in—part of access to justice is access to swift justice, to actually getting your case resolved. That's incredibly important.

I'd also comment again about the POA matter. Convictions in absentia were a huge issue as far as access to justice because of people not having representation, not understanding the process. By allowing clerks of the court to vacate convictions, it means that provincial prosecutors are able to deal directly with individuals and basically cut through all of the red tape that would prevent us from reopening their cases and dealing fairly with their matters.

Mr. Mike Harris: To my colleague from Waterloo region, from Kitchener, my next-door neighbour: It's great to have you elected here in this chamber. You bring a wealth of experience when it comes to these things.

And I'm glad the member for London–Fanshawe is bringing up things that we see with our provincial courts and our Provincial Offences Act.

I'd like to give the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler a few minutes to talk a little bit more about some of the things that she sees in this bill, in regard to the Ministry of the Attorney General, that she thinks are going to help the people of this province.

Ms. Jess Dixon: The member for Peterborough spoke a little bit about the electronic juries questionnaire. Again, this is very important. Trying to have a representative jury means that a big part of that is making access to the jury pool more equitable and easier. By being able to do this virtually, we are making it far more likely that we'll have more people who are responding, who are engaging, and we will therefore have much better access to that representative jury that is really essential when we're talking about access to justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to participate in this debate on Bill 46. Just so people understand the context, this bill is part of a red tape package of measures that the government just introduced, which includes 28 different initiatives; some are legislative, some are more policy-related. Given the limited time I have this morning, I just want to highlight a couple of those measures that are included in the red tape package, and specifically, the ones that are of most concern to the people of London West.

One of the initiatives that the government has announced with this bill is the Grow Ontario Strategy. We heard the Minister of Agriculture talk about the strategy as the province's plan to build consumer confidence and support farmers and Ontario's food supply.

I have to say that there are a lot of concerns about what this government is doing, in fact, to undermine Ontario's food supply and to undermine the ability of farmers to continue to feed the people in this province.

As we know from the committee hearings on Bill 23, Ontario is one of the few jurisdictions that actually is able to produce surplus food so that it can be sent to other jurisdictions to help feed people.

A couple of days ago, we all received a media release from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture showing that more than 50,000 people have signed on to the OFA's campaign to support farmers and Ontario's food supply, which they are calling the Home Grown campaign. They are highlighting the fact that every day in this province we are losing 319 acres of farmland. That is equivalent to losing nine family farms every week—and the reason we are losing this is because of the policies that are brought forward by this government. We have seen, over the last five years, a doubling of the rate of farmland loss that is occurring in this province. That is not the way to support farmers and ensure that Ontario has a sustainable food supply.

On the one hand, the government is announcing a Grow Ontario Strategy, but on the other hand, they're opening up the greenbelt, they're paving over farmland, they are bulldozing forward with the 413, and all of these initiatives are going to continue to expedite the loss of farmland in this province.

The next feature of this bill that I want to comment on is the commitment to open up the Veterinarians Act. I did want to give a shout-out to Dr. Martha Harding, a London veterinarian who established the East Village Animal Hospital. That East Village Animal Hospital now has locations not just in London, but also in Kitchener and Sudbury and Hamilton. Dr. Harding runs the East Village Animal Hospital as a veterinary service that low-income people can take their pets to to get very low-cost basic veterinarian services. One of the barriers that Dr. Harding has encountered in providing this service is that, currently in Ontario, there is no ability for a veterinary clinic to be registered as a non-profit. There are a lot of people across the province who would like to support veterinary clinics like the East Village Animal Hospital, to provide those

low-cost services to people on low income. Everyone should have access to a pet. We know the benefits of pets. We hear of low-income people who have to surrender their pets because they can't afford the veterinary fees. So I urge the government to look at introducing that non-profit status for veterinary clinics like the East Village Animal Hospital.

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I also want to comment on one of the schedules of this bill that temporarily allows retired judges to work longer in the court system. This is in schedule 4. It allows retired former provincial judges serving on a part-time basis to go from 50% of full-time service to 75% of full-time service, but that is only until April 2024, I believe.

In London, we have a crisis in both Small Claims Court and in civil courts. I heard from a labour lawyer in London who uses the Small Claims Court many times to pursue wrongful dismissal cases on behalf of workers in the community. He said, "I have a case where the claim was filed in 2019, a settlement conference was held pre-COVID and, for over two years since, it has been radio silence from the court."

The Small Claims Courts are simply not able to deal with the huge backlog that has grown, and as a result, people are not getting justice through the Small Claims Court process. I have concerns that schedule 2, allowing retired provincial judges to serve a little bit more time in the courts, is not going to effectively deal with that backlog in our court system—and it's not just Small Claims Court; it's also the civil courts.

Earlier this fall, we had a number of prominent lawyers from almost every single major law firm in the city of London write to the Attorney General, Doug Downey, to urge him to take action on the trial backlog in the civil courts in London and southwestern Ontario. They pointed out that the regional senior justice declared in a ruling that trials of over two weeks have no prospect of being heard until late 2024. They gave some examples of the consequences of the backlog in the civil court system. They said, "A business making \$50 million a year with dozens of employees failed because the court could not find time to hear a dispute about the ownership and control of the business...."

"A small business was lost while a contracted dispute remained unresolved."

Clearly, dealing with the backlog in the civil court system is something that would—that is red tape reduction that would really help businesses move forward.

These lawyers who sent this letter to the Attorney General have called for a couple of things. They've called for two more Superior Court justices to be appointed to the regional court and two more justices to London specifically to deal with civil matters. They also argue in support of a specific earmarked civil legal aid fund. We know that the cuts to legal aid have really had a major impact on people's ability to pursue justice through the courts.

In the limited time I have left, I want to highlight the irony of this government saying that it is moving forward

with red tape reduction when other things that they are doing are adding red tape. They are adding barriers to businesses and municipalities in the province. I want to use the example of Bill 23. We had a letter from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, and they pointed out that when “municipalities are prohibited from seeking advice from conservation authorities, they will need to acquire additional resources and expertise related to natural heritage review, protection and management to replace the substantial technical and science expertise provided by conservation authorities. This will increase costs and delay development.”

So on the one hand, the government says they're all about red tape reduction—they're bringing forward this bill—but other bills like Bill 23 have actually added red tape and added barriers to businesses in the province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN RENFREW–NIPISSING–PEMBROKE

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Christmas parades are back, and the world is better for it. All across the valley, communities are getting together to do something that everyone loves but that has been missing for the last couple of years. In my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, each and every parade is a special experience that speaks in a very visual way about the people, the organizations, the businesses and their expressions of community spirit.

This past weekend, I was able to attend parades in both Cobden and Pembroke.

The Cobden parade is a daytime parade that brings out people from all around the area and sends out the message that Christmas is near. As the first parade of the season in our area, that is most appropriate.

For many years now, the Pembroke parade has been an evening parade, and this year's edition was truly spectacular. As many as 70 floats took part in the parade, witnessed by the biggest crowd I've ever seen in Pembroke.

The floats and the work that goes into them are something to appreciate, and my hat goes off to all those who work so hard to make these parades so very special.

But what really is the most wonderful part of the Christmas/Santa Claus parades is the joy and excitement shown by the children as they anxiously await the arrival of the jolly old elf. As I move along the parade routes exchanging greetings with so many people, it is the reactions of the children that leave the most lasting impressions. The joy of children— isn't that what it's all about? I look forward to experiencing more of it this weekend.

Merry Christmas to one and all.

EVENTS IN MUSHKEGOWUK–JAMES BAY ÉVÈNEMENTS À MUSHKEGOWUK–BAIE JAMES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The holiday season is upon us, and today I would like to take the time to commend the communities in my riding for their efforts in offering wonderful activities for the residents. Here are a few events I had the opportunity to attend, just to name a few:

Centre de Loisirs had their annual craft expo, with merchants and artists selling their goods, and a visit from Santa.

La ville de Hearst avait la Magie de Minuit pour encourager l'achat local, ainsi qu'un village des fêtes pour les familles avec du curling, du hockey, du chocolat chaud et une rencontre avec le Père Noël.

La ville de Moonbeam a organisé un souper et une soirée musicale pour célébrer les commerces et leurs employés.

The Rotary Club of Kapuskasing had its second annual Winter Wonderland Parade this past Sunday. Many local businesses participated in the floats and gave out candy to children and families along the road.

There is a lot more to come, with markets and craft shows in Fauquier and Val Rita, holiday office parties for the communities, and the festival of lights in various towns across the riding.

It is time to spread some holiday joy and reflect on what we are thankful for this past year. Remember to support your local businesses.

This time of year is difficult for many families and individuals, so let's not forget about our food banks, our angel campaigns and our toy drives. I urge you all to be kind and donate where you can. A simple gesture can go a long way.

I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season. Je vous souhaite, tous et toutes, une belle fête.

CENTRAL YORK FIRE SERVICES

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Speaker, I rise today in the chamber to tell you about an event in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora that happened earlier this month. The Central York Fire Services invited me to attend their annual recognition ceremony. I had the honour of speaking at this great event and congratulating our community's unspoken heroes.

1020

I would like to begin by thanking Chief Ian Laing and Deputy Fire Chief Rocco Volpe for all their great work and the encouragement that they provide to the Central York Fire Services team.

Thank you to all our firefighters and all our first responders for your selfless commitment and dedication to the safety of our community.

During this event, Captain Chris Airey, an expert in ice water, rope and high-angle rescues, was recognized for his contributions in leadership and supporting the training of his fellow firefighters and community members by being awarded the Jim Allen Award. This award was introduced in 2018 to honour Captain Jim Allen for his dedication and contributions over his 37-year career.

This event was also the first time the fire services awarded “wings” for their new air division, which uses unmanned aerial drones to assist in the firefighting process. I would like to personally recognize the Central York Fire Services for embracing technology to modernize their service and approach to firefighting.

To all the firefighters at the Central York Fire Services, thank you.

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The cost of living in Ontario is out of control. People feel it every day, and many middle-class families are doing things they never expected.

The Feed Ontario report reveals record-high food bank use. Since the pandemic, first-time visitors are up 64%, with one in three people accessing food banks for the very first time. In its report, Feed Ontario cites precarious employment, underfunded disability supports, and unaffordable housing as reasons why middle-class people are turning to food banks in numbers never seen before. They say, “The reason that so many people must turn to a food bank is because our once-strong economic foundation has weakened.”

In my community of London, average rent jumped 36.9% last year, one in four children are living in poverty, and 6,230 individuals and families are on social housing wait-lists.

People are being crushed under the skyrocketing cost of living. Families shouldn’t have to turn to food banks to help feed their kids when they work hard for a living, but that is the reality in Ontario right now.

The middle class built Ontario because of public health care, because of public education, and because they earned good wages. The Ford government is strangling these public systems, while more and more people are being pushed into poverty.

This government should take Feed Ontario’s recommendations: improve the quality of work, improve social assistance, invest in social housing, and put people at the centre of policy and program design.

To this Conservative government: Protect Ontario’s middle class; not just wealthy, insider donors.

BOATING SAFETY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I rise today to speak about a constituent of mine from Stittsville, Cara McNulty. Through her advocacy group, Life Jackets for Life, she is a tireless and hard-working advocate for children’s safety. Her group’s goal is to change the law to require children to wear life jackets on small vessel boats. Just over four years ago, her 11-year-old son, Joshua Steinburg, passed

away in a drowning accident. The 26-foot speedboat he was riding hit a wave, and Joshua had removed his life jacket just minutes before the accident.

Joshua’s story is not the only one—hundreds of boat drowning accidents happen each year. According to the OPP in 2020, over the last decade, 80% of the people who died in investigated boat drowning incidents were not wearing a life jacket.

These deaths are preventable.

Norm Miller, the former MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, introduced legislation in this House, in the form of a private member’s bill, in order to make the wearing of life jackets mandatory. That bill never made it through the House. I’m hoping that I can work with members from all sides of the House and all parties to reintroduce Norm Miller’s legislation.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Cara and every person who has lost a loved one to drowning: Whether you are fishing or riding your speedboat, always wear a life jacket. It saves lives.

HEALTH CARE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Today is the last day this government can choose to save Connect-Clinic, the only virtual clinic in Ontario dedicated to delivering gender-affirming health care. An alternative funding plan could save the clinic. They are commonly used in academic, northern and specialized health care settings already. Connect-Clinic checks all three boxes.

Tomorrow, 3,500 trans Ontarians will lose access to life-saving care. And I cannot stress this enough: They will have nowhere to go for this specialized care.

Losing virtual health care does not only affect patients in the north or rural areas of Ontario; I’ve heard from my own constituents in Toronto Centre who are reeling at the loss of virtual health care.

My constituent Andrew shared, “My partner and I are among 1.8 million Ontarians who don’t have a family doctor. We’ve registered multiple times for the Health Care Connect and contacted doctors’ offices with zero responses to date. My partner and I have just found out that we’re expecting a baby. So this weekend we booked a virtual appointment to be referred to an ob-gyn. If this service is no longer supported after December 1, we would lose access.”

Speaker, this government brags about their embrace of innovation, and yet they’re throwing away that same innovation that enables virtual care.

Funding cuts to virtual health care will not all be replaced with in-person appointments—they’ll be replaced with Ontarians without access to health care.

I urge this Conservative government to change course.

SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN KITCHENER–CONESTOGA

Mr. Mike Harris: I’m not sure if he’s watching today, but a former—well, he’s not a former friend of ours; he’s still a friend of ours, Percy Hatfield.

Percy, this one's for you, if you're keeping an eye:
 It's always a pleasure to stand up for my riding.
 But this morning my statement seems to be rhyming.
 'Twas the day before December, and all through this House,
 Members got so quiet, you could even hear a mouse.
 And if you're looking for plans to be made,
 Come to Kitchener–Conestoga for a Santa Claus parade.
 The floats and decorations have been made with care.
 In hopes that St. Nicholas would soon be there.
 Elmira this Saturday, New Hamburg on Sunday.
 Bring the whole family and you'll have a fun day.
 If you're busy this weekend there's no need to take fright.
 Wellesley has their parade on December the 9th.
 And if you still think Santa will never be seen,
 He'll also be in St. Clements on December 17.
 You'll see me or my helpers, I call them my staff.
 Like Santa's own elves they work and they laugh.
 Keep an eye out for Cupid, for Donner and Blitzen,
 And my new friends MPPs Riddell and Dixon.
 Look for this jolly old elf with a brightly lit sign,
 Propped up by hockey sticks and held together with twine.
 As I look at the clock I can see my time's tight.
 So Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

SIMCOE CHRISTMAS PANORAMA RIVER OF LIGHTS

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: That's a bit of a tough act to follow this morning.

As we embark upon the Christmas season, we all have memories that are stirred by certain decorations, events, foods and drinks. I have fond memories of being bundled up so warm and so tight I could barely move, as my entire family made its way to Simcoe to walk through the River of Lights at the Simcoe Panorama. My brother and I looked forward to the night, especially when there was enough snow that we could be pulled in our little wooden sleigh.

This Saturday night, in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk, the 60-year tradition riding continues as Simcoe Panorama flips the switch to over 200,000 lights, numerous displays and hundreds of decorated trees. Downtown Simcoe and its parks will be transformed into a magical winter wonderland. Horse-drawn trolley rides, character meet-and-greets, a festive market and, of course, a cup of hot chocolate await.

Hundreds of volunteers do their part to ensure the month-long River of Lights shines each and every night, but there are also those who work behind the scenes throughout the year to ensure displays are retouched and lights are in working order. The past few years have been difficult for the Panorama, given the challenges the pandemic presented, but this tireless group of volunteers have soldiered through, and I know they are looking

forward to this season for a return to a full slate of festivities.

Panorama runs from this Saturday, December 3, until January 1, from 6 to 10 each day.

Thank you to all who make this winter wonderland happen.

And to all members, I invite you to come take in this extraordinary exhibit. It's sure to make even the grinchiest of members feel the warmth of the season.

Merry Christmas to you all.

1030

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Mr. Speaker, I have a good-news story from Essex county about long-term care. Arch Long-Term Care operates a 75-bed facility in Tilbury, but the building is old, and they want to build a new one only 15 minutes down the road, in the town of Belle River. It's going to be brand new, state-of-the-art. It will have private rooms. It will have 160 beds—twice as many as the old facility. Of course, the NDP member before me opposed that idea. But because of this government's progressive and compassionate policies, Arch applied for and received a licence to build the new facility in Belle River. That means the people of Tilbury and Belle River will now have twice as many beds, in a state-of-the-art facility that they didn't have before.

I want to thank the Minister of Long-Term Care for ensuring that the people of Essex county—and indeed all Ontarians—receive access to the quality long-term care they deserve, in a safe, homelike setting, when and where they need it.

HARVEST HANDS

Mr. Rob Flack: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and acknowledge an extremely worthwhile organization in my riding: Harvest Hands.

Speaker, did you know that close to 50% of all food produced in this country is wasted or lost to landfills? It's a staggering and unfortunate reality.

That is exactly why Jim and Jacintha Collins founded Harvest Hands in St. Thomas in 2020. Their mission is to rescue surplus food from retailers, bakers and growers to help feed families. Nutritious, bountiful and perfectly edible food is rescued from landfills. Fresh produce, frozen food, packaged and canned goods all end up in homes throughout southwestern Ontario.

As a non-profit food distribution bank, Harvest Hands's purpose is to help agencies gain access to good food. Funded entirely by donations and volunteer-driven, Harvest Hands provides food that feeds over 24,000 families a year in southwestern Ontario. Since its inception, Harvest Hands has delivered over \$8 million—\$8 million—of food from Windsor through to Oshawa. The distribution network that Harvest Hands serves is comprised of more than 80 agencies.

With Christmas fast approaching, many food banks across this province will face an even greater need for

volunteers and food donations to meet increased holiday demand.

Waste not, want not.

Thank you, Harvest Hands, for a job well done.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to introduce the Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization to the Legislature this morning, and thank them for bringing Ontario-made, innovative health care solution providers Oncoustics, Able Innovations and Huron Digital Pathology to Queen's Park this morning to showcase their great technologies.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to give a warm welcome to Patty Coates, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Carolyn Ferns of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Rachel Vickerson of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, and the many, many members of CUPE and other child care workers and ECEs who are here as part of the national day of action on child care.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to give a warm welcome to my father, Ray Lecce; my brother Michael Lecce; and two future Prime Ministers: my nieces Valentina and Vivienne. Thank you for coming today to watch Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to acknowledge Aiden Perritt, the legislative page from my riding, who is the page captain today. Today in the members' gallery, we have his father, James Perritt. We also have his grandparents: Brian Cole, a Knight of Justice in the Order of St. John and CEO of the St. John Council of Ontario; and Sharon Cole, a Dame of Grace in the Order of St. John and chair of the St. John Canada Foundation. Welcome all.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to welcome, from Diabetes Canada, Russell Williams, Ashley Bergwerff, Terezinha Hignett, Walter Robinson, and John Whitehead. My caucus colleagues and I, and some other members as well, look forward to meeting with them during lunch today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome my staffers Dayna Prest, Jonathan Cassels, and Robyn Fishbein. I'm so pleased that you're spending today at Queen's Park with me.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Today I would like to welcome an amazing young city builder and resident of the beautiful Scarborough North riding, Amina Mohamed. It's always great when you come here.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm very pleased today to welcome many people here from the teachers' unions and education unions.

But I want to make a special point—to point out Paul Kossta, in the members' gallery. He has been the legislative observer for OSSTF for many years and is going to be retiring soon.

Interjection: What?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. So I just wanted to give him a personal greeting.

Thank you for all you do for the people of this province.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome to our House Kevin Davis, mayor of the incredible city of Brantford, and his key staffer, Sasha Hill. Welcome to the people's House.

MPP Jamie West: I want to welcome Janice Folk-Dawson and Patty Coates, the vice-president and president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome today's page co-captain Isabelle Casselman and her family, who are here as well—her mother, Melissa; her father, Stephen; and her younger brother Nolan.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'd also like to welcome Patty Coates and Janice Folk-Dawson from OFL.

I'd also like to say thank you very much to all the education workers, ECEs and health care workers outside who came out in support.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'd like to welcome Upasna Kumar, my executive assistant—the first time in the chamber watching question period.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It is always a special day when community leaders from Mississauga–Malton come to Queen's Park. I'd like to introduce Avtar Sandhu and Roshan Pathak from the Council of Heritage and International Peace. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Smith: I have a very special guest to present today. I would like to introduce Currie Dixon, the member of the Legislative Assembly for Copperbelt North—and he is the leader of the Yukon Party—and his chief of staff, Danny Macdonald. They've come a long way. We're so happy they're here.

Mr. Rob Flack: The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance is here today. I'd like to welcome Jan VanderHout, Joe Sbrocchi, Jim Meyers, Ed Vermolen, and Kevin Safrance.

Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

I'll remind everyone there is a reception tonight in the dining room.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I apologize—I didn't even recognize Janice Folk-Dawson, executive vice-president of OFL. She's also here with us today. Welcome.

1040

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: the 2022 annual report from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion calling on the Ford government to respect yesterday's ruling by the court that found Bill 124 to be unconstitutional, stop the attack on public services, and immediately return to the table to reach a fair deal with Ontario's public sector workers.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Tabuns is seeking the unanimous consent of the House on a motion calling on the Ford government to respect yesterday's ruling by the courts that found Bill 124 to be unconstitutional. Agreed? I heard some noes.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Ottawa–Vanier has a point of order.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do have a point of order, Speaker. 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 Labour regarding McIntyre Powder this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Collard is 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 Labour regarding McIntyre Powder. Agreed? Agreed.

QUESTION PERIOD

COURT DECISION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

Yesterday was an historic victory for Ontario workers. The courts recognized what 800,000 public sector workers and New Democrats have been saying for years: that Bill 124 is unconstitutional. That was affirmed by the courts. This is a hard-fought and long-overdue victory for workers, who deserve a government that will respect this decision and work with them to move forward.

Why won't the Premier respect the court ruling and stop appealing yet another court loss for this government?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I think the member opposite knows that we're reviewing the decision. We intend to appeal, so I can't comment further. Pas de commentaire.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, we have seen the consequences of this government's wage restraint across the public sector, but nowhere have the effects been more acute than in our health care sector, where Bill 124 has directly contributed to our province's current health care crisis.

Given yesterday's ruling, will the government finally admit that Bill 124 has had a negative impact on our health care system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As the Attorney General said, we are reviewing this decision. Our intention is to appeal.

But we will speak to our investments in health care, especially in health human resources.

Since March 2020, we have added over 12,000 health care professionals to the system.

Just this year alone, the Ontario College of Nurses has registered over 12,800 nurses—and we still have two months to go.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make these historic investments to support health care workers and the delivery of health care services all across this province.

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

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice threw out Bill 124 in its entirety, ruling it absolutely null and void. Justice Koehnen found that Ontario was not facing an economic situation that "justified an infringement of charter rights," and that the law was "substantial interference" with the constitutionally protected bargaining rights of hundreds of thousands of workers.

Bill 124 has been bad for workers in Ontario—period. It should never have seen the light of day in the first place.

Speaker, it's long past time the government started showing workers the respect they deserved from day one.

With the cost of living skyrocketing, my question is, will the government get out of its own way, get out of the way of workers' protected right to freely bargain a fair wage and finally respect this decision?

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

Hon. Monte Naughton: Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to work for workers every single day in Ontario.

That's why we partnered with private sector unions, employers and tradespeople to bring in the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, to get tens of thousands of people into well-paying jobs in the province.

That's why we brought in historic legislation in Working for Workers 1 and Working for Workers 2 to ensure that workers have the right to disconnect, and that, for the first time in Canadian history, we're recognizing international credentials, so when newcomers come to this province they can work in professions that they've studied.

We became the first in Canada to give truck drivers access to washroom facilities across this province.

And we are the first in North America to move forward with expanding portable benefits so millions of workers who don't have health and dental benefits today are going to get those benefits under Premier Ford.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Today's Auditor General's report showed a sad state of affairs on this government's stewardship of the environment.

Under the Liberals, Ontario lost an average of 1,825 hectares of wetlands per year, and the wetlands that do remain have very little, if any, protection.

Now nearly half of southern Ontario's remaining wetlands are at risk of being lost, with no requirements for wetland evaluation before land use changes.

To the Premier: What does this government have against wetlands? Seriously—what do they have against them?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks for the question.

The other side likes to talk about what could happen, might happen.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what will happen: We're going to continue to protect wetlands here in Ontario. We've got a plan to build 1.5 million homes in this province over the next 10 years and keep a robust ecological footprint. Home builders will still go through a process. Species at risk—there's legislation to cover to that. Wetlands are disappearing; we've heard that. We've got an opportunity to not only preserve them but expand them, and a plan to do that as well.

Don't believe the hype. Wetlands are here to stay in Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That was pretty amazing.

Again to the Premier: The auditor found that along the Niagara Escarpment there is no environmental monitoring because there are no staff. Reports of violations—including high-risk incidents of construction of buildings—have gone unenforced. And nearly all development permit applications have been approved in the past five years, even when they went against the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Why isn't the Premier doing anything to protect the Niagara Escarpment?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks again to the member opposite for the question.

The Niagara Escarpment is an arm's-length body that does great work—and we know the Niagara Escarpment is a beautiful and wonderful area in Ontario that we want to protect. We get feedback from the escarpment folks all the time, and we talk with them constantly about what can be done to make things better. We'll continue to speak with them. But, again, they're their own body—they make their own decisions, and we respect those decisions.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: How is it that in just a few short weeks we've seen this government attack the greenbelt, conservation authorities, farmland, wetlands, and do nothing to protect the Niagara Escarpment?

Today, the auditor found that the province is missing in action on addressing urban flooding risks. There is no coordinated approach, no effort to protect against the loss of green space, and basically nothing to address aging stormwater infrastructure—all while this government strips revenue from municipalities and the effects of climate change are felt more every year.

Why isn't this government doing more to protect homeowners from the devastating impact of flooding?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks for the question. Flooding is something I've lived personally in my community—members will recall that before I got here my community suffered two very significant floods.

That's why I was so excited to see the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry step up their game over the years. Go to Water Street and see the facilities that are there to ensure that Ontarians are protected against flooding. It is amazing. They're doing an amazing job.

1050

Conservation authorities: We're asking them to focus on flooding in hazard lands to keep people safe. That's the focus and the priority.

Build homes, keep people safe, build Ontario—that's what we're going to do.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Today's Auditor General's report put in writing what we already knew: Ontario's vaccine rollout was sloppy and uncoordinated. The government didn't listen to public health experts and let 3.4 million vaccine—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Stop the clock.

The House will come to order.

Start the clock.

The member for Nickel Belt has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The government didn't listen to public health experts and let 3.4 million vaccine doses go to waste. Poor planning resulted in nine high-risk neighbourhoods being left out of the province's targeted hot spot strategy while low-risk neighbourhoods received early vaccine access. The Premier assembled a vaccine task force but neglected to include any public health experts on it for weeks.

Why did the government not listen to public health experts during the vaccine rollout?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: While I have a great deal of respect for the Auditor General, on this, I cannot agree with her. The numbers show that we have done an incredible job protecting our most vulnerable, through a vaccine rollout that is second to only Japan across the world.

The member speaks about things that we can look at and point to as successes—GO-VAXX buses that were going into communities that had lower vaccine uptake; Operation Remote Immunity, where we partnered with Ornge air ambulance to make sure, at the very beginning of the pandemic, when we had limited supplies of vaccines—that they were going in with our partners at Ornge to vaccinate remote and fly-in communities; other opportunities that, frankly, other provinces looked at and wanted to emulate, because Ontario was leading in ensuring that our most vulnerable, that our individuals who were at

highest risk, were getting access to those vaccines as quickly as possible.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The auditor found that the ministry's approach to communicating factual information to the public was disorganized, inconsistent, and lacking details about the benefits of COVID vaccines and vaccination. She also found that the ministry missed out on opportunities to educate and inform the public of the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine, and, ultimately, this government undermined public confidence in vaccination.

Why did the government undermine public confidence in COVID-19 vaccination?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The numbers don't add up. When you talk about that, you're suggesting that we don't have over 80% of Ontario adults over the age of 12 who are fully vaccinated.

We have led the world, because we ensured that we had mass vaccination clinics; we had clinics in businesses, in manufacturing facilities. We had GO-VAXX buses going around to higher-risk neighbourhoods to make sure that they understood the value and had those conversations. We had SickKids hospital open up a phone line to talk to parents and caregivers about the questions that they had when we had vaccines available to children.

I will not apologize for our vaccine rollout. We have a lot to be proud of, and the numbers prove that out.

CURRICULUM

CHILD CARE

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Speaker, parents in my riding of Burlington want to know that their children are well-positioned for success. They want assurances that their children are being taught a modern curriculum by the most qualified educators, in schools that are technologically connected and safe.

I'm proud that our government is determined to support our children by ensuring they have all the necessary learning tools.

Everyone wants to see our students succeed in and outside of the classroom.

Can the Minister of Education please provide an update on how our government is taking the right steps to ensure our students have everything they need for a successful and fulfilling education?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Burlington for the wonderful question and her continued focus on young people and their success.

Mr. Speaker, under our government, we have undertaken a focus on helping young people graduate and get access to good-paying jobs. From a modern curriculum to modern schools to merit-based hiring of our educators—we are overhauling our curriculum, with a focus on increasing outcomes, graduation rates, results and better jobs for the young people we represent. It's why we have reformed our curriculum—labour market-aligned for the

first time—including mandatory learning on financial literacy, on coding, on real-life application, on learning about the importance of balanced budgets—because we know, on this side of the House, that budgets do not balance themselves. We also know about the costs of debt and inflation and paying taxes. We're teaching kids about problem-solving skills and leadership development.

We're investing to build modern schools, with over \$500 million every year.

And we're ensuring the best educator gets hired in a meritocracy, so that the best leaders are in front of children in this province.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Young families in my riding of Burlington are facing economic hardship due to rising inflation and economic uncertainty.

Child care has long been a significant expense for working parents who want to ensure that their children receive top-quality care while they're at work.

We know that under the previous Liberal government, child care costs became too expensive and inaccessible for many. This was unacceptable and created a tremendous burden on individuals and families.

To the Minister of Education: What is our government doing to provide much-needed relief for our working families across the province?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: At a time of rising national inflation and the rising cost of living, our government is stepping up in a big way to deliver financial relief for Ontario families.

It's why we signed a better deal, with three billion more dollars and an additional year of investment on the table to ensure every parent—for-profit and non-profit parents, which would have been excluded by the New Democrats and Liberals—that they have access to the financial relief of roughly \$10,000 by the end of this year alone.

Four times, our government has stepped up with direct financial relief to parents. We just rolled out another catch-up payment which is going to deliver \$1.6 billion in total into parents' pockets, where we know they need it, to face the rising costs.

We're also standing up against the federal Liberal carbon tax, which has raised the cost of home heating, of baby supplies, of food, and making clear this regressive tax hurts the most vulnerable within our communities.

We are standing up for affordability. And we'll continue, under our Premier's leadership, to make life more affordable and child care more accessible for Ontario parents.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Over the past few weeks, this government has been dealing with some issues regarding insider information and plans to open up the greenbelt and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, with certain parcels purchased just weeks before the government's announcement.

Some of the Premier's most loyal developer friends—the De Gasperis family—own 20 properties on the land this government is opening up for development.

Just this week, we learned that TACC Developments, controlled by Silvio De Gasperis and members of his family, borrowed \$100 million at an interest rate of 21% annually to purchase greenbelt land, of all things, in 2021.

In the minister's experience, is a 21% interest rate on \$100 million a good deal?

Hon. Steve Clark: The government has been very clear in our postings on what our intention is regarding the property. We've been open, clear and transparent, and we look forward to receiving comments from the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It turns out that the loan was in fact a very good deal for the De Gasperis family. In 2020, they bought 475 acres of greenbelt land for around \$24,000 an acre. They own nearly 2,000 acres within the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. They bought this land cheap because it was protected as farmland in perpetuity. Early estimates find that the soon-to-be-newly-developable land could be worth at least \$380,000 an acre. That's a big payoff for a greenbelt gamble.

Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share with any landowner or developer or any of their lobbyists or representatives information about the government's plan for removing lands from the greenbelt before it became public on November 4?

1100

Hon. Steve Clark: No.

Speaker, I'm going to be assisting the integrity commissioner in his investigation. I look forward to being vindicated, and I look forward to the apology from the official opposition.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Like many provinces, Ontario is facing our most significant labour shortage in a generation. This labour shortage greatly impacts our economy and communities, particularly in the skilled trades sector.

As our province plans to build for the future, we must ensure that we have enough workers with the right skills to help us meet this challenge. Every skilled trades job that remains unfilled represents unmet economic opportunities for our great province.

I ask the minister: What is our government doing to address the ongoing skilled trades labour shortage?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for that very challenging question this morning.

Our government, from day one, has been on a mission to train more workers, so they can build better lives for themselves and fill the jobs that families and businesses across Ontario rely on.

That is why we are reinventing our programs so that welfare and disability support recipients are no longer left on their own. Instead, the changes we're making are providing tailored solutions—like workboots to get them started, and a transit pass to get them to their first shift.

Mr. Speaker, our message is clear: For anyone looking to find well-paying and meaningful work, our government will give you a hand up.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the minister for his answer.

Helping people gain the skills employers need means they can support themselves, their families and our entire province.

For far too long, people eager to work hard and contribute to our economy faced difficulties navigating bureaucratic processes, leaving them discouraged.

Nothing gives a person a greater sense of pride and worth than the ability to contribute through their work.

Our government should act to remove burdens and lift barriers to help people find work opportunities.

My question to the minister: How has our government helped more individuals find meaningful employment in this great province?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thanks to the member again for this question.

Mr. Speaker, under the previous government, only 1% of people on social assistance were finding employment each year. That might be good enough for those across the aisle, but it's not good enough for us.

In the parts of Ontario where we've started our new approach, the results are outstanding: 79% of job seekers are working at least 20 hours per week, and 55,700 people are now on a path to finding employment.

This is how we lift people up, and this is how we're going to achieve our ambitious plan to build Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier.

Municipalities are reeling from the alarming passage of Bill 23 on Monday. The lack of consultation and the absence of respect and facts have resulted in a deeply flawed piece of legislation that will undermine housing affordability, increase homelessness, and compromise the integrity of the greenbelt ecosystem.

Last week, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga claimed that seven Waterloo region municipalities were “sitting on over \$200 million ... of reserve funds from development charges that have already been collected.” Specifically, he went on to say that the township of Woolwich was sitting on \$6.5 million of DC charges that they didn't know about. In fact, all of the DC reserve funds are allocated and are in the municipal five-year economic forecast. You just have to learn how to read, I guess.

The drastic reduction in development charges will—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

No personal attacks in the House.

Conclude your question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, you just have to meet with the council and you can see the numbers.

The drastic reduction—

Interjection.

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

Member for Waterloo, conclude the question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —will negatively impact the municipalities' ability to facilitate housing, which is so important in the province of Ontario.

Why is the government implying that these funds are not being used and that municipalities are negligent in their duties?

Hon. Steve Clark: The member opposite is incorrect; the member for Kitchener–Conestoga is a great member. He meets regularly with his municipalities. He was merely quoting the financial information that's provided to the ministry. If, in fact, the numbers that municipalities are giving us for the amount of DC reserves they have is incorrect, perhaps we should have a deeper dive into the documentation that the minister is being sent.

Clearly, there were councils in every council chamber, in every corner of the province, that campaigned in advance of the October 24 election that said they wanted to prioritize affordable housing.

Bill 23 provides the opportunity to incent having more affordable housing, having more attainable housing, having more inclusionary zoning units. It's doing the exact opposite of what the member for Waterloo is suggesting.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Following the shocking comments by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, I wrote municipalities about the government's assertions.

Woolwich Mayor Shantz set the record straight:

"Based on the pace of our growth ... we will actually require additional funding to be able to do all of the forecasted work. We are staying with the best practice approach that, as much as possible, growth should pay for itself.

"We do not want existing taxpayers to pay that heavy burden. That's neither fair or appropriate."

Mayor Crombie herself said that Mississauga will lose \$885 million over 10 years in development charges because of Bill 23. She said that it's equal to losing 20% of their capital budget.

Why is this government undermining municipalities and their ability to facilitate affordable housing?

Hon. Steve Clark: The member for Kitchener–Conestoga is actually standing up for the dream of home ownership.

We've got young people here. I want to make sure that there is a generation of potential homeowners who have a home that meets their needs and their budget.

Any mayor—like Mayor Crombie, who the member opposite is quoting—who doesn't think that a \$132,000

development charge on a semi-detached home in Mississauga isn't going to get turned over to the buyer is living in a dream world.

Those mayors who speak against our bill have one message: They're saying to that young family, "Stay in your parents' basement. You're never going to have a home that meets your needs."

On the government side, we will realize the dream of home ownership—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order. The member for Waterloo will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order.

Start the clock.

Next question.

COURT DECISION

Mr. Ted Hsu: Picture this grim scene 2,300 years ago in Asculum: The Macedonian general Pyrrhus surveys the battlefield. Roman legions, Greek phalanxes, elephants, archers and cavalry lie wounded and dying—a battle so costly that historical accounts disagree on whether any side won. Pyrrhus himself said, "If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined."

Today, picture this: paramedics lined up in overcrowded emergency rooms, overwhelmed ICU nurses, cancers going undetected, tent communities across Ontario, educators in physical danger because of understaffing, even idled ferries.

Why won't the Premier accept the Ontario Superior Court ruling against Bill 124 and realize that any appeal would be at most a Pyrrhic victory? Don't start another battle. Renegotiate a fair deal, and get to work on our real problems.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As the member opposite knows, we are reviewing the decision that is before us. As the Attorney General said, we have the intention to appeal that.

Let's compare our record of investments into this province against 15 years of the previous Liberal government. Let's look at health care. They left this health care system on life support. They cut residency spots. This government is building two new medical schools—a new medical school in Brampton, a new medical school in Scarborough; increasing the amount of doctors in the north. That is in stark contrast to the members opposite.

We will continue to make these historic investments supporting health care, health human resources across this province, and we will take no lessons from the members opposite on how to make those health care investments.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Well Mr. Speaker, you could either try to learn from history or try to rewrite it, like this side does.

What does the Premier hope to gain for the people? He should be sitting down with unions. He should stop fighting the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, negotiate a fair deal, and focus on real problems of working families. What do the Conservatives hope to gain from appealing the Ontario Superior Court's ruling against Bill 124?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, as we said, we intend to appeal this decision, as it is before the courts.

We will stand on our record of investments that we have made—which is, again, in stark contrast to the members opposite.

Let's look at health human resources. Since March 2020, we have added over 12,000 health care professionals into the system—just this year alone, over 12,800 registered nurses at the Ontario college of nurses.

The members opposite oversaw firing of nurses across this province. They cut hospital budgets. They closed hospitals. They stopped building hospitals in Brampton, in communities like mine that were neglected for 15 years.

We're building hospitals in Brampton; we're building hospitals in Windsor, in Niagara, in Mississauga, because the previous government failed to make those investments. We will take no lessons from the members opposite on how to make those investments.

NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Kevin Holland: All of us in this House share a common goal: keeping Ontario's roads safe for all drivers.

In the last year, we have seen an alarming increase in fatal collisions on our roads, particularly in the north.

Injuries and fatalities are twice as likely to occur on a northern highway as compared to a highway in southern Ontario. This is unacceptable.

As the winter season is upon us, drivers in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and across the north deserve certainty that the government is taking action to put their safety first.

Can the Minister of Transportation please tell the House what our government is doing to support transportation safety in northern communities?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for the great question.

Under Premier Ford's leadership, our government is taking concrete steps to make roads in northern Ontario safer.

Just a few weeks ago, I was pleased to announce that our government took another step forward to deliver the first ever "2+1" highway pilot in North America. This model is used in jurisdictions around the world, and it has been shown to improve road safety and enhance traffic

flow. By issuing the request for proposals for the new pilot on Highway 11 north of North Bay, our government is demonstrating real progress to get shovels in the ground on this critical project making roads in the north that much safer.

A "2+1" highway pilot is part of our government's plan to build Ontario, and we're getting it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the minister for her answer and for the great work she's doing in her ministry. I want to commend the minister for her leadership in delivering much-needed safety improvements in the north.

After 15 years under the previous Liberal government, life became more difficult for people living in northern Ontario. The previous Liberal government failed on winter road maintenance, cancelled northern passenger rail service, and neglected to make the meaningful targeted highway investments our region desperately needs.

Can the minister please elaborate on her newly announced innovative project and how it will support the communities of northern Ontario?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you again to the member for the question.

Speaker, we have received resounding support on the "2+1" highway from local stakeholders, including Mark Wilson from Going the Extra Mile for Safety, as well as members of our government's Northern Transportation Task Force. The "2+1" highway pilot will support northern development and boost economic growth in the region, after decades of neglect by the previous Liberal governments. And this builds on other initiatives championed by our government to support and grow the north.

Just recently, we created a new highway level of service that requires Highways 11 and 17 in northern Ontario to be cleared within 12 hours after a winter storm, four hours faster than the previous standard.

Speaker, this is not a one-and-done deal for northern drivers. We will continue to look for even more ways to support safer and more prosperous communities in the north.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: According to the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, the province will need at least 65,000 new child care staff over the coming years to meet the expected demand for \$10-a-day child care. Sixty-five thousand child care staff is an enormous number. To get anywhere close to that will require a long-term strategy to retain and recruit child care workers. Without a strategy, parents and families will lose access to \$10-a-day child care.

My question to the Premier is, where is that strategy?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, because of our Premier's leadership, we have been able to deliver a better deal, with \$3 billion on the table more, and an additional year of funding guarantees that will ensure child care

remains more affordable and accessible for all Ontario families.

It's fundamental that we remind the people of Ontario that had the New Democrats and Liberals had their way, we would have omitted literally 30% of operators in all of our communities that are depending on government to come up with a sustainable, inclusive program that reduced costs.

On average, by Christmas of this year, we're looking at \$12,000 per child. This is a monumental step forward.

The member opposite is right; we will need more ECEs to fulfill the 86,000 spaces this government is working to create. It's why we have a plan. We've launched a specific advisory group that has been established over the fall of non-profit, for-profit and technical experts coming together to ensure we've got the requisite staff. We continue to increase wages, and we continue to roll out a program that has 92% of operators enrolling, because they believe in this program.

The people of Ontario are depending on this government to get the job done.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, any advisory group on the workforce has to include the voices of workers.

I want to remind the minister that in section 4.2 of the child care agreement that he refers to, Ontario committed to consulting on a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for child care workers this past summer.

I have tabled a bill to start addressing the child care workforce crisis by ensuring that the solutions put forward by workers and advocates are listened to.

My question to you, Minister: Will you listen to child care workers?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What I can confirm is that the workplace stabilization advisory group is going to be launched this winter with the aim of including the voices of all those working in our child care space, because we want to rely on their expert experiences, ensuring that we have the right staff who are trained and supported, with the right levels of salary, so that we can retain and recruit these high-quality workers.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to hire thousands of additional ECEs in our province because we will need more people to staff the 86,000 more spaces this government will create—more access, in addition to more affordable child care. It rose by 400% under the former Liberal government—an indefensible record.

This government and our Premier know we can make child care affordable for families for future generations, and we're going to get the job done.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

I recently learned of a wonderful grant to a local theatre group called the Tweed and Company Theatre, a fine organization that has benefited from support provided by

the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The support they received likely won't make headlines in the news, but that funding will have an immense impact on ensuring the sustainability and the expansion of this fine organization's productions.

I'm always impressed by how much can be accomplished when non-profit organizations receive the funding they greatly deserve.

1120

Can the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport please tell us more about the resources available, so that other community organizations across the province can realize the same benefit?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: I'd just like to add that we don't look for headlines; we look for results.

I'd like to thank the member for his question and for his strong leadership representing the residents of Hastings–Lennox and Addington. He will be interested to know that our government agency, created 40 years ago under the great leadership of PC Premier Bill Davis, continues to build healthy and vibrant communities across Ontario. Since the voters in Ontario entrusted Premier Ford to lead the PC government in 2018, \$2.4 million has been invested through the Ontario Trillium Foundation in the non-profit sector of Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

I'll go to the numbers a little later, because I'm running out of time, but I'll go back to the point: We get results. We're not worried what people talk about; we're—

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister for that response.

Speaker, \$2.4 million for my riding is absolutely wonderful.

In my previous role as a municipal mayor, I was fortunate to witness the many impressive achievements made possible through support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Whether it's replacing benches and bleachers in three of our sports facilities in Tweed, or support for the Royal Canadian Legion in Bancroft, or providing assistance to the Heart of Hastings Hospice—all of these programs have greatly benefited.

Once again, can the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport please provide additional details on how the Ontario Trillium Foundation can help non-profit organizations across the province?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to do so.

I joined representatives from all parties in this House for a breakfast celebrating the Ontario Trillium Foundation's 40th anniversary just over a week ago. Recognition of the OTF's value is universal, and I'm happy to promote the foundation, whenever possible, because it's important to all of us.

The OTF's Resilient Communities Fund is making positive contributions in communities across Ontario working towards economic recovery, with grants of up to \$150,000 to help non-profits rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. In fact, the deadline is coming up.

It's time to get it done. That deadline is December 7, 2022. So I encourage organizations to get it done.

Our government invested \$105 million through the Community Building Fund to support non-profit tourism, culture, sport and recreation organizations that create great experiences and great events across this province.

I'll continue to work with OTF and help them do what they do best: help us in our province.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture.

Ontario loses 319 acres of farmland every day to development—319 acres that will never ever grow food again. Now the government is trying to pave over the greenbelt as well, and farmers are concerned. The three farm organizations that represent almost every farmer in this province have written an open letter to the Premier expressing that fact. I'd like to quote from that letter: "These losses are not sustainable and will become increasingly worse with the overreaching effects of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022."

My question to the minister is, does she agree with the farmers of Ontario that farmland loss at this rate is unsustainable?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to rise in this House to address the amazing industry that we have in Ontario, our agri-food sector.

Just on Monday, we released a Grow Ontario plan that has been well received by every commodity organization and every general farm organization in this province. Part of that strategy over the next 10 years is to see production increase by 30%. Farmers and agri-food businesses alike are applauding the fact that we have a strategy that's going to see our agri-food sector not only excel but, year over year, increase yields as we embrace new innovations and new technologies that are going to see our yields go through the roof. Why? Ontario consumers need confidence in their food supply—not only in this province, but across Canada.

The rest of the world is watching our industry because they're seeing us as leaders.

Again, our future is bright in Ontario's agri-food industry.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. But you have the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the National Farmers Union—those farmers are telling you that yields are great, but yields are per acre, and when you lose 320 acres a day, over the long term, you're losing the ability to produce food. They are ringing the warning bells to your government. They've written to the Premier with that warning.

I have asked this question several times and have yet to hear the minister say the word "farmland." Does she

actually represent farmers at the cabinet table—to say the word "farmland"?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, that assertion is absolutely BANANAS, coming from that critic—and look in Hansard to see what that acronym stands for.

The fact of the matter is, we have released a strategy that has been embraced by every single player and stakeholder in our value chain. We're looking to strengthen our agri-food supply chain over the next 10 years. We're increasing production by 30%. We're increasing food manufacturing by 30%. We're increasing our exports by 8% annually. And most importantly, we're looking to increase our food and beverage manufacturing by 10%.

Again, the future is bright because we have a government that not only understands but cares for the agri-food industry in this province. By working through our three pillars—to strengthen our supply chain; to embrace innovation and agri-tech; as well as growing our labour force, our workforce and the talent within our agri-food sector—we are going to excel, and the world is going to see us as a world leader.

POLICE SERVICES

SERVICES DE POLICE

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Ensuring police services in Ontario have the resources they need to keep the communities in Simcoe–Grey and across our province safe is of the utmost importance. Having up-to-date technology means that our officers will have the best information available to carry out their work effectively.

Recently, the Solicitor General spoke about our government's investment of \$61 million in new technology to fight auto theft across this province.

Investing in new crime-fighting technology is crucial to helping our police services solve outstanding cases and bring closure to the victims and their families.

Can the Solicitor General please tell us how investments our government is making in new technology will assist our law enforcement partners in delivering justice to our residents?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my friend from Simcoe–Grey for the question.

In Ontario, we are investing in the latest technology and using cutting-edge techniques to keep Ontario safe. We are a province of innovation and progress, and we're proud of this.

Just last week, the Ontario Provincial Police, with the help of state-of-the-art genetic-based technology, were able to close the 1980 murder case of Micheline St. Amour. This science is transformational. I want to recognize retired Detective Superintendent Dave Truax and retired Detective Constable Mike Hickey for their work in solving this homicide. Now Micheline's family can finally have some peace.

Monsieur le Président, rien pour moi, en tant que solliciteur général, n'est plus important que la sécurité de

notre province. Pour le premier ministre de l'Ontario et pour moi, c'est personnel.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the Solicitor General for that answer. It is reassuring to hear that this revolutionary new technology was instrumental in delivering justice for the victim and helping to bring peace to their family after all these years.

1130

As reported by the media, because of our government's investments, police services across our province will be able to advance unsolved cases for DNA technology investigation in the coming years.

Can the Solicitor General please provide more details on how Ontario's police services can use investigative genetic genealogy as an investigative tool?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Speaker, on Monday of this week, the Toronto Police Service arrested a suspect in Moosonee in the murders of two women that happened back in 1983. Now, after four decades of work, the families of the victims can have some closure.

My ministry is proud to have provided a grant used to fund genetic genealogy for the Toronto Police Service.

Science, technology and innovation help police in their pursuit of justice for everyone, and to keep our communities safe. They will never give up.

We want to thank Detective Sergeant Steve Smith and his whole team from Toronto's homicide and missing persons cold case unit.

We will continue to invest in leading-edge technology so that our police have the tools and resources they need to fight crime.

Monsieur le Président, nous continuerons de faire ce qui est difficile pour assurer la sécurité de l'Ontario.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

London Health Sciences Centre has an innovative plan to redirect patients suffering from mental health episodes to a new emergency room, but Ontario refuses to help or provide funding unless the already cash-strapped city of London ponies up \$300 million of the total cost—\$300 million. My question to the Premier: Why are you forcing the city of London to pay when health care funding is a provincial responsibility?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: From the very beginning, our Premier had a focus on mental health and addictions, which is why, of course, we have our first minister of mental health and addictions here in the province of Ontario, under a Progressive Conservative government.

We understand that there are partnerships that exist within communities that need to be fostered, and part of those commitments is ensuring that the responsibilities of the municipality and of the health care system federally

are working together to make sure all of these innovative proposals are appropriately funded.

I would love to look in more detail at the program or idea that the member opposite is interested in sharing, and I'm happy to follow up with him after question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is back to the Premier: How can this government talk about commitments and working together when they refuse to meet with front-line workers to discuss solutions to our health care crisis?

Cities lose revenue with Bill 23, cities lose democracy with Bill 39, and now Premier Ford, who is sitting on billions, wants to download responsibilities onto municipalities and taxpayers to fund provincial health care.

My question: Why is this government downloading huge costs onto municipalities like London when they're underfunding health care by almost \$900 million?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, with the greatest of respect, where was the member in August, when we voted on a budget that increased health care over \$5 billion? You voted against it. You opposed those investments that we are making in health care, that we are making in hospitals and in mental health and addictions organizations that are doing incredible work across Ontario. We've made the investments. We've increased the number of beds that are available in communities to make sure that people are getting the services they need.

The member opposite needs to look himself in the mirror and ask why he didn't support that \$5-billion increase in August.

HOUSING

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Associate Minister of Housing. Ottawa is home to over a million Ontarians and is among Canada's largest cities. Significant population growth is projected over the next decade for the Ottawa area, including in my riding of Carleton.

Ottawa and the surrounding areas are favourable destinations for newcomers to settle. With new immigration targets set by the federal government, there is a real concern regarding housing availability needs to meet both current and future demands. As many newcomers will arrive in Ottawa and the surrounding areas, housing availability will remain a pressing concern.

Speaker, through you: Can the Associate Minister of Housing please explain what our government is doing to provide housing relief for new and existing Ontarians living in the Ottawa area?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my honourable colleague from Carleton for the question and also for her strong advocacy when it comes to housing on behalf of her constituents.

I was in the member's city last week, alongside my federal and municipal counterparts, to announce a \$90-million housing investment across the city of Ottawa to support the construction of more than 270 units. These units will meet a variety of accessibility and affordability needs, ranging from studios to three-bedroom apartments.

I look forward to continuing our partnership with all levels of government, as well as the non-profit and private sectors, to ensure that all Ontarians, including the most vulnerable in our communities, have a safe place to call home.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the Associate Minister of Housing for his answer—

Interjection: A great minister.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: He's a fantastic minister, and the people of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill are blessed to have a hard-working member like the minister.

It's really reassuring that our government is implementing strategies addressing housing availability in Ontario, including in communities in my riding of Carleton, like Findlay Creek, Riverside South, Stittsville, Greely and more. By working with all levels of government, housing supply will expand to address the needs of the current population and newcomers settling in the Ottawa area.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Can the Associate Minister of Housing please expand on our government's plan to address housing projects that will benefit local communities in Ottawa?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I absolutely can. Again, I want to thank my colleague from Carleton for the follow-up question.

To add to my previous answer: The funding will support five projects across the city of Ottawa, including the project that our government is supporting which is located at 159 Forward Avenue. This will be a four-storey building with a total of 49 units, 30 of which will be designated as affordable, and the remaining 19 will have rents that are on par or below average market rent. As I've said from day one, we'll continue to do everything we can to support projects like this one, because they prioritize and support the most vulnerable.

With lack of supply and housing prices out of control for many Ontarians, we'll continue to work, again, with all partners, all levels of government, to increase supply and support housing in every corner of our province.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Health.

I was contacted by my constituent Elliot, whose doctor has announced new fees for previously insured OHIP services. Elliot is now being asked to pay for basic services like getting prescriptions, referrals, and transferring medical records.

Forcing people to pay for basic services like getting a prescription refill is not just a hurdle; it's a threat to people's health and well-being.

Why are patients like Elliot being charged these surreptitious fees?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As with many questions that come from the NDP caucus, there needs to be more detail to that question. I would begin with: Are they phone

appointments, phone consultations? There is a change that is coming up, as of December 1, to ensure that more family physicians have the ability to meet with their patients directly—as opposed to temporary codes that were put in place during the height of the pandemic to make sure that individuals had access to their primary care physicians. We put those virtual care codes in place because we wanted to make sure that individuals had the opportunity to continue relationships with their primary care physicians. There is a change that has been approved by the Ontario Medical Association, voted on by their members, which will ensure a switch to—while virtual care continues in the province of Ontario, it will be funded at a different level than in-person care.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

1140

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is back to the Minister of Health.

Elliot's doctor won't perform these services without a \$20 e-transfer or a yearly subscription fee of \$125.

Accessing public health care shouldn't require e-transfers or credit cards. Those unable to pay could start avoiding their family doctor and wind up in emergency rooms.

What is your plan to ensure Ontarians can get the health care they deserve using only their OHIP card?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Our plan is our Plan to Stay Open.

Our plan is to build two new medical schools in the province of Ontario, in Brampton, in Scarborough, the first new medical schools, frankly, that have happened since—wait for it—a previous Conservative government.

Our plan has been to work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to ensure that, as internationally educated graduates, medical practitioners have the opportunity to get their education reviewed, assessed and ultimately approved if they qualify. We are making the changes to make sure that individuals who want to practise medicine in the province of Ontario can continue to do so.

I will never suggest that what the member opposite is saying is appropriate.

But I will say, our family physicians have stepped up consistently to assist in the vaccine rollout and protect the people of Ontario.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question this morning is to the Minister of Infrastructure.

For too long, the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, failed to make the investments that were needed in broadband infrastructure. In so many communities, such as my riding of Niagara West and rural communities across Ontario, the failure to make these investments meant that our people were not able to be connected to the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Broadband access isn't just a requirement for participating in our economy; it's a requirement for people to ensure that they're able to access important social,

community ties—as well as speaking with their family members.

Our government has made historic investments in this crucial infrastructure area.

I'm wondering if the Minister of Infrastructure would be able to explain to the House and to the people of my community what investments are being made to ensure that rural communities across Ontario are being connected, today and tomorrow.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

As everyone knows, we are investing \$159 billion over 10 years to build critical infrastructure across this province. Four billion dollars of that fund will be allocated to make sure that everybody in the province of Ontario, including our rural communities, will be connected.

We completed our reverse auction this summer. Eight Internet service providers have been selected to connect 266,000 homes. We have 40,000 to 60,000 more premises to connect. We are currently working on our last-mile strategy to make sure that everyone in Ontario has quick, easy and reliable access to high-speed Internet across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the Minister of Infrastructure for her response to my question and for the investments that her ministry, as well as so many others, are making in rural Ontario.

For too long, the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, ignored the needs of rural communities. Under the leadership of Premier Ford and this Ontario PC team, that is changing.

The minister spoke about some of the investments that are being made in communities such as mine. When I think of places like Kimbo, Winger, Grassie, St. Anns—small communities where historic investments are having a real impact in the lives of so many of my constituents—I know it's important that this work continues.

Can the minister speak more about the important plan to ensure that each and every household in the province of Ontario is connected to modern, high-speed Internet?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I think it's really important for us to recognize that prior to COVID there were 700,000 premises that did not have access to high-speed Internet.

How could a family quite possibly earn an income working from home or educate their child or reach their doctor at home without access?

We have 40,000 to 60,000 premises to go. We will not stop until every single one is connected.

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

SCOTTISH HERITAGE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a point of order.

Most people know today to be St. Andrew's Day. I would also like to recognize that today is Scottish Heritage Day in Ontario.

I'm proudly wearing my McDonnell tie of Glengarry, as it is the regimental tartan of the SDG Highlanders in my riding. It is also the family tartan of my predecessor Jim McDonnell, whose private member's bill, last year, proclaimed November 30 of each year Scottish Heritage Day in Ontario—just one part of Jim's legacy as an MPP in this House.

Jim, the good Scot Barbara Stephenson is stopping by with some Starbucks.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I recess the House, I want to inform the House that we have a special guest in the west visitors' gallery: Russell Williams, a former member of the National Assembly, who served the riding of Nelligan for four terms.

It's great to have you here.

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

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MPP Jamie West: We have a lot of guests here today. I'm going to share some of the introductions with the Minister of Labour.

I do want to start with Janice Hobbs Martell. Her father, Jim Hobbs, is the inspiration for the McIntyre Powder Project. Janice is joined by Elaine Hobbs, Jim's wife of 55 years. Their eldest daughter Charlene was not able to be here, but Jim's children Linda Demers, Janice Hobbs Martell, Jim Hobbs Jr., and his son-in-law Len Demers are here, as well as two of Jim's granddaughters, Jessica Rogers and Mackenzie Hobbs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to welcome from the great riding of Carleton one of my constituents, Glenn van Gulik, who is here with the Salvation Army today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I too would like to welcome everyone here to Queen's Park. They've done so much work, Mr. Speaker, around the McIntyre Powder issue.

There are a lot of people that we need to recognize, but I want to recognize Ken Brezenski; he is here with his wife Luanne. They are also here to represent Ken's father, Felix, who was exposed to McIntyre Powder for 27 years at McIntyre Mine. Felix passed in 1996.

MPP Jamie West: Some of the McIntyre Powder-exposed mine workers are here with family. I would like to introduce Roger Genoe, who is here with his wife, Dorothy. Ron Tough is here with his partner, Penny Earley. Bob Olmstead is here, Speaker. Ken Brezenski is here with his wife, Luanne Brezenski, and they're also here to represent Ken's father, Felix, who was exposed to

McIntyre Powder for 27 years at the McIntyre Mine. Felix unfortunately died in 1996.

Max Plouffe is here, along with his wife, Jeannette, and Gary Zarichney is here with his wife Pauline and his daughter Rose.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I would like to welcome Linda Lundström, one of three daughters of Rickard Lundström, representing their family; as well as, representing the Len Vincent family, Daniel and his wife, Carmen. Daniel's parents, Len and Jean, are unable to be here in person due to Len's McIntyre Powder-related health issues. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jamie West: As well, in the gallery representing the Herman Hogan family, we have Darlene Racicot, who is the daughter of Herman. Representing the Gérard Gaudet family is Gus Gaudet, who is the son of Gérard and Laurette Gaudet. Representing the Henry Johnson family is Anne Dupuis. She is the daughter of Henry Johnson, and she is here with her husband, Gerard Dupuis, and daughter Leslie-Ann McKee.

I'll finish off the final two. Representing the David St-Georges family, Chantal Bryce and Rachel St-Georges are the daughters of David St-Georges, and David's son-in-law John Bryce is here as well. And representing the O'Neil Rochon family, Carole Rochon Legault is the daughter of O'Neil and Anita Rochon, and Carole is here with her husband, Mike Legault.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 26, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of post-secondary education / *Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'éducation postsecondaire.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr. Calandra moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / *Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.*

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 government House leader and Minister of Legislative Affairs care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, Speaker, very briefly. The legislation, if passed, would help clarify management structures, roles and responsibilities here at the Legislative Assembly.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC HEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (IN HONOUR OF DR. SHEELA BASRUR), 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE (EN HOMMAGE À LA DRE SHEELA BASRUR)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to the positions of Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health and related matters / *Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne les postes de médecin-hygiéniste en chef et de médecin-hygiéniste en chef adjoint et des questions connexes.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Nickel Belt like to briefly explain her bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill amends the Health Protection and Promotion Act to make the Chief Medical Officer of Health an officer of the assembly. It also specifies the manner in which the Chief Medical Officer of Health may be appointed or removed from office. The act is also amended to provide for the appointment of a select committee in the event of a declaration of an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act that relates to a public health event or pandemic or may have health impacts anywhere in Ontario. The mandate of the select committee consists of receiving advice from and providing advice to the Chief Medical Officer of Health with respect to the situation that gave rise to the declaration of emergency.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MCINTYRE POWDER PROJECT PROJET DE LA POUDRE MCINTYRE

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Today, I am pleased to rise as Ontario's Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to extend an apology that is long overdue on behalf of all the members of the Legislature and the people of Ontario.

It has been more than 40 years since McIntyre Powder has been used in Ontario mines, but for the thousands of miners who were exposed to the powder, it might as well have been yesterday. They were told by their employers that this powder would help protect them from lung disease and that they had to inhale it to continue working in the mines.

These 25,000 miners across northern Ontario didn't have a choice. For them, their livelihoods depended on taking this powder, and it was supposed to keep them safe. Instead, this powder caused the very things it was supposed to prevent. The survivors have had to deal with the lingering effects—lung disease and Parkinson's—while countless families have had to watch their loved ones suffer, helpless to do anything in relief.

1510

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 30 people here who have travelled from right across northern Ontario—family and friends who have had to watch their fathers, brothers and sons live this hell, including six miners here who experienced this themselves.

I also want to recognize miners like Isadore Commando, David St. Georges and thousands of others who didn't live to see this day.

And Janice Martell, who I'm glad to have met and had the opportunity to listen to. Janice is the daughter of Elliot Lake miner, Jim Hobbs. Jim passed in 2017 after a 16-year battle with Parkinson's. Janice, I don't need to have met him to know how proud he would be of the fight that you have taken up.

Speaker, I also want to recognize my colleague across the floor, the member for Sudbury. His unwavering commitment to his constituents—and miners across northern Ontario—helped bring us to this day. I also want to thank our government House leader, the MPP for Markham—Stouffville, for his assistance and for his staff's help as well.

Today's apology is the next step in actions to support our miners. I'm proud to say, earlier this year, the Premier and our government declared Parkinson's disease to be an occupational disease that is the result of work-related exposure to McIntyre Powder. As a result, miners who were exposed to McIntyre Powder and have been diagnosed with Parkinson's are entitled to compensation without having to produce any evidence that their disease is work-related. For the miners and families here today, this means not only faster compensation but, equally as important, recognition that what businesses demanded these workers to do was wrong.

Speaker, I am proud that our government also funded the research that led us to this momentous occasion. And today is just a start—our government will continue to make investments to help identify and recognize occupational illnesses and support those who have been injured by exposure on the job, because anyone in Ontario who falls ill because of their job should have the confidence that they and their loved ones will be taken care of. That is why our government launched the first-ever review of our province's occupational illness system to deliver lasting change for workers and their families. This review is being led by an independent research centre at St. Michael's Hospital with the unparalleled expertise in studying complex health issues. Their work will lead to improved recognition of workplace diseases, a better understanding of the exposures that led to them and, most importantly, more days like today.

While we know that an apology will not bring your loved ones back, it will not ease the pain and sadness so many of you have faced—this tragedy should not have happened to you; it should not have happened to your loved ones—to each and every one of you, on behalf of the people of Ontario, we are truly sorry.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to stand with me to honour and remember the victims of this tragedy. Thank you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses? I recognize the member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Before I begin, Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity for the guests to use the Speaker's gallery. There are a couple of the members who had mobility issues, but they all wanted to stand together, so I'm very thankful to you and your office for opening the entire gallery to them.

Speaker, today is November 30, an important day in Ontario mining: 79 years ago today, despite expert evidence recommending against its use at the time, the Ontario government of the day sanctioned the first use of McIntyre aluminum powder for use on Ontario mine workers. During the 36 years that it was used, more than 25,000 Ontario mine workers, primarily in uranium and gold mines, were forced to breathe the finely ground aluminum dust known as McIntyre Powder.

Before the start of each and every shift, the doors of the dry, the mining change room, were sealed shut, the ventilation would be turned off and a mist of fine aluminum dust was pumped inside. The dust would make the air turn black. Locked into the room, the workers were told to breathe deeply so the dust would coat their lungs, so the dust would protect them, and if the workers refused, they were fired.

I want to share the voice of two of these workers. During a press conference we held, Ed Graham said, "I put old shirt rags over my face to avoid the aluminum dust, but a supervisor caught me and told me to take that rag off my face. I asked the supervisor about the aluminum dust and was told, 'Keep asking questions like that and you won't be here very long.'"

Bill Ferguson also said, “At the start of each shift they would line our lungs with that aluminum dust before we went underground. The theory was that the silica and rock dust wouldn’t stick to your lungs and you’d cough up the aluminum at the end of your shift, but that didn’t work. They sprayed me with that for 18 years.”

For 36 years, Speaker, mining workers like Ed and Bill were told that breathing aluminum powder would protect them from harm, but instead many miners experienced immediate and long-term health effects, and it simply wasn’t fair. It wasn’t fair to the 25,000 Ontario mine workers who were forced to breathe McIntyre aluminum powder. It wasn’t fair to their loved ones, to their wives, to their children, to their fathers, to their mothers, to their friends and their fishing buddies. It simply wasn’t fair.

And so, today we are here, united as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 79 years after the first use of McIntyre aluminum powder, 36 years after its final use, and we are here to tell you that we are sorry.

Nous sommes désolés. L’utilisation de la poudre McIntyre a été sanctionné par le gouvernement de l’Ontario. Ce n’était pas juste pour les 25 000 mineurs Ontariens. Ce n’était pas juste pour leurs amis et pour leurs familles. Nous sommes désolés.

We are sorry that between 1943 and 1979, more than 25,000 Ontario mine workers were forced to breathe McIntyre aluminum powder. We are sorry that the use of McIntyre powder was supported and sanctioned by the Ontario government of the day. We are sorry this happened to people who dedicated their lives and their work to the betterment of our province.

Speaker, when I began, I said today is November 30. This is an important day in Ontario mining because today, 79 years after the Ontario government sanctioned the first use of McIntyre aluminum powder, I am proud to join with all members of the Legislative Assembly from all parties. Together, on November 30, 2022, an important day in Ontario mining, we offer an apology on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to all miners, to mine workers, their friends and their families. We are very, truly sorry. Nous sommes vraiment désolés.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I want to thank the Minister of Labour for his statement and apology, and we all need to thank the member from Sudbury for his tireless advocacy to shed light on this tragedy. We’ve all seen him in this House and in his community advocating for victims and their families, and to educate the public on what happened, so thank you.

Today is a new chapter, hopefully one that brings more attention and some closure for victims and families. We also need to thank the volunteers from the McIntyre Powder Project for all their work to educate the public and to document the extensive health issues that have affected miners and their families.

1520

Mr. Speaker, mining has, and always continues to be, a critical and noble profession that keeps the wheels of our

economy moving. The profession of mining has come a long way, including with safety standards, but it continues to be a dangerous profession. For centuries, men and women have worked in mines, being exposed to various risks to not only put food on the table and support their families, but to support the economy, their province and the country. Unfortunately, like we have seen with this case of aluminum powder inhalation, many of the advances in safety we see today have come due to the tragic loss and suffering of people that have come before us.

Tens of thousands of miners, and many who did not work in the mining industry, have been exposed to the McIntyre aluminum dust, from 1943 to 1980. Many suffered severe health challenges as a result. Men and women going to work, just doing as they were instructed to inhale this dust, just wanted to put in a good day’s work and return to their family safely. They thought they were doing what was right to protect themselves, and that was what they were told if they didn’t know. The tragic reality is that we did not do enough to ensure their safety, both in the short term and the long term. I can’t imagine the suffering that many families went through.

This apology today is a good step towards positive change to occupational disease or injury, and I wish every success in the government’s efforts to improve occupational safety for the workers that make our society prosperous. We need workers, Mr. Speaker, and we need to do everything in our power to ensure that they are safe at work. Every employer’s ultimate goal should be to send their employees safe home every day, every night to their families and to their children, that they’re able to grow up surrounded by loving, healthy family members who take care of them.

I want to say that we will remember all the victims. We thank everyone who is here with us today, and those who are not with us. As elected officials, we have a duty. We have a duty to put in the work, to do the research, to discern the truth, to explain it to people and to put the safety of our workers at the top of our priority list before tragedy strikes and not after.

Applause.

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you’ll find unanimous consent for a moment of silence for all those who have passed because of the exposure to McIntyre Powder.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence in memory of all of those victims who were exposed to McIntyre aluminum powder. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment’s silence.

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

PETITIONS

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Jamie West: I believe this is the last time I'll be reading this petition in the assembly. I want to thank Janice Hobbs Martell for all of her work and for arranging for the apology today. None of this would have happened without her, Speaker.

The petition is entitled a petition "For an Official Statement of Apology on Behalf of the" Legislative Assembly "of Ontario to the McIntyre Powder Project Miners.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 25,000 Ontario mine workers were subjected by their employers to mandatory, non-consensual inhalation of finely ground aluminum dust known as 'McIntyre Powder' between 1943 and 1979, as a scientifically unproven industrial medical treatment for the lung disease silicosis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario supported and sanctioned the McIntyre Powder aluminum prophylaxis program despite the availability of safe and proven alternatives to effective silicosis prevention measures such as improved dust control and ventilation, and also despite expert evidence from the international scientific and medical community as early as 1946 that recommended against the use of McIntyre Powder treatments; and

"Whereas the miners who were forced to inhale McIntyre Powder experienced distress, immediate and long-term health effects from their experiences and exposures associated with aluminum inhalation treatments, as documented through their participation in the McIntyre Powder Project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to provide an official statement of apology to the McIntyre Powder Project miners."

I support this petition, as do all of my colleagues. I'll sign it on behalf of all of us, Speaker.

Interruption.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas from electric and hybrid vehicles to barbecues, the government is supporting the development of homegrown supply chains, creating the next generation of products and returning Ontario to its rightful place as" Canada's workshop; and

"Whereas low-carbon steel production has become critical for jurisdictions to compete for manufacturing investments as businesses look to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their supply chain. These investments support the creation of new jobs and economic growth as steel producers, automakers and other industries transform their operations; and

"Whereas critical minerals in" northern Ontario "will drive electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing in" southern

Ontario, "where Ontario's automotive sector is poised for resurgence as the industry continues its large-scale transformation; and

"Whereas the government's plan will help Ontario become a North American leader in building the vehicles of the future; and

Whereas Ontario will build the next generation of vehicles "by securing auto production mandates to build electric and hybrid vehicles; and

"Whereas Ontario invested \$1.5 million through the Regional Development Program to support an \$18.5-million investment by auto parts manufacturer Ventra Group to create the Flex-Ion Battery Innovation Centre in Windsor; and

Whereas \$250,000 has been invested "to support the development of two new battery production lines at the Electra Battery Materials Corp.'s future Battery Materials Park near Cobalt;

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

"To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to invest in the manufacturing sector that will contribute to the economic success of the province" of Ontario.

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Nicholas to take to the table.

1530

PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je remercie Dan Landry pour cette pétition intitulée « Prix de l'essence.

« A l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l'Ontario continuent d'être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l'essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux États américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d'essence; et

« Alors que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l'essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d'écart de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d'essence annualisés inférieurs;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'accorder à la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario le mandat de » régler « le prix de l'essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

Je supporte cette pétition. Je vais la signer et la remettre à Scarlett pour qu'elle l'amène à la table des greffiers.

HOME CARE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s seniors deserve high-quality, patient-centred care and our government is making significant strides towards better meeting the needs of long-term-care residents by hearing directly from them; and;

“Whereas people, including seniors, should have the option to stay in their homes and receive the care they need if they choose and if it is possible; and

“Whereas home and community care keeps people healthy and at home, where they want to be, and plays an important role in the lives of more than 700,000 families annually; and

“Whereas a strong home and community care sector is key to the government’s plan to end hallway health care and build a connected, patient-centred health care system; and

“Whereas home care supports will prevent unnecessary hospital and long-term-care admissions and will shorten hospital stays; and

“Whereas our government plans to invest up to an additional \$1 billion over the next three years to expand home care, improve quality of care, keeping the people of Ontario in the homes that they love, longer; and

“Whereas the additional funding is intended to support home care providers, address rising costs and support recruitment and training as well as expand services; and

“Whereas these types of investments and other developments, such as virtual care options, care at home can become a choice that seniors, recovering patients and their families make instead of only relying on more traditional venues of care;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to build on the progress this government has made on building a patient-centred home and community care system.”

I endorse this petition, sign my name thereto, and I would be pleased to give it to page Camilla and ask her to execute her duties accordingly.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I would like to provide this petition to the House.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:”

Please “Support Gender-Affirming Health Care.

“Whereas two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse, and intersex communities face significant challenges to accessing health care services that are friendly, competent, and affirming in Ontario;

“Whereas everyone deserves access to health care, and they shouldn’t have to fight for it, shouldn’t have to wait for it, and should never receive less care or support because of who they are;

“Whereas gender-affirming care is life-saving care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the reintroduction of a private member’s bill to create an inclusive and

representative committee to advise the Ministry of Health on how to realize accessible and equitable access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I will proudly affix my signature and provide this to our page Mabel for the centre table.

LAND USE PLANNING

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the population of Ontario is expected to grow by more than two million people by 2031, with approximately 1.5 million of those new residents in the greater Golden Horseshoe region, the Ontario government has announced a consultation in November regarding proposed changes to the greenbelt;

“Whereas the provincial government is taking decisive and bold action to address Ontario’s housing supply crisis by building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years;

“Whereas these proposals could support municipalities’ plans for responsible growth and help build more than 50,000 new homes;

“Whereas to accommodate growth and support the building of more homes, the government is proposing to remove 15 areas of land, totalling approximately 7,400 acres, from the edge of the greenbelt area, affected areas may be adjacent to the existing greenbelt boundaries to an existing urban area must be on or near readily serviceable land and have the potential for homes to be built in the near future;

“Whereas if these lands are removed from the greenbelt, landowners will be expected to develop detailed plans to build housing quickly, and if conditions for these lands are not met, the government will return these properties to the greenbelt;

“Whereas, simultaneously, these proposals would add an additional 9,400 acres to the greenbelt, including a portion of the Paris-Galt moraine and 13 urban river valleys in the greater Golden Horseshoe for an overall greenbelt expansion of approximately 2,000 acres;

“Whereas this government is intent on fulfilling its commitment to get more homes built faster so that Ontario families can find a home that meets their needs and their budget;

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

“(1) That all members of provincial Parliament support the completion of the consultation and the expansion of the greenbelt; and

“(2) That all members of provincial Parliament support the government continuing to take decisive action to address Ontario’s critical housing shortage.”

I am happy to put my name to this petition and provide it to Kennedy.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today being November 30, 2022, I present this petition on behalf of the good people

of Elliot Lake and across the North Shore: the Bouchard family; Hamilton family; Phelan and Todd families; Martin family; Lacelle family; Harrison, Kanafa and Hennessey families; McLean family; Lefebvre, Salo, Racette and McLeod families; the Blaheys, the Sanches and Marcottes; the Hills; the Whites; the Mikkolas; the Bigras, Lawsons and Grattons.

“Petition for an Official Statement of Apology on Behalf of the Government of Ontario to the McIntyre Powder Project Miners

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 25,000 Ontario mine workers were subjected by their employers to mandatory, non-consensual inhalation of finely ground aluminum dust known as ‘McIntyre Powder’ between 1943 and 1979, as a scientifically unproven industrial medical treatment for the lung disease silicosis; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario supported and sanctioned the McIntyre Powder aluminum prophylaxis program despite the availability of safe and proven alternatives to effective silicosis prevention measures such as improved dust control and ventilation, and also despite expert evidence from the international scientific and medical community as early as 1946 that recommended against the use of McIntyre Powder treatments; and

“Whereas the miners who were forced to inhale McIntyre Powder experienced distress, immediate and long-term health effects from their experiences and exposures associated with aluminum inhalation treatments, as documented through their participation in the McIntyre Powder Project;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to provide an official statement of apology to the McIntyre Powder families and miners across this province.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and send it to page Grace to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

1540

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to thank the residents of Curve Lake for their signatures on this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in the First and Second World Wars, over 7,000 First Nation members, as well as an unknown number of Métis, Inuit and other Indigenous recruits, voluntarily served in the Canadian Armed Forces; and

“Whereas countless Indigenous peoples bravely and selflessly served Canada at a time of great challenges for Canada; and

“Whereas this spirit of volunteerism and community marked the life of the late Murray Whetung, who volunteered to serve in the Second World War; and

“Whereas many First Nations individuals lost their status after serving in the wars off-reserve for” more than four years; and

“Whereas despite this injustice, many continued to recognize the value in continuously giving back to their community; and

“Whereas the values of volunteerism and community are instilled in the army, air, and sea cadets across Ontario; and

“Whereas the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act establishes an award for the cadets and tells the story of Indigenous peoples’ sacrifice and mistreatment;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the passage of the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act, 2022.”

I fully endorse this petition and will give it to page Alex to take to the table.

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 30, 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for her comments this morning. I remember one of the things that you had commented on was that we were introducing legislation which was introducing more red tape at the same time as we were trying to cut it—which, of course, is one of the reasons why you have to be, as a government, looking always to cut red tape: because you’re always making new regulations and new laws, and you want to make sure that you don’t just add to the burden on taxpayers.

Since being elected, our government has taken over 400 actions to reduce red tape and maintain important regulations that protect people’s health and safety. So I wanted to know, now that you’re seeing the results in savings of more than half a billion dollars annually to businesses and people and time and money, which is supporting businesses and bringing manufacturing back to Ontario, will you support this legislation and help us reduce red tape in Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much to the member for the question. The example that I used in my comments this morning was Bill 23. This is legislation

that—municipalities very clearly said, “This is going to cost us more money. This is going to create new barriers.”

This morning I read a letter from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority where they said that this is creating more barriers, more obstacles to municipalities, as well as threatening our wetlands and opening up new risks for flooding.

In the case of Bill 23, what I know from the city of London, they’re looking at a \$97-million potential hole in the budget over the next five years. I don’t think that what this government is doing is saving the province money. In fact, it is costing municipalities like London and across the province big dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation this morning. I know that less red tape—one of the things I always talk about is the number of long-term boil-water advisories in the north. I wish we removed the red tape of funding all the boil-water advisories. Sometimes, our First Nations can be identified as red tape because we have rights that are trampled on.

I just want to find out if you’re aware of any free, prior and informed consent that was done for First Nations and to ensure this bill move forward?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Kiiwetinoong for that question. I am not aware whether that kind of consultation took place. I did note in the background that went along with this red tape bill that the government claimed to be committed to working with Indigenous partners to better understand and address barriers to accessing government business support programs.

But at the same time, just earlier this week, we heard from the Chiefs of Ontario and First Nations leaders that the government, in tabling Bill 23—so if we’re going to use that as an example of how this government approaches consultation with First Nations, the government blatantly violated First Nations’ inherent domestic and international rights over their ancestral and traditional territories. First Nations were given no opportunity to be consulted regarding the tabling of Bill 23 and I doubt that they had an opportunity with this bill, either.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: Again, I’m trying to be the kinder, gentler Mike Harris. Some days it works; some days it doesn’t. But—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Harris: I know; I know. But to the member from London West: It’s really interesting. We hear a lot of the opposition saying they don’t support the measures in this bill and, you know—fine. But I guess the question really is, does the member support the reduction of red tape here in the province? I’m going to use an example from my riding.

During the tenure of the previous government, we lost 12,000 manufacturing jobs, mostly due to red tape and regulation and high energy costs. And I know that in London there have been some similar issues over the years

where there’s been a lot of businesses that have left and have moved to greener pastures, so to speak, in the United States and overseas.

We here on the Conservative benches want to reduce red tape; we want to make it easier to do business here in the province of Ontario. Does the member from London West support that?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Look, there are always opportunities to look at how legislation is working and see if it can be improved. I know that the schedules that are included in Bill 46, most of them are housekeeping; most of them were in response to stakeholder feedback. So yes, that is exactly what a government should be doing: They should be listening to see when there are opportunities for improvement. But this government has a track record, Speaker, of using red tape reduction as a justification for gutting environmental protections, for gutting health and safety protections, for putting Ontarians at risk, for costing municipalities more money. That is not something that the NDP can support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I’d like to thank the member from London West for her presentation. As I’m sure she’s aware, a group of London lawyers have called upon Ontario’s Attorney General in regards to judicial appointments because of the dire trial backlog in London and southwestern Ontario.

My question for the member: Is the provision in schedule 2 of Bill 46 sufficient to address the trial backlog in London and southwestern Ontario?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank my colleague, the member for London North Centre, for that question. Certainly, as I pointed out in my remarks, I don’t think that the provisions that are included in Bill 46 are going to address the severe backlog that has been allowed to build up in London over the course of many years, not just with our civil courts, but also with our small claims courts. And a temporary change to allow retired judges to work 75% of a full-time job rather than 50% of a full-time job—maybe that will get a couple more trials through, and we need to deal with that backlog. But certainly, London expects and London deserves to see more concrete action from this government to deal with that chronic backlog because it’s affecting businesses, it’s affecting our economy and it’s affecting the people who live in our region.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member from Brampton West.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member from London for her speech. Madam Speaker, earlier in the morning, my friend from Peterborough–Kawartha was highlighting that there were over 300,000 regulations in Ontario. Our government, since day one, has been creating an environment for businesses to flourish and jobs to flourish, and we can only do that if we’re cutting unnecessary red tape and unnecessary regulations.

1550

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, our Minister of Economic Development is in India right now, encouraging

businesses to invest in Ontario. Does the member opposite think that those businesses will invest in Ontario if we have unnecessary regulations and red tape?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As I mentioned in my remarks this morning, one of the primary concerns of people in Ontario—and we know that from the support that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is getting for its home-grown farmland preservation campaign—is to preserve farmland.

So this member can talk about the number of regulations that have been reduced, but on this side, we want to highlight the fact that 319 acres of farmland is being lost in this province every day, and that is undermining our self-sufficiency as a food-producing jurisdiction. It is undermining food security for people in this province. It is undermining the sustainability of our agriculture and rural industry, and it's affecting our environment when you see that level of loss of farmland on a daily basis in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: A very quick question: One of the amendments in this bill would allow a clerk of the court to set aside an administrative conviction. That's something that really ties up—the old system would really tie up things. The new system that we're proposing will free judges of the provincial—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you, sir.

Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm sorry we didn't hear an answer to that interesting question, but maybe we will in the future. I think that's important.

It's really great to have an opportunity to hear some comments today on the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2022. I have a completely different perspective on the act than the members opposite, at least from what I've heard today. Speaker, we all know red tape is something we are far too familiar with everywhere.

There was a great quote this morning from the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler about bureaucracy expanding, increasing—

Mr. John Yakubuski: The bureaucracy is expanding to support the needs of the expanding bureaucracy.

Mrs. Robin Martin: The bureaucracy is expanding to support the expanding needs of the bureaucracy—or something to that effect—which I thought was lovely, from Oscar Wilde.

That is exactly the case, and it's really the result, often, of well-intended rules, regulations and policies that no longer serve their original purpose, because things do change over time, but instead cause unintended frustration, expense, delay and complications. It's a barrier to economic productivity, competitiveness and innovation.

Speaker, if no action is taken to address red tape, it does have the tendency to grow uncontrollably, like in some horror movie. When we formed government in 2018, Ontario was being strangled, literally, by red tape: the largest regulatory burden of any province in Canada,

according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. That's why, since day one of the Ford government, our government has focused on removing outdated, unnecessary or redundant regulations that hold our province back.

Our government has passed eight red tape reduction bills and packages, consisting of more than 400 individual actions: bills that have contained common-sense changes such as eliminating licence plate renewal fees, making it easier for restaurants and bars to include alcohol with delivery and takeout orders and making it simpler to interact with government. These things are saving people and businesses time and money, and I would think everybody could support that.

Ontario's total regulatory compliance requirements have been reduced by 6.5%. Businesses are saving more than half a billion dollars in compliance costs every year, and that's money that they're no longer spending to fill out government paperwork or comply with regulations that are duplicated across multiple levels of government.

Of course, there's much more work to be done and our province continues to face big challenges. We continue to face supply chain disruptions that were made much worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we're seeing seismic shifts in demand as the habits of people and businesses have changed. There are ongoing labour force shortages that are beginning to impact both day-to-day life and Ontario's economy. In fact, two thirds of Ontario businesses report that their supply challenges have gotten worse this year, and more than one third of businesses say labour-related obstacles will limit their growth.

We know that government can and must play a supportive role to ensure well-functioning supply chains and solve challenges like those seen in the labour market. One of the best things we can do to achieve that is by continuing our efforts to reduce red tape.

With the time I have, I'd like to share some highlights from the package.

We're launching the Grow Ontario strategy to strengthen Ontario's food supply chain from farm to fork, building a stronger, more resilient agri-food sector that has a strong foundation to respond to future challenges. This strategy will outline actions to support consumers and farmers, promote the supply chain while increasing the commercialization and adoption of innovative technologies and practices that enhance competitiveness, increase productivity, and create economic growth.

To help protect road infrastructure during this time of year, the Highway Traffic Act provides local authorities the power to temporarily reduce vehicle axle weight limits. We're giving municipalities a new option to optimize the timing of these reduced load periods, including shortening the period when conditions permit.

We're making it easier to build electricity transmission lines that do not have a financial impact on ratepayers by exempting customer-funded projects from the Ontario Energy Board's leave-to-construct process. With the proposed amendments to the act, proponents of these projects will continue to have the right to apply to the Ontario

Energy Board to cross a highway, railway or utility line in circumstances where an agreement cannot be obtained.

We're addressing barriers to the underground geologic storage of carbon by proposing to amend the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act. If passed, this will support industry and reduce red tape by creating a framework to regulate and enable the permanent storage of carbon as a new tool to help reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions. As future phases are advanced, innovation of carbon capture, use and storage technologies will be encouraged, playing an important role in managing emissions and producing low-carbon hydrogen.

We're proposing to amend the Animal Health Act to provide authority to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to protect the health and well-being of the public and animals when faced with a potential animal health crisis. Proposed changes would enhance animal disease emergency preparedness, mitigate risks to animal health and human health, and boost the resiliency of Ontario's livestock and poultry sector, ensuring Ontarians have a reliable, safe and stable food supply.

We're starting a broad public consultation on the potential modernization of the Veterinarians Act to reduce compliance burdens for vets and practice owners. The proposed changes to the act would address the scope of practice, complaints and resolutions processes, quality assurance and governance of the college of veterinary medicine of Ontario.

We're 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, including home builders and municipalities, to submit, track and receive all Ministry of Transportation approvals online, saving time and money.

We are increasing court capacity and efficiency to help address the COVID-19 backlog in criminal cases by temporarily increasing the limit on the number of days retired judges can work and allowing court clerks to reopen certain proceedings if they believe a defendant missed a notice or was unable to attend a meeting or hearing through no fault of their own.

We're proposing amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that would improve the operational efficiency of that act and the board. This includes ensuring injured or ill apprentices receive loss-of-earnings benefits at the same amounts as a journeyperson would receive them, providing flexibility about when the WSIB board of directors must meet and ensuring requirements for governance documents and office lease transactions are consistent with and not duplicative of other government directives.

1600

We're reducing red tape by exempting certain hot tubs located in individual hotel rooms or suites for the exclusive use of a unit's guests from the requirement of the public pools regulation, and this will reduce the regulatory burden for hotel operators while ensuring guests continue to enjoy a safe stay.

We're providing authority to local medical officers of health to order rabies testing for deceased animals if they were under observation when they passed.

This is also another important innovation: We're enacting changes to the Mandatory Blood Testing Act to allow victims of crime, first responders and emergency personnel who are sometimes exposed to bodily substances to receive faster processing of their tests. We're proposing other changes as well.

Finally, I'd like to say that we're proposing a new act and associated regulation-making authorities that, if passed, would confirm the continuation of the corporate status of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, retroactive to January 1, 2020.

All of these initiatives, I think, are helpful to the people of Ontario, will make it easier to interact with government and will reduce the red tape burden. I think everybody should support them, so I'm hoping everyone will get together with me and do that. I look forward to any questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: The member from Eglinton—Lawrence spoke about how Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, is helping to protect and amplify small businesses. I guess I wanted to know, then, why it was her government that granted small business grants to businesses that weren't even in Ontario to the tune of some \$200-plus million during the pandemic—money that was supposed to be supporting our small businesses going out of province. That seems odd.

I know that the member from Eglinton—Lawrence knows that we share communities like Little Jamaica and small businesses in midtown that are squelching for funds and had their grants turned down because of little administrative glitches.

I'm just wondering what the government has to say about that, and particularly the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We do share a border and lots of great companies that work along Eglinton in Toronto. I'm really proud that we were able to get all of the money out to small businesses to support them. I'm really proud that we're doing a lot to save small businesses—all businesses, really—money in Ontario by saving them about half a billion dollars by reducing all of this red tape.

Under the former Liberal government, they had the highest cost of compliance for businesses in Canada, a total of \$33,000 per business, which was at least \$4,000 more than any other province. That is not a record that would draw businesses here, as my friend said earlier. We need to get businesses to come to Ontario so we have a prosperous economy for all of our workers and all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Niagara.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Alexis de Tocqueville, speaking about democracy in America, spoke about the administrative bureaucracy, saying it's like a "sovereign power" that

“extends its arms over the entire society; it covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated, minute and uniform rules, which the most original minds and vigorous souls cannot break through to go beyond the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them and directs them”—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member—

Interjection: You're not in your seat.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My apologies. My question to the member is: Does this describe the red tape in the province of Ontario under the former Liberal government?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Well, thank you very much to my colleague for the question. It's an excellent question, and, I have to say, I love Alexis de Tocqueville so I'm thrilled that I'm responding to a quote from some of his writing.

Certainly, he describes some of the red tape and the burden of bureaucracy and red tape on businesses and communities so that they can get things done. I think it's very clear from what you read—and Alexis de Tocqueville put it better than just about anybody else—that it's something that we need to address. We need to free people from the burden of red tape, and I'm very excited that we're bringing forward yet another red tape bill to achieve that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll pick up on the question just asked by the member from Niagara West about democracy and red tape. This bill is about red tape reduction, and the government has argued that the other bill they have before the House, Bill 39—that you need to override the results of the last municipal elections in Toronto, Niagara, York and Peel in order to get more efficiency, to cut the red tape and get housing built. Is it not possible to build housing while still respecting the outcomes of our recent municipal elections and respecting the democracy that they represent?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Obviously I think the red tape reduction is extremely important for the future of Ontario's economy, and obviously we're always doing everything we can to make sure that we're following through on our promises to the people of Ontario, to make sure that we're not posing an undue burden.

Government can be an undue burden. We have three levels of government in Canada: We have municipal governments, we have provincial governments and we have federal governments. It's confusing for people, and it also poses a huge burden on people to achieve their ends. They have to make sure they're complying with regulations of all kinds all the time, and I think the more we can do to streamline that, rationalize it and make it make sense so people can still get things done and so governments can still get things done—that's a good objective and we should achieve that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and an honour to take my place and stand at my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

I want to start my comments this afternoon by asking a question to the government. This bill is entitled *Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act*. I want to put a question, and I'm going to end with the same question in my comments that I'm going to be bringing in this afternoon: Does this government look at First Nations as being red tape? I'll come back to that question at the end of my comments that I'll be making this afternoon.

I do want to go through a few of the schedules that I do want to put some comments on. I want to talk a little bit about schedules 1 and 4, but most of my comments that I'll be making today will be on schedule 5. There's some concerns that I see there, and I want to raise those concerns because there's certainly some issues that I have there.

I want to go to schedule 1, and I'll cover schedule 4 at the same time. Bill 46 has been marketed by the government as taking measures to aid farmers and protect Ontario foods. However, they are basically tinkering around the edges with this particular piece of legislation. They are not taking on the larger challenges identified by industry groups as major hurdles to Ontario's agricultural market.

The Ontario beef farmers have asked the government to take steps to support their industry by—the government calls it red tape, but these are really big steps and big milestones that the industry has been asking for, for a very long time, which are increasing investment in the risk management program to help protect the province's food security, that's one; to review the PAWS Act and examine farm inspections and enforcement practices employed under the act, there's another one; and preserving farm and grazing lands through land use policies that see agricultural lands protected.

Now, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and many of our members have raised it often in the House, and let's put the number out there: 319 acres of land are being lost every single day. That's 319 acres of farmland that are being lost each and every day in this province. The government just removed protection on thousands of acres of farmland, which is a direct attack on the industry's long-term future for Ontario.

1610

Now I want to take some time and look at schedule 5. The things I want to cover under schedule 5, in the short time that I have left, are: Schedule 5 is eliminating the prohibition of deep geological carbon storage. It's also opening up the path to storage in ground; however, it's also being used to extract natural gas. I want to touch on this a bit.

The third thing that I want to talk about is that they're opening up a process to crown land which—crown land is a colonial way of saying “treaty lands.” And I go back to the initial questions that I put to this government: Do you see First Nations communities as red tape? Do you see First Nations communities as stakeholders? And why is it that we're seeing legislation such as this as an afterthought, that now we're going to go back and consult with First Nations on treaty lands? We're getting that wrong. These discussions should take place prior to the legislation coming into the House.

Now, on point number two, what I wanted to do is touch on a few things. This is an article in a paper, Narwhal. It says, “Critics of carbon capture technology see investments like those in the Prairies and argue it’s simply a way to prolong the lifespan of an industry that needs to put itself out of business if the world is to survive.”

It also goes on to say, “The push for government funding”—and again, the funding is coming from the federal government, but the province is opening up legislation here to permit this to happen—“also comes as oil and gas companies are pulling in big profits, and spending the windfall on stock buybacks and increased dividends for investors....

“Even those who support carbon capture technology”—one of the speakers—“including Chris Severson-Baker, the Alberta director of the Pembina Institute, don’t want an excess of public money invested in an industry that is ‘likely to decline in the not too distant future.’”

He also goes on to say, “These projects, at scale, are not cheap.... Most require significant public funding to make financial sense.... costs, including sourcing good storage areas, could become more expensive.” And he goes on to say, “the average cost of a big project in Canada is currently \$1 billion for a megatonne per year of reductions.”

I’m just briefly touching upon some of the highlights that were in this article: “‘We think there’s definitely sources of [carbon dioxide] that could be captured in the upstream oil and gas sector, in the oilsands, today, but it’s not as extensive as the companies claim.’”

He also goes on to finish this article: “The injection of carbon into deep aquifers requires monitoring to ensure that carbon doesn’t escape for a very long time. He noted that might need to be a fund to manage that liability.”

So under schedule 5, we will allow for carbon dioxide to be injected into the bedrock as a form of sequestration: “Carbon capture ... and storage essentially means any technology that removes carbon from industrial processes and ... stores it deep underground ...

“Captured carbon can also be used for what’s called enhanced oil recovery, where the carbon is injected into old wells in order to increase pressure and force more oil or gas to the surface. The carbon is then stored in the wells. It’s a less carbon-intensive way of getting to the oil, but it’s still using carbon to access sources of, well, more carbon.”

Environmental groups have criticized carbon capture as a form of greenwashing during a time of climate crisis, allowing oil and gas companies to justify extracting more fossil fuels. According to the industry proponents, “There need to be more regulations put in place to oversee the expansion of carbon capture, utilization and storage, particularly when it comes to pore space and monitoring.” And the government has removed the prohibition of carbon capture on crown lands. These are treaty lands, and the government has not demonstrated any consultation with First Nations, Métis or other Indigenous groups about this change. So I come back to the question that I initially asked: Does the government look at Indigenous communities, Métis, Inuit and First Nations, as red tape? Well,

if I look at this bill and compare it to the actions this government is doing, one would have to extract and say yes, because they are completely leaving them out of the decision process or engagement process.

These crown lands that this government is going to be tampering with and opening up is a colonial way of saying “treaty lands.” Let’s be straight about that, Speaker. There is a responsibility from this government to have meaningful consultation with First Nations, Indigenous communities, Inuit and Métis people, and they’re not doing that. They’re looking at them as being an obstacle.

I may be wrong. I’m hoping that someone from the government will steer me in the right direction and show me differently. But when legislation comes to this House—and this is not the first piece of legislation that came to this House and is in this format and denies and does not take—this government does not take the time to meaningfully participate, engage with the First Nations community leaders. It leads me to believe that this government exactly does that: They look at First Nations across this province as red tape. They look at them as being stakeholders. And I tell this government, you will have a lot of an easier time passing legislation if you sit and have meaningful discussions with Indigenous communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Harris: We are on questions and comments, right? I’m just clarifying. Excellent.

I had an opportunity to listen to many of the things that the member was saying. Listen, he brings up some valid points, and I do appreciate any time he rises in the Legislature.

I want to go back just quickly to the question that I asked the member for London West. When we’re talking about eliminating red tape here in the province, looking at regulations that we can try to streamline or, quite frankly, eliminate if they’re redundant—my riding lost 12,000 manufacturing jobs, 12,000 good-paying jobs. These are jobs with pensions. These are jobs with benefits. These are jobs that people want, and we lost them to jurisdictions that had less red tape and regulation.

Just as a general question, does the member support the reduction of regulations here in the province, the reduction of red tape and things that will support good jobs, good-paying jobs, good, steady jobs for the people of this province?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I always enjoy being in the House when the member for Kitchener–Conestoga is in the House. It seems that when I’m not here, he seems to really ramp it up, and when I’m here, there are more cordial discussions that we have, because we have several sidebars. That’s something that a lot of people who are watching right now on the TV don’t get to see when the cameras are off: the work that gets done in this place.

I say to the member, of course I would support legislation that would be helpful, that would generate employment opportunity, economic growth in this province. However, a good part of my statement that was made

today was actually on the bill. I talked about that. But I wanted to raise a flag and I wanted to hear from the government, who can tell me differently, is this government actually looking at Indigenous communities as being red tape? Because if you are not, then the consultation process would have taken place prior to this legislation hitting the floor of the Legislature.

I'll leave that with you, my friend.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Spadina–Fort York.

M. Chris Glover: Merci au député d'Algoma–Manitoulin pour ses commentaires. J'ai une question sur la séquestration de carbone.

My question is about carbon capture and the sequestering of carbon. You talked quite a bit about it. It seems like an unproven technology, and it seems that there was a case in Australia where the government invested millions of dollars in carbon sequestration. It wasn't very successful, and it seemed to be used more as an excuse for oil companies to continue burning fossil fuels rather than an actual way of reducing carbon output. Would you like to comment on that?

1620

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Spadina–Fort York for his question, and he's right. I did raise a lot of these comments, and a lot of those concerns I raised were under schedule 5. The huge concern I have is opening up treaty lands. See, I said that right, Speaker; it's easy. We should all try to do that, instead of saying it the colonial way: "crown land." We should be talking about treaty lands and what we're doing to those particular lands in not engaging with First Nations communities and talking to them about how it's going to be affecting the communities.

Also to your point, the intent, the idea behind this is that it's supposed to be a wash. It goes in, but what it also does—there's a new way of now inserting carbon into the ground which will push additional oil out, which will continue to perpetuate the idea of using oil. That's something we should be thinking about, not only in this province but across the globe: getting away from fossil fuels.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I wanted to ask the member opposite—he had a lot in his remarks. But when we talk about red tape, a lot of us have different definitions of red tape. I just want to ask the member opposite how he would define red tape.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Red tape, to me, would be something that is creating a barrier or causing delays or preventing certain projects from moving forward, and that comes in a variety of forms.

Now, one thing we have to remember is: Watch out what you ask for. Because removing too much of that red tape also removes the oversight that we have put in place to make sure—why certain projects take longer to go through, why certain ones are successful and why others aren't. The oversight is something that is very, very important, and sometimes removing some of the red tape

eliminates that and takes away security from the variety of options and projects that are looking to move forward in this province.

As legislative representatives, that's our role: to make sure that certain procedures, certain security measures are in place so that we keep the produce and the processes safe for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm very interested in the way this government interacts with our First Nations and First Nations leadership, as well as Métis. They obviously have something to say. They have governance and government in place. They have free and fair elections where they elect their leaders. They have elders who help to make sure that the right decisions are made, not just for today but for seven generations to come.

I'd like to ask the member from Manitoulin: What difference do you figure it would make if the government took the time to sit down with First Nations, listen to their ideas, listen to their way of life and listen to their knowledge to move bills like this bill forward?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her question. She's absolutely correct. When it comes to Métis, Inuit and First Nations communities, they really do look, in their decisions, at how it impacts them today, what they've learned from yesterday, but also how it's going to affect the seven generations to come. They think a lot further ahead than most of us do. It's something that is within their ways.

A responsibility that we have as the Ontario government is to recognize that we are all treaty members. We are all part of this globe, and we need to respect the nation-to-nation relationship that is there, that is enshrined, that is their right. We should be consulting with them prior to any piece of legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. The member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member for telling me about his definition of red tape. Now it's this holiday season, where we're tying those red bows on our gifts, but we certainly don't want to tie our small businesses in red tape. I just thought I would add a sense of levity to the Legislature, as we're all preparing—me with my Hanukkah candles, as well, as a side note.

I just wanted to ask the member—you know, we talk about small businesses and helping them with red tape, and you were saying, in your definition, that you don't want to overburden them and that you have to be cautious. I'm just wondering when was the last time you spoke to CFIB and what you heard from them and when your last meeting with CFIB was.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, off the top of my head, I don't remember the last discussion that I had with CFIB, but I do remember many discussions that I've had with the mom-and-pop shops in my riding, and the mining sector, and some of the natural resources and some of the for-

profit and not-for-profit organizations across Algoma–Manitoulin. It’s part of my role, and I know you do the same thing, listening to the pulse of those individuals in the areas that we represent.

I think my job here as the elected MPP for Algoma–Manitoulin is to bring the lenses of how people feel and what their perceived sights are on what red tape is and how they can move the stake forward and how they can prosper as businesses. A lot of what they’re bringing forward is just—they need the ability to move their projects forward. They need to do it in a timely fashion. They want to do it in a secure way, as well—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It’s a pleasure to join this discussion today on Bill 46, An Act to enact one Act and amend various other Acts. It’s the first red tape bill that our new Minister of Red Tape Reduction has brought forward, but I doubt very much that it will be the last, because it is something that we are absolutely seized on, on this side of the House.

And it didn’t start here. I’ve been around long enough to remember when former Premier Mike Harris was elected in 1995. He saw a province that had been governed by the party on the other side here for five years, and saw the absolute growth in red tape in the province of Ontario and what a constricting effect it was having on businesses and people in the province of Ontario.

I know they might get upset with me here, but socialists love red tape and bureaucracy. They absolutely love it. I’m not sure how they’re going to vote on this bill, but I’m sure they’re kind of conflicted because the people out there, they get it. Government is too big. It stands in the way of progress. Every time you talk to somebody on the street and you ask them, “How is this going?”—it could be their project to build a new home, it could be a project to build something in the community, it could be a public institution that’s going to be built in the community—the first thing they’ll say is, “I can’t believe the amount of regulations we’ve got to go through to get that done. It’s absolutely ridiculous.” You talk about other jurisdictions that get things done in a quarter of the time.

This bill is not going to fix all of it, but it does speak to the philosophy and the belief of this government and its members that we can do better. We can make Ontario much better by getting on with moving forward and not standing in the way.

I do want to appreciate the Oscar Wilde quote from the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler earlier today—I don’t have it in front of me—that the bureaucracy is expanding to serve the needs of the expanding bureaucracy. It may not be exactly the quote, but it certainly paraphrases it. That’s what happens as governments get bigger and bigger and bigger. The bureaucracy becomes more and more unwieldy, and the people aren’t even actually able to understand what a blockade it can be.

1630

So you have to have a government that actually takes the position that we are going to remove some of that

unnecessary regulation. I don’t know if there’s an actual definition out there, but to me, red tape should be defined as “unnecessary regulation that impedes the ability of society to move forward in a progressive and beneficial manner”—something to that effect; that’s my own definition.

But the members on the other side—while listening to this debate, I have to ask myself, do they really want to debate Bill 46, or do they want to regurgitate something else? Because I heard more about Bill 23 today than I heard about Bill 46. But there’s a news flash for you folks over there: We actually passed Bill 23. It’s now done. But I think you’re a bit conflicted on Bill 46. You actually barely want to speak to it.

With that in mind, Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mr. Yakabuski has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there have been 25 speakers and over nine hours of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion that the question be put, say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion that the question be put, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is required. It will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further business?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order, Madam Speaker: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for us to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Ms. Khanjin seeks unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Do we have it? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should consult with the public and its partners in the Family Court system to promote and ensure the availability of continuing education seminars for professionals in Ontario’s Family Court system, such as judges, justices of the peace, crown attorneys, custody assessors and social workers, on matters related to intimate partner violence and coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Madam Speaker, the motion that I’ve introduced into the Legislature today is

aimed at protecting children, supporting women who are fleeing abusive relationships and those who are victims of intimate partner violence and coercive control.

This motion comes with a heavy backstory, and it's an example of why it is so important we re-evaluate and apply new strategies to eliminate these horrific crimes. It's about a girl named Keira Kagan—she was four years old, almost five. Keira's mother, Dr. Jennifer Kagan-Viater, remembers her for her love of animals, sweet-natured soul and courageous smile. We say "remembers" because Keira died suddenly in an apparent murder-suicide at the hands of her father.

On February 9, 2020, Keira and her biological father were found dead at the base of a cliff at Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area in Milton. Jennifer Kagan-Viater and Keira had lived in Burlington, and were living in Thornhill at the time.

In the years leading up to Keira's death, Dr. Kagan-Viater remembered an escalation in abusive behaviour by her ex-husband. Though she'd left him years earlier, she worried about the safety of her daughter during his unsupervised visits.

She said, "The abuse did not stop with separation, and it only got worse. Keira was used as a tool to get claws into me."

She said she went to the courts seeking protection for Keira, and expressed concern about Brown's violent and coercive behaviour, but she said she was met with hurdles.

She went on to say, "When I brought forward the evidence about abuse of Mr. Brown, we had a judge, for example," say "that domestic violence is not relevant to parenting and, 'I'm going to ignore it.'"

This motion is aimed at addressing a glaring gap in our family law system to ensure that judges, crown attorneys, justices of the peace, court assessors, social workers and other professionals have the information they need to keep women and children safe.

Jennifer Kagan-Viater, her spouse, Philip Viater, friends and supporters worked hard to spread the message about the need to fill this gap. I am proud to have Jennifer's support for this motion and her commitment to see this become law in Ontario. This work is in honour of Keira and to ensure that no family has to mourn a lost loved one because of violence and abuse.

Violence against women and children is a blight on our society. All of us in this House know we need to fight it. It takes money for shelters and education. It takes teaching men and boys, women and girls that domestic violence of any kind is wrong. And it takes arming those who make decisions about custody access and child safety with the full information they need to keep everyone safe.

Last Friday was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, running until December 10, Human Rights Day. The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity joined me and MPP Pierre at Halton Women's Place in our community to see the vital work they do.

This is also Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Yesterday, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services marked the month, as we all did, by wearing a purple scarf, the symbol of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses's Wrapped in Courage campaign. And December 6 is the anniversary of the Montreal massacre. We mark all of these commemorations because we know we need to do so much more.

Forty-four per cent of women in Canada have experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Ending the relationship does not end a women's risk of death; 20% to 22% of intimate partner femicides were perpetrated by estranged spouses within the first 18 months of separation.

In Canada, a woman is murdered every 2.5 days, ranging from 144 to 178 murders each year between 2015 and 2019.

And in 2021, the rate of femicide was trending even higher. Of the women murdered, 50% were killed by intimate partners and 26% by family members.

Women account for 80% of reported incidents of intimate partner violence, which affects all ages, races, ethnicities and socio-economic strata. Women at highest risk are those who are young, immigrants, refugees, Indigenous or living with disabilities.

In my own community, Halton Women's Place took 2,200 crisis calls in 2021. Over the same year, Halton police responded to 3,500 intimate-partner-violence-related calls, made 890 arrests and laid 2,000 charges.

Data on femicide in Canada show alarming trends among non-urban and Indigenous women. One quarter of all murdered women in Canada are Indigenous.

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses published a monthly report on femicide. In September 2022, they reported 40 confirmed femicides in Ontario since November 26, 2021.

Furthermore, violent and aggressive behaviour towards female partners is not always weighted heavily enough to change outcomes during decision-making in Family Court, such as in child custody cases.

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A report from the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative included statistics on children killed in the context of domestic violence in Canada. There were 74 children killed, representing 9% of all domestic homicide victims identified in the period from 2010 to 2019. There were 54 accused identified in 52 cases of domestic homicide involving children; 82% were male. The majority of children killed were the biological children of the accused at 70%, followed by stepchildren at 24%.

Now, what these stats tell us is that the danger in cases of intimate partner violence does not end with separation or divorce. The most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is when she separates from her partner. According to research from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, when there is history of coercive control, violence and a recent separation, a woman's risk of domestic homicide goes up 900 times. A study from the US found that 11% of 231 women killed by their intimate partner had been issued a restraining order; about 20% of

those who had been issued a restraining order were killed within two days of the order being issued.

Jennifer drew my attention to the case of Jared Osidacz, an eight-year-old boy in Brantford, Ontario, who was killed by his father after a judge granted him unsupervised access.

In courts in Canada and other countries, one of the strategies used by abusers is victimizing themselves or alleging parental alienation. This is a tactic used by abusers whose interest is not in the best interest of the child or the ex-spouse but in controlling them.

We all know that abuse can be more than physical or sexual. Coercive control is part of the definition of family violence contained in both the federal Divorce Act and in the update our government made to the Children's Law Reform Act in 2020. Both define it in the same way: "Family violence' means any conduct by a family member towards another family member that is violent or threatening, that constitutes a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour or that causes the other family member to fear for their own safety or for that of another person, and, in the case of a child, includes direct or indirect exposure to such conduct."

We have the definition in our laws. We just need to ensure that training about domestic violence includes knowledge about coercive control and all aspects of intimate partner violence.

A federal bill, Bill C-223, introduced by Quebec MP Anju Dhillon, calling for training for federally appointed judges, passed the House of Commons with all-party support and is currently before the Senate. It follows on a law originally proposed by former MP Rona Ambrose for mandatory training in sexual assault law for judges. It was eventually passed as a government bill. The new law would add to this. This is what is needed in Ontario too, as Ontario regulates far more of the Family Court system.

The latest continuing education plan for Ontario judges notes that criminal law education conferences have recently covered a range of topics, including sex offences and sexual offenders and the meaning of consent in sexual assault cases. The plan does not appear to specifically reference intimate partner violence or coercive control in a family law context. The most recent Justice of the Peace Education Plan posted on the Ontario Court of Justice website includes two references to domestic violence issues.

We need to go further than this to ensure that decision-makers in the Family Court system learn about intimate partner violence, including emotional violence and coercive control. For too long, women have been silenced from speaking out about domestic violence and the trauma faced while navigating our legal system. That ends today as the Legislature passes Keira's Law motion.

I would like to thank the Attorney General of Ontario as we take the first step to ensuring we have training about intimate partner violence and coercive control for Ontario judges, justices of the peace, crown attorneys and other professionals in our family courts. We need more tools to ensure all decision-makers know the signs of abuse so we can keep women and children safe.

To all those women who have suffered or are suffering: We hear you and see you. We know this is only the first step, but I'm going to keep working until we've found solutions. The best way that we, in the House, can honour Keira's memory is to keep safe other women and children at risk from intimate partner violence.

I ask members in this House to support my motion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today to participate in this debate on private member's motion 19. Certainly this is a motion that the official opposition is pleased to support. It calls on the government to promote and ensure the availability of continuing education seminars for professionals in Ontario's Family Court system.

Now, in saying that this is a motion that we can support, I want to point out the contrast between the contents of this motion that was tabled since the election and the recommendations that were made by the coroner's jury to the province of Ontario following the murders of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam in Renfrew county several years ago. In particular, I want to highlight recommendation 8, recommendation 28, recommendation 29, recommendation 31, recommendation 42 and recommendation 57, that all dealt extensively with training in our justice system.

Recommendation 8 requires "that all justice system participants who work with" intimate partner violence "survivors and perpetrators are trained and engage in a trauma-informed approach to interacting and dealing with survivors and perpetrators."

Recommendation 28: "Review existing training for justice system personnel."

Recommendation 29: "Provide professional education and training for justice system personnel ... which should include"—and then there's a long list of content recommendations for what the training must include.

And then recommendation 31 is to "track whether mandated" intimate partner violence-related "professional education and training is completed by all justice system personnel."

It's one thing to promote and ensure the availability of training; it's quite another to mandate training for all those who are involved in the Family Court system.

I just want to remind members—I think it was about a year and a half ago or so—that we debated in this place Bill 207. That was amendments to the Children's Law Reform Act legislation that was brought forward by the Attorney General to recognize the fact that many of the cases that come before the family courts involve families where one partner, typically the woman, has been experiencing violence at the hands of the other partner, typically the man, and so the Family Court system is involved in making custody decisions.

At the time, Luke's Place from Durham region presented to the committee and they made some recommendations to this government that were endorsed by a

long list of women's shelters and sexual violence agencies and gender-based violence agencies. One of those recommendations that was endorsed by all of these agencies involved in the violence against women sector was that "family law services, courts, and legal advisers must complete family violence and family violence assessment training and practice requirements."

1650

Unfortunately, at the time that Bill 207 was debated the government chose to ignore the recommendation to make that training mandatory. It appears that in the motion that is before us today, the government still wants to leave it up to the professionals involved in the court system to decide whether they're going to participate in this training. We know from the inquest that was conducted in Renfrew that making the training mandatory is critical.

I also wanted to highlight a couple of other recommendations that were included in the coroner's report, and in particular, recommendation 18, that says, "Recognize that the implementation of the recommendations from this inquest, including the need for adequate and stable funding ... will require a significant financial investment," and they call on the government to commit to providing such funding.

Unfortunately, Speaker, we have not seen this government commit to coming to the table to provide the stable funding, the ongoing funding, that organizations that provide intimate partner violence support services need to help survivors navigate the justice system. In fact, we see an exemplary program, the Family Court Support Worker Program, which provides assistance to survivors as they navigate the Family Court system. We have seen that program—that funding is provided year after year. Agencies have to reapply. They never know whether the minimal dollars that are allocated are going to be there.

So providing the supports, making the training mandatory: That is what is going to have a meaningful difference for survivors of intimate partner violence in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I would like to start my remarks by thanking the member for Oakville North–Burlington for bringing this motion forward. It is a motion that deals with a very serious issue, the issue of domestic violence, and it deserves full support from all of us.

I understand that this motion is inspired by Keira's Law, a federal bill that passed in the House of Commons on June 1 of this year, with unanimous support of the whole House of Commons. The bill is currently at the second reading stage before the Senate.

The bill requires a justice to consider whether someone charged with intimate partner violence should be required to wear an electronic monitoring device, but more on point with the current motion, the bill also provides for continuing education seminars for judges on matters related to intimate partner violence and coercive control in intimate relationships.

The story behind this legislation is unfortunately one that is too common. Thanks to the determination of

Keira's mom, Jennifer, we now see Parliament taking action, and we need to do the same.

Keira was her four-year-old daughter, and she was found dead with her father on February 9, 2020, at the base of a cliff at Rattlesnake Point conservation area in Milton, Ontario. It is believed that this was a murder-suicide. The father, Robin Brown, had been abusive for years previously. The mother, Jennifer, sought protection for Keira through the courts. She expressed concern with her ex-husband's violent behaviour. Unfortunately, like it was mentioned before, she was not taken seriously, with the judge saying that the domestic violence and coercive control of Mr. Brown were actually not relevant to Keira's custody.

When I say this kind of story is too common, I mean that 30 to 40 kids are killed by their own parents every year in Canada. Some of the responsibilities fall with the courts, because they are failing the victims, because judges don't have the proper training. Without the science of domestic violence, judges are ignoring clues that could help avoid such tragedies. Science cannot be infused, even for judges; it needs to be learned by those who have the power to make a difference.

All judges understand that in any domestic dispute, the interest of the child needs to be the priority. However, the interpretation of what this interest is can be wrong if the judge is thinking that the child must be able to see both parents and that fact supersedes any consideration of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not necessarily visual physically, and that's why training is important. Training is not only important, it is critical.

I had the opportunity to speak to Jennifer just two days ago. She's a brave mother who has shown great determination in bringing forward a proposed solution, not for her, because for her it's too late, but to protect other children and parents from the infinitely tragic situation she has endured and the pain she continues to suffer. There is no more terrible loss than losing a child. We cannot let Jennifer down, no more than we can let down the children and parents who are at risk every day in this province.

The motion is a great first step. When I spoke with Jennifer, she said she's grateful and she's encouraged by this, so I'm totally supportive of this effort by the government. But we need to go further. We need to have conversations with the judiciary and the chief justices about the importance of making this a priority.

I spoke to the member for Oakville North–Burlington and to the Attorney General earlier this week, and I want to reiterate my offer to help and to collaborate with the government on moving this forward, to see concrete changes in our legislation.

Again, I want to thank the member for Oakville North–Burlington for bringing this motion before the assembly of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Janet Desormeaux, 43, of Sudbury, was killed on October 30. Janet will be remembered for her smile and her love for her family, a staple within her community and hockey arena.

Katherine Zollerano, 43, of Toronto, was killed on November 2. Katherine will be forever remembered and missed by many family members, friends and loved ones.

Danielle Strauss, 38, of Hamilton, was killed on November 10. Danielle enjoyed spending time with her neighbours on outings or playing bingo, and loved to laugh.

Jane Doe, eight years old, of Oshawa, was killed on November 12. The victim was like a daughter to many in her small community, and she had a bright future ahead of her.

Jane Doe, 41, of Kitchener, was killed on November 15. The victim will be deeply missed by her family, friends and community members. Two other victims, a 51-year-old woman and a seven-year-old girl, were also injured in this attack but are expected to survive.

Jane Doe of Milton was killed on November 22. The victim will be forever remembered and missed by her children, other family members, friends and community members.

Speaker, these are the victims of femicide in the last month alone. I rise today to honour and remember these women, as well as the many others who have been killed by those they knew well. Our thoughts, our prayers and our sorrow continue to be with their families and their friends.

Madam Speaker, every young woman, every girl, has the right to live in safety and with dignity, free from intimidation and violence. It is so important that the women in our communities who are affected by violence and exploitation receive the support they need, while offenders are held accountable through our justice system.

I am speaking today in support of this motion from the member from Oakville North–Burlington. Continuous education courses for our partners in the Ontario Family Court system will help to better inform those involved in the early warning signs of gender-based violence and will lead to preventive measures being put in place before it becomes too late.

This motion builds on our government's many actions to address gender-based violence. Last year alone, we invested \$11 million in violence prevention initiatives and nearly \$200 million in services and supports for survivors of violence. The 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; supports like safety planning, counselling, mental health services, supportive housing and culturally responsive healing programs.

1700

I'd 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 that plan. The plan is a historic milestone in fulfilling a lifelong plan and a lifelong standing commitment of all levels of government to work towards a Canada free of gender-based violence.

Ontario led the approach in forwarding the national action plan to the FPT forum of justice ministers with a written request that they commit to taking further action to improve justice system responses, including by holding perpetrators and offenders accountable.

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 help them redirect their lives. It is difficult and often unsung work, but it is life-saving and life-changing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

MPP Jill Andrew: I rise today to say thank you and to also add my support to the motion from the other member: intimate partner violence continuing education in Family Court. We absolutely need to continue education for everyone who is within an inch's length of being associated with intimate partner violence, gender-based violence etc.

What I want to start by saying is, violence against women and children is about a power imbalance. It's about someone wanting to use their power to diminish another. I think what we have to do is use legislation to build up women and children so they can feel safe, so they can feel empowered to get help, to be able to access help to get out of the situation. Now, it can't just be on the women's and children's shoulders. It has to be on the system's shoulders. We have to address this systemically.

I had a conversation with many members—a couple of dozen members, it felt like—from OAITH, staff members and board members, and it stuck out to me when one member of OAITH said that in their organization, there is one Family Court worker for 260 clients—one Family Court worker. Another person in this group of warriors who are doing Herculean work on a shoestring budget said they had lost funding for their child care respite worker, which creates a huge barrier for women, whether they're trying to get to a job interview or if they have to get to court. The bottom line is, we have to fund the selfless people, the organizations, the community-based resources that are literally helping women and children out of intimate partner violence, out of gender-based violence.

And I will say this to the government: I understand that there have been years where there has been a bit of latitude that's been given to shelters and organizations to use their budget as they see fit. I want to stand here and say that that worked and that allowed organizations to be able to use the money where it was necessary: an extra staff person, not having to pay for transportation if that's not what they need. What they need is important and they are the experts of what they need in their sector, and of course the lived experience of survivors—they are the ultimate experts, as well.

So we need to ensure that there's annualized funding to support organizations. We need to ensure that this government isn't cutting any more from legal aid, as they have in the last recent years. But most importantly, we need to listen to survivors.

I want to share with you some excerpts from N.M. She gave me permission to read it, but I'm just going to keep

her name confidential. N.M.'s story: "I have an 11-year-old boy now, and I spent about 10 years of his life in court. Just this week, I received yet another threat from his dad.

"I'm honestly not sure how many court orders I have at this point, but I can say for certain that none of them have been particularly useful, and all it does is cost me money. The courts only recognize overt physical abuse as abuse. Anything else is insignificant, which is hugely problematic.

"Time and time again I was told that my experience of abuse is 'irrelevant' and that I need to put that behind me and put my child's interest first.

"Continuing on the above point, as a woman who left an abusive relationship, having authorities ... push that message continuously is very demeaning/diminishing ... I have put my child first by leaving the relationship, and from my perspective, exercising caution with an abusive man is another way of putting my child first....

"I have several court orders demanding him to release his financial disclosure, and not once did he release his financial disclosure....

"There is no way for me to enforce him paying child support, without paying additional legal fees, and even if I do go that route, there's still no promise that he'll have to pay....

"If I get upset in court (and what kind of emotionless monster wouldn't feel emotion when talking about the fate of their child)"—when one is escaping violence—"I'm seen as irrational and weak, while the ... 'cool as a cucumber' dad can smirk at me from across the courtroom and win the judge's favour."

We need "gender sensitivity training for all Family Court staff, lawyers, and judges, domestic abuse training for all of the above, as well as children's aid workers and police.

"I have ideas on what can be done to address this massive systematic and invisible problem, and they include ... more awareness of narcissistic abuse" and emotional abuse as abuse.

The last thing I want to say: These organizations need more staff. They need more angels to do this work, because, as one member said, they don't want to have to call the police. That is a last resort. It's about having the counsellors. It's about having the mental health supports and the staff there who can take a trauma-informed approach. That is the way to go, but all of that requires funding. You all are in power. You all have the dollars. Spend them where it counts: on women and children's lives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to be able to support the motion from my colleague representing Oakville–North Burlington, in particular that the government should consult with the public and its partners in the Family Court system to promote, and ensure the availability of, continuing education seminars for professionals in the Family Court system.

One such partner who can assist the government with this critical consultative and continuing educational

process is Luke's Place, situated in Oshawa in the region of Durham, who I have worked with for a number of years at a number of levels, some personal. Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children is a non-profit centre of excellence devoted to improving the safety and experience of women and their children. They're the only stand-alone family law support centre in Canada for women who have been subjected to intimate partner violence. They provide direct services to hundreds of women and their children every year and share their expertise with other stakeholders, as cited in the motion, through training programs, resources, tools, research and mentoring.

What's clear, as statistics and reports have highlighted, as well as the member from Oakville North–Burlington, is violence against women increased and intensified under COVID-19. I saw evidence of that, unfortunately, in the region of Durham.

Speaker, I am pleased to say that Luke's Place stands ready and able to help effect the intent and purpose, the important purpose, of the motion before us this evening.

1710

I thank my colleague in Oakville North–Burlington for bringing this important motion before us this evening. I urge all members here tonight to support it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I am grateful for the opportunity to rise today to support this important motion put forward by my colleague.

Domestic abuse can take many forms and is almost always related to power and control in the relationship.

Knowledge is power, and by knowing more and educating ourselves on the signs of intimate partner violence and coercive control, we put ourselves and our judicial system in a better position to help protect women and children in abusive relationships.

Gaps in education can have devastating and painful repercussions, as was the case with Keira Kagan, who was killed by her father. Keira's mother, Jennifer, repeatedly warned judges of the danger Keira's father posed to them. Keira's Law, Bill C-233, is currently in the Senate. If there was sufficient training of court officials to identify violent tendencies and the dangers of coercive control, Keira's case may not have had such a tragic ending. It's imperative that lawmakers, enforcement officers and judicial powers recognize and know the signs. In order to do this, training is required.

To become an accredited mediator in Ontario, a person would have to do 21 hours of domestic violence training. This is mandatory training, which is required to be updated every year for five years. However, judges do not have to complete this training, and this is where the gap is.

Families put their trust in the court system, hoping that those making the decisions have the knowledge and the understanding it takes to identify violence and abuse in a family situation, because abuse is not always physical and violence doesn't always present physically. Coercive control can look different in each and every case and can

include things like isolating one from friends or family, monitoring communications or tools and depriving one of basic needs. For children, this can look like yelling, rejecting them, brainwashing, thought reform or turning one parent against another. These behaviours can also lead to challenges for children in their adult lives. Victims and survivors of coercive control often struggle with their own mental health, including PTSD, stress, anxiety, eating disorders, substance and alcohol abuse or even repeated cycles of violence and coercion.

The judicial system needs to start recognizing that abuse isn't just physical; it can be subtle, humiliating, through intimidation, threats, control over finances and liberties. It's power over the victim. We need to do more and do right by victims and children escaping these situations. Long after the abuse has ceased, the effects on families remain, and the trauma outlives the actual violence and the abuse. We need to make sure that judges, justices of the peace, social workers, mediators and decision-makers are helping to end the cycle of abuse with the appropriate training to handle difficult family cases.

Yesterday, Minister Fullerton spoke about November being Woman Abuse Prevention Month and how the purple scarf is a symbol of the courage it takes for women to leave their abuser.

To protect women and children, all levels of the system need to be trained on intimate partner violence and coercive control. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of victims and in the lives of survivors. Thank you to my colleague from Oakville North–Burlington for bringing intimate partner violence and coercive control to light.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Oakville North–Burlington has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to thank all of my colleagues in the House who have spoken on this important motion: the members for Brampton Centre, Burlington and Whitby; the members for London West, Ottawa–Vanier and Toronto–St. Paul's. Thank you for your commitment to opposing gender-based violence.

Thank you also to all the organizations in my own community who support the victims of violence and who

work selflessly to make sure women and children are safe: Halton Women's Place, Zonta Club of Oakville, SAVIS of Halton and the Women's Centre of Halton.

I'd like to recognize the many people who have worked to promote Keira's Law provincially and federally, including the municipal councils in Oakville and Burlington, who passed resolutions in support. Thank you to federal member of Parliament Anju Dhillon and my federal counterpart in Oakville North–Burlington, Pam Damoff, for their leadership.

In the gallery today, we have some great supporters of this initiative: Marlene Ham from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Silvia Samsa from SAVIS of Halton, my friend Sonia Robinson from Oakville North–Burlington and my friend Kristin Demyen. For their insights and advocacy, I thank you.

Most importantly, my gratitude to Jennifer Kagan-Viater and her husband Philip Viater for their courage and leadership. Because of the work they've done, I believe that lives will be saved.

On a personal note, I would like to offer my profound gratitude to the women who courageously came forward and shared their personal stories of trauma and abuse with me. In my research, I came across a quote from Grant Wyeth in a recent article saying, "How societies treat women and children is the true reflection of their social health—and the behaviour of justice systems provides the legal framework to these values." As members of this House, we can lead how our society treats women and children—and I welcome your involvement in the consultation with justice partners as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Triantafilopoulos has moved private member's notice of motion number 19. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It's carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1718.

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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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