

Legislative  
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of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 March 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1<sup>er</sup> mars 2023

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

WEARING OF PIN

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On a point of order: the member for Carleton.

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** I'm seeking unanimous consent from the House for permission to wear a pin of the pre-revolutionary Iranian flag for the duration of Persian Heritage Month.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Carleton is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear a pin for the duration of the month. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAPORE DI CALABRIA INC. ACT, 2023

Mr. West moved second reading of the following bill: Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Sapore Di Calabria Inc.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

SAPORE DI CALABRIA INC. ACT, 2023

Mr. West moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Sapore Di Calabria Inc.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

1748317 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Khanjin moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act to revive 1748317 Ontario Inc.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

1748317 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Khanjin moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act to revive 1748317 Ontario Inc.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

933834 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2023

Ms. Khanjin moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 933834 Ontario Limited.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

933834 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2023

Ms. Khanjin moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 933834 Ontario Limited.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

MAIZAL TORTILLERIA INC.  
ACT, 2023

Mr. Glover moved second reading of the following bill: Bill Pr10, An Act to revive Maizal Tortilleria Inc.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

0910

MAIZAL TORTILLERIA INC.  
ACT, 2023

Mr. Glover moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr10, An Act to revive Maizal Tortilleria Inc.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

2103890 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2023

Ms. Bell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 2103890 Ontario Limited.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

#### 2103890 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2023

Ms. Bell moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 2103890 Ontario Limited.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

#### WOODSTOCK MOOSE LODGE NO. 1141 (HOLDINGS) LIMITED ACT, 2023

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive Woodstock Moose Lodge No. 1141 (Holdings) Limited.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

#### WOODSTOCK MOOSE LODGE NO. 1141 (HOLDINGS) LIMITED ACT, 2023

Mr. Hardeman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive Woodstock Moose Lodge No. 1141 (Holdings) Limited.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

#### REDUCING INEFFICIENCIES ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENTS), 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES INEFFICACITÉS (MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR LES INFRASTRUCTURES)

Miss Surma moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur les infrastructures.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the minister to lead off debate.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I'm happy to rise for second reading of Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023. I would like to let the

House know that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant Mr. Yakabuski the MPP from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you for his help.

First, I would like to acknowledge how far our province has come. The global pandemic tested each of us, but in the face of adversity, we persevered and continued building critical infrastructure to improve people's quality of life. Madam Speaker, the progress we have made is remarkable. We have unlocked thousands of cost savings for taxpayers and businesses through actions such as:

—supporting a reduction in WSIB premiums and the WSIB rebate without reducing benefits;

—increasing the employer health tax exemption from \$490,000 to \$1 million;

—cutting the gas tax by 5.7 cents per litre and the fuel tax by 5.3 cents per litre beginning July 1, 2022; and

—introducing and temporarily enhancing the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit to encourage investments in regions of Ontario that have lagged in employment growth.

We are also delivering one of the most ambitious infrastructure plans with a historic investment of more than \$159 billion over 10 years. Through investing in the construction of new hospitals, schools and long-term-care homes, our government is ensuring people and their families are being cared for and that our communities are supported for decades to come.

We have created thousands of new jobs by investing millions of dollars in skilled trades to ensure that the current labour gap is filled with high-paying jobs for Ontarians and to create meaningful pathways for more secondary school students into rewarding careers. That's thousands of new carpenters, electricians, ironworkers and mould makers across the province to help us build the critical infrastructure projects that the people in Ontario need most. My colleague Minister McNaughton at the Ministry of Labour is leading that charge with the creation of Skilled Trades Ontario.

We have also delivered more public transit across the province, from the return of the passenger rail service to northeastern Ontario to breaking ground on the historic Ontario Line. Our transit investments are getting people to and from work faster or to their families faster and more conveniently, with more commuting options, stations and seamless connections.

Our government was re-elected with an even stronger mandate to build Ontario for today and for generations to come—and we are delivering. We know that these are tough and challenging times worldwide. Our government is successfully working with our industry and construction sector partners to better understand the challenges they are facing—whether it be inflation or supply chain disruptions—to identify ways that our government can help. We are tackling the current economic environment head-on so that we can continue to build Ontario and deliver on our promise to the people.

That is why today I am putting forward the next step in Ontario's plan by introducing Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments),



2023, that, if passed, would cut red tape, save taxpayers' money, enhance fiscal management and boost our economy. The bill contains two initiatives that are part of this plan. The first proposed initiative, if passed, would help our government better maintain and manage real estate, and the second initiative, if passed, would help bring much-needed efficiency to the Environmental Assessment Act, all while ensuring continued environmental oversight.

Today I want to highlight our government's plan to better maintain and manage real estate. In order to understand the impact of this bill, I will first explain what these suggested amendments entail. Ontario's real estate portfolio is one of the largest in Canada. Currently, there is not a streamlined process for this portfolio. And while real estate is one of our government's greatest resources, a holistic approach to decision-making and real estate management is very much needed.

#### 0920

The Ministry of Infrastructure, through its realty agent Infrastructure Ontario, oversees the province's general real estate portfolio of owned and leased properties. However, provincial oversight for Ontario's portfolio is distributed through legislation among five ministries and 54 entities that operate under individual processes and protocols relating to real estate decision-making of this expansive portfolio. This is why a more holistic approach for real estate decision-making is needed.

Our government has a unique opportunity to improve governance and operate our real estate portfolio more efficiently by creating a framework for centralizing decision-making and management. Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, if passed, would establish that initial framework to modify the real estate authority of 14 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with control of real estate property previously under the control of the prescribed entities. This would be the first step in allowing our government to increase operating and fiscal efficiency. It would also support our objective of saving taxpayers money through a holistic approach when it comes to overseeing and managing Ontario's real estate portfolio.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the entities that are included in our proposed bill and acknowledge the important work they continue to do for our great province. If the bill is passed, our plan proposes that the entities to be prescribed are:

(1) Education Quality and Accountability Office: an arm's-length government agency that is dedicated to enhancing the quality and accountability of Ontario's publicly funded education system from kindergarten to grade 12. EQAO gives students the opportunity to reach their highest potential and uses credible evidence to empower students, teachers, parents, guardians, stakeholders and the public with the information needed to support and improve student learning and outcomes.

(2) Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario: an independent regulatory agency created to improve consumer and pension plan beneficiary protections in

Ontario. This organization plays a critical role in protecting Ontarians by regulating sectors like life and health insurance, credit unions, loan and trust companies, mortgage brokers, health service providers and financial planners and advisers to increase transparency, accountability and contribute to public confidence.

(3) Ontario Financing Authority: a crown agency that aims to meet the province's financial requirements in a sound and cost-effective manner. The OFA manages the province's debt and contributes to the government's debt reduction efforts through prioritizing sound decision-making, efficiency, and safeguarding Ontario's credit rating. The OFA also advises on financial policies and projects, executes all borrowing, investment and financial risk management activities, and much, much more.

(4) Ontario Securities Commission: an independent crown agency that provides protection to investors from unfair, improper or fraudulent practices to foster fair, efficient and competitive capital markets, and confidence in the capital markets. The OSC contributes to the health and performance of Ontario's economy by regulating market participants like firms and individuals, and marketplaces like the Toronto Stock Exchange.

(5) Human Rights Legal Support Centre: which gives legal help to people who have experienced discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code, with services available in 140 languages. Ontario is a diverse province with residents from all walks of life, and our government understands how important it is to ensure everyone is treated equitably. The Human Rights Legal Support Centre helps people claim and protect their rights while preventing discrimination and harassment due to race, religion, gender, age, disability or marital status.

(6) Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario: which helps to ensure that Ontario's colleges and universities are accessible, offer high-quality programs and are accountable to the people across Ontario. Through evidence-based research, this organization is committed to the continued improvement of Ontario's post-secondary education system.

(7) Intellectual Property Ontario: an agency that will help the post-secondary education and research and innovation sectors generate, protect, manage and commercialize intellectual property. This is crucial in today's digital society. Intellectual property and data have a direct impact on our province's success, wealth and well-being. IPON was created to drive economic growth for businesses in Ontario, resulting in better, more secure jobs and a prosperous future for Ontario.

(8) Skilled Trades Ontario: an agency responsible for apprenticeship and skilled trades certification, dedicated to simplifying access to services for skilled trades professionals, promoting the skilled trades as a career and addressing the labour shortage in the industry. This government is committed to building our province, and we thank Skilled Trades Ontario for their partnership.

(9) Province of Ontario Council for the Arts, also known as the Ontario Arts Council: an agency that plays a pivotal role in promoting and assisting the development of the arts for the enjoyment and benefit of people in Ontario

through grants, scholarships, loans and services, while also awarding Ontario residents for their outstanding accomplishments in the arts.

(10) Ontario Media Development Corp., also known as Ontario Creates: an agency whose mandate is to be a catalyst for our province's economic development, investment and collaboration in Ontario's creative industries, like music, book, magazine, film, TV and digital media. Through targeted programs and services, support for innovation and by leveraging public and private partnerships, Ontario Creates builds the capacity and competitiveness of the province's creative industries to deliver award-winning content that is enjoyed by audiences across Ontario and around the world.

(11) Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp., also known as Destination Ontario: Ontario's lead tourism marketing organization that helps inspire travellers to make Ontario a must-see destination and to return to the beauty of Ontario again and again and again. Destination Ontario plays an important role in contributing to Ontario's provincial economic prosperity through impactful, inspiring marketing and investment partnerships.

(12) Ontario Trillium Foundation: an agency that builds healthy and vibrant communities throughout Ontario by investing in community-based initiatives, while strengthening the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector. Support is provided to projects that drive positive change and work towards the well-being of people across Ontario.

(13) Agricorp: a provincial agency that provides financial and risk management programs and services to the agricultural industry while maintaining the highest standards of customer service, fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability. Agricorp works closely with the farmers of Ontario to understand and respond to their needs and to provide excellence in delivery to help grow Ontario's agriculture.

(14) The Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council: an agency that was established to promote fire prevention and public education through sponsorships and partnerships with various groups with an interest in public safety. The citizens of Ontario have a right to live in an environment safe from fire, and the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council does important work to ensure people in Ontario have awareness of fire safety and access to high-quality programs.

Madam Speaker, each of these entities has a critical role in the health, well-being and economic prosperity of Ontario. The work they do matters—it matters to the people in our province who rely on them to provide programs, regulatory services, advice, funding and much more. Most importantly, they help us fulfill our promise to build Ontario, and as we've heard, their efforts impact many different sectors that we depend on daily, from schools, businesses, health care, the digital sector, human rights and equity, the skilled trades, arts, media, tourism, agriculture and fire safety.

**0930**

So, Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank each of these entities for their hard

work. Some of these organizations have been established for decades, and some are new, but each of these entities contribute significantly to Ontario's growth through their partnership, innovative ideas and dedicated, skilled workforce. They have helped our province build during one of the most uncertain times in history. I know we can count on all of them, moving forward, to help build Ontario now and for generations to come. To them, I offer my gratitude.

By creating a framework to centralize the real estate authority of these 14 entities as a first step, our government would be in a better position to reduce red tape, create more efficient processes and ensure that these entities can focus and invest more on their individual mandates, while continuing to provide the services that people across Ontario need and deserve.

The bill, if passed, would amend the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011, and would include complementary amendments to the following nine other acts:

- AgriCorp Act, 1996;
- Arts Council Act;
- Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021;
- Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993;
- Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996;
- Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario Act, 2016;
- Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997;
- Human Rights Code; and
- the Securities Commission Act, 2021.

The legislative amendments that are being proposed today, if passed, would support the centralization of real estate, subject to any exceptions that would be determined by regulation. This is about good governance, which Ontarians expect from their government. It's about strong leadership by constantly looking at ways we can take the burden off the taxpayers while we fulfill our mandate to build up this province.

Since 2020, the Ministry of Infrastructure has consulted with key stakeholders, including the 14 entities that I have already mentioned and their eight oversight ministries. Our government heard that the proposed amendments are aligned with ongoing initiatives to optimize office space and increase efficiencies. The oversight ministries for the 14 prescribed entities support centralization. Madam Speaker, that's because the people of Ontario deserve a responsible, more efficient government.

The benefits of a more centralized real estate model have also been echoed in numerous third-party reviews. For example, in 2017, the Auditor General's annual report outlined a series of recommendations to help ensure properties in Ontario are well managed and maintained in an efficient and economical manner. The Auditor General identified that the Ministry of Infrastructure's general real estate portfolio could be operated more efficiently through centralized authority and decision-making.

We are a government of action. Through the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, I can assure you that we are constantly reviewing policies to see where they can be

updated and where things can be done more efficiently. With these proposed changes, we continue to take action. We took those recommendations back and through these proposed legislative changes, we are responding.

The feedback we have received doesn't end there. The 2018 Ernst and Young line-by-line review of government spending, titled *Managing Transformation: A Modernization Action Plan for Ontario*, found that the government could operate its real estate portfolio more efficiently, resulting in enhanced fiscal management. This report was conducted to ensure that the Ontario government was making good on its promise to restore trust and accountability, while improving value for the tax dollar. It's a promise we take very seriously.

Key findings from that report found that a centralized approach to the management of real estate property and a more effective asset management process had numerous benefits, including:

- a significantly reduced overall spend across government;
- a more structured and effective asset management life cycle process; and
- improved alignment of policies, allowing for a more efficient enterprise-wide decision-making capability.

In addition, PricewaterhouseCoopers identified in 2018 that the operating model for government real estate is a barrier to transformation, particularly for office space, and could create confusion, duplication and overlap. This study found that a strategic and holistic approach to the government's real estate portfolio could foster greater levels of transparency while improving decision-making capabilities and reporting. It would also create a more integrated planning process with ministry programs. Madam Speaker, I agree.

In 2019, a Deloitte report also found that by centralizing real estate decision-making, it would likely improve strategic alignment for the management of provincial infrastructure and assets.

Madam Speaker, as you can see from the feedback I have just presented, the benefits of a streamlined real estate model make sense.

A review recently conducted by the Samuel Zell and Robert Lurie Real Estate Center in 2017 is interesting to share. This is a centre established by the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, designed to promote excellence in real estate education and research. The review found that a decentralized framework often had high vacancy rates and that a siloed approach to assessing a real estate portfolio reduces efficiency, office optimization and fiscal management. So the evidence is right in front of us.

The report found that many organizations have adopted a centralized model to better measure and manage infrastructure, and these organizations are showing great success after implementing a central model to identify property types, geographical locations, standard policies and guidelines. For example, the ministry conducted an initial jurisdictional scan that identified best practices across governments, including the city of Toronto, Shared

Services BC and Public Works and Government Services Canada. In all cases, we found that these jurisdictions moved to a centralized model—efficiency, transparency and accountability.

The research is clear: Our changes will help to increase efficiency, cut red tape, enhance fiscal management, save taxpayers' dollars—and it's just good governance.

The bill, if passed, would bring our government one step closer to reducing costs by eliminating duplication of responsibilities. By providing clear guidelines, it would improve the quality of services to the taxpayer. This bill is the first step towards reducing the number of people involved in making simple decisions on real estate. This bill, if passed, could also unlock future cost savings for the taxpayer and enhance fiscal management.

Our government's proposed measures would move towards ensuring that real estate is utilized effectively. When realty authority is centralized, it means that all real estate matters would be overseen by a single authority, which would reduce the need for multiple ministries and entities handling similar tasks and processes. This would also lead to several other benefits such as reducing redundancies, eliminating duplication of efforts and reducing the need for multiple levels of review and approvals. This, in turn, would streamline processes and cut red tape, ultimately leading to cost savings.

Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, if passed, has the potential to provide more efficiency and transparency. Our government is confident that this bill, if passed, would boost economic development opportunities across the province. This is all part of our government's promise to make life better and more affordable for the people of Ontario by working harder, smarter and more efficiently.

#### 0940

As I mentioned earlier, our proposed real estate initiative would be the first step in optimizing Ontario's real estate portfolio. Part of that long-term growth includes today's measures that, if passed, would help address issues of regulatory burdens and red tape, while also helping to save time and money. That's why we are proposing these important measures today.

Madam Speaker, this bill, with the changes that we are proposing, is important to the future of our province. The people are depending on innovative ideas and new approaches to reduce inefficiencies. They expect us to be fiscally prudent, respect taxpayer dollars, cut red tape and practise good governance. And this legislation, if passed, will deliver on those expectations.

I want to thank the Speaker for my time in the House today.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for her leadership on this issue and for recognizing how important it is that everything that we do in this government dovetails with our plan to build Ontario and make life better for the people who call Ontario home. There are so many entities that she has touched on in this

bill, and it actually speaks to the importance of recognizing that government is not one little thing here and another little thing there; it's a group, a conglomeration, of many ministries and entities, and sometimes it would appear that they're working at cross-purposes. So by bringing these all together, it makes it much more efficient and keeps us focused on our promise which we made in 2018 to build Ontario and make it open for business.

I'm going to get back to some of that a little later, but first I want to deliver remarks on behalf of the ministry that I am the parliamentary assistant for, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, which kind of has a half of this bill, but a very important one, and I'll tell you why.

I'm here almost 20 years—I know, I know; the best-before date has long expired, some might say. But for every one of those 20 years, what I have heard from people in my riding is, “Yak, why does it have to be so” blank “complicated? Why is government always making it more difficult, not less difficult, to get it done?” Isn't that a phrase that we used in our campaigns—get it done? That's what this bill is all about.

I am going to read the remarks that I have here and then I'll get back to some things.

Again, I want to thank Minister Surma.

It is my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' proposal for Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023. With this bill, our government is proposing to continue our efforts to modernize Ontario's almost 50-year-old environmental assessment process.

Like a house that is 50 years old, while the foundation is still strong, it requires updates to reflect the changes that have occurred over the past five decades, because today our environmental assessment process is too slow and too unnecessarily burdensome and costly. We believe that Ontarians deserve better. We believe that our environmental assessment program should be effective and efficient. It should deliver strong environmental oversight and consultation opportunities, while supporting and building our strong economy. We can accomplish both. We can no longer afford to do things in the older, slower, less efficient way.

Today's global economy moves at too quickly a rate, and Ontario cannot afford to be left behind. That's why our government is looking at smarter, more modern ways of doing business. We want to make sure that important public services and infrastructure, including roads and bridges, can get shovels into the ground faster without unnecessary costs and delays.

For the long-term, we are committed to building a strong environmental assessment program that considers the input of local communities and ensures that we focus on projects that have the highest impact on the environment—things that Ontarians expect of us, things that Ontarians deserve from us.

With the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, we are proposing to

build Ontario and provide appropriate environmental oversight by continuing to modernize Ontario's environmental assessment program to better serve Ontario now and into the future. We are proposing a sensible, practical change—a change that would provide environmental oversight while reducing delays to get shovels in the ground on projects that matter most to Ontario communities.

But let me be crystal clear: Environmental standards and protections will remain in place and continue to be a top priority for our government as we work to ensure Ontario has good-paying jobs, affordable housing and a strong economy.

I'm pleased to report that our government has already taken steps to modernize the environmental assessment process. We have been taking a phased approach to advance various components. In April 2019, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks released a discussion paper with broad themes for modernization. Subsequently, the Environmental Assessment Act was amended.

In June 2019, through the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019, the Environmental Assessment Act was amended to exempt over 350 low-impact projects. In July 2020, the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020, further amended the act, allowing for the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to begin to transform the environmental assessment program by working on implementing regulations and carrying out consultation. And in December 2021, a minor amendment was made to the act to make it clear that a class environmental assessment can be amended to change the projects that can follow that process.

Today's proposed change to the Environmental Assessment Act marks a small but important step in our journey to modernize Ontario's environmental assessment program.

So what are we proposing? Today, our government is proposing a change to the Environmental Assessment Act to provide the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks the ability to waive or alter the 30-day review period, allowing projects to begin sooner. The current environmental assessment program requires a 30-day review period between when a class environmental assessment is completed and when the proponent may begin project activities.

To help the members of the Legislature here today, I will give you a brief overview of a class environmental assessment. Class environmental assessments can be developed for classes of undertakings that are similar, routine in nature, they have known potential environmental effects that are predictable and well understood and they can be managed through established impact management methods. The class environmental assessment establishes a planning process for projects that fall within the class of undertakings, such as a municipal class environmental assessment for municipal infrastructure projects or a class environmental assessment for minor electricity transmission facilities. The majority of all class environmental

assessments are undertaken by municipalities. A class environmental assessment is a proponent-led self-assessment process.

This means that a project that falls within the class of undertakings in a class environmental assessment is approved as long as the proponent successfully completes the approved planning process in the class environmental assessment. There is no formal Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks approval required for the class environmental assessment project. Let me assure you that any class environmental assessment requires public consultation and a comment period.

**0950**

The current environmental assessment process requires a 30-day review period between when a class environmental assessment is completed and when the proponent may begin project activities. This 30-day period provides the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks with the opportunity to require the proponent to undertake a higher level of environmental assessment. For those 30 days, once a project has completed class EA requirements and there are no outstanding issues, the project cannot proceed. For 30 days, permits cannot be issued. The project cannot proceed, and everyone involved just waits until this 30-day period expires. In many cases, this is an unnecessary delay. In many cases, this is an unacceptable delay.

Just imagine a municipality waiting to begin a much-needed infrastructure project, like the building of a bridge or widening of a road critical to the lifeblood of their town. Imagine that municipality being ready and able to start a project at the beginning of August, wanting to get it under way and make progress while the weather is still warm. Then imagine that you are that municipality, and you are being told that, no, you're going to have to wait 30 days, even though you've done an excellent job on your class environmental assessment and the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has absolutely no reason or plans to require you to undertake a higher level of environmental assessment. You have to wait for no good reason but that you have to wait.

I cannot think of a better example—sorry, let's say a worse example—of unnecessary red tape. This government, our government, is committed to cutting unnecessary and burdensome red tape which is preventing Ontario's people and businesses from reaching their full potential. Over the last four years, this government, our government, has reduced the estimated net annual cost of complying with regulations for businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, colleges and universities, school boards and hospitals by—listen closely now—\$576 million. This achievement actually far exceeds the target we set in March 31, 2022, of \$400 million. We're ahead of schedule, and we're going to stay that way.

But we're not done. As part of our plan for building Ontario, we are continuing our efforts to reduce red tape, to help create jobs and make it easier to invest and build here in Ontario while ensuring appropriate regulatory oversights remain in place to protect the public, workers and the environment.

Currently, there is no ability for the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to unilaterally waive the 30-day period, even if there is no intention or plan to intervene. It should be noted that the waiving of the 30-day period has previously occurred to move a road construction project forward more quickly, but to do so required a time-consuming Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation. In August of last year, a Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation exempted Bombardier Inc., in partnership with the city of Mississauga and the region of Peel, from the prohibition on proceeding with the Derry Road East and Alstep Drive road improvements during the 30-day period. This decision allowed Bombardier Inc. to proceed with road construction faster and not miss the construction season timing. How important was that? Construction was to begin in the fall of 2022, with the target completion date of spring of 2023.

If the amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act are made, in the future such an exemption could be provided through a minister's order, avoiding the need for an LGIC regulation, avoiding the need for unnecessary delays in critical infrastructure projects with no outstanding issues—projects that are needed to keep Ontarians moving.

That is why today, our government is proposing a change to the Environmental Assessment Act to provide the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks with the ability to waive or alter the 30-day review period, allowing those important projects to begin sooner. Class environmental assessment proponents, including municipalities, that have completed the relevant process would directly benefit if their projects are able to get shovels in the ground sooner.

Let me assure you, Speaker, that the changes we are proposing today would not reduce environmental oversight. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks remains committed to maintaining oversight for projects that may significantly impact our communities and ecosystems.

I hope I've fully explained the amendments this government is proposing here today to the Environmental Assessment Act as part of the proposal for Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023. I'm asking for the support of all members of the Legislature in helping to pass this bill, a bill that would eliminate unnecessary red tape, a bill that would be welcomed by municipalities and other proponents looking to provide much-needed infrastructure in our province, a bill that will help build Ontario.

That is the information I'm providing today from my ministry, the ministry that I'm the PA to. I'm proud to be here this morning to bring that clarification and that message from my minister, the Honourable David Piccini.

Now, I do have some time left—a fair bit of time, actually—and I do want to comment somewhat on the address of the Minister of Infrastructure this morning, too. I'm going to tidy up these papers a little bit. It's the first time I've ever had papers given to me that are written on both sides and I actually find that a little cumbersome, to

be honest with you. My eyes aren't that good that I can read the page numbers that are really, really small at the bottom. But somehow we got through it, and I hope the message was understood and clear.

Speaking of a clear message—I want to thank the minister this morning for her message explaining why we are bringing forth this legislation. It is so much completely tied in and dovetails with our plan for Ontario. But we can't make that kind of progress if we aren't bringing forth the kind of legislation that provides for the vehicle to get it done. She has touched on so many entities that will be impacted and affected, even the changes with real estate and the inefficiencies that exist because government is complicated.

I get back to my riding, where people say, "Why do things have to be so complicated?" And that's exactly what they are. But from the time that Premier Ford was running in the 2018 provincial election—he was not the Premier yet, of course—he made it clear that we're going to make life in Ontario less complicated. Because we are in a worldwide battle, a worldwide battle to bring jobs and businesses and manufacturing back to Ontario.

#### 1000

You have to remember—and for those of us who were here, like myself, years ago, we saw the devastation that was brought to Ontario by the previous Liberal government in our manufacturing sector. I know my friend from Essex understands it as well as anybody because that's one of the areas in the province where manufacturing is such a key component of their Ontario. We saw literally the hollowing out of our sector because the Liberals had no interest in getting a board in the game of real life in the world we live in today. So while other jurisdictions were taking our jobs away, they sat there kind of dumbfounded and thought that somehow the tooth fairy would come along, they would have a tooth and a wish under the pillow and everything would be fine in Ontario. But it didn't happen. It just didn't happen.

We saw 300,000 jobs—remember: These are the well-paying jobs in Ontario. The manufacturing jobs are the ones where people say, "Boy, I hope I can get a job at factory XYZ or whatever, because that's a job that is going to provide me with a good living to raise my family and have a good retirement when I'm done, and be a good part of the middle class." But those jobs were disappearing, and do you know what happens when those jobs disappear? So do the people. The people who wanted those jobs and could be benefited by those jobs start to find other places to live and work and raise a family, because you've got to go where the jobs are. So we're sending a message out to the world today: Come on home. Come on home to Ontario, where you belong and where you always did belong, because we are now building the Ontario that works for you. That is what were doing here in Ontario, and I'm so proud to part of this team that is laser-focused.

There are many, many things that you have to do in government. Some of them are the mundane things of just operating the business as usual, making sure that people have the necessary supports that are important in a society

such as ours. They're kind of the day-to-day things. We've got to make sure that the Treasury Board can cut the cheques and pay the bills and all of those kinds of things. But if you're really, truly going to face the future, you better be looking into that looking glass and getting an idea of what the future is going to look like so you're actually in the game when the future arrives, because tomorrow is just a day away. Tomorrow is just a day away, and if you want to live in yesterday, then tomorrow is going to pass you by. That's not going to happen in Ontario under our leadership.

The minister talked about the things that we're doing to support families, and I just wrote a few of them down here. The gas tax cut: You know, the folks on the other side didn't like that. They didn't think we should be doing that, but on June 2, Ontario thought we should be doing that. Because we took our budget—Minister Bethlenfalvy brought forth the budget last year, and we took it to the people, and the people gave it a resounding—not just a pass; it was an honours pass. They didn't just re-elect us; they re-elected us with a higher number of seats than before, one of the biggest Conservative seat totals in history. And the opposition, on the other hand, lost seats. They lost seats because they wanted to campaign on yesterday. Premier Ford campaigned on tomorrow.

We saw what was happening across the country with the federal government and their punitive carbon tax. It is hurting every single family across the province. And we said, "We've got to do something that will help them." So we're cutting the gas tax, but at the same time we are making historic investments in infrastructure, hospitals, schools. What did I hear the Premier say yesterday? There's \$50 billion in hospital projects on schedule in this province, approved and ready to go—\$50 billion in hospital projects in this province. And do you know what you need to build hospitals?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** People.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** You need people with skilled trades, I say to the PA for health. She's on top of this one. You can't build the hospitals or anything else if you don't have the skilled tradespeople. And what are we doing? Well, Minister McNaughton is changing the game completely in how we develop and produce skilled workers in this province.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** John's going to build them all by hand.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Well, if it was me, that probably wouldn't happen because I don't have the skills. But my son does. My son is a Red Seal carpenter, and he's going to have work—well, I'll tell you, his beard will be grey and trailing on the ground before he's out of work because he's going to have a job for as long as he wants in this province because we're building it. So if people like my son Lucas—our son. I'd better make sure I say "our son Lucas." I don't want to get a text from my wife. Well, I do want to get a text from her, but not on that subject.

So where are we going in this province? We're shooting for the moon, folks. In the 1960s, when the race was on to the moon in the United States, and President Kennedy

said, “We’re going to have a man on the moon”—he did say a man. Today, we would be putting someone of any gender on the moon—“We are going to put a man on the moon and we’re going to get there before the Russians,” and they did because they were committed to doing just that. Well, we’re committed to reaching for the moon, reaching for the stars here in Ontario, because we are sending a message to the world that there is no better place—no better place—to establish than right here in Ontario.

Now, I’ve got to tell you a little—so some of the things—I’m going to run out of time, believe it or not. Public transit: I have been listening to the Minister of Infrastructure talk about public transit like it’s—my wife would say, “Veik ir pika.” She never stops. “Veik ir pika,” she’d say—German words; I don’t know exactly what they mean—but when I’m talking too much, my wife will say, “Veik ir pika.”

But the minister never stops talking about public transit and how we’re building that here. When we came into government in 2018, people were wondering how we’re actually going to move people here in the city of Toronto. This is a world-class city, Toronto, and it’s got a world-class, soon-to-be Stanley Cup champion hockey team, and I’m looking forward to that parade. I’m looking forward to that parade. It’s a world-class city, but you can’t be a world-class city without a world-class transit system.

So when Premier Ford was elected, he came out, and the minister, with an ambitious plan to make our transit system part of that world-class city, and that’s what we’re doing. So people can say, “Not only do I have a city that I can be proud of, a city that, down the road, years from now, decades from now is still going to be on the cutting edge”—because they saw the future.

Cellphone gap and high-speed Internet: What a change that is making to people’s lives here in Ontario—what a change. Every home connected by 2025—that’s ambitious, but we’re on schedule. In fact, I think we may be ahead of schedule.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Don’t jinx it.

**Mr. John Yakubski:** Don’t jinx—the minister just told me, “Veik ir pika.”

I want to tell you a story about the Internet. So I called a little lady yesterday for her birthday. We were talking about a number of different things, and she was articulating to me a number of stories. One of them was a little private joke between her and her daughter about five dollars. I’d have to tell you the whole story and I won’t have enough time for that, but it was just an interesting story about the dynamic between a mother and daughter and the five dollars.

And then she was telling me a story about when she had leaking pipes in the basement and the two fellows that came to repair them. Somehow, she got to saying that, “It doesn’t matter what you call me. You can call me ‘Hey, you,’ if you want.” And the guy thought her name was “Hey, you”—just an interesting story.

But this is what I was talking about to this lady, and we started to talk about how the world has changed—how the

world has changed in her lifetime. I was on the phone with this lady for 15 minutes—nice, robust voice; never missed a beat; right on top of things—telling me that her daughter cut my father’s hair when he would be in Renfrew. When he would be in the constituency office—his constituency office was in Renfrew—her daughter would cut my father’s hair, and my father has been gone since 1987.

**1010**

But anyway, in the process, then, of wishing this absolutely wonderful woman—she only goes by Peg. I didn’t call her “Peggy”; she goes by Peg, or “Hey, you,” if I chose to, she said. But she’s talking about the Internet and different things, and how it has changed. And now the Internet is such a vast, different, but important thing for people today.

Oh, by the way, did I tell you that Peg Clemow of Renfrew, Ontario, was 103 yesterday? Just so you understand the vitality of our citizenry and the people, and how blessed we are to have people like that among us who can talk about—they can’t talk about what they read about life in the Depression; they can actually tell you about life in the Depression.

We don’t experience those kinds of things today, because we have governance in a different way that builds in protections, backstops and supports for those vulnerable and less able to take care of themselves. We don’t have those kinds of impacts today that we had back then, but we still do have ups and downs in the economy.

I’ll tell you what people want: They want a government they trust enough—that has their finger on the pulse, as my dad used to say, to understand and not just react, but to be ahead of the game, so to speak, so that when those times come, they’ve already laid down and laid ahead the road map for recovery. You’re constantly in a state of recovery and decline in economies today, and bouncing back. The future here in Ontario—we know that these are troubling times and troubled times, with war in Ukraine and Russia seemingly intent on taking over a sovereign nation that is a neighbour, not respecting the borders of another nation, which is impacting us all over the world, particularly in Europe. But none of us is immune to the events of the world today.

I think the Speaker used a word today that was basically implying the nature of our world today being so small. We want to continue to be a player. It’s a big world on one hand, but a small world on the other, and we want to make sure that this province continues to be an important player in that world. That’s why we are making the necessary changes to legislation in Ontario.

I say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: How courageous, knowing that there would be pushback for those who don’t understand or don’t want to understand the importance of building homes if you’re going to attract more people to your province. If the population is going up, Minister McNaughton, with Premier Ford and many other ministers—Minister Dunlop, with skills development—we’re making sure that we’re producing the people to fill those jobs. With Minister Fedeli, Minister Surma and others, we’re making sure that we’ll have the jobs.

But if we've got the people and we've got the jobs, we've got to have a place for them to live. Minister Clark, through the Premier's plans, is making sure that people who come to this province—half a million people are going to be coming to Canada each year according to the federal government. The vast bulk of those are coming to Ontario. We've got to make sure that we have a place for them to stay. This government is forward-facing, forward-looking and forward-planning, so that the Ontario of the future is the best Ontario that you will ever see.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Unfortunately, we are out of time for questions and answers.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** We will be moving to members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS DAY

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Today is March 1. It's the sixth annual Professional Engineers Day in the province of Ontario. P.Eng. Day recognizes the vital role that professional engineers play in designing, creating and safeguarding our province, and I'm truly proud to be a P.Eng. serving the people of Ontario here at Queen's Park each and every day.

It's equally fitting that representatives of the University of Windsor, a wonderful home to engineering graduates, join us today at Queen's Park. The University of Windsor's commitment to establishing strategic and meaningful partnerships with local industry remains steadfast, and countless examples exist of these pioneering relationships, including the Ed Lumley Centre for Engineering Innovation, as well as the new wine and spirits lab facilitated through the esteemed faculty of science. These partnerships concurrently benefit both the students and our local economy, and our community is left better off because of them.

Whether it be the forthcoming Windsor-Essex acute care hospital, with shovels projected to be in the ground by 2026 or the new Stellantis/LG Energy Solution EV battery manufacturing plant set to be operational by 2024, Windsor and Essex county are on the brink of a generation-defining era for expansion and innovation.

The University of Windsor has and continues to play a key role in ensuring that our homegrown talent is preparing today for both the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. I again wish a very warm welcome to the University of Windsor team here today.

### MUNICIPAL PLANNING

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This year, I launched the first-ever member's statement writing competition for high school students in Parkdale–High Park. Students could submit a statement on any issue they wanted. This competition is designed to empower young people and

foster youth participation in politics by bringing their voice directly to Queen's Park and speaking about issues in their own words.

The winner for 2023, as selected by an independent committee, is Ian Snider from Humberside Collegiate. Here is Ian's statement:

"Ontario is in a housing crisis."

Premier "Ford's solution: Allow suburban developers to create overpriced, car-dependent suburbs. This isn't so much a solution as a capitulation to those who caused the crisis in the first place.

"It is the increasing sprawl that has raised housing prices, especially in the city, where the poor have been priced out in favour of the highest bidder.

"The demand for walkable neighbourhoods is there, yet the government refuses to hold developers accountable to build the housing needed in Ontario: walkable, affordable, mixed-use development.

"Today, more and more Ontarians favour living in the city over the suburbs. As public transit is expanded in anticipation of new residents" Premier "Ford is unwilling to build destinations.

"As young couples are forced between living in the city and starting a family," Premier "Ford refuses to build affordable housing. As food prices rise," Premier "Ford lets cul-de-sacs replace farmland.

"Our neighbourhoods make all the difference in our lives. With walkability comes healthy living, a greener environment, and a sense of community. We can build our cities to support their residents, but this government is doing the opposite just for the profit of a few developers."

### TINY HOME YOUTH BUILD PROGRAM

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Recently, alongside the Associate Minister of Housing, I had the opportunity to meet with Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga-Dufferin and staff from the Halton Catholic District School Board to learn about their tiny home youth build program. This program provides hands-on building experience for Halton region high school students who are learning construction and skilled trades, all while making an impact for families and communities in need. These student-built tiny homes can be a solution for emergency shelter, seniors, laneway homes and can be part of the solution to the housing crunch. This project is a fantastic way to introduce students to the trades, giving them hands-on work experience and exposure in real-time under the instruction of trained professionals.

Led by Allan Nason, Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School has seen incredible interest in the program, with students transferring from neighbouring schools just to participate. This year alone, there were more than 90 students on the wait-list for Allan's construction class, with more than 50% female.

Participating students are also eligible to complete college credits in the skilled trades as part of the Dual Credit Program. A partnership with Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation are the housing partners on the pilot



project, and five tiny homes are now fully site-serviced and operated by the Chippewas community.

The build program trains students in an interesting and practical way which, in turn, will lead to in-demand, meaningful jobs, building a better and brighter Ontario.

1020

#### CAREPOINT CONSUMPTION AND TREATMENT SERVICE

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Recently, I had the privilege of joining my colleagues in London to tour the new Carepoint Consumption and Treatment Service building. Evidence shows that consumption and treatment services provide many benefits to those who access services and benefits the neighbouring community, including reducing overdoses as well as a proven track record of successful connections to health and wraparound social services. In London, this program has reversed 713 overdoses and served over 1,000 clients. This new site will provide more opportunities to expand these programs and save even more lives.

Carepoint has had a long and difficult uphill battle, but we've really seen the London community open their minds and hearts, recognizing the importance of supporting marginalized people. I would like to thank Brian Lester, Dr. Sonja Burke, Megan Van Boheemen, Lily Bialas, Dr. Alex Summers, Shaya Dhinsa, Dr. Chris Mackie, Scott Courtice, Dr. Sharon Koivu, Dr. Andrea Sereda, Pam Hill, Linda Sibley, John Pare, Ed Holder, Karen Burton and many more.

After an exhaustive search for an ideal location, the retiring owners of John Bellone's Musical Instruments, John and Moira Bellone, kindly offered their building to support the community to save lives.

What will always remain with me is Dr. Sonja Burke's emphasis that every person has value, meeting them where they are, hugging each person and educating our community about harm reduction. Welcome to the neighbourhood.

#### BRAMPTON WEST YOUTH COUNCIL

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** The youth of today are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. We must do whatever we can to empower them. That is why it is so vital that we continue providing opportunities for our youth to be engaged and involved in their community.

When I was a young man, I involved myself in politics and community initiatives. These experiences showed me the value of public service. Thus, I consider it a personal mission to uplift our youth and provide them with opportunities.

For this reason, I founded the Brampton West Youth Council, or BWYC, in my riding. This youth-led group has undertaken many initiatives to support their local community. I'm so proud of these talented kids, as they've already made a sizable impact in Brampton West through initiatives such as park cleanup, a back-to-school drive and fundraising for charitable organizations such as

ErinoakKids. This truly shows the power and value of volunteering.

Moving forward, the BWYC continues to think of innovative ways to make an impact within the community through youth-led initiatives. This March break, we're planning to hold a community food drive to give back to those in need.

I'm thankful to each and every member of the BWYC and I will continue to support their good work for years to come.

#### WAWATAY NATIVE COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Wawatay radio has been essential to life in the Far North since broadcasts began. Wawatay means "northern lights." The Wawatay Native communication service was created in 1974 and is a communication lifeline to the people in treaty number 9, number 3 and number 5.

Wawatay is an independent, self-governing media organization dedicated to telling stories from the First Nations that make up the First Nations in northern Ontario. They operate a monthly newspaper printed in Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree that is distributed to First Nations across the north. The overall news coverage and distribution of this service reaches a population of about 58,000 people.

Waawaate Nandotamowin, or the Wawatay Radio Network, offers local and national news, music, community announcements, call-in shows and language programs, as well as special programs for women, elders and youth. The Wawatay Radio Network is the only source of news in our languages.

As an example, over the March break, the Northern Bands Hockey Tournament will get played in Dryden and will be broadcast across the north, play by play, in our languages for everyone to listen.

These radio programs are an essential resource for the preservation of our languages. Wawatay has been a communications lifeline for the people for the past 49 years.

*Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

Booshoo and wachiyeh to the elders this morning.

#### ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

**M. Stéphane Sarrazin:** Je prends l'opportunité ici en Chambre aujourd'hui pour remercier mes collègues de l'APF, l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Ça a été un plaisir pour moi de me joindre à eux récemment pour participer à ma première réunion du bureau à titre de chargé de mission pour la région Amérique.

Plusieurs parlementaires francophones de partout à travers le monde se sont joints à nous du 29 janvier au 2 février à Papeete, dans la capitale de la Polynésie française. Ce fut une expérience enrichissante d'avoir des discussions avec mes collègues députés francophones de plusieurs pays.

J'aimerais remercier le président du pays, M. Édouard Fritch; le président de l'assemblée, M. Gaston Tong Sang; ses collègues députés ainsi que les membres de l'administration du gouvernement pour leur accueil incroyable. Je crois que la gouvernance de leur pays est unique. Leur passion pour l'environnement et la culture est exceptionnelle.

En tant que Franco-Ontarien, tout comme le président de l'APF, la promotion et la protection de la langue française, notamment au sein des communautés francophones en situation minoritaire, sont des enjeux qui me tiennent particulièrement à coeur.

C'est donc avec beaucoup de fierté que j'ai l'opportunité de représenter les intérêts de ma région au courant des deux prochaines années en tant que chargé de mission, région Amérique.

En tant qu'adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie, j'ai aussi eu l'occasion d'avoir des discussions très intéressantes au sujet de l'avenir de la génération d'électricité et de l'électrification des véhicules dans leurs pays. La Polynésie française pourrait éventuellement être ajoutée à la liste de pays qui aimeraient travailler avec notre province dans le futur pour discuter du dossier de la production d'énergie.

#### CITY OF TORONTO

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Last night, I attended the East Scarborough boys and girls club AGM, and I met a single mother and her daughter. I asked her what she is hoping for, and she said that, one day, she wants to be able to raise her daughter in a house where she can play freely outside. As an immigrant to Canada from Jamaica, this reminded me of the dream my parents had for our family. I now serve as the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood and have fulfilled that dream.

Toronto is a magnet for newcomers, and this city must be a place where people can continue to dream and have a chance to fulfill their dreams. The beauty of Toronto is that it has the potential. However, affordability remains a challenge. People need to be able to afford to put food on the table and a roof over their head. Toronto needs strong leadership that will make that happen—strong leadership for a stronger Toronto. All levels of government must work together to achieve this. Toronto is going through some uncertain times, not the least of which is a budget gap of \$1.5 billion. For Toronto to continue on an upward trajectory, the solutions will involve the provincial and federal governments playing a role to help close this gap. As Toronto emerges from the pandemic, we must all work hard to keep our capital city strong so that it will continue to be the economic engine for the province and the country.

I love Toronto. It's where I live, and I have countless opportunities in this city. Toronto needs to be a city where all its people are included and have an opportunity to fulfill their greatest dream.

#### HEARTS 4 JOY

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I'd like to talk about a group of people from my riding who have inspired me on so many

occasions to do more. One of the things that I've instilled consistently in my children is, if you can do more, then do it. If you can help someone, then help them. If you can make a difference in someone's life, then step forward and make that difference.

Four ladies in my riding started something for their adult children, because there wasn't a social entrepreneurial program for people with Down syndrome. It started in Norma's backyard as the Down syndrome business group and has grown to its own charity now called Hearts 4 Joy. At present, it's 16 artisans with varying exceptionalities who come together and create some truly inspiring art. I'm sure all of you have heard of Elf on the Shelf, but did you know about Gnome in Your Home? Maybe you have tiki lights on your deck and you'd like to replace them with hand-painted lanterns that look like stained glass.

#### 1030

On February 10, I had the pleasure of being at their official opening of their new shop in the Charlotte Mews. The new space will allow for a retail outlet for the group to sell their crafts and a great space for the artisans to do their masterpieces.

Norma, Debbie, Sharon and Irene, what you have done for Emilia, Allyson, Derek, Julie, Nicole, Carly, Tyler, Connor, Jessica, Josh, Jory, Luke and Kacee can't be measured. You inspire everyone who meets you to do more and to be a better person.

#### NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I rise today to recognize and appreciate the immense contributions of the non-profit sector in Ontario. The non-profit sector plays a vital role in our communities by providing essential services and resources to those in need, supporting social causes and enhancing the quality of life for everyone.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the staff and professionals of the non-profit sector. They are the community champions who have dedicated their time and effort to make a positive impact on our society. They have worked tirelessly to provide much-needed support and assistance to the most vulnerable members of our communities.

I thank the government for supporting Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week, and I appreciate all the members here going around in their communities thanking each of them. Definitely they deserve our appreciation. I commend their unwavering commitment to making a difference in the lives of Ontarians. Their selfless dedication and hard work deserves recognition and appreciation.

#### REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett):** I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Expenditure Monitor 2022-23: Q3, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. Bhutila Karpoche:** Page Lindsay Matheson from Parkdale–High Park is page captain today, and I'd like to give a warm welcome to her parents Lauren and Donna Matheson who are sitting in the members' gallery.

Also, we have Ian Snider, member's statement writing competition winner for 2023, from Humberside Collegiate Institute, and his mother Elin Goulden. Welcome.

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** It's my honour to introduce two good friends of mine from the village of Osgoode in the great riding of Carleton: Canadian veteran Corporal Greg Thurlow, who served from 1971 to 1989 in the air force as an air medevac specialist in search and rescue, as well as his better half, Elizabeth McNee, a dedicated community volunteer and organizer of the Osgoode senior luncheons at the Legion. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'd like to welcome representatives from AMAPCEO who I'll be meeting with later today, who are in the chamber: Dave Bulmer, Cynthia Watt, Angela Freeman, Colleen Walsh, Suzanne Conquer and Jennifer Harewood. Welcome to the Legislature.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'd also like to welcome AMAPCEO to Queen's Park, Ontario's professional employees. This is their Queen's Park lobby day. They're having a reception later on today. Please join them.

Including the guests who the member for Guelph just introduced, I'd also like to welcome Grant Burns, who's also with AMAPCEO and my former EA in my office.

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** I have the honour today of introducing to the House Dr. Trevor Hall, his wife Tanya Staples, Jady Hall, Julian Hall and Marlaena Hall. Thank you for coming today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm pleased to welcome a former member who is with us in the Legislature today, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek in the 39th, 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments. Welcome back.

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** I would like to welcome representatives of AMAPCEO, Ontario's professional employees, to the Legislature for their Queen's Park day. Joining us in the chamber this morning are Dave Bulmer, Cynthia Watt, Angela Freeman, Colleen Walsh, Suzanne Conquer and Jennifer Harewood. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It's a great pleasure to welcome Marta Hajek and the Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario team to the Legislature. A number of us had a chance to have breakfast with them this morning. Thank you for the important work you do for older adults in Ontario.

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I'd like to welcome very important people, members of Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario, to Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I, too, would like to welcome the amazing group from Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario and thank them for their breakfast and all the great work they do to keep our sensational seniors happy and safe across Ontario, and also to thank Minister Cho for his joyful, joyful comments this morning and encouraging us

all to smile, which we could do a lot more of in the chamber.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I know she's watching at home—she's not here in the gallery, but I'd like to wish my Italian wife, Rita De Luca-Gates, a happy 27th anniversary.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** In follow-up to my member's statement, I'd like to acknowledge representatives here from the University of Windsor on behalf of members for Essex and for Chatham-Kent–Leamington. A warm welcome to President Gordon, Vincent, Chris, Heather, Ivona, Tom, Lisa, Narayan, Drew, Rupp, Debbie, Bill and Amy. We're delighted to have you all here with us today. They're up in the visitors' gallery to my rear.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** On behalf of my colleague, the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North and the NDP caucus, I'd like to welcome members from the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario, in particular Camille Duhaime, the treasurer, and Brandon Rhéal Amyot, a student at Lakehead University. Welcome.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I'm really excited today to welcome Malcolm McLean to Queen's Park today. Malcolm is the grandfather of legislative page Charlotte Tamminga. I've actually known Malcolm since I was a legislative page back in 1991. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I had a wonderful meeting today with the Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario team, where they expressed that elder abuse has increased by 250% over the last two years. I want to welcome CEO of Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario Marta Hajek, Mary Shkoury, Mehnaz Rafat, Angela Yenssen, Debra Sayewich, Jane Teasdale—from our Davisville community in St. Paul's—and Lily Hoang. Thank you for a wonderful meeting, and I look forward to the solutions together.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** If there are no objections, I'd like to continue with introduction of visitors.

**Mr. David Smith:** I'd like to welcome the grade 10 students from Père-Philippe-Lamarche secondary school from my riding of Scarborough Centre this morning to Queen's Park.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** It is my great pleasure to welcome the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario in the members' gallery, one of whom is a University of Windsor student.

I would also like to welcome faculty from the University of Windsor—the university is proudly in my riding: Dr. Gordon, Dr. Houser, Dr. Georgie, who I'll be meeting with later, Dr. Van Heyst, Dr. Sheppard-LeMoine, Dr. Porter, Dr. Marquardt, Dr. Kar, Dr. Carriveau and Dr. Pratt.

Go, Lancers, go!

1040

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** I, too, would like to welcome representatives from AMAPCEO who are here today. Joining us from their team are Dave Bulmer, Cynthia Watt, Angela Freeman, Colleen Walsh, Suzanne Conquer and Jennifer Harewood. I welcome them to Queen's Park, and I look forward to meeting with them today.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'd like to welcome Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario. I'll be meeting with these folks later on this afternoon: Lauren Bates, Laura Proctor,

Michel Tremblay, Jean-Rock Boutin, Tom Carothers and Anna Malfara. Welcome to your House.

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** It's an honour to introduce partners from the tiny home build pilot program—from Halton Catholic District School Board: Allan Nason, construction and home-building teacher, tiny home build project; students Ava Sunderland and Aaliyah Young-Lalumiere; Jody Harbour from Grandmother's Voice; Eden Grodzinski from Habitat for Humanity; Kelly Hoey and Michelle Murray from HIEC. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'd like to welcome to the House Sofia Raffat, a student intern from Toronto Metropolitan University who is working in my office. Welcome, Sofia.

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** I'd like to welcome Caleb Garrow-Ledoux to the House. He's a volunteer in the riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. It's his first time at Queen's Park. Welcome.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am delighted to welcome today Jess Carpinone, who is a small business owner of Bread By Us in Ottawa and a member of the Better Way Alliance. She was at Queen's Park this morning to talk about paid sick days, along with advocates from the Decent Work and Health Network, including: Sarah Shahid; Yasmin Beydoun; Deena Ladd from the Workers' Action Centre; Julie Chowdury; Dr. Bernard Ho, emergency room physician; and Debra Slater from the EMPOWER PSW network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. George Pirie:** It's my privilege to introduce Gaetan Malette, my campaign manager, from Timmins, Ontario.

Gaetan, welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** It's my pleasure to welcome a friend, a former municipal colleague and a great community champion: Mark Quemby from the town of Bracebridge—and his son Connor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for—*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** —Nepean.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Well, Speaker, I'll be here for 17 more years; maybe you'll get it right. Thank you.

I want to introduce and, obviously, say hello to our friend Paul Miller, who we all spent a great deal of years with.

I also want to recognize a friend and somebody I got to learn from in a previous incarnation as minister: Vincent Georgie, who's up with the University of Windsor today, but also with the Windsor International Film Festival.

Welcome to our assembly.

#### WEARING OF SCARVES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister for Seniors and Accessibility has a point of order.

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** Earlier, a member of Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario asked me if we can wear scarves in the House, so I'm seeking unanimous consent from all the colleagues.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The minister is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have permission to wear a scarf in the House today. Agreed? Agreed.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### LAND USE PLANNING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** The Premier has repeatedly claimed that his carve-up of Ontario's greenbelt is simply about providing the land we need for housing. But a new report released just yesterday found that there is more than enough land to build two million homes without punching massive holes in our greenbelt. So if it's not about land for housing, what is it about?

Will the Premier admit that this is about paving over protected land so a select few people can make a lot of money?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Another day, another NIMBY question from the Leader of the Opposition.

We made it very clear during the election that the Housing Affordability Task Force report would be our long-term road map. We promised Ontarians that we'd put a plan in place to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. We're going to continue to build upon our success with all of our housing supply action plans. But we're not done yet. We've got a lot more work to do with our municipal partners to get the plan in place to build those homes, and that's exactly what this government is going to do.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** The minister should read that report, because the Housing Affordability Task Force did not recommend tearing up the greenbelt.

Speaker, the report that was released yesterday shows what the people of this province already know: We don't need insider schemes and torching of the greenbelt to build the housing that people need.

We need 1.5 million homes in Ontario, and it's only getting worse. But I haven't talked to one municipal leader—not one—one housing advocate or one regular Ontarian who thinks that the problem is that there aren't enough mega mansions. That is not the problem.

Why won't this government work with our municipal partners to build affordable homes on the land we already have available?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Again, the Leader of the Opposition needs to read the Housing Affordability Task Force report. She needs to meet with housing advocates across the province who are praising our plan.

Clearly, in the Housing Affordability Task Force report, it talked about the need for responsible housing growth on undeveloped land, including outside of existing municipal boundaries.

We speak to municipalities every day who are signing our housing pledge and signing on to the partnership with our government. This is very exciting.

Speaker, at the end of the day, it's all about providing that opportunity for that young couple to realize the dream of home ownership; it's all about making sure that when we welcome those new Ontarians to our province, we've

got a safe, secure home that meets their needs and their budget. That's why we're doing the housing supply action plan.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, no one is buying that the Premier's greenbelt scheme is about building housing—nobody. It's about the Premier, his well-connected friends and their secret insider deals.

Planning experts, municipalities and the government's own task force—despite his creative quoting from that report—have said that land availability is not the problem.

Again, will this government—and I'd love the Premier to be able to answer this question—listen to the experts, use the land we already have available, and reverse the decision to remove 7,400 acres of protected greenbelt land?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, if there's anybody who's providing selective quotes, it's the Leader of the Opposition.

We're growing the greenbelt by over 2,000 acres. We're adding parts of the Paris-Galt moraine and the urban river valleys that municipalities and conservation authorities universally have suggested be added to the greenbelt.

At the end of the day, despite the Leader of the Opposition's NIMBYism—as we all know, building absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone; the BANANA business that we're hearing from the leader and her members—we're going to continue to work with municipalities, we're going to continue to work with non-profits and ensure that more attainable and affordable housing is being built. That's the impetus of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster—to ensure that development charges incent the type of housing we want: more purpose-built rental, more Habitat for Humanity homes. That's exactly what Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, does, and we're going to continue to build on that in the days ahead.

## HOUSING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, this government's record on housing is abysmal—talk to any municipality out there. Encampments are probably the clearest example of the failure of this Premier to meaningfully invest in truly affordable housing. It can take a decade right now to get placed into an affordable unit. Shelter allowances for folks on a fixed income aren't enough to find a bachelor apartment. People in communities from Sault Ste. Marie to Sarnia to Barrie are sleeping in tents while this government is asleep at the wheel.

Can the Premier explain how, after four years of his leadership, things have only gotten worse?

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

1050

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Our government is continually working to make sure that people have the supports they need and to help them find a job. That's why we're working across ministries to make sure that we have the

services and programs available, putting people over paperwork, creating training programs, creating job opportunities.

That's why we have also been working on supporting people who are unable to work. We recognize that. We have increased the ODSP rates with the largest increase in the history of this province. We have increased the earnings exemption threshold by 400%. We are tying the increases to inflation. We are making sure that people are getting discretionary benefits and temporary emergency supports. We're working across multiple ministries, making sure that people can have access to the supports that they need.

This is a strategy that we've had for the Ontario Disability Support Program for disability support with the Journey to Belonging, making sure that people can live in their communities, creating wraparound services. This is continuous work that—

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

Supplementary question?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Again, it feels like this government is living on a different planet than most people in this province, because I can tell you, you get a full-time job in this province right now and you're at a food bank. You're at a food bank.

How does this government expect people to get by when they create crater-sized loopholes in the only measures that keep apartments affordable? Go out there and talk with tenants, I beg you. When a tenant leaves a rental unit, there's no limit to how much that rent can increase for the next tenant. You know what that means? It means double-digit increases. People in Hamilton saw rent increases of 26% between tenants; in Ottawa, 17%; in Toronto, a 29% increase, Speaker. Those are for the same units.

Does the government understand that they have created a system that takes away affordable housing options?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** The Associate Minister of Housing last week in the House categorized where we're at in the state of rental housing in the province. Because of our policies, as most in the House know, we had in 2021 over 13,000 new rental starts in Ontario, the highest since the early 1990s—1992, for example. Last year, as Associate Minister Parsa talked about right here in question period last week, we had over 15,000, which is the highest amount of rental starts in Ontario's history.

But, again, Speaker, I talked earlier about Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster and what we were able to do. Affordable rental and housing developers in Oshawa reported that through Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster, they were saving over \$500,000 in development charges and associated fees. What's that going to do? It's going to feature 24 affordable rental units, 26 affordable ownership homes. These are the policies that we're building upon—

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

The final supplementary?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This government needs to get out of the back rooms and start listening to real people, because their so-called laser focus on their insider friends is not solving the problem.

Community Living Essex told us that the wait-list for affordable housing in their region has ballooned to 5,400 people. Last year, the city of London had a wait-list of 6,000. Niagara was reporting numbers of over 9,000 households.

Municipalities are pulling every lever, but they cannot solve this housing crisis alone. Will the Premier commit today to fixing rent control loopholes and making meaningful investments in public housing?

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

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I thank the leader of the official opposition for the question. Mr. Speaker, I would like to see one day the leader or the members of the opposition get up and actually stand up for Ontarians and support us in building more homes across the province.

We should be looking at our numbers. In 2021, in 2022, a record number of housing starts in our province—no thanks to the opposition. I mentioned this last week, when the previous government was in power, they held the balance of power. The lowest housing starts came in the three years when they had the opportunity. They could have made housing a priority for Ontarians. They didn't. It took this Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, under the leadership of the Premier, the caucus members on this side and in the middle to say, "No more. Housing is going to be a priority for Ontarians. We'll make sure to deliver it to them. We're not going to let down anybody."

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Bhutila Karpoche:** The Globe and Mail has reported that based on the province's own numbers, in 2022, the Landlord and Tenant Board received more than 5,550 N-12 applications where landlords sought units for own use, a 41% increase from 2019. The board also received nearly 1,113 eviction applications for renovations in 2022, almost double the volume from 2019.

Tenant advocates say this spike in evictions filings is hardly a coincidence, because when a tenant is evicted, rents can increase by any amount. As a result, we're seeing tenants being forced out of their units in bad-faith evictions and rents skyrocket.

Will the Premier make rents affordable and end bad-faith evictions by passing the NDP's Rent Stabilization Act?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't sure if the opposite member was praising this government for the work of the independent tribunal that has in place rules to protect the tenants when they have issues to bring forward.

What we have done is we have added a record number of adjudicators to the Landlord and Tenant Board to help

protect the tenants as they bring their issues forward and to make sure that the claims by the landlords are legitimate or not. And then, the fines have been increased for those that are doing it inappropriately.

I can't think of anything better than an independent tribunal listening to the tenants with legitimate concerns, staffed appropriately with a record number of adjudicators.

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

**Ms. Bhutila Karpoche:** When my constituent Janice Walker's mother died, she was forced to set her grief aside to face an urgent issue: Her landlord, the Myriad Group, was evicting her because she was listed as an occupant and not a tenant. To continue to stay in her home of 36 years, Janice was told she would have to pay 50% more in rent each month or vacate the unit within 30 days. If the NDP's Rent Stabilization Act was law, Janice would not suddenly find her rent jump by 50%.

Will the Premier remove the incentives to evict tenants simply to raise rents?

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

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Again, I thank my honourable colleague for the question.

As I said before, and I'll say it again, no government in the past 70 years has provided more protection for tenants in this province than this government.

We paused rent increases during COVID. We made sure that tenants had protection when they needed it. The rent increase guidelines that the member is referring to in 2021 last year was capped at 1.2% increase. This year, because of our actions, we capped that at 2.5%, well below inflation. If it wasn't for our actions, the rent increase guideline would have been at 5.3%.

So let me make that very clear: Once again, it's this government that will stand up for the people of this province, will protect tenants and make sure—what the opposition wants is for people to be pitted against one another. That's not going to happen. We're going to work with our partners to make sure that we have more units in this province, and we'll continue—

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

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Hamilton is a city where innovation and manufacturing go hand in hand. For decades, we have been fortunate: Our advanced industries have grown to create a manufacturing industry that embraces cutting-edge science and technology. But now more than ever, the competitive global manufacturing space threatens the future of Hamilton's own advanced manufacturing industry.

As one of the country's fastest-growing mid-sized cities, my constituents want to know if they will have good manufacturing jobs right at home well into the future.

Will the minister please explain how our government is continuing to secure investments in Hamilton's manufacturing economy?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Recently, Premier Ford and our team Hamilton attended the grand opening at Bimbo Canada. They announced a \$15-million expansion and an investment to boost local manufacturing and solidify their competitive edge.

1100

Speaker, Bimbo is Canada's largest and oldest commercial bakery, producing over 1,000 products for 18 brands. As we walked through their exciting new facility, we saw popular names, such as Dempster's, Villaggio, Stonemill, stacked as deep as the eye could see. With a \$1.5-million investment from our government, they're expanding their lines of tortillas, as wraps are becoming more popular in lunch bags.

But this isn't just an investment in advanced manufacturing, it's an investment in people, creating new, well-paying jobs in Hamilton.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Speaker, back to the minister: When the previous Liberal government sent 300,000 manufacturing jobs running from Ontario, Hamilton was especially hit hard, but now Hamilton is back on track to lead Ontario's manufacturing revolution. That is because Hamilton's history is steeped in its manufacturing roots, but also in its hard-working heritage. Hamilton is home to Ontario's brightest innovators and entrepreneurs. It is because of them that Hamilton has the diverse and flourishing economy it has.

In addition to supporting investments and creating good jobs in my city, will the minister please explain how our government is supporting Hamilton's entrepreneurs?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** There is huge support for Hamilton, and not just the \$500 million towards ArcelorMittal Dofasco's green steel projects or the \$40 million in support for OmniaBio's \$580-million investment in gene therapy.

Our government is delivering on our plan to encourage entrepreneurship and grow small business. We have lowered their taxes, reduced red tape and made their hydro affordable again. And to further encourage entrepreneurs, we are funding their Small Business Enterprise Centre to make sure their dreams become a reality.

We fund special programs for young entrepreneurs and students to help them get started in business as well. Through our Digital Transformation Grant, we're helping these businesses go online to sell their products worldwide.

The message is clear: We are building Ontario.

#### MUNICIPAL FINANCES

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We completed a scan of municipal property tax hikes across the greater Golden Horseshoe area, and we found that nearly every single

municipality is being forced to hike property taxes with no improvement to service because this government chose to give big developers a tax break with Bill 23 and is now forcing Ontarians to make up the difference.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** No, you cut that bit.

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Burlington is looking at a 7.5% tax hike; Toronto, 7%; Markham, 6.4%; Peterborough county, 8%; Waterloo region, 8.6%.

Minister, you promised to make municipalities whole. Are you going to keep your promise?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I remind members to make share comments through the Chair, not across the floor.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, here's the fundamental difference between the government and the NIMBY party across: We do not believe here in the government that non-profits and affordable housing providers should be charged exorbitant fees and add those onto the cost of a project. That's the difference.

We listened to our municipal partners. Every single council that the member opposite has just quoted ran in the fall election on building more non-profit, affordable and rental accommodation. Exactly these policies that are in Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster are going to incent those types of housing. That's the plan that the government's put forward.

I appreciate that the opposition party will support NIMBYs and BANANAs 100% of the time. I understand that, but we owe it to Ontarians to ensure that we've got—

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

Supplementary question: the member for Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Back to the minister: There is no evidence whatsoever that giving a big corporate developer a tax break will lower the cost of buying a home. There's no evidence whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, AMO estimates that municipalities are on track to lose \$5.1 billion in development fee revenues because of Bill 23. AMO presented to us at finance committee. This is revenue that is earmarked to pay for affordable housing, for transit, for sewage and parks—services that make our towns and cities great places to live.

Minister, it's budget season. What exactly is your plan to help municipalities pay for the infrastructure needed to help our towns and cities grow?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, I'm going to give the member opposite another example. A not-for-profit affordable housing development in Scarborough reported moving forward on creating 800 new affordable homes thanks to the changes that were proposed in Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act. The exemption on development charges for affordable and attainable homes made the project "financially viable," and construction can begin this year—something that we want as a government to move forward.

We're always going to stand on the side of providing affordable housing opportunities, attainable housing opportunities and rental. We need more purpose-built rental in the province, and our policy to incentivize development charges on these family-sized rentals, the deeply affordable rentals that we need in our communities, that's the policy we're always going to stand up for. The NDP can always—

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

#### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Ontario is fortunate to have a rich and diverse agri-food sector. In my riding, farms and food producers contribute to the strength of this industry. Across the regions of our province, farmers and food producers contribute significantly to Ontario's GDP.

However, over the past few years, our hard-working and dedicated farmers have experienced challenges and difficult circumstances. To ensure that our food supply system continues to be competitive, our government must maintain its commitment to promote Ontario's products and support our agri-food sector.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what action our government is taking to ensure that our farm products can be accessed by international markets?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Just moments ago, we heard about the amazing news at Bimbo in Hamilton. I trust that everyone in this House has absolute confidence in the nutritious, high-quality food grown and produced right here in Ontario.

It's because of the Ontario farmers' best practices, coupled with research and innovation, that year over year our yields are increasing. And because of that, we're in a position as the government of Ontario to be their best champions. We are increasing awareness of, and demand for, good, quality food grown and processed right here in Ontario.

We've recently sent a message around the world to our international markets that Ontario is open for business. Our Ontario farmers are growing capacity and increasing food production, and we have an incredible value chain that ultimately will not only meet domestic demand but demand coming from other jurisdictions around the world.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you to the minister for that response. The investments made by our government into research and agri-food innovation continue to demonstrate the strong leadership from our Premier and this minister.

Ontario possesses strong agricultural production capabilities and technologies to enhance competitiveness and strengthen the sector. With more than 200 commodities that contribute over \$19 billion in agri-food exports,

Ontario's producers are ready to expand into international markets, like Japan and Vietnam.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how our government promotes Ontario commodities abroad?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I want to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his interest in, support of, and for continuing his championship of the Ontario agri-food sector—

**Hon. Todd Smith:** He likes to eat.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** As one member said, "He likes to eat," as we all do. And people around the world like to eat as well.

That's why I was very pleased to take 18 delegates representing five key sectors in our agri-food industry to PAN Vietnam. We had representatives from beef, pork, grains, oilseeds and ginseng and, Speaker, it was a tremendously successful trade mission inasmuch as we had memorandums of understanding signed. We hosted and facilitated over 100 business-to-business meetings. We met with business and diplomatic leaders and, Speaker, people are looking to Ontario. They are proud of the work that we've achieved, and I can tell you with absolute confidence, we're going to continue to grow demand for good, quality nutritious food grown and processed right here in Ontario.

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#### ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

**MPP Jamie West:** Speaker, I want to tell you about Kyle from Sudbury. He is on the Ontario Disability Support Program, and it has never been enough for him. Kyle has been trying to find work, but hasn't been successful. In his own words, he said, "There is little accommodation for people with disabilities in the modern workforce." Everyone knows that ODSP has never been enough. And as food and rent become even less affordable, Kyle is facing homelessness.

My question to the Premier: Will the Premier finally listen to the NDP and immediately double ODSP rates so that people like Kyle can afford food and rent?

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

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Our government has made the largest increase in ODSP in the history of this program. We raised the rates when we first came to government. We've raised them by a historic amount again. We've tied that to inflation. We've added in the increase to the earnings exemption threshold—an increase of 400%. We've created training programs to help people understand how they might be retrained and be able to enter into the job market, to provide meaningful jobs and a meaningful purpose for people who want to work who are on ODSP.

And for those who cannot work, we have made the measures to make sure that we have the proper supports for them, with ODSP, with discretionary benefits, with micro-credentialing strategies for those who can work,



understanding the mental health supports that are available, working across ministries to provide improved lifestyle for them and provide the essential basics for them. The LIFT tax break, the CARE tax break—really making sure we look at this from a holistic point of view and provide the—

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

The supplementary question?

**MPP Jamie West:** Kyle actually predicted that the minister would say exactly that. He said that she's going to brag about the 5% increase and the increase to the earning cap, and he asked me to read this message back to her: "The 5% increase was never enough, and the increase in wage earnings will never affect those who can't work. Those are band-aid solutions that miss the mark of the greater problem at hand. Many disabled Canadians ... are struggling to find any work, while others have conditions that render working impossible."

Speaker, it is time for the Premier to admit that ODSP has never been enough. Will the Premier immediately double ODSP rates and save disabled Canadians like Kyle from homelessness?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Our government has invested more in social assistance than any Ontario government in the history of this province. We are a government that is putting people over paperwork.

As I said, this is one program, and that's why we need to take this program in the context of all the other supports that are being provided to improve peoples' lives, to increase their ability to have a job and to be retrained. So these are all areas that we're continuing to contribute to, whether it's increasing the minimum wage, the job training tax credit, the \$1 billion in social services relief funding that we've put through during COVID, the Ontario Trillium Foundation efforts, the Feed Ontario programs, the Student Nutrition Program—the list goes on and on. ODSP is one program in the context of many others, and we'll continue to make the investments that we have promised.

## MUNICIPAL FINANCES

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, everyone in Ottawa knows that the Premier and this government abandoned the nation's capital during the convoy occupation last year. In fact, Justice Rouleau said, "I find the province of Ontario's reluctance to become fully engaged in such efforts directed at resolving the situation in Ottawa troubling."

A few weeks later, the Premier and this government would abandon Ottawa again when a massive windstorm with winds of 190 km/h ripped through the city and left 180,000 residents without power. Ottawa taxpayers are collectively on the hook for tens of millions of dollars for the clean-up of the storm and from the convoy.

Individual farmers and homeowners in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell have holes in the walls of their barns and in the roofs of their barns, Mr. Speaker. This winter,

instead of storing equipment and hay, those barns are expensive storage for snowdrifts.

So when Ottawa is in crisis, why does this government always turn its back and say no?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, I think there's a reason why there are only a few Liberals in the House, and part of that reason is because they ignored not only Ottawa but so many parts of the province of Ontario for so long.

We have made some very, very significant investments in the nation's capital—and I hear the members over there groaning because they don't like to talk about the transit investments we made. I understand why that member doesn't want to talk about the transit investments we made—because when he was responsible for those transit investments, he couldn't get it done. The system was broken, so we've had to step in and make sure that it works well.

We've made investments in health care in Ottawa—the Ottawa Civic Hospital, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario—all investments that could have been made under the Liberals, but were not made under the Liberals. We're making those investments on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario.

We are bringing back the automotive sector in the province of Ontario—in part, do you know who's going to benefit from that? The high-tech sector in auto will play such an important role—thousands of jobs.

We're expanding the highway between Toronto and Ottawa.

We're getting the job—

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

The supplementary question?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My supplementary is also for the Premier. The city of Ottawa continues to ask this government for help, and this government continues to turn a cold shoulder. City council and the mayor have both expressed grave concerns over Bill 23 and the impact it will have on the city's finances—their inability to maintain infrastructure without drastically increasing taxes. In fact, this year, the city of Ottawa is cutting transit funding and using growth funds to balance their budget—a situation that won't be able to continue for long without massive property tax increases.

Ottawa taxpayers were hit again with the funding formula change to Ottawa Public Health. In fact, the chair of Ottawa Public Health says that will add \$3 million to Ottawa taxpayers' responsibilities if this isn't addressed by the government.

Ottawa taxpayers simply can't fulfill the bill that this government wants to send them. So, given the economic damage they're already creating in Ottawa and with the upcoming budget, will the government reverse course on the public health funding formula and ensure Ottawa isn't shortchanged \$3 million?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** The opposition keeps talking about our More Homes Built Faster initiative, but again, they're very selective in sections of the report. So to answer the question, I'm going to read exactly what's in this report, on page 18:

"Reduce the costs to build, buy and rent.

"The price you pay to buy or rent a home is driven directly by how much it costs to build a home. In Ontario, costs to build homes have dramatically increased at an unprecedented pace over the past decade."

Speaker, again, our government is committed to ensuring that non-profit housing, purpose-built rental—we want to make sure that everyone that wants a home that meets their needs and their budget. Again, this is what motivates me—these young people in the gallery. I want to ensure that they have a home that meets their needs and their budget.

We're committed to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years—

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

The next question.

#### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Ross Romano:** My question is for the Minister of Mines. The mining industry is vital to our province's economic prosperity, creating 75,000 jobs and contributing almost \$13 billion to Ontario's GDP. Our government understands and appreciates the value and the importance of the mining industry, especially in the north. When a mine opens in the north, a place like my hometown of Sault Ste. Marie wins.

Early exploration is the first step in locating new critical mineral mines that will help secure our supply chain for battery technology and electric vehicles. The strength and potential of the mining industry should not be underestimated, and our government must continue to make strategic investments.

Can the minister please explain how our government is supporting the exploration for critical minerals?

**Hon. George Pirie:** Thank you for the question from my friend and the member from Sault Ste. Marie. We joined the Premier in Sault Ste. Marie to announce a \$5.8-million investment through the Ontario Junior Exploration Program—because it starts with exploration. You know the genesis of Algoma Steel in the discovery of iron ore in Wawa—and Wawa right now is thriving on the basis of exploration and development activity. From Wawa back over to Dubreuilville and over to Marathon, it starts with exploration. That's why we have funded 32 mining companies and have invested an additional \$12.5 million in private capital to find critical minerals.

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Here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker: The opposition voted no to these investments. They voted no to jobs in northern communities and they voted no to finding new critical minerals. This government, under the Premier, is taking decisive action to secure our supply chain and our future, and it all starts with exploration.

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

**Mr. Ross Romano:** Thank you to the minister for the response. When a mine opens in northern Ontario, Ontario wins. Think of all the items we use every day: From smart phones to electric vehicles, from steel to diamonds and gold, it all comes from a mine.

Our government is building Ontario, and in order to continue getting it done, we need a strong mining sector and a well-integrated supply chain. Look no further than my home of Sault Ste. Marie, where steel made at Algoma Steel, beams from SIS, concrete pumpers from Apex Cranes, belts from Belterra are all critical to building our mines in northern Ontario. Speaker, I could go on and on and on.

Investments in northern Ontario's mining sector support so many local businesses and the thousands of people they employ. Can the minister please elaborate on how new businesses in the north are responding to investments that are being made through our Ontario Junior Exploration Program?

**Hon. George Pirie:** Mining is the number one employer in the great riding of Timmins. I am proud of what mining means to my community and to the north. Our investments have been hailed by industry. But don't just take my word for it; listen to how impactful \$400,000 can be for a junior mining company.

Dr. Michael Gunning, president and CEO of VR Resources—and VR Resources has a remarkable rare earth discovery just north of Timmins—said, "For a small company like mine, doing the front-end R&D of exploration—funding matters. It takes courage and it takes money to make these discoveries.... OJEP has made a difference to my company and is making a difference to the industry."

The importance of these investments cannot be overstated, and the industry agrees. With our investments, these companies will find mines in the future while helping us to secure Ontario's future.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the opposition to vote for us the next time we make vital investments in this in-demand sector of our economy.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier: \$150 an hour—that's what some staffing agencies are charging not-for-profit long-term-care homes for a registered nurse. That's what the agency charges, not what the registered nurse is being paid. This government has made working conditions so bad, ignoring our staffing crisis for so long, they've created a profitable business model for their friends, taking advantage of a health human resource crisis.

Does the Premier or anybody on that side believe that companies should be charging \$150 an hour and taking advantage of a crisis they've created in long-term-care homes?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Well, I think the honourable member knows that, top line, we are investing over \$13.5 billion to improve long-term care across the province of Ontario, and that does include over 27,000 additional health care workers, PSWs, nurses and allied health professionals.

But I do understand the challenges with agency staffing in long-term-care homes. It is something that I've been hearing from our stakeholders. That is why, of course, I have asked the deputy minister, and the deputy minister has brought together the technical advisory committee on my orders to ensure that we get input from the Ontario Long Term Care Association, AdvantAge, from staffing agencies themselves, to also review what other jurisdictions are doing on this, but it is also recognition they are an important part of the health care system. But I do understand that there are challenges with the long-term-care homes.

When I speak to some of the individuals who are with staffing agencies, a lot of times they're telling me they want more flexibility in how they're staffed, on how their hours are—

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

The supplementary question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** He never answered the question about the \$150 an hour.

Back to the Premier: The minister can stand up and pretend like this crisis has been resolved, but we all know that in this case, it has not.

We should try listening to health care workers. You created a situation so extreme, with staffing shortages and Bill 124, that one not-for-profit home is spending \$3 million on agency employees—10 times what they budgeted for. Agencies are waiting in the parking lot after they finish their shift to approach staff when they leave to join the agency. This will reduce the care in our homes. People will suffer; seniors will continue to die.

At what point will this government wake up, recognize that the long-term-care staff are burnt-out and start showing them some respect?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** This is a member who has voted against the over \$13 billion of investments in long-term care. The member voted against the additional 27,000 health care workers for the long-term-care system. The member voted against improving to four hours of care per day. He's voted against every single measure to improve long-term care in the province of Ontario.

The member and his party have voted against the billions of dollars in investments in health care in his own riding. Then the member has the nerve to get up here and claim that care is somehow threatened.

You know what I'm hearing from staff? I'm hearing that they want more flexibility than they are being provided right now under the contracts that they have signed. We're looking at that. That is why I have ordered the advisory table to give me recommendations to look at what

is happening across other jurisdictions, and we will ensure that our seniors are first.

## CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Just last week, one of my constituents from Sarnia–Lambton shared the heartbreak that their family experienced. Their 15-year-old son is no longer able to focus or get out of bed to attend school because of an ongoing mental health challenge he is facing. Anxiety Canada estimates that about 25% of youth will engage in school-refusal behaviour during their schooling years. This behaviour, also known as school avoidance, is related to mental health issues and is not the same as truancy.

All children in our province need accessible and reliable services in order to grow and develop into healthy adults. What is this government doing to improve the mental health of the children and youth of our province?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** I'd like to thank the member for Sarnia–Lambton for this very important question. Since 2019 we've invested over \$130 million in mental health and addiction services for children and youth through the Roadmap to Wellness. Last year, we invested an additional \$31 million in annual funding to reduce waitlists and support the mental health and well-being of children and youth, with another \$170 million set to be invested over the next three years through the road map.

More tangibly, something which we're extremely proud to be supporting are our youth wellness hubs, one of which is slated to open in Sarnia just this spring. To date, we've provided funding for 22 youth wellness hubs, all of which provide mental health and addiction supports, primary care and early intervention to those aged 12 to 25 on a walk-in basis.

Mr. Speaker, we're working every day to make sure that children and youth in the province of Ontario can get the care they need when and where they need it.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you to the associate minister for that response. I appreciate that the associate minister and our government understand the seriousness of mental health challenges experienced by young people.

In Sarnia–Lambton, as the minister said, we are looking forward to the opening of a youth wellness hub, where my granddaughter Janessa has played a major and pivotal role in its design. I look forward to the minister coming down. We're confident that it will provide much-needed support for children and young people in our community.

Children and youth have a wide variety of needs, depending on their individual circumstances, and some rural and remote areas of our province may not have a youth wellness hub. Children and youth, no matter where they live in our province, deserve access to services and programs that will support their health and well-being.

Speaker, can the associate minister please explain what our government is doing to meet the diverse needs of young people across Ontario?

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**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** The member raises a very important point, which is that it's crucial to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to mental health, particularly when we're dealing with young people. That is why we're constantly innovating and finding new ways to treat children and youth and new ways for them to access services—the care that they need.

For example, those with acute needs can access the Step Up Step Down live-in treatment program which helps more kids through levels of intensive treatment as needed. For those who can't or don't want to access in-person services, we've invested in telehealth options specifically for children and youth, and just last month, I joined Minister Jones at Ontario Shores for the announcement that we are investing a further \$4.5 million in the One Stop Talk program, which provides virtual walk-in counselling services for kids across the province.

We're increasing access to supports, addressing the demand caused by the pandemic, decreasing wait times and improving the quality of care we provide for the children, who are the future.

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** My question is to the Premier. When this government's temporary and inadequate program of paid sick days was introduced two years ago, the Minister of Labour famously said that as long as there is COVID, there will be paid sick days for Ontario workers. Well, that flawed program is expiring on March 31, and COVID is still very much with us, along with many other infectious diseases.

Will the minister commit today to providing 10 permanent paid sick days so that workers can stay home if they are sick with COVID or any other illness after March 31?

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

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member opposite that she wholeheartedly—her and her party—supported our program that we brought forward to support workers during COVID. We were the first jurisdiction in the country to bring in job-protected leave. We were the first jurisdiction to bring in paid sick days in the province of Ontario to protect those workers during the pandemic.

We are continuing to bring forward initiatives to support workers. One of the things I'm really excited about and proud of and that I hope the opposition will support is our plan to bring in portable benefits to millions of workers in the province today that don't have health and dental benefits.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue having the backs of workers every single day.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Health care workers and advocates with the Decent Work and Health Network were at Queen's Park today highlighting the problems with the government's paid sick days scheme. Not only is it temporary and inadequate, but it subsidizes large corporations like Loblaws and Amazon that refuse to provide paid sick days for their workers while raking in record pandemic profits. The government's scheme has transferred \$189 million of public funds to corporate profits.

Almost 60% of Ontario workers do not have paid sick days from their employer, especially if they are racialized or low wage. Instead of supporting their corporate friends, will the government start working for those workers and legislate 10 permanent paid sick days now?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Actually, we have been there for the workers of this province during the pandemic, but we've also been there for those small businesses to ensure that within, on average, three weeks, they got reimbursed for those paid sick days. It's important that we continue working for workers, and we've been doing this.

But, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have really changed over the years. They've abandoned workers in this province. For example, when we hired 100 new health and safety inspectors in this province to bring the inspectorate to the highest in provincial history—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The opposition will come to order.

The minister will respond.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Mr. Speaker, when we brought forward legislation to hire 100 more health and safety inspectors in the province, it was the NDP that voted no. They said no to protecting the health and safety of workers in the province. But under the leadership of Premier Ford, we'll always work for our workers.

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** My question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation. Our government continues to demonstrate strong leadership by ensuring that our energy system is sound, reliable, affordable and environmentally clean. We should all be proud of the fact that our electricity grid is over 90% emissions-free.

While this is promising news for our energy sector, our public transit must follow this standard. Diesel fuel is one of Oakville's largest greenhouse gas emission sources. That is why our government needs to take action to move public transit vehicles away from diesel fuel power to a more environmentally friendly source. Can the Associate Minister of Transportation explain what our government is doing to help our local transit agencies become more environmentally sustainable?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member is always advocating for Oakville, and once again, he's doing it with that question this morning. Thank you.

Just last week, Thursday, February 23, our government, in partnership with our municipal and federal counterparts, unveiled the initial batch of Oakville Transit's first-ever zero-emission, battery electric buses. That's a major milestone, and it's part of our \$4.4-million investment in 27 electric buses for the town of Oakville. Our efforts will help provide safe, reliable transit service for Oakville riders, all while lowering emissions and producing less noise on local roads.

What's more, investing in these low-carbon transportation options demonstrates that our government is laser-focused on reaching its goal of reducing Ontario's emissions by 30% by 2030. Our government is helping transit providers shift to modern, efficient fleets that will improve people's quality of life and travel, both today and for many—

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

The supplementary question?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the associate minister for that response. Our government must continue to be a leader when it comes to delivering and investing in our transit systems. We must ensure that our transit networks remain emissions-free, reliable and safe for all individuals. Whether commuting on a bus or riding on the GO rail network, our transit system ensures people and families remain connected with jobs, housing and opportunities throughout our region and indeed the whole province. Now is the time to redouble these efforts and deliver on expanding our transit network.

Can the Associate Minister of Transportation explain what our government is doing to ensure that our entire GO Transit network will continue to meet the needs of the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** That is a great question, and it's important to contrast the record of the opposition versus this government, because this government is making the largest transit expansion plan investment in this country's history: \$61 billion over the next 10 years to connect the grid, a spider web of transit across this entire province. This includes GO rail's expansion program to bring two-way, all-day frequent service to communities like Oakville in core segments of the GO rail network, with trains as often as 15 minutes—every 15 minutes, Speaker.

But to the member's point, electrification is an important part of that process. We need to reduce emissions and our public transit system is an important part of that. That's why we trust that the opposition, as we move forward and green our fleet and grow our fleet, will support us. It's unfortunate that they voted against every single transit expansion measure that this government has taken, but the good news for Ontarians is, there's a lot more to come. I hope they'll support it in the future and do the right thing.

#### AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, did you know that, last year in Hamilton, 200

people called for an ambulance and none were available? These frightening incidents are called code zeroes or code reds, and they're happening all across Ontario, in all of our ridings. Paramedics and front-line workers continue to raise the alarm. When will this government act to ensure that when people call for emergency help, it is there for them?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I think this is an appropriate time to remind everyone how much our community paramedics and our paramedical experts have been critical to protecting the citizens of Ontario.

With 911 models of care, we have paramedics in community who are able to serve individuals and not always take them to an emergency department. Where did that come from? That came from paramedics and paramedic chiefs, who said, "We have an innovative model that will make a difference and will improve the outcome for patients." We've done that. We've done that with investments in the dedicated nurse off-load program, which has nurses funded by the province of Ontario that are dedicated exclusively in emergency departments to assist those paramedics who come in with a patient and are able to transfer that patient immediately to that dedicated nurse to make sure that they can turn around and continue to serve their province and their community. We will continue to—

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

Supplementary question?

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**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Back to the Premier: Despite what we're hearing, these things are just continuing to get worse, not better. Since April of last year, your government has withheld \$6.4 billion that could have gone to address this life-and-death critical issue. Your government supported my private member's motion to make this a priority, and since then, we have not heard or seen anything.

When will this government act—this is a life-and-death issue—to ensure Ontarians get emergency help when and where they need it?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Another program that I'm very pleased to work with the Minister of Colleges and Universities on is, of course, our Learn and Stay program, which has now been expanded beyond nurses to lab techs and to paramedics.

But it's not just our government that's making investments in health care in the province of Ontario. Earlier this morning, it was a great honour to thank the Orlando Corp. for a \$75-million gift to the Trillium Health Partners. There are literally people who are stepping up, seeing the innovation, seeing the investments that our government is making and saying, "We want to be part of that solution."

Thank you to Orlando Corp., and congratulations to Trillium Health Partners.

## TOURISM

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Tourism remains a vital sector in supporting Ontario's economic prosperity and plays an important role in communities across northern Ontario. However, the reality is that the tourism and hospitality industries are still recovering from ongoing global economic uncertainty, supply chain disruptions and rising costs due to inflation. The 2022 annual report from Tourism Thunder Bay outlines many achievements, indicating a remarkable recovery, with several key tourism statistics rebounding more quickly than expected. However, there remain challenges. As an example, American tourists have typically made up one third of visitors to Thunder Bay, but their visits have dropped to less than 13%.

Can the minister please explain how our government is supporting tourism efforts in northern Ontario?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** I'd like to thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, and also it was great to have Mr. Miller join us today. We have to do something about that.

Our government is building prosperity everywhere, for everyone, to help grow regional economic opportunities across our great province. Bolstering northern tourism is critical, and northern Ontario is going to get a little more love today—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** I knew you would like that, sir

The north, particularly northwestern Ontario, was significantly impacted by the drop of visitation from the US due to border restrictions. Those have eased, so we are supporting the visitor economy through strategic investments. Specifically, for the northern tourism economy, we've invested more than \$10 million for regional tourism organizations, supported festivals and events through our Reconnect Ontario Program and targeted northern marketing campaigns through Destination Ontario. Through these partnerships and investments, and great people, we're going to get it done.

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

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** Thank you to the minister. While it is encouraging that Thunder Bay's accommodation sector for tourists is currently higher than in 2019, I am mindful that 70% of tourism businesses took on debt over the last three years. As a result, for many businesses, a significant portion of revenue is being directed toward paying off that debt. Our government must make tourism a priority, as this sector is an indispensable component of Ontario's broader economic development.

Can the minister please elaborate on what our government is doing to protect jobs and shore up the tourism sector?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Thank you again for the question. We're seeing strong signs of tourism growth across Ontario. Our government support is helping Ontario's tourism industry re-emerge as an economic powerhouse, and it is exactly that. We've provided targeted funding to

address the challenges that affected every segment of the tourism industry as a result of the pandemic. That includes the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program, the Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund, the Reconnect Ontario Program, which I mentioned earlier, and Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant.

I'd also like to point out that tourism stretches far past what we might be thinking. When I think of tourism, sport jumps into mind. The Canada Games in Niagara, huge impact on the community—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Yes, maybe.

The Ontario Winter Games in Renfrew country—huge; the film festival in Windsor—big time, all of that adds to our tourism.

We will continue to support that and the people behind tourism to make them stronger and better at what they do, because we've got the right people in place.

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

## DEFERRED VOTES

## YOUR HEALTH ACT, 2023

## LOI DE 2023

## CONCERNANT VOTRE SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill

Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system / Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à modifier et à édicter diverses lois en ce qui concerne le système de santé.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.*

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

On February 22, 2023, Ms. Jones, Dufferin—Caledon, moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system.

On February 28, 2023, Mr. Smith, Peterborough—Kawartha, moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Smith, Peterborough—Kawartha's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Harris, Mike	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Romano, Ross

Byers, Rick	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot	Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Romano, Ross
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh	Byers, Rick	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane	Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian	Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Clark, Steve	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie	Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Coe, Lorne	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna	Clark, Steve	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Crawford, Stephen	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave	Coe, Lorne	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David	Crawford, Stephen	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Dixon, Jess	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon	Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Dowie, Andrew	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura	Dixon, Jess	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Downey, Doug	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd	Dowie, Andrew	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Dunlop, Jill	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga	Downey, Doug	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina	Dunlop, Jill	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Flack, Rob	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay	Fedeli, Victor	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Ford, Doug	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.	Flack, Rob	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Ford, Michael D.	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.	Ford, Doug	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy	Ford, Michael D.	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirre, George	Yakabuski, John	Fullerton, Merrilee	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie			Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirre, George	Yakabuski, John
			Ghamari, Goldie		

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** All those opposed to Mr. Smith, Peterborough–Kawartha’s motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

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

#### Nays

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Blais, Stephen	Hunter, Mitzie	Stiles, Marit
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutila	Tabuns, Peter
Bowman, Stephanie	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	

#### Nays

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

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 74; the nays are 35.

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

Ms. Jones, Dufferin–Caledon, has moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On February 22, 2023, Ms. Jones, Dufferin–Caledon, moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system.

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

#### Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Harris, Mike	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 74; the nays are 34.

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

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard some noes.

Minister of Health?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I’d like to refer it to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

#### BUILDING BETTER BUSINESS OUTCOMES ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 POUR GARANTIR DE MEILLEURS RÉSULTATS POUR LES ENTREPRISES

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

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Securities Act to require certain issuers to adopt and make publicly available written policies respecting their director nomination process / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les

valeurs mobilières afin d'exiger que certains émetteurs adoptent et rendent publiques des politiques écrites concernant leur processus de mise en candidature des administrateurs.

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

*The division bells rang from 1200 to 1201.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On February 28, 2023, Ms. Bowman moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Securities Act to require certain issuers to adopt and make publicly available written policies respecting their director nomination process.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Blais, Stephen	Hunter, Mitzie	Stiles, Marit
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutla	Tabuns, Peter
Bowman, Stephanie	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanhof, John
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	

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

#### Nays

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

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 35; the nays are 75.

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

*Second reading negatived.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1204 to 1500.*

## PETITIONS

### PROBATION AND PAROLE SERVICES

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I've got a petition here with over 2,000 signatures, and I'll have another one with another 2,500.

A petition "to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the probation recidivism rate for high-risk offenders is 40% and very high-risk offenders is 57%; and

"Whereas Ontario probation and parole services has the highest number of offenders under community supervision in Canada, and Ontario probation and parole officers have the highest case counts in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario probation and parole officers' case-loads and workload demands are so high that it is extremely challenging to ensure offender compliance with probation and parole conditions; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Solicitor General requires probation and parole officers to take on additional initiatives without providing additional resources, adding to chronic and systemic understaffing and under-resourcing; and

"Whereas Ontario's probation and parole officers issue more than 4,500 warrants each year on offenders who have breached their supervision conditions, and our criminal justice system does not actively seek their whereabouts, posing a significant threat to public safety;

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

"That the Ontario government hire an additional 200 front-line case-carrying probation and parole officers, hire an additional 50 probation support staff and implement a plan to actively seek and enforce the more than 4,500 outstanding breach warrants issued each year by probation and parole services for absconding offenders in order to reduce Ontario's high rate of probation and parole recidivism, provide more effective client services, ensure the health and well-being of correctional staff and better protect public safety."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and send it with page Jaden.

### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** "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 a period of time; 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 veterans’ 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 wholeheartedly endorse this petition, Speaker, and I’ll present it to page George.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I’m here to read a petition on social assistance rates from Dr. Sally Palmer.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the recent small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens well below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to live in this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

I fully support this petition and will sign it for Vedant to take to the table.

#### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** “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 a period of time; 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 veterans’ 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.”

Speaker, I’m going affix my signature to this petition and provide a copy of it to legislative page Charlotte.

#### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This petition is entitled “Health Care: Not for Sale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas Premier” Ford and the Minister of Health “say they’re planning to privatize parts of health care;

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

“Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

**1510**

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

“—repealing Bill 124 and recruiting, retaining and respecting doctors, nurses and PSWs...;

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

“—10 employer”—government—“paid sick days;

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

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

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

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Rohan.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I have a petition to raise the social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the recent small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens well below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to live in this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

I will sign this petition and give it to Liyao.

#### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** “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 a period of time; 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 veterans’ 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 will sign my name to this petition and provide it to Nolan.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** The petition is titled: Tell Ford to Double Social Assistance Rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are over 900,000 Ontarians who are forced to rely on social assistance;

“Whereas Doug Ford’s Conservatives promised to raise Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates by only 5%, and have provided no additional support for those who receive Ontario Works (OW);

“Whereas inflation is at a 40-year high and people on fixed incomes are forced to make sacrifices every day just to survive”—I apologize, but the font is very small here;

“Whereas both ODSP and OW recipients live in legislated deep poverty, a meager \$58 increase to ODSP and no additional support for OW recipients will do virtually nothing to improve the lives of people living on social assistance;

“Therefore, we the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately double social assistance rates, so that people can live dignified, healthy lives.”

I definitely support this petition. I will wholeheartedly sign it and send it down with George the page.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. I’ll remind the members once again that it’s preferable to make reference to other members by their ministerial title or their riding name, as applicable, even when reading from a text.

#### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I have a petition here 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 a period of time; 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 veterans’ 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 support this motion, will add my signature here too, and pass it to page Jaden.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### REDUCING INEFFICIENCIES ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENTS), 2023

### LOI DE 2023 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES INEFFICACITÉS (MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR LES INFRASTRUCTURES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 1, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur les infrastructures.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** When this House last debated Bill 69 at second reading, we had just heard the leadoff speech from the government side. The Minister of Infrastructure and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke have made their presentations. They’re both present in the House. We’ll now move to questions to those two members with respect to their speech.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I’m pleased to address my question to the Minister of Infrastructure. This bill before us has two schedules. It’s fairly compact; it’s only five pages long. But the section about infrastructure, specifically—I’m wondering how transferring control of the 14 properties to the Minister of Infrastructure is going to make things better.

When I had read the recommendations from the Auditor General’s report about the real estate portfolio, the AG referenced a lot about how poorly Infrastructure Ontario was managing the government’s real estate portfolio. It wasn’t recommending that the agencies hand them over to Infrastructure Ontario to manage.

This bill, from where I sit, appears to address a problem that I can’t identify. If the minister could answer that for me, I’d appreciate it.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you to the member for the question. I think the Auditor General was very clear in her recommendations in terms of finding efficiencies and

optimizing office space. I think it’s very difficult to do when there are many, many different agencies making various different real estate decisions.

To be able to optimize office space and also find efficiencies—because we try to be fiscally prudent in this House—is to have a holistic view and a central place where that decision is being made.

1520

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Question?

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** This question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. In your speech earlier this morning, you noted several reports that all talked to strategic management of properties aligning the real estate model. You quoted reports from Pricewaterhouse in 2018, the Ernst and Young report, the Deloitte report. All of them talked to aligning the real estate model.

The question to the minister is, how will the centralization of real estate under these agencies help the government achieve its priorities?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. I think the easiest way that I can explain this—I’ll use different ministries as an example. Our government is often very proud of the fact that—how closely our ministries collaborate and work together in order to make decisions, rather than ministries making decisions in silos. Similar structure here: agencies reporting to ministries. Of course, our ministries work together, but in order to have a real, holistic ability to make decisions, to make recommendations, to find efficiencies, to optimize and modernize space, I think it would be extremely helpful to government to have it all in one place so that we can take a look at the picture and make decisions and recommendations to government.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I appreciate the minister’s response, and I agree. I came across, in the recommendations from the Auditor General—about optimizing office space. I did want to know, though, how does taking the properties and transferring them to the responsibility of the minister address office space? Also, IO doesn’t even directly manage the real estate holdings that it oversees. That’s contracted out to private providers, and the client satisfaction is lacking, to say the least. How will this make it better for those 14 agencies? Are those 14 agencies happy about having a change in management? This bill is only a day and a half old; I haven’t had a chance to hear from them, so if you could share.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. How will this help? It will give us a very clear line of sight in terms of how much space is used by how many individuals. Is that space appropriate for the purpose that they serve? Is there space that is not being optimized? Could their space be modernized? It gives us at the Ministry of Infrastructure a clear line of sight into those 14 agencies. I think that would be most helpful to government. Again, we have a responsibility to be fiscally prudent and make good decisions on behalf of taxpayers.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** My question is to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, who earlier this morning made a great presentation and spoke about the environment and how it relates and fits within Bill 69. If he could expand a little bit more on whether this legislation will have any impact on existing class EAs and overall environmental protection?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank the member for that question. I want to make it very clear that the EA process is not in any way being compromised. The proposed legislative amendments are minor and will not have any impact on the existing class EAs or environmental protection. The EA process requires proponents to assess potential environmental impacts, identify mitigation measures and consult with Indigenous communities, the public and stakeholders before the project can proceed.

Again, this process is not affected. To be clear, the environmental assessment standards will remain in place.

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

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for her presentation this morning. I listened intently. I did have a question. This bill is very young; it's about a day and a half old. The official opposition has reached out to the government benches. It seems to be this government's standard practice that bills are dropped without offering any briefing, without offering any of the tools that are really common and traditional in this House.

My question is, Speaker, when will this government be providing the official opposition with a briefing on this bill?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you to the member for expressing his interest in my bill. I really appreciate that. Because this bill is, frankly, quite simple in nature—it is comprised of two separate pieces: removing a 30-day mandatory waiting period to do with environmental assessment and also centralizing the real estate decision-making authority for 14 agencies, which I spoke to very clearly this morning.

If there are very technical questions that you have, I would be happy to honour the member and arrange for a briefing.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** First, I would like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for the ongoing commitment to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, which is a fantastic fund which has provided over \$12 million of infrastructure funding to the riding of Essex. That's going to help towns in my riding, like LaSalle, Amherstburg, Essex, Harrow, Kingsville and Belle River, build infrastructure like sewer lines, which is good for our environment, keeping our environment clean.

I have a question about the environment: How is the government keeping the environment top of mind while reducing inefficiencies at the same time?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank the member for Essex, not only for the question but for his continued commitment and advocacy for his community down in the Essex area and all of those communities he mentioned.

What we're doing here today is ensuring that when there's an approval, there is no 30-day waiting period for municipalities—which are the number one proponents of most of these EAs and are the ones that are most involved in it. So there's no requirement to wait 30 days while you're twiddling your thumbs and contractors are waiting to get the job done. We can waive that period. It is now within the purview of the minister—and every situation will be judged by the minister, but the minister will have that opportunity and that authority to waive that 30-day waiting period should they choose, and that is going to move projects ahead more quickly, more effectively and perhaps even avoid the winter season to get a job done.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Unfortunately, we have no more time for questions and answers. Now it is debate. Further debate?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in this House on behalf of the official opposition and deliver what I hope are thoughtful comments on Bill 69, which the government has called the Reducing Inefficiencies Act.

Just for the folks at home, this is a relatively small bill. It's got two schedules, one about the Environmental Assessment Act and one having to do with infrastructure and specifically the realty portfolio. The government and Infrastructure Ontario have a significant real estate portfolio, and this is delving into what that will look like in the future, and so, of course, we have questions.

This bill was introduced a day and a half ago, and I'm doing my darndest to kind of gather all those pieces. I will say right off the hop that this bill does indeed put something forward that maybe addresses a problem to solve, but it's a problem that I can't identify. So we'll talk more about that, but when I look at the Auditor General's very comprehensive reports, both about the environmental protections and about the real estate services, I'm not seeing the need for this. Hopefully, over the course of debate, the government will be able to shine a more specific light on what they're hoping to achieve with these pieces.

**1530**

For example, when we have bills introduced in this House, the government is always given the opportunity—excuse me; any member is given an opportunity—to give a brief explanation of the bill. In the eight and a half years I have been here, I have never seen what I saw the other day, which was that the government was given the opportunity to give a brief explanation, and the explanation was, “No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.” They would not take that time. However, in fairness to the minister, they gave an hour this morning where we got to glean a little bit more.

But I'm going to give my comments on these two schedules. I'm going to fill an hour, which is going to be a treat for the folks at home and the folks here, but I think it's an opportunity. Of course, I come to this House as a

former educator—although, are you ever a former educator, as an educator?—and I am excited to share much of the very thoughtful recommendations from the Auditor General's reports. So get comfortable, and then we're going to get educated. I hope that by doing that, the government will maybe hear a few things and think, "Ooh, that's what we should do next," or, "Hey, how come we didn't put that in this bill?"

The minister spoke this morning about reducing efficiencies or cutting red tape or being more fiscally responsible to the taxpayer. All of those things sound just fine, but I feel that there are missed opportunities if that really were the goal. The two speakers this morning, I would say, if I'm being kind, ragged the puck a little bit, because it's hard to fill an hour when you've only got two schedules, so there was a lot of—I might do the same today, so fair is fair.

So, Speaker, what do we have? We have Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act. The minister's introduction this morning—section 1 is giving the Minister of the Environment more flexibility with respect to the timing of approvals to proceed following the end of a comment period for a class environmental assessment. With a class environmental assessment, there is a 30-day waiting period. There is a 30-day period where hopefully governments would thoughtfully consider public input.

There may be times when there is limited public input, so we've heard the minister or the parliamentary assistant say today, "Then why take the time?" I think his exact words were, "You have to wait for no good reason." I get a little twitchy about the term "for no good reason." There may be examples—and I will be fair to the Minister of the Environment. We had a brief chat yesterday when I said, "What on earth is this bill about?" And he gave me a few examples of when the government felt there was a need to move forward more quickly.

My concern is giving a blank cheque to any of the government members, frankly—no disrespect to that particular minister, but any of the ministers. On a case-by-case basis, maybe, in the hands of a responsible government, there might be an opportunity, but in the hands of this government, I get twitchy that it will be taken advantage of, and there is nothing in the track record of this government that would put my mind at ease.

In fact, in today's hour-long presentation, half of it is going to be going through some of the Auditor General's recommendations and highlighting times when the government has maybe not held up their end of the deal when it comes to listening to public comments or providing that opportunity as they are supposed to. I'm going to make the case that I don't think it's a good idea to give a minister that opportunity to just skip that 30-day period entirely, because even though the government has said, "Oh, case by case, once in a while, maybe, if needed," well, what if "once in a while, if needed" becomes "all of the time" and it becomes standard practice?

Schedule 1 of this bill allows the environment minister to waive the 30-day waiting period required under the Environmental Assessment Act following the end of a

class EA comment period before granting approval to provide with an undertaking—often, or one example, an infrastructure project.

Schedule 2 of this bill is where we get into the infrastructure side, and it's supposedly in response to the Auditor General's 2017 report on real estate services, which criticized the poor management of government properties. I've read those recommendations, and I don't see where the government landed on this particular solution. I've heard the minister's justification for it, but it isn't clear to me from the recommendation, so I'm going to delve into that, and hopefully, the government can answer my concerns and my questions.

Back to schedule 1: It basically allows the minister to ignore public comments that are received following the completion of a class environmental assessment. There are lots of different kinds of environmental assessments, but in this case, a class EA has that 30-day waiting period, and this bill says ixnay on the 30 days. There could be, in some cases, as I said earlier—maybe there is a justifiable reason from time to time. Actually, the minister gave me an example, and the parliamentary assistant used an example: Bombardier. That was what the minister told me—that this one specific construction project, they wanted to make it faster. There was the opportunity, and the minister took it, to go to cabinet. The fact that something might take however long to get on the cabinet agenda has nothing to do with me; that has to do with the government's House.

But if there is such a need, there is a channel, there is a way to do that. So this blank cheque, I would say, is an overreach—or maybe overkill, in this case. Waiving the 30-day period might allow an important project to move forward without delay, but, again, I still think that it's the wrong way of going about it. We have seen that this government has repeatedly—I'm trying to be parliamentary. They have not shown that they have prioritized public input; they have not shown that they care about that public input. And I will make that case today, if anybody wants to get ready to heckle me. Particularly with respect to the environment, we have seen what looks like contempt—am I allowed to say that? It would appear that the government doesn't care to hear from the public. Examples like Bill 23: My colleague—I'll read her letter—wrote to the Auditor General and flagged how that process unfolded, and yes, that's a concern. Bill 109 will delve into that. You guys cut off the comment period two weeks early, if I recall, but I'll delve into that. It's not the best track record. What do they say: "the best predictor of future behaviour is past"? Work with us here.

There's so much to cover, and it's only two schedules. All right, buckle up, kids.

We'll start at schedule 1. Following the end of the comment period for class environmental assessment, waiving that period—this seems like it could be a minor change, but what if it isn't? What if there is public comment to be considered and the government says, "But we don't want to have to," and they just do away with that process? If there are no public comments, that's one thing, but there is no reason to trust that this government would

responsibly use any additional discretion it gives itself, however minor, when it comes to fast-tracking environmental assessments.

If we look back, in 2021, a court ruled that this government broke the law and violated the Environmental Bill of Rights when it passed a different schedule of Bill 197 without the legally required public consultation—and remember that the whole point of that 30 days is to consider what the public has offered. The public input is to supposedly consider it, maybe improve legislation or improve a decision or factor something in that might improve a project. Why on earth would you want to rush something like that? Thoughtful consideration shouldn't be something that—the former minister of MNR had said, “You have to wait for no good reason.” I wrote it down and highlighted it. I didn't like that. I may come back to that again.

**1540**

The Environmental Bill of Rights requires that the government notify and consult with the public before it makes a decision on a proposal that could affect the environment. Section 35 of the Environmental Bill of Rights also requires that the government consider public comments that are received during a public consultation before making that decision. The Environmental Bill of Rights doesn't specify how long the government should consider the comments, but it says that they're supposed to consider it. In practice, the government has regularly proceeded with a decision barely hours after public consultation periods end, with limited evidence that they've even considered it.

How many of us have sincerely served at committee, listening to people who have come before committee to make a bill better, to flag concerns for government, to offer expertise, and then no sooner than they're finished, the committee process is over—the committee hasn't even put its report forward yet, and we're already moving forward with the next step of the government making that law. Many times it has felt quite insulting to the deputants, to the people who come all the way to Queen's Park or who prepare their thoughtful comments, only to have the process steamroll them, really, not appropriately consider their input.

That said, and I hate to be cynical, but that 30 days, it's not even—if we maintain that 30 days, I challenge the government to do better anyway, to actually thoughtfully consider public input. I guess what I'm saying is, even if we keep it, I have no faith that the government will utilize that time as intended. I guess it's about making better legislation or just making faster and I guess more partisan legislation. That's the challenge of any government, right? How many pieces of legislation do you want to get through in your time here and how many of them do you want to endure? I guess that's up to every government. The next government in the province of Ontario will have to make tough choices too. I look forward to having to make those difficult decisions, but I know that, when we're government, we'll do what we have always done, which is listen to the folks in our communities and consider their input when crafting legislation.

Recently, the Auditor General warned this particular government that they violated the Environmental Bill of Rights again, since 2021, by passing Bill 109 at third reading while public consultations were still under way. The Auditor General later informed us, in response to the letter that the member from University–Rosedale had sent, that the government may have violated the Environmental Bill of Rights again by passing Bill 23 at third reading while public consultation of several schedules of that bill were still under way—not a good look.

I took the opportunity to reach out to some folks in the conservation authority world, and the concerns that they raised were I think the concerns that folks at home would have and I know folks on this bench would have, that this proposed schedule is one more attempt to limit the ability to carry out a fulsome review of potential impacts from a proposed undertaking subject to the EA process. As this person has shared, “The current EA process provides that there is a 30-day pause after the environmental assessment comment period. This pause is important as it allows the ministry to review all comments received and any concerns raised and then determine if the proposed undertaking should be subject to further study ... in order to address concerns and ensure that potential impacts can be mitigated.” The proposed legislation does away with that pause.

Speaker, I would say that a key principle of a successful environmental assessment would include a systematic evaluation of impacts from a proposed undertaking to determine environmental effects and how they can be mitigated. This proposed legislation and this change would undermine the ministry's ability to ensure a fulsome review. I don't feel like that should be the goal.

Let's unpack some of our history here in the province of Ontario. From the Auditor General of Ontario, December 2022, this report was Operation of the Environmental Bill of Rights. What I'm going to do is basically read the Auditor General's report—not the whole thing, don't worry, folks—highlighting a couple of pieces that will explain why I'm concerned about waiving this 30-day pause, waiving this 30-day opportunity for the ministry to consider public comments to ensure a fulsome review.

From the report, the heading is, “Ministries again chose not to follow EBR Act requirements to consult Ontarians about several environmentally significant proposals.

“The municipal affairs ministry did not meaningfully consult Ontarians before implementing significant changes to the Planning Act, and was not transparent about the outcome. In March 2022”—that was already a year ago—“the ministry introduced Bill 109, the More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022, in the Legislature. Bill 109 proposed significant changes to the Planning Act, including creating a new type of zoning order, at the request of a municipality, to which the provincial policy statement, provincial plans and municipal official plans would not apply, and limiting the amount of parkland that a municipality can require a developer to provide for developments in transit-oriented communities. The ministry posted a

proposal notice for these changes on the Environmental Registry for the minimum 30-day public consultation period, but the bill received third reading and passed into law before that comment period had ended, cutting short by two weeks Ontarians' opportunity to provide feedback that could influence the outcome."

It begs the question, how much does the government care about public input when they cut it short by two weeks?

Another section here:

"Ministries again chose not to follow EBR Act requirements to consult Ontarians about several environmentally significant proposals.

"Public consultation is at the heart of the EBR Act and its purposes. The EBR Act sets out rules for how a ministry must consult the public about its environmentally significant proposals. In particular, the act requires a minister to do everything in his or her power to consult Ontarians for a minimum of 30 days using the Environmental Registry before implementing an environmentally significant proposal. Further, the minister is required to take every reasonable step to ensure the public's comments are considered before making a decision."

I'm going to read that last section again: "The minister is required to take every reasonable step to ensure the public's comments are considered before making a decision." That is not what we have seen to date, and now what we have before us, again, is giving the minister the opportunity to waive that 30 days in a class environmental assessment entirely.

The Auditor General's office found in 2019, 2020 and 2021 that some ministries deliberately did not consult Ontarians about major environmentally significant decisions. Again, in 2022 we found that three ministries—municipal affairs, energy and environment—did not notify and consult Ontarians in accordance with EBR Act requirements before making several significant decisions.

This is not a good pattern. Maybe it's something that this government doesn't care about because they've already made the decision. That's sort of the "father knows best" thing that I pick up a lot from this government. They have an idea, they have a plan and they're going to move it forward. But what if there was something thoughtful and there was expertise out there to be learned from, to be gained from, to make it—whatever it is, whatever the piece of legislation or project—better or to prevent a problem? Why wouldn't you want that information? It's 30 days.

**1550**

As a side note—and hey, I've got the time. I can do whatever I want right now; well, within reason, Speaker. When you're talking to municipal partners—and I hope this government does that more often than I think they do. When they're talking to municipal partners, they're probably going to hear that there is a lot of improvement that could be made to the environmental assessment process. Municipality to municipality—they have feedback. Their engineers have feedback. So work with your partners. If you're wanting to move forward, if you are

wanting to take full advantage of that construction season, then make sure those projects that are ready to go are indeed ready to go. And when you're talking to municipal partners, they will highlight for you the ways we can streamline or make sure that projects are able to advance.

This way here feels to me like it was something the minister tripped over with this example of Bombardier—which sounds like it was a significant project and they wanted to make it faster. Maybe work on how things get to the cabinet table faster if that couldn't be done for three weeks, rather than this blank cheque.

Speaker, another piece here is that municipal affairs did not meaningfully consult Ontarians before implementing environmentally significant changes to the Planning Act.

It says, "On March 30, 2022, the municipal affairs ministry introduced Bill 109, More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022, in the Legislature. Bill 109 would make environmentally significant changes to the Planning Act. In particular, one proposed amendment would create a new type of minister's zoning order, at the request of a municipality, to which the provincial policy statement, provincial plans and municipal official plans would not apply. This could mean, for example, that such an order could approve a development that was inconsistent with policies that aim to protect significant wetlands, woodlands or prime agricultural land. Another proposed amendment would limit the amount of parkland, or equivalent cash, that a municipality can require a developer to provide in an area designated by the province as a 'high-density transit-oriented community.' The city of Toronto has estimated that, on the basis of this amendment, it could see a reduction in parkland dedication by 33%, affecting the quality of life for city residents far into the future."

The 30-day period ended April 29, 2022; "however, on April 14, 2022, Bill 109 received third reading and royal assent—two weeks before the end of the public comment period on the proposal." Well, that's not supposed to happen, and that's not allowed, but the ministry did not formally update the notice, using the normal—could I get water, please? Thank you. I've got a fair bit of time here. I've got to make it through, Speaker. "The ministry did not formally update the notice using the usual 'Update' banner at the top of the notice, which meant that the notice was not moved to the top of the list of recent notices on the main page of the registry, and interested Ontarians may not have been aware of the update."

Now I'm in the weeds, but I'm okay with being in the weeds because it makes the case that this government really doesn't seem to care about having people involved in the process or knowing about the changes. Even for something as simple as when the government has an update, there's a certain way they do it so that folks can see it and interested Ontarians are able to notice it and access it. And that minister was like—well, I won't say what the minister said because I wasn't there, but that ministry did not follow the normal procedure.

As it says here, "By continuing to solicit public comment after April 15, the ministry gave the false impression

that there was still an opportunity to inform decision-making around Bill 109. Indeed, some Ontarians continued to submit comments on the proposed amendments through the registry up and until April 25, 2022, 10 days after the decision was made.”

Well, that doesn't seem fair or right.

“The ministry's description of the effect of public comments on the decision,” according to the Auditor General, “was misleading. Only eight of the 32 comments submitted in response to the registry notice were submitted before Bill 109 passed... in making the decision, the ministry could not have considered the remaining 24 (75%) of the comments submitted after Bill 109 passed.”

So as the Auditor General said, “Clearly the ministry did not consult Ontarians about this proposal for the statutory minimum 30 days. Moreover, ministries are required to consider providing additional time for the public to comment on proposals in order to permit more informed consultation, and providing additional time for public consultation beyond the mandatory minimum was warranted in this case. The environmental significance of the proposed changes was great, and the proposal was part of a package of multiple, complex proposals, including a proposed guideline for the use of the new type of minister's zoning order ... Several municipalities expressed concern that the 30-day comment period was insufficient to provide an informed response.”

The Auditor General's office “asked the ministry for information about any steps the minister took to ensure the public received notice of the proposed Planning Act changes ... The ministry responded: ‘While the ministry posted Bill 109 on the Environmental Registry ‘the day it was introduced for a 30-day consultation period, the passage of all bills, including Bill 109, is determined by the will of the Legislature, not the ministry or the minister.’” I don't know. That feels like a snarky response.

Rather than prioritizing public comment and access or recognizing that good governance is about listening to the people, considering their comments—none of that here.

Speaker, the Auditor General points out, in a section called “Many Ministries Repeatedly Omitted Information in Environmental Registry Notices—Undermining Transparency, Accountability and Meaningful Public Participation”—she says: “When ministries do not provide sufficient information in a proposal notice, there is a risk that Ontarians will not be able to meaningfully participate in a government's environmental decision-making, as intended by the Environmental Bill of Rights Act. “In turn, the government misses out on the benefits of public participation, including improved environmental decisions and outcomes.”

Here's another case where the government, on purpose, with this schedule, is missing out on “the benefits of public participation, including improved environmental decisions and outcomes.”

Speaker, here is an article: It says, “Opposition Parties Wary of PCs' New Bill to Shortcut Certain Environmental Assessments.” It says that, after the story “was first published, a member” in the Minister of the Environment's “office ... stressed that ... the changes only apply to

class environmental assessments” and “that large transit projects ‘would likely’ still be subject to a full environment assessment.” “Would likely”—so I guess it's cross our fingers and just trust them. It's not the story that you've been telling here.

We heard from Environmental Defence. They have said about this 30-day waiting period that “it's a time when the minister is supposed to be considering, and the public is supposed to be debating, whether to refer a project for a more detailed assessment.” But instead, this government and this minister have said, “No, we don't need it.”

Man, I thought I would run out of material before I ran out of time. I'd love to go back and tell the story about Duffins Creek.

**1600**

While I've got the former minister from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry—remember, Speaker, when they declassified the wetland? I do. That was when facing massive public pushback and there was a lot of public input from the environmental side and the municipalities.

The town of Ajax had said, “As the minister responsible for protecting our natural resources including provincially significant wetlands ... allowing up to four million sq. ft. of warehousing and distribution space to be built on 57 acres of key natural heritage and hydrological features—including” provincially significant wetlands, “significant woodland, and significant wildlife habitat—would be precedent-setting. It would send a very strong message to developers and communities about the priorities of your government, and should not be taken lightly.” There are some fighty words there, right? These were strong words from across the community.

That story played out. There were some lessons learned, I think, on the government benches. But there were really important lessons learned across the community, which is that their voices don't matter and, “We'd better band together in order to be heard.” So now, with the 30-day comment period at risk, I worry that the public's ability to influence government decisions to shape policy will be further diminished.

Speaker, I'm going to move on to the second half of the bill. I appreciate with this schedule 2 that I'd had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Infrastructure a couple of specific questions about it. As my colleague had requested—traditionally there was a briefing that would be offered when a new piece of government legislation hit the table so that opposition critics would be able to do their jobs to the best of their ability, ask those specific questions and provide, hopefully, a thoughtful critique and raise issues, but this is only a two-schedule bill so there's not necessarily a lot of meat to it. But what I want to know is the implications. What I want to know is its effect and its impact. So, as I said, I have no idea what problem this bill is meant to solve.

Schedule 2 prohibits some entities from owning or managing real estate and would require them to hand over their real estate interest to the Ministry of Infrastructure, presumably to be managed by Infrastructure Ontario.



There are 34 agencies that manage their own properties right now, and this government has chosen—and I don't know how they chose—these 14 of 34. I can't provide comment on what sets them apart but maybe there will be more after this; I don't know. These entities are Agricorp; Education Quality and Accountability Office, or EQAO; Province of Ontario Council for the Arts; Ontario Media Development Corp.; Ontario Trillium Foundation; Ontario Financing Authority; the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council; Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp., also known as Destination Ontario; Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario; Ontario Securities Commission; Human Rights Legal Support Centre; Intellectual Property Ontario; Skilled Trades Ontario; and Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

The government's press release suggested that these changes will address the 2017 Auditor General's report that has "identified opportunities for the province to deliver the real estate portfolio more efficiently through initiatives that centralize authority and decision-making."

As far as I can tell, in the 45 pages filled with about 11 recommendations, the Auditor General's report didn't say anything about poor management by agencies like the 14 that I've mentioned, EQAO or Agricorp. It didn't say anything about their poor management, but the AG report delved into how poorly Infrastructure Ontario was managing the government's real estate portfolio. The Auditor General did not recommend that these agencies hand over their holdings to Infrastructure Ontario.

When I asked the minister about that, she talked about optimization of office space. That was indeed one of the recommendations, but I am curious how this accomplishes that. If managing them means having access to their books and being able to figure out square footage or who is using what—I don't know, but I know there's a lot to management. In fact, Infrastructure Ontario doesn't directly manage the real estate holdings that it oversees. It contracts property management services out to private providers. The providers and the services were quite fairly and comprehensively criticized in the AG report. The AG criticized the procurement of these contracts for being uncompetitive. The fact that they were being awarded to contractors who had a poor track record, whose clients who were having their snow plowed or having the lights changed or whatever—the building management had not good stuff to say; really low client satisfaction. But again, this was then a property manager that was re-awarded a contract. The AG criticized Infrastructure Ontario's poor oversight of these contracts.

In short, this bill doesn't do anything to address the actual problems that were cited by the Auditor General in the 2017 report with respect to the Minister of Infrastructure's poor oversight of Infrastructure Ontario's poor oversight of its private contractors' poor oversight of government properties. So as far as the Auditor General had highlighted that Infrastructure Ontario was the problem, this bill would make that problem worse by giving Infrastructure Ontario even more properties to manage, maybe poorly.

There were a lot of recommendations with clear opportunities for the government to make those corrections and make things better, and honestly, I suppose it's possible that Agricorp or EQAO or the Human Rights Legal Support Centre—maybe they do an even worse job of managing their real estate portfolio than Infrastructure Ontario and its private contractors do. Maybe further centralization will improve the management of these properties, at least up to the level of Infrastructure Ontario's poor management.

But I have no evidence that any of these agencies do a poor job. Does the government? Is that part of the story? Because this morning, when we heard the Minister of Infrastructure give her remarks, I felt like we were watching an infomercial, and it was a positive one. It was talking about the great work that all of these agencies do, like Skilled Trades Ontario or the Ontario Securities Commission. It thanked them. We were like in a brochure for each of them.

But I haven't heard yet how they feel about this and what will that look like when they want their snow plowed. Do they call the minister directly? Because that's something that—we have transferred control of these properties to the Minister of Infrastructure. I would like to know how that would make things better.

I did hear stuff about optimizing and efficiencies, but what does that actually look like for the folks who can't get—their property isn't being properly maintained? Do they call the government? Because I know how well that's going for folks at home who are picking up the phone and trying to get help from the government: The voicemail doesn't get checked; the phone numbers aren't connected. If you go on INFO-GO, it would seem that nobody works in the government ministry or we're down to a skeleton crew here. I don't know; adding more to the government's plate—I would love to know how that will make things better.

Speaker, I'm going to delve into the 2017 Auditor General's report on real estate services. I had the opportunity years ago to sit at public accounts and listen to these discussions and be a part of them. They're with Infrastructure Ontario. It was actually kind of a fun little exercise, a very worthwhile exercise to go back and review these recommendations, because I remember being a part of the conversation at the time.

#### 1610

One of the things that the Auditor General sets out to frame our understanding of the government's responsibility when it comes to their real estate portfolio is the following: "Infrastructure Ontario is responsible for helping its client ministries and agencies find space by either matching their needs to available space in government properties or leasing other space within the private sector. It is also responsible for managing these properties, including the costs of cleaning, repairs and maintenance, security, utilities, property taxes, and, for government-owned land and buildings, their sale or demolition. Infrastructure Ontario has an external property and land manager, which is a real estate services company, that provides

all the operating and maintenance work for Infrastructure Ontario's client ministries and agencies. Further, Infrastructure Ontario is responsible for overseeing capital projects, namely the construction, rehabilitation and renovation of government properties."

Some of the things that I said in there—I'm wondering how the minister feels about being responsible and having the property management transferred to her responsibility. Again, it's cleaning, repairs and maintenance, security, utilities, property taxes for government-owned lands and buildings, sale or demolition—all of that in these buildings.

This is quite a list, these 14. I'm not suggesting that these properties are up for sale. I do know that the EQAO building that's on Yonge is prime real estate. So I think all of us are going to be watching this with interest to figure out what is actually the goal here, because "optimizing office space" feels hollow. This is a lot of real estate.

The Auditor General's audit "determined that Infrastructure Ontario's management of government properties was impacted in part by weaknesses in the enterprise realty service agreement"—so in the actual agreement between Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Infrastructure. "The agreement does not set out any mandatory, minimum standard of performance for managing the costs of capital projects. It also does not set out timelines for meeting the accommodation standard for office space designed to ensure that existing government properties are used efficiently, and timelines for maintaining the state of government-owned properties to the agreement's standard"—yikes.

I'll just read the headlines here, or the top sections of the report and recommendations. These were what they highlighted: "The design of a request for proposals (RFP) approach attracted few bids for the management of 7,500 capital projects." Remember, it's not Infrastructure Ontario when you pick up the phone and say, "Hey, can you come shovel my snow?" They've got property managers that do this. But it attracted very few bids for the management.

Another problem: "Better oversight of external project managers' procurement methods for capital projects is needed."

"Infrastructure Ontario is using preliminary estimates to prioritize which capital projects to do."

"Minimal incentive exists for external project managers to manage costs"—that was a fun section to read. There is no incentive for them to manage costs at all. There's no disincentive for them to keep the costs careful.

"External project managers do not have an incentive to complete projects on time."

"Capital repair funds used to fund operating costs for managing government properties"—that's a problem.

"Infrastructure Ontario provides insufficient information on operating and maintenance services to its client ministries and agencies."

Here's one—and I'll focus on this one because the Minister of Infrastructure, in response to my question

about how transferring the responsibility of these properties to her will make the world a better place, how this bill makes things better, had talked to me about office space optimization. Well, from the Auditor General's report: "Office space per person exceeds the ministry standard. Over \$170 million in office accommodation costs could be saved annually if effective steps are taken to reduce the space occupied per government staff person to comply with the 2012 office accommodation standard of 180 rental square feet per person set by the Ministry of Infrastructure. Neither the ministry nor Infrastructure Ontario has set a goal for when this standard should be met."

If we're going to talk about office optimization, where is that in the bill? When do we get to see that the ministry has indeed set targets? That was a criticism, that they haven't set a goal for when this standard should be met, and it's a standard that they have set.

"Almost \$19 million was spent" in one year "on operating and maintaining 812 vacant buildings."

"One private-sector company with a history of poor performance is still being awarded new contracts by Infrastructure Ontario." These are some concerns that were raised by the Auditor General, and we don't see them answered in this bill, which says, "Hey, this bill exists because we're answering the Auditor General's concerns."

The conclusion by the Auditor General in this report was, "Infrastructure Ontario could maintain government properties more cost-effectively by better overseeing the companies that it has engaged to provide most capital repair and property management services to ensure costs for capital repairs and property management services are reasonable and projects are completed on time. As well, existing government properties could be used more efficiently, with people occupying less space per person. The agreement between Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Infrastructure needs better performance standards to incentivize Infrastructure Ontario to manage and maintain government properties more cost-effectively."

We're just at the beginning of the report. If the government wanted to go through carefully and look at each recommendation and try and answer that—because there's a lot of money being spent. There are some really tangible suggestions about how to find efficiencies. The office optimization is an interesting one. I'm not arguing that that's a concern if it's raised in here and the minister recognizes it as well, but what does that look like? Now that the minister has this holistic control of these properties, how do you figure out the number of square feet per person? What is that going to look like? What is the plan going to look like with each of those agencies?

One of the other concerns is that the project managers who were receiving such poor scores on the customer satisfaction survey that Infrastructure Ontario had completed—and these are client ministries. These aren't just random folks; these are people that we rely on, that the government relies on, and they had some major concerns about how they were being treated, everything from salting the sidewalks and snowplowing to basic maintenance in the building, that they weren't getting the service

they needed. This particular company—what does it say here?—“gave it scores ranging between 25% and 69% in these years: The required score to pass the performance measure was 80%.” That’s how low it was being assessed or rated by client ministries.

“Infrastructure Ontario did not consider past performance when it assessed”—it only got three bids and it didn’t consider those scores. It just gave it to them. And the penalty for doing a poor job was set by the property manager. So you’re policing yourself and setting your own penalty rate, and the government is like, “Oh, that’s fine.”

“The penalties that could be levied for poor performance, such as projects not on time, on budget or of poor quality, in Project Manager B’s new contract were lower than” the other project manager, and that’s because they set them lower. In the Auditor General’s report, “if Project Manager B failed to meet all performance measures it would” only “lose a maximum of 25% of its annual management fee,” whereas the company that didn’t have bad ratings gave itself a higher penalty. They would lose 45%. You’re asking the fox to police the henhouse here.

“Infrastructure Ontario did not attempt to negotiate to increase the amount of its penalty to bring it more in line with” the other company. What are they doing? And now you’ve given them 14 more properties, I think, or the minister; I’m not exactly sure what this will look like. I guess we wait until regulation.

**1620**

So here’s a recommendation: The Auditor General recommends “that Infrastructure Ontario review and adjust accordingly its process for procuring project management services”—you’ve now added 14 more agencies to these folks—“to formally prepare a new business case, ... include standard penalties for all contract managers on future RFPs; and incorporate past performance.” If they do a garbage job, why are you giving them more contracts?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** They do it all the time.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Oh, I know—all the time.

Recommendation 2: “We recommend that Infrastructure Ontario obtain sufficient procurement data from external capital project managers, including all bids, change orders and bid evaluations.” That’s not in this bill.

Recommendation 3: “In order to ensure the fair and economical procurement of project contractors, we recommend that Infrastructure Ontario obtain sufficient information on procurements conducted by external project managers, and analyze this information to determine whether there are any trends that suggest non-cost-effective procurement practices and ... implement its planned controls over external project managers.” It goes on—not in this bill.

There’s a section: “Ineffective measures to hold external project managers accountable for controlling costs and time to complete projects.” Why aren’t you reining them in? This is about efficiencies?

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** I apologize for interrupting the speaker, but there are a number of

sidebar conversations. Just keep it down a little bit, please. Thank you.

I apologize. Back to the member from Oshawa.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

So in the last little bit of time here, I’m going to read this section, because this is what my concern is about these 14 agencies whose properties are being transferred to the Minister of Infrastructure. If they’re going to find themselves at the mercy of the same operating and maintenance services as being provided by these contracted-out project managers or the contracted-out services, I feel badly for them if this hasn’t been remedied.

Again, from the Auditor General’s report, these are just some client ministries. These are your ministries, okay? These are not random folks.

“Client ministries’ written comments on operating and maintenance services....

“We have also found that new contracts for cleaning, snow removal, etc. are tendered by [the external property and land manager] and services have been removed or frequency of services have been changed. We have no input in these changes and in some instances the [external property and land manager’s] on-site maintenance staff are not even made aware of the change. For instance I noticed that the parking area (at one building) was not being cleaned as it normally was and I mentioned it to [the external property and land manager] after some time [it] told me that the cleaning of the parking garage was removed from the last parking contract. After many months they have hired the building cleaning company on a separate contract to clean the garage.”

Again, we’re in the weeds here, but folks have a job to do. The government is navigating these contracts. It’s contracted out, and nobody is paying attention. What kind of management is that? And now you’ve got 14 new agencies who get to be a part of this management family? I wonder how they will feel.

Another client ministry said, “[Regarding] interior cleaning, [we] have yet to see a schedule of what is done where/when even though we have asked a number of times.”

Here’s another one. They used to have an agreement in the early 2000s “that detailed all the services for the building and who had the responsibilities to perform those services.... Currently, occupancy agreements provided to [our ministry] do not identify individual buildings or provide specific details of services provided for them. We no longer have a quick reference document that can confirm what services are provided for ministry-occupied buildings, and must contact IO ... or their service provider to get those details. If we request a copy of a lease from IO, typically only a portion of the applicable segment of the agreement is provided. If we request a copy of a service contract, IO does not provide a copy, only some details as they deem relevant. This can be an issue as illustrated in a very recent example. [Our ministry] questioned the cleaning services being provided to another building. [Our ministry] was initially told by IO that certain services were not part of the cleaning contract, and [we] acquired a third-

party vendor to perform those services. It was recently discovered, after much persistence on [our] part for IO to verify the contract, that those services were in fact included in the original contract. [Our ministry] has been paying twice and we are now in the process of rectifying this issue and hoping to be reimbursed for the error. We have estimated that we paid approximately \$16,000 unnecessarily over the last five years.”

Just another day in Infrastructure Ontario’s management portfolio.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** So that’s why we’re changing it.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The government across the way is saying, “Well, that’s why”—and I missed it, but I’m excited for him to tell me in the questions and comments. I’m going to guess that what he said was, “So that’s why we’re taking 14 more agencies and putting them into that portfolio.” I’m confused about how that makes things better—and maybe it does. I would like the government to spell out how this is going to make things more efficient or better when we’ve got these examples of people who are at the mercy of these maintenance contractors that aren’t doing what they’re supposed to, and then IO doesn’t sound like an effective manager in these cases. So what’s going to be different at Infrastructure Ontario, and how come they’re not the focus of this bill? Are the agencies such bad managers of their own property that that had to be taken away from them? What is it that you’re hoping to gain by bringing them under the IO umbrella? Maybe there are solutions there. I’m excited to hear.

Speaker, recognizing that we are coming to the end of an hour—and I appreciate that when I said, “How am I supposed to fill an hour?” my party whip said, “Oh, you can fill an hour.” Yep, I guess so.

I’ll distill it down here: We have a bill in front of us that I’m surprised they have brought forward as its own stand-alone bill. Normally, we see these types of amendments or schedules put into a larger government bill. But as I said, this sort of solves a problem I can’t quite put my finger on. It’s been a day and a half; I’m trying to understand what motivates them, and hearing things like “efficiencies” and “holistic,” whatever—that doesn’t mean anything to the folks who go to work every day in one of those properties. What will it mean for them? I guess I would like to know, what is the end goal? Is this a part of the story of improving things as per the 14 recommendations of the Auditor General for the real estate services portfolio?

And when it comes to the class environmental assessment, that 30-day waiting period, we’re holding our breath about how often that will be used. This government’s track record on how it treats public input and consultation on the environment is poor. I would say the public is treated with disdain, frankly, and often so is the environment. Perhaps the government can take today’s debate as an opportunity to walk us through how the environment will continue to be protected and how this piece of legislation, indeed, will not just reduce efficiencies but make the world a better place, because I don’t see it.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** To the member from Oshawa: The Reducing Inefficiencies Act, the bill we’re talking about today, Bill 69, is about being fiscally prudent, saving taxpayer dollars, cutting red tape and practising good governance. Speaker, we’re also looking at, as you’ve heard earlier today, how we can reduce administrative burden on standard infrastructure projects while maintaining our strong environmental and consultative processes.

Through you, Speaker, to the member from Oshawa, can she today, given what I’ve just described, tell us whether she’s going to support this legislation, yes or no?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Well, far be it from me to heckle, but I was. As the member was asking the question and highlighting what the government says that this bill is doing, I wanted to know how: How is it reducing inefficiencies? How is it streamlining? How is it doing that? Because I don’t see it, and the hour-long lead from the government this morning told a lot of stories about the good things that these agencies are doing, but this is kind of a big deal to pull it all under the minister. How does that make the world a better place? How are we supposed to trust a government whose track record on the environment is brutal? You can spin it however you want, but it is brutal.

1630

I don’t know. I can’t answer that. How? How does this do those things? Walk me through it.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** There’s no way that the Auditor General, given the 2014 report, would recommend that Infrastructure Ontario take more responsibility for 14 other agencies. It does lend a question: What is the motivation here?

One can only think of what’s happening at Ontario Place. Now, Ontario Place is one of those cultural, iconic places in Toronto. It is one of those special places that brings people together. The government of Ontario owns it, and yet they have contracted out, just as IO will end up doing, to a couple of agencies that have determined that a spa will celebrate the original vision of Ontario Place; that it will be a destination for all Ontarians, a spa; be a vibrant waterfront and open space, a spa; achieve environmental resilience and sustainability—a spa.

Does the member from Oshawa have any concerns that this opens the door to removing that layer of accountability and oversight on these important infrastructure projects?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** When it comes to oversight or accountability, transparency, I have a lot of concerns, as most Ontarians do, around these big infrastructure projects. When the government keeps shoving them into that P3 closet where we don’t have an opportunity to know what’s going on in there, we just have to wait until it gets handed back and if it gets handed back with the delays and the costs.

We’ve seen that as being part of this government’s approach, so everything they have been doing is kind of like handed away from government to a contracted service

provider or consortium or a bunch of financiers. I'm sure they know better than government. I actually have more faith in the ministry workers, frankly, a lot more than it would seem this government does.

Do I have concerns? Yes. I don't think this government has the same definition of "accountability" or "transparency" that the rest of Ontarians do.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you to the member from Oshawa. I don't think the member actually understands what we're actually doing here, the way she's spoken about this 30-day waiver. This only gives the minister the ability and the authority to waive the 30-day waiting period after the assessment has been fully completed and consulted on—after. These are about standard projects like waste water and water in a municipality, things that municipalities need badly, and they want this.

I'm going to ask the member, categorically: Is what you're telling us here today that you would rather see those projects wait another 30 days rather than allowing a municipality to get quicker access to clean drinking water?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Am I allowed to refer my question to my colleague?

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** No.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** No. Okay.

I don't know that any government member should be asking questions about accessing clean drinking water. They have a responsibility where that's concerned. But I will answer the question that he asked about "do I understand?" Yes. This is about the minister taking the adequate time to consider the comments. As I said earlier, if there is a big project and municipalities and all folks are rowing in the same direction and there aren't the community comments, the minister does have the opportunity to go to cabinet if, in this case, he wants to make things go faster. That's what has happened in a case that the PA mentioned earlier. Do I want the minister to thoughtfully consider any of those comments—it's a chance to consider them? I do.

On a case-by-case basis, then make the case, don't write a blank cheque. People in Ontario don't—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions? I recognize the member for St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the member for Oshawa: The legislation today further waters down environmental protections. Do we trust that it will be used responsibly?

Earlier today, the Minister of Housing was asked a question about selling off the greenbelt. What happened next was peculiar. He lifted up the housing task force report and asked if the member had read it. He knows that nowhere in that report did their experts recommend selling off the greenbelt—in fact, the opposite. It said that shortage of land isn't the problem and land is available in areas outside of the greenbelt.

My question: How can we trust a government that is willing to gaslight the Ontario public on greenbelt selling-

off, pretending it was a recommendation by housing experts—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the one comment, please.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I withdraw.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Thank you. To the member from Oshawa for a response.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So my takeaway is, do I trust them? No. Do I trust them on the greenbelt? No.

On page 10 of their task force report, they said, "No, we can do this without the greenbelt."

The government's own words had the criteria that in order for land to be even taken out of the greenbelt, it had to meet those criteria—and one of them was about it being serviced or adjacent to service. I know, in Durham, they don't meet that criteria. According to the government, they have said, "If it doesn't meet the criteria, it will be returned to the greenbelt." So if I trusted them, I would know that land like that, like in Durham region, would be returned to the greenbelt. Feel free to prove me wrong.

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

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you to the member for Oshawa for her comments. There was a lot of, "I don't know if you guys do this"—and then a drive-by smear, if you will, of the government.

One of the things she said which I just want to get on the record is that she doesn't know if we consult with municipalities. I can tell you that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has set up regular meetings with municipalities all through our last term of government. He has probably done it more than any other minister, ever.

The member did say—and I was listening intently—that she doesn't want us to be sending things to consultants and finance experts all the time and that she has more faith in government. This legislation, if passed, would modify the real estate authority of the 14 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with the ability to oversee and manage.

So I think, based on what you said, you should support this legislation. Am I right?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** That was so weird. That's not what I said. When I was talking about consultants and financiers, I was talking about P3s and just handing a project over to bankers and saying, "Hey, make construction decisions. We're going to trust you, and then get it back to us." That's what I was talking about—the P3 model. How we interpret things is personal.

I don't know what else she asked. She can ask again.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** That is all the time we have for questions and answers. It is now time for further debate.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023, that would, if passed, make amendments to the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011, and complementary amendments to nine other acts, and amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act.

Madam Speaker, the people of this province re-elected our government to build Ontario now and for generations to come. They are expecting us to be fiscally prudent by making smarter and more effective decisions, while also respecting how tax dollars are being spent, and, of course, by cutting red tape by removing and modernizing outdated regulations.

That's why our government is taking the necessary steps to unlock our province's economic potential, deliver better jobs, and provide cost savings for families and businesses across Ontario. We have already made significant progress. For example, we have unlocked thousands of cost savings for taxpayers and businesses; we have seen thousands of more people trained for rewarding careers in the skilled trades. We are also delivering one of the most ambitious infrastructure plans with a historic investment of more than \$159 billion for over 10 years. Our government was re-elected on a promise to protect and grow Ontario's economy and build our communities so that the people of this province are supported, and we are delivering.

**1640**

Our government has a plan, and that's why I'm proud to rise in the House today and speak to our government's Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. If passed, our proposed measures would help cut red tape, enhance fiscal management, boost the economy and save taxpayers money. We are practising good governance for the people of this province, and this bill we are proposing contains two initiatives.

The first proposed initiative would better maintain and better manage real estate. If passed, this legislation would establish a framework to modify the real estate authority of 14 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with control over real estate previously under the control of the prescribed entities.

Madam Speaker, each of these 14 entities has a critical role in health, in well-being and economic prosperity of Ontario. Their work impacts many different sectors that people in our province depend on daily, from schools to businesses, health care, the digital sector, human rights, equity, the skilled trades, arts, media, tourism, agriculture, fire safety and so many. We know that the past several years have brought significant challenge to each of these industries, yet members within each of these entities have shown great leadership and adapted to keep their work, programs and services moving forward.

If passed, this legislation would create a framework to centralize the real estate authority of these entities, which would reduce red tape and create a more efficient process so these entities can better support the people of Ontario.

These 14 entities would also be able to leverage the government's realty model for office space. This model was developed to support the government's commitment to plan and manage provincial real estate assets to ensure consistent, efficient and sustainable realty services across the entire general office realty portfolio.

The expected outcome would be a better managed government office realty portfolio that provides a responsive client service, provides strategic real estate decision-

making and reduces red tape, optimizes existing funds and real estate and reinvests savings to address the market inflation, capital repair and rehabilitation.

Bill 69, if passed, would amend the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011, and nine other acts, including the AgriCorp Act, 1996; Arts Council Act; Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021; Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993; Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996; Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario Act, 2016; Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; Human Rights Code; Securities Commission Act, 2021.

Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize that real estate is one of our government's greatest resources, but currently, accountability for this portfolio is highly distributed among many entities. Each of these entities have individual processes and protocols for decisions and for transactions. Our proposed initiative is the first step in allowing our government to increase operating efficiency. It would also support our objective to act as one holistic organization when it comes to overseeing and managing the real estate portfolio of ministries and entities.

Since 2020, the Ministry of Infrastructure has consulted with key stakeholders, including the 14 entities and their eight oversight ministries. The oversight ministries of these 14 entities support our initiative of acting as a more holistic organization. That's because these changes would help reduce duplication and will help reduce the burdens for ministries, entities and our government.

We are confident that this bill, if passed, would help ensure that real estate expertise within our government is being leveraged and that decisions are made strategically so we can continue to make the smart strategic decisions and investments that people across this province deserve and need.

The second initiative within this bill will help reduce delays with changes to the Environmental Assessment Act while ensuring continued environmental oversight of class environmental assessment projects.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would allow the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, on a project-specific basis, to alter or waive the 30-day waiting period for class environmental assessment projects. This would bring our government one step closer to modernizing an almost 50-year-old environmental process that is slow, costly and burdensome, without compromising environmental standards and protections.

Madam Speaker, I really want to highlight this portion here: without any compromise in terms of environmental standards and protections.

Our people and businesses across the province face red tape and regulatory barriers, and we are focused on easing those burdens and making Ontario better—better for people by assessing and modernizing important regulations, and better for businesses by removing unnecessary processes that hold them back. By providing new and innovative solutions, we continue to improve quality of life across the province.

The proposed measures in this bill include concrete action that would provide lasting solutions. For example:

- increasing operating efficiencies by implementing a more structured and effective way to manage real estate;
- ensuring our government can better align our policies to enhance government-wide decision-making capabilities through using a more centralized, holistic approach;
- reducing regulatory burden for certain class environmental assessment projects to help get projects built faster; and
- saving time and money that could be spent on other projects that matter most to the people in our province.

The benefits of a more centralized decision-making real estate model, in addition to our amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act, are very, very clear. I'm proud to say that this is part of our government's promise to make life better for the people of Ontario. That's why we are consistently taking action to develop new, flexible, innovative and responsible plans to navigate new challenges and build Ontario for the future.

That includes rethinking and modernizing our approach to managing and making decisions about our real estate portfolio. For example, our government is looking at new ways to assess and upcycle real estate properties that sit unused and empty, to better meet the needs of our province. We are doing this by implementing a more efficient process to identify buildings and properties that are no longer needed to deliver programs and assess them for economic and social-purpose opportunities. By revitalizing surplus government properties, we are saving taxpayers' money while building stronger communities and increasing our potential to deliver more services. We're also working to distribute a great portion of the agency workforce across the province and boost economic growth in these communities.

**1650**

Our government has heard very loud and clear from businesses and workers that they expect more from our government, which is why we took action to drive this change. Just last year, we announced that our government is working with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in planning the relocation of its Toronto-based head office to London. This is part of our government's Community Jobs Initiative, which aims to distribute the greater portion of the provincial agency workforce across the province to foster economic growth in these communities. This initiative expands, relocates and grows agencies' presence in communities across Ontario so more people have access to high-quality jobs.

We have made it clear our government will take action for the people of Ontario. We will get shovels in the ground to build highways, to build hospitals, transit and other key projects that will boost our economy and improve our day-to-day lives. This is part of our plan to build Ontario. We are also working to ensure our communities are able to access faster and more reliable and seamless transit. Ontario is seizing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build vibrant, mixed-use communities across transit stations across the greater Golden Horseshoe. These transit-oriented communities, also known as TOCs, will improve transit access and bring more housing, jobs,

retail and public amenities within the short distance of transit.

We are also redeveloping Ontario Place into a world-class year-round destination with family entertainment, parkland, waterfront access and more. Repair work has already started on the iconic Cinesphere, Pod complex and bridges. This spring, we expect to begin construction to bring the site services up to modern standards including water, sewer, gas and electrical systems. It has been an entire decade since Ontario Place closed its attractions, and our development project will create a beautiful and cohesive landscape across the site that will integrate the improved areas with enhanced parkland and public space. With our investments, Ontario Place will be a destination where families near and far can come together to create lifelong memories.

These projects are just a few examples of how we are investing in infrastructure for the people of Ontario. Our government has always been open and transparent with the people of Ontario. And we know that these are challenging times. But by working harder, smarter and more efficiently, we are continuing to build on our previous commitments. We are continuing to explore ways to improve quality of life for the people of Ontario. That's why every day, in every corner of our province, our government is getting the job done.

Modernizing government process and oversight, reducing regulatory burden and saving taxpayers' dollars through improved efficiency measures like the ones we are proposing today are key to building Ontario. It is key to strengthening communities and ensuring our prosperity today and for many years in the future. Together with the initiative from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, this bill, if passed, would cut red tape. Madam Speaker, the changes that our government is bringing forward would help build Ontario's economy and prosperity.

I will now turn it over to parliamentary assistant Amarjot Sandhu to talk more about the proposed legislation and Ontario's plan to build.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member from Brampton West.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** I think it's question and answer and then—do I have only two minutes?

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** You have only two minutes and 41 seconds.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** I am pleased to rise today to speak briefly about Bill 69, Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. This bill, if passed, would create a framework to improve the management of real estate, and it would bring efficiency changes to the Environmental Assessment Act.

Madam Speaker, our government has a bold transformative plan to build Ontario. That is why we're continuously looking at new and innovative ways to improve efficiencies, save taxpayers' money and improve quality of life across our province. Bill 69, Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023, is an important step in our plan and, if passed, it would support timely decision-making.

Our proposed measures have the potential to allow for faster deployment of critical projects. They would help

reduce duplication and burden, and by making minor changes to the Environmental Assessment Act, we have the potential to reduce delays in construction projects without compromising environmental safety. The bill, if passed, would help cut red tape and streamline processes so we can continue to practise good governance on behalf of the people of Ontario. This is all a part of our plan to enhance fiscal management and save taxpayers' dollars.

Madam Speaker, as part of this plan, I would like to take a few moments to highlight some of the work we have been doing over the past few years to support our communities and economy. Our ministry plays a critical role in the quality of life enjoyed by all Ontarians. Infrastructure is the backbone of a strong and healthy economy, and it is essential for the quality of life of all Ontarians, both today and in the future. When a new road, highway, transit line or bridge is built, we're helping hard-working Ontarians get home to their families safer and faster. When new infrastructure is installed to improve access to high-speed Internet, we provide families with the opportunity to work and educate their children from home. And when we build hospitals and long-term-care homes, we're ensuring our most vulnerable members are provided the care they deserve.

That is why our government is building Ontario like never before, laying the foundation for a stronger and more productive Ontario. We have dedicated over \$159 billion over the next decade to support priority projects such as transit, highways, schools, hospitals and long-term care. That is the province's most ambitious plan in its history, and it includes so many projects that will help build a stronger, more productive Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** That is all the time we have for debate. We're now moving on to questions and answers.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** The government is proposing legislation that will waive the waiting period for the ministry to review environmental assessments and public comments. Now, that might not be a problem in some situations, but the record of this government on environmental makes me worried.

Let me quote the government's Housing Affordability Task Force: "Land is available, both inside the existing built-up areas and on undeveloped land outside greenbelts." And yet the Premier is selling off the greenbelt just so wealthy developers and donors to this government's party can profit.

Speaker, through you, to the member opposite: Can you explain how we can trust that the ministry won't weaponize this change so they can ignore public comments, ignore communities and ignore concerns about the environment, and fast-track through projects and enrich their friends?

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Response? I recognize the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

1700

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Madam Speaker, through you, to the member opposite: To be crystal clear, the environmental assessment standards will remain in place.

The EA process is not being compromised. The EA process requires the proponents to assess potential environmental impacts, identify mitigation measures, consult with Indigenous communities, the public and stakeholders before the project will proceed.

The 30-day waiver is after the successful completion of the environmental assessment if there is no other concern in the assessment.

That being said, we are almost one step closer to modernizing a 50-year-old burdensome process.

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** My question is for the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park. The member talked about modernizing and modifying the real estate authority of 14 different agencies. Has the government consulted with these agencies ahead of the legislation being introduced in the House?

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you to the member from Burlington for this question. The government has been consulting with the 14 agencies as well as the eight oversight ministries in terms of the impact of the proposed legislative amendments and discussing how the government can have a holistic organization with an efficient manner to manage and oversee the real estate portfolio.

Having said that, the 2017 Auditor General's report, as well as other third-party reports, has been identifying these opportunities to have an efficient way to manage and oversee the real estate portfolio. Since then, our government has been in consultation with these entities and our stakeholders and, of course, all the oversight ministries to make sure that we come up with a plan that reduces the burdens—

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park. It's interesting that the ministry is transferring all of this responsibility over to Infrastructure Ontario, because the Auditor General identified so many concerns about their oversight and their management. To be clear, Infrastructure Ontario actually contracts out their property management, and they can't even do that well, Madam Speaker.

What is the rationale for moving these 14 agencies into Infrastructure Ontario, because that's likely where it's going to end up, when the Auditor General—and thank goodness we have an Auditor General who actually shines a light on the inefficiencies and the lack of accountability on every government. I mean, let's be honest, the Liberals kept her very, very busy, but this government has got her working non-stop. What's the rationale for moving these agencies into Infrastructure Ontario?

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you to the member opposite for that question. The rationale is for our government to be fiscally prudent, for our government to cut red tape, to save more taxpayer dollars, for example.

The expected outcome that the member opposite is looking for from this legislation would be a better-managed government office realty portfolio that provides



more responsive client service, that has strategic real estate decision-making authority, and reduced red tape, as I mentioned. And, of course, it will optimize existing funds and real estate funds and reinvest these savings into addressing market inflation, capital repairs and rehabilitation.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** One of the things that struck me about this bill is there are portions—the process for EAs, for example; it was first put in place 50 years ago. Whenever we do something that reduces red tape, we're looking at good government practices and good governance in general. Does it make sense, really, to have something that was put in place 50 years ago? Simple things like technology—we were using a Brownie camera to take pictures of things at that point. We didn't have the computer technology that we have today. All of those things, to me, make sense, that you can speed up some of those processes.

My question is, how is this legislation going to make lives better for people in Ontario? Because, ultimately, that's what we're trying to do, make lives better for the people we represent.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you to the honourable member from Peterborough–Kawartha for that particular question. He's right. This bill would bring our government, yes, one step closer to almost—a 50-year-old environmental assessment process that is slow, costly and burdensome, but we're going to do this without compromising environmental standards and protections. By doing so, we will reduce that 30-day wait time only if there's no other concerns after the completion of the environmental assessment.

By doing so, we can, for example, get a municipal road project to speed up—we can make sure that our government can work with municipal partners and stakeholders to get shovels in the ground faster. That way, we can optimize the way our government works with our stakeholders to build Ontario for the future and for generations to come.

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

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** We heard a lot of promises coming out of a relatively small bill, which I find quite remarkable, but my sense is that this bill has the potential to actually increase red tape, and I'll explain why.

Each of us here, if we're from out of town, have access to an apartment to live here. We pay. It has to be approved, but we look after our own hiring, cleaners, food, whatever it is, to take care of our place because it's direct, and yet what we heard earlier was that this idea of hiring contractors and so on will be so far removed from where things are actually taking place. It's actually more red tape for the people to deal with their situations.

My question: Is it possible for us to see the consultations with those organizations? I understand many of them to be arms-length. For example, the Ontario Arts Council is independent and arms-length. So I'm wondering if—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Thank you. Response?

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Yes, this will definitely cut red tape, because there are 14 entities doing 14 different transactions and managing portfolios on their own. When they bring 14 different entities as one holistic organization and have a streamlined process to make decisions, it will definitely save taxpayers' dollars and streamline the process to have a better alignment when it comes to managing and overseeing the real estate portfolio.

For example, when it comes to optimizing the funds in these entities, we can save a lot of funds and reinvest these funds to work on market inflation. We can reinvest the same funds into capital repairs or rehabilitation. So there is space to be efficient, to operate this in an efficient manner, so that definitely is going to cut red tape and save—

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

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's an interesting bill that we have here before us with Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act. Unsurprisingly, we see yet more buzzwords being thrown into more legislation. Rather than having an acronym, there's these business buzzwords.

But to begin my remarks, I wanted to clearly state that trust is something that is not freely given on everything and anything, nor should it be. Trust is something that really needs to be earned. Trust is about dialogue. Trust is about respect. Trust is about accountability and transparency—all the things that are treated like buzzwords but actually have real, valid, tangible meaning.

I listened very intently to the Minister of Infrastructure's presentation, and we heard many of these buzzwords—we heard about “efficiencies,” “streamlining,” and so many buzzwords, quite frankly, people at home could fill out a bingo sheet and have a heyday each day and every day with this government. But when we take a look at the government's record on the environment, it's a dumpster fire. It's a dumpster fire with toxic waste in it, for heaven's sake.

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This government wants trust. They want us to trust their words. They want us to take them at their word. They want to simply smile and say, “There's nothing dubious about this.” They have categorically been denying the official opposition the customary briefings that were typically provided as part of the tradition, respectability and honour of this House. I did want to inform the House that earlier, in my questions of the Minister of Infrastructure, I asked why the requests for briefings had gone unanswered thus far, and it's unsurprising that directly after that question was asked and on the record, publicly available, suddenly that request for a briefing has been honoured. So I do look forward to the briefing that will be available for the official opposition—again, something that was customary and something that happened after each and every bill was introduced, but something now that has to be requested, apparently.

We also hear words like “fiscally prudent and responsible,” “efficiency,” “streamlining”—all these sorts of things—and I would say that this bill does not achieve that in that it does not tackle the real issues that the Auditor General has pointed out.

As I begin my remarks, I’d like to start with schedule 1, the changes to the Environmental Assessment Act. This will allow the minister to waive the 30-day waiting period that is currently required following the end of a class EA comment period before granting an approval to proceed with an undertaking, such as an infrastructure project.

In the Auditor General’s report from December 2022, *Operation of the Environmental Bill of Rights*—I’d like to read a couple of the recommendations into the record.

Recommendation 2: “To provide Ontarians with a minimum of 30 days to comment on environmentally significant proposals for acts, and to provide prescribed ministries with sufficient time to consider any comments submitted before the proposals are implemented....”

Recommendation 3: “To provide Ontarians with a minimum of 30 days to comment on environmentally significant proposals for acts, and to provide prescribed ministries with sufficient time to consider any comments submitted before the proposals are implemented, as required by the Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993....”

Speaker, this is clearly a bill that is an attempt or a very overt gesture to gut the Environmental Bill of Rights. It’s a workaround. It’s a way to deny the customary comment period. It’s a way to ignore the public. It’s a way to deny consultation.

I did want to also introduce some recent information to this House. We recently passed legislation in this House, and the mayor of Central Elgin was completely caught off guard by the legislation that was passed by this House. The title of this article is, “‘Completely Off Guard’: Central Elgin Mayor Shocked by Province Annexing 700 Acres.” Mayor Sloan said, “I think a little more than surprised”—when he responded to Bill 63. “Of the 1,500 acres, 75% of that lies in Central Elgin. The concern that Central Elgin has, is that some of that was marked for development land for economic development for Central Elgin. Now we’ve lost that revenue.”

Clearly, the government did not consult with Central Elgin in the implementation of that legislation. This will be a great economic boon for the area, but it’s something that Central Elgin is clearly losing out upon. The government did not do their due diligence by contacting all interested and affected parties, and we see the exact same sort of operation here with this bill. There’s a claim that this will be more efficient, it will be streamlined, it will be faster, and perhaps that’s true. Obviously, stomping on environmental rights is a way for this government to be faster and be more efficient. They must see that as being somehow more efficient, which is concerning to the official opposition.

I’d also like to quote from a letter that was sent from the Auditor General to the official opposition, to the MPP for University–Rosedale. The Auditor General says, “In your letter, you asked my office to review whether the

government has violated the Environmental Bill of Rights....”

“Sections 15 and 35 of the EBR require ministers to do everything in their power to give public notice of a proposal at least 30 days before the proposal is implemented, and to take every reasonable step to ensure that all received comments relevant to the proposal are considered when decisions about the proposal are made.”

She goes on to say that she has concerns whether all of the comments related to Bill 23 were meaningfully considered before decisions were made. Obviously, these are huge concerns. This government will claim that these are not concerns. The comment period for Bill 23 was incredibly short. When we look at Bill 69, we wonder if this is yet more of the same.

As I turn to schedule 2, schedule 2 is about the Ministry of Infrastructure Act. It would allow the ministry to assume a lease entered into by the entity with a third-party landlord. So we look at all of the 14 entities that are mentioned in schedule 2 that ostensibly Infrastructure Ontario will start to take the management of and look after the servicing of, but there are so many problems that the Auditor General has already identified with Infrastructure Ontario that have not yet been addressed. So I’d like to take a look at some of the operations of Infrastructure Ontario in my comments today.

In 2014, the Auditor General released a report showing that public-private partnerships, which are administered by Infrastructure Ontario, showed wastefulness and incredible overspending—\$8 billion more on projects, allowing these P3 companies to siphon money off of the public purse, to take money away from health care, to take money away from education. She stated back then, “If the public sector could manage projects successfully, on time and on budget, there is taxpayer money to be saved....”

She looked at 74 projects. They included several hospitals, the Eglinton light rail line; they were all built with these P3 models, also known as alternative financing and procurement or AFP. These were all administered under Infrastructure Ontario. She found that with these projects, they cost about 14 times what the government does for financing. It’s really become almost an industry that we see here in Ontario, and it’s the largest infrastructure company in all of Canada, because the government is quick to waste public money to make sure it gets into a few private hands. They’re taking everyone’s money, and they’re making sure that only a few people benefit from it.

Also, Infrastructure Ontario’s chief CEO at the time said, “The guys we’re outsourcing this function to, this is their core competency”—but they aren’t showing that they’re competent whatsoever when you consider the cost overruns, the way in which they overstate the risk, and the fact that also, if these projects do come in on time, which is very rare, and if there is more money that they’ve allocated, it comes to them in a windfall profit.

Back when this report was tabled: “Interim Progressive Conservative leader Jim Wilson said the first step is for the Liberals to get rid of their ‘bias’ in favour of private partnerships, and analyze projects more objectively.

“They have a bias—which normally we would be accused of as Conservatives—[of] wanting to always use an alternative finance plan,” he said. ‘They need to get rid of the bias.... You’re basically skewing all your contracts into one stream.’

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Now, that goes against Conservative ideology, which is that there ought to be competition, there ought to be people who are doing this for the right price. That’s supposed to drive costs down. But really, what we’re seeing with Infrastructure Ontario is something completely different.

Now, Lysyk also saw that these calculations are very wonky. They assume that if the public is managing projects, it’s going to cost a great deal more and, also, that the government will fail to meet its obligations.

It’s very interesting that it’s this sort of negative attitude that the government has about its own self—the government thinking that it, itself, is going to fail and fall behind in terms of the maintenance and fixing of infrastructure. It’s incredibly odd. But these are assumptions that, apparently, are completely acceptable in Infrastructure Ontario.

Further, when we look at the way in which these P3s operate, they also really benefit a whole host—I would say that there’s an entire industry behind this. They deliver economic benefits to corporate law firms and financiers. They earn enormously high fees arranging complex contracts, lending money to the government at rates higher than what the government normally pays. That’s bad business. The government could borrow money at a much better rate, and yet they choose not to. They’re choosing to fill the pockets of a few people. That’s not fiscally prudent. That’s not fiscally responsible. It is incredibly difficult. Overall, the Auditor General found that Ontarians paid 28% more for these projects than they ought to have. It’s incredibly, incredibly problematic.

If we also look at the way in which these projects are financed, it’s a sneaky way of the government hiding the money that they’re spending, because the borrowing is stretched out over decades and these financing charges will often account for 80% of the extra charges of these massive P3 projects.

They also hide behind these value-for-money assessments. It was actually quite groundbreaking that the Auditor General was able to get as much information, because many of these value-for-money assessments are—basically, they’ve been called “window dressing.” They claim commercial confidentiality. They really don’t want anyone to scrutinize the numbers. That’s why we’re so lucky in Ontario to have the Auditor General, who is able to provide that unbiased scrutiny of government spending.

Back when the Conservative government was in opposition, they loved the Auditor General. Now that they are in government, they suddenly—I don’t know if that relationship is really the most fond one, at this time.

I’d like to quote: “Canada’s largest P3 agency makes decisions on tens of billions of dollars of public spending using assumptions with no basis in fact.”

It’s often been called Stephen Harper’s evidence-free policy-making that we’ve seen when it comes to this blind adherence to this for-profit and P3 model. It doesn’t bear any real fiscal prudence. It doesn’t make any sense.

The large companies behind P3 projects can also walk away at any time. They risk only the equity that they place into a project. Generally speaking, that’s about 10% to 15% of the cost.

Toby Sanger also points out: “Infrastructure Ontario has been paying the big P3 companies”—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** The member for Carleton will come to order.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** —“that unsuccessfully bid on P3 projects up to \$2 million per bid to cover some of their costs.” That is an amazing consolation prize.

So these few companies that bid on these projects can actually receive a cash windfall for simply putting in an application—not even for being successful, for just simply putting in an application. Toby calls it “a cozy fraternity of lucratively paid P3 companies and consultants getting wealthy at the public’s expense.” That is not fiscally prudent. That is not good business.

Back in the day, the Conservatives, as opposition, were quite critical of this sort of spending, yet now that they’ve changed to the other side of the House, they’re quite happy with the status quo. In fact, they have become the status quo.

I’d also like to take a look at some of the Auditor General’s report on real estate services. Now, the Auditor General states—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** The House will come to order.

I apologize to the member. He may continue.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Thank you very much, Speaker. It kind of reminds one of Romper Room, doesn’t it? I should pull out a mirror and tell everyone that I’m seeing them.

The Auditor General said that the agreement, the enterprise realty service agreement, between Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Infrastructure—here are the problems: “The agreement does not set out any mandatory, minimum standard of performance for managing the costs of capital projects. It does not set out timelines for meeting.” And it does not make sure that government properties are being “used efficiently.” These are all the buzzwords that we hear from this government all the time, and they’re not doing it. It’s abundantly clear that this is not being upheld. They are not doing their due diligence. They are not participating in what is a good business model.

So if we take a look at the request for proposals, the RFP approach, the Auditor General pointed out that that attracted only a few bids for the management of 7,500 capital projects. These were projects worth about \$900 million over five years. There was not a broad range of companies that bid on this. It’s very curious.

She also criticized—it says, “Better oversight of external projects—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** I apologize once again to the member for London North Centre.

Would the member for Carleton please come to order. Thank you.

You may continue.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Thank you very much. I wasn't sure what that was.

She also states, “Better oversight of external project managers’ procurement methods for capital projects is needed.” She goes on—she believes in competition. She believes that things should be fair. And on the side of the official opposition, that makes sense. She states, “Infrastructure Ontario does not track how many vendors bid on capital projects and which vendors are winning the bids.” They actually don't track what they are responsible for—wow. Where's the accountability? Where's the transparency?

The Auditor General talks about the vendor rotation process, which is supposed to be an electronic bidding service that's supposed to provide these contracts in a more fair manner. “However”—this is where it's interesting, Madam Speaker—“since 2013-14, Infrastructure Ontario has allowed its external project managers to select vendors from its ... list and manually add them to the list of bidders.” So they cherry-pick the ones they wanted to get the contracts to make sure they got the contracts.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** What could go wrong?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Exactly. What could go wrong?

Speaker, as we look at Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, there is far more that this government needs to do in terms of reducing inefficiencies. On the side of this official opposition, we hear this government with all of their buzzwords, we hear them with all of their rhetoric and their language, but we'd like to see actual action that is reducing inefficiencies. We'd like to see a better business model where there is true transparency, accountability and actual efficiency.

Let's see the government do this. Let's not hear them talk about it; let's see it reflected in legislation. I look forward to the briefing, and I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for providing that.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** It's time for questions and answers.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Some of the stuff with the environmental assessment, the processes were put in place 50 years ago. Fifty years ago, we used the IBM 360 computer. It was a four-bit processor. What we have here is a two-bit party that wants one bit of discernible progress, so I'm really confused by this. Could the member from London North Centre please give me an idea of why the NDP loves red tape so much, why they want to keep so much red tape in there and why they don't want any progress over 50 years?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member for his comments. I want to return to a piece of legislation

that I was honoured to draft. Dr. Cheryl Forchuk in London offered a program with smart devices to help people who are struggling with mental health needs and struggling to maintain their housing. They're provided with a smart device to attend counselling sessions, a pill dispenser so they receive their medication on time, a Fitbit activity tracker, and weight scales.

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This program showed great promise. It cost about \$18,000 per person per year, rather than the cost of a mental health bed. It was great cost savings. It was efficient. It was amazing. And it was also something to be prescribed by a doctor. The device and the program would be prescribed. It was to be added to the Assistive Devices Program. I heard lots from this government about how ADP is 30 years old and it's for mobility devices and sensory aids and that's it. They had the opportunity to modernize ADP and they chose not to, so I'm tired of hearing—

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I certainly get concerned when this government, any time, talks about the environment. We see their attack on the greenbelt, where reports are now saying that they could build two million homes without touching the greenbelt. We are losing over—this is important. I know they're not really listening over there; they're playing on their phones. I guess you can do that in here.

We are losing over 315 acres of farmland every day in the province of Ontario. The cost of our food is going up 12%. My question: Do you trust this government to protect the greenbelt?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his excellent question. No, I don't think that anyone in Ontario at this point trusts the government on the way in which they've handled the greenbelt. They've talked about this swap where they're actually adding lands that already had some protections on them. They'd like to pretend that they are doing this thing where it's an equal exchange, but if we look at the greenbelt as a chain, if you weaken any links of that chain, such as a watershed or something else that is contributing to the filtering of our water, then that entire chain is weak.

What they're doing to the greenbelt is odious. They're making sure that it's going to be easier for these developers to make McMansions, which is not what we need more of. We need more inwards and upwards development, we need affordable housing, we need rent control, we need vacancy decontrol, we need protections for tenants—none of the things that this government is doing, because they do not care about tenants.

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

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** This government was elected on a mandate to clean up the mess after the 15 years of Liberal mismanagement. Under the previous government, hydro rates skyrocketed, taxes soared and taxpayers' dollars were mismanaged.

Bill 69 is about good governance, cutting red tape and streamlining oversight. Why does the NDP want to add red tape and slow down the government?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member for her comments. I think it's important that we are always having history lessons within this chamber, and it's important that we think about the way in which the Conservatives have now become part of the Liberal-Conservative consortium. They have worked hand in hand for a number of years.

They, on the side of the official opposition, said that they were going to change things. They agreed with the Auditor General. And now that they're on the government benches, we see a completely different change in attitude. They're upholding many of the things that they criticized the Liberals for, including Infrastructure Ontario, including Tarion. Now they've even created yet more government bureaucracy with things like HCRA.

But this attack on the greenbelt is absolutely odious. They're also taking money away from municipalities when they need it the most. The government should be having a public builder building housing, not expecting private, for-profit agencies to—

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch to the member for the presentation.

I know we talk about environmental assessment and we talk about the last 15 years of the Liberal government—never mind the last 15 years. As First Peoples of these lands, we've been doing environmental assessments and environmental stewardship for thousands of years as First Nations people.

When we talk about infrastructure and reducing inefficiencies and whatever, I wish we were talking about the takeover of infrastructure such as water sewer systems in far northern Ontario. They always talk about good governance; they always talk about the people of Ontario. But we're always left out. It would be so cool if we removed the boil-water advisories in far northern Ontario. That would be the change—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Response?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from Kiiwetinoong for his comments. He has brought to this chamber so much important dialogue that the governments, past and present, have tried to ignore, and I just want to thank him for continually bringing up those issues.

The government has a responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to clean drinking water. The fact that there are places in this province which do not have access to that basic human right in the 21st century is unconscionable. It's completely unacceptable.

There are areas close to my riding that have been under boil-water advisories for 25 years. If that were to happen in any large urban centre, it would be corrected immediately. It would get government attention. But we've seen governments, past and present, who simply want to kick the can down the road. They want to finger-point for jurisdictional change, and they simply don't want to do the

right thing. They could get clean drinking water there; they just choose not to.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** This act before us right now, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, is about being fiscally prudent, saving taxpayer dollars and cutting red tape. The proposed legislation is a step towards modernizing government process and oversight.

Currently, Ontario has one of the largest and most complex real estate portfolios in Canada, and we seek to centralize the management of this real estate portfolio under the Ministry of Infrastructure where it belongs. The government can reduce unnecessary administrative burden and costs and, ultimately, save the taxpayer money.

My question to the honourable member is this: Does he support saving taxpayer money or not?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** You know, if this government were concerned about things like fiscal prudence, they would make sure that we invested in housing, that we had a public builder to create that housing, because housing is health care.

With the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we travelled the province and we heard about the people who are struggling. And yet we see bills like Bill 23, which are just actually—they wrap that bill with the word “housing,” but really what it's about is McMansions, and it's about seizing land from the greenbelt.

Instead, what we should make sure is we should have a government that's actually looking at how Infrastructure Ontario operates. We should have a government that looks at how Tarion operates. When people make the largest purchase of their lives, they deserve to have some—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** We have time for one final question.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I always like listening to the opposition sometimes talk about worrying about tax dollars. You want to worry about tax dollars? This member was right on the money when he talked about P3s.

I'll tell you a quick story, because I've only got a few seconds left. The Peterborough hospital, which was built with 349 beds that were publicly built—it cost \$349 million. And he knows this story. In St. Catharines, when they did the new hospital, almost the exact same size, do you know what it was under a P3? It was \$1.1 billion. So you could have taken that \$700 million, saved taxpayers' money and put it back right into the community, right back into health care—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Response?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** With this government, we don't see fiscal prudence. We actually see the largest shift of public money into a few private hands that we have seen.

For many years, we criticized the Liberals for this. But this government is doing it almost on steroids. It is unbelievable what they have achieved with Bill 23, with Bill 7, with so many different things and ways—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** That is all the time we have for our questions and answers.

Further debate?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I appreciate the impromptu opportunity to have been given today an opportunity to address this very important piece of legislation, which, on the face of it, seems to be something like just a house-keeping bill. But it's actually a very intelligent move on the part of the PC government to centralize decision-making authority for many real estate transactions that occur within the government. I was lucky, because prior to being given the opportunity to address this matter today, I had the benefit of hearing all of the comments made by various other members of this chamber, including the member from Scarborough-Rouge Park, the member from Brampton West, the member from Oshawa—who gave a very brave one-hour dissertation regarding this bill—and the member from London North Centre.

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Another member of this House, the member from Peterborough-Kawartha, made the observation with regard to one of the items being treated in this bill—that is, the Environmental Assessment Act—and he made the statement that it is, in fact, a very old piece of legislation. Without revealing exactly the date I was born, it's my conjecture that this Environmental Assessment Act is actually older than I am and hasn't been amended since. Now, I'm of the opinion that things that are old aren't necessarily bad—in fact, they might be quite good—but it's not a bad idea to look at these things every once in a while and decide whether or not that which is old can be dusted off a bit and improved.

As a matter of reflecting on that particular act and the experience that people have had with that act, I can inform the other members of this assembly that once upon a time, in the not-too-far-distant past, I used to serve on a municipal council. When I was first elected in the year 2000, I served as a councillor from 2000 to 2003, and then I was elected as deputy mayor from 2004 to 2006. Having served as a member of an elected council, I had the opportunity to learn up front and close and personal on how environmental assessments are done at the municipal level.

Now, I'm going to describe the environmental assessment at the municipal level, and it's going to be a simple description. It's not going to be 100% reflective of what the legislation says, but I'm just going to give a simple explanation of it.

If a municipality is going through an environmental assessment, the first thing they might do is tender the contract. So they have to put it out for tender, which means they advertise, people bid on it, and then they have a meeting and they select somebody to do the environmental assessment and pay them for doing that. That's the first step. Maybe that takes some months.

Then they issue public notices. Notices are put in newspapers; maybe they're put online. You might see one at town hall. And the public notice might say that consultations have begun.

Then there's an interim report to the municipal council, and the interim report might report on what has been done

so far, what kind of consultations have happened. The municipal report might also propose what the project might look like and provide various alternative projects.

Then the party conducting the environmental assessment will make a recommendation. It will be the preferred option. That will be put before a municipal council to be considered. When it goes to the municipal council, it will be a public meeting, and that's when the NIMBYs come out—"not in my backyard." Everybody comes out, and they say, "I don't want this built in my backyard."

Then the municipal council deliberates on it and hems and haws, and if they are intimidated, they might turn it down. If they're intimidated by the NIMBYs, they'll turn it down. Or they might vote on it and pass it, or they might say, "Let's defer this for more information from administration." And all that time is going by, Madam Speaker. Time is going by, and it's going by and it's going by.

Then, finally, a decision gets made. A municipal council finally votes on and approves a project. Sometimes these processes take months, sometimes years, and that's not unusual. It's actually quite typical. Then after the decision is made, there's a 30-day period.

Now, after hearing that very simplistic description of the environmental assessment process, you might naturally ask this question: After all that time, do we really need another 30-day period of nothing happening? You might ask that question.

I think the MPP for St. Catharines touched on it a bit. I want to be fair to the MPP from St. Catharines; I don't want to try to exactly quote what she said, but the MPP said something along the lines of, "In some situations, that 30-day period might not be necessary." And that's exactly what this act says. Not in the same language, but in colloquial language, that's what it says.

In some situations, that 30-day period is not necessary. So why not just let the minister move things along and avoid the 30-day delay, which, as we've seen in my brief and very simplistic description of the EA process, might actually add cost if you add those 30 days. You might save some money if you process or bypass those 30 days. A municipal council might save some money.

It's also true, as the member from Renfrew stated earlier, that if you allow the 30 days to be truncated, you will allow to start the project earlier, thus avoiding winter weather. As we all know, there are two seasons in Ontario: winter and construction. That's what we all say.

There could be a very, very positive result in allowing the minister to truncate those 30 days and giving permission to a municipal council to proceed with the project that's been considered. Because, as we all know—at least those of us who have served in the municipal field or have done this type of work before—the process is already very long, and there's lots of public consultation. You can be consulted online. You can submit your consultation online. You can go to the public meeting in person and you can deliver your comments in person. You can write them down and send them in a letter to your municipal council.

You can send them in an email. There's lots and lots of opportunity for public consultation.

To add the extra 30 days is really not necessary in most situations, particularly when you're talking about a very simple municipal project, which might involve something very simple like building a road or something of that nature. It might not even be 30 days; it might be longer than that.

With respect to how this might operate, in the event that this legislation gets passed, I think what we need to do first is perhaps take a look at how things are operating right now. I'm sure there are many, many members of this House—there's 124 of us—who probably were not aware before. But we're aware now, because the Minister of Infrastructure has made us aware—and I thank the minister for making us aware—that there are actually, at present, at least 14 entities that manage real estate here under the government of the province of Ontario. I will admit—I'll be frank with this assembly—I did not know that there were at least 14 entities that managed real estate for the government of Ontario. I imagine there could be more. Maybe the Minister of Infrastructure will be providing another report at some time in the future, and maybe we'll learn that too.

But here, let's take a look at this list of the 14 entities in the province that currently manage real estate for the government of Ontario. Here we go:

—Agricorp;

—Education Quality and Accountability Office—I would have thought that they would have managed education and accountability; I didn't know they were managing real estate;

—Province of Ontario Council for the Arts, also known as the Ontario Arts Council;

—Ontario Media Development Corp., also known as Ontario Creates;

—Ontario Trillium Foundation;

—Ontario Financing Authority;

—Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council;

—Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp., also known as Destination Ontario;

—Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario;

—Ontario Securities Commission;

—Human Rights Legal Support Centre—that's one I think everybody will find interesting. I come from the legal field. I would imagine that the Human Rights Legal Support Centre would have been working on human rights and perhaps giving people advice in the court system or maybe even giving people advice in front of the Human Rights Tribunal, but apparently the Human Rights Legal Support Centre also manages real estate;

—Intellectual Property Ontario;

—Skilled Trades Ontario;

—Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

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That's a lot of organizations. I'm sure they're doing their best managing the real estate that's under their authority and control, and I have no reason to think otherwise, that they're not doing or trying their best—I think we all do. But that means that we actually have 14

different agencies managing real estate for the government of the province of Ontario, some of which, clearly, after reading that list—all 124 of us, I suspect, will agree without any hesitation that the primary function of those organizations really is not to manage real estate and that they have a different function which is their primary function, but somehow they've acquired the additional or secondary function of having to manage real estate.

It's always a great thing—and I'm going to pay some homage here to someone out of history I have a great deal of respect for—if you can concentrate on one thing you do really well. You can maximize efficiency, do it better than anybody else, produce faster than anybody else, make decisions faster than anybody else, maximize all sorts of great consequences, when you can do one thing really well and be allowed to do that one thing really well. For example, let's talk about an artist, a painter. If a painter is allowed to just paint, the painter doesn't have to worry about managing real estate, doesn't have to worry about managing the finances, doesn't have to worry about making dinner. If the painter can concentrate on one thing and do it really well, that painter will probably become a great painter because the painter is not diverting their efforts or their expertise trying to do things at which the painter is not too good.

I would imagine that those 14 organizations may have the same point of view. Those 14 organizations, as I said earlier, have a different primary mandate. Their primary mandate is not to manage real estate. The primary mandate of the Human Rights Legal Support Centre is not to manage real estate. That's not their primary mandate. The Fire Marshal's Public Fair Safety Council has a primary mandate, and I would venture to guess that the management of real estate is not their primary mandate. So it might, in fact, be very useful to allow these organizations not to have to manage real estate but to turn that concern over to a central agency, which is exactly what this bill proposes to do, and allow them to concentrate on their primary mandate, and to have an organization whose primary mandate is to manage real estate.

All that seems very logical and simple, or at least it appears to be logical and simple to me, and I think the Minister of Infrastructure in her statements this morning made it very clear and logical and simple to this assembly as to why these steps have to be taken or should be taken and should form part of the consideration of this assembly.

I had the opportunity to listen to the remarks made by others in this chamber. Some people had some concerns. Some people raised the question of whether or not they had a certain amount of confidence with regard to how things were going to work out if this legislation were passed, and the answer to that is, you'll get to see the results. You will get to see the results.

And what do we say? What do we say, those of us who support this proposed legislation? Well, we say that having 14 organizations all trying to do the same things, which are not under their primary mandate, is probably not saving taxpayer money—probably not. But having an organization that takes care of all that real estate and who

is able to make those kinds of decisions—that is to say, the decisions with regard to the management of real estate—is probably going to save taxpayer money.

Now, here’s the choice before us. Here’s the choice: The choice, number one, is do nothing. As I have always said throughout my 24-year law career to my clients, “Your first choice is do nothing.” If you do nothing, you will have what you have now. Under the present proposed legislation, you have a second choice. Here’s your second choice: Do something. And the “something” proposed under this legislation is to create a consolidated authority which will manage real estate, which presents a possibility that does not exist under the previous choice. Under the previous choice, “do nothing” means you save no more money. That’s the consequence. It is undisputable. Under the second option, “do something,” you are presented with, I will say, the probability—others might say merely the possibility—of saving money.

So given the choice between doing nothing and gaining nothing, or doing something and possibly or probably gaining something, what is the logical choice? I shouldn’t have to answer that question, but because I want to complete the logical connection, I will answer that question. The logical choice, Madam Speaker, is option number two: Do something. And that is what the Reducing Inefficiencies Act does. It proposes to create a body which—at the end of the day, the goal is to save money, save taxpayer money, and wouldn’t that be a nice thing for us to do for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario?

And so that, Madam Speaker, is why I will be very happily voting in favour of this proposed legislation. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Unfortunately, we do not have time for questions and answers.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

*Report continues in volume B.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Mike Civil

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Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
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Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
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Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
<b>Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)</b>	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
<b>Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)</b>	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
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Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
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Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
<b>Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)</b>	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	