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Jeudi
23 février 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 February 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 février 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ST. THOMAS-CENTRAL ELGIN
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA MODIFICATION
DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE
ST. THOMAS ET CENTRAL ELGIN

Mr. Clark moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of St. Thomas and the Municipality of Central Elgin / Projet de loi 63, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de St. Thomas et la municipalité de Central Elgin.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to lead off the debate.

Hon. Steve Clark: Good morning, colleagues. Today it is both my pleasure and my privilege to rise to begin debate at second reading of our government's proposed legislation, the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act. I'm pleased to say that I will be sharing the government's time during this leadoff address with my honourable colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

I'm sure when Minister Fedeli speaks, the minister will tell members of the House that when global companies seek out a location for a new manufacturing facility, there is fierce competition within jurisdictions across North America and the world to win their business. And as we all know, our biggest competitor is south of the border. I know this very well. My riding of Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes is right on the beautiful St. Lawrence River, looking over into northern New York state. There have been times when we've debated in the House the fierce competition that comes from south of the border. It wasn't uncommon, back when the Liberals were in power, that Ogdensburg, New York, and the economic development area around there, would have tremendously fierce competition to try to move our businesses from Ontario to northern New York state. So I know this very well.

As a government, to compete for jobs and investment offered by the global marketplace, Ontario needs to move quickly to take advantage of opportunities. That is exactly what we are doing with Bill 63, the city of St. Thomas and the municipality of Central Elgin boundary adjustment act.

At my ministry, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the associate minister, Michael Parsa, the parliamentary assistant, Kevin Holland, and I are actively doing our part to deliver on our government's plan to build Ontario and lay out a foundation for the province's long-term economic recovery. We've made changes to several acts under my ministry's purview, like the ones we're proposing in Bill 63, to get shovels in the ground faster on critical infrastructure, including a number of government priorities: housing, broadband, highways, transit, as well as supporting an increased investment in job creation.

I think we can all agree that when it comes to job creation, it's one of the great opportunities we have in this House to look at an issue in a non-partisan way. We need to be an attractive location for new business. Our province must offer a strong inventory of site locations. These are sites where the timing and the cost for development and investment is readily known and it's also streamlined to meet project deadlines. It has become an expectation among investors—a global standard—that these sites are shovel-ready. That's why I'm here this morning along with my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Our government is taking the necessary action to help secure future investment opportunities for a very large site, or a mega site as they are called. As the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade will tell you in further detail, his ministry has identified mega sites across Ontario that could support large-scale strategic investment opportunities—very, very important. Many of us have local communities that participated in some of these efforts. The most recent was the Job Site Challenge, where there were a number of communities that came forward and presented investment opportunities to Minister Fedeli. There are other programs like the certified site program—many of those in the House will know that communities across the province have worked closely with Minister Fedeli's ministry to create these certified site opportunities. The mega sites bring real, new opportunities for long-term investment that can create thousands of good-paying jobs and many, many more indirect jobs throughout the industrial supply chain that will benefit communities across the province.

The site which has been identified as part of this program has the potential to create thousands of new jobs for the community, the region and our province. This

proposed legislation that I will talk more about this morning would reduce red tape to help ensure the site is shovel-ready, as is required to attract the large-scale manufacturing investments in today's global marketplace. This is something that many, many other jurisdictions have put in place. For Ontario to compete, we need to do the same.

Speaker, many times you've heard me speak in the House about too much red tape that can cause delays and ultimately drive up costs for housing construction. We have seen, as a government, how bureaucratic government processes, excessive fees and excessive costs have led to once-viable projects not moving forward. As Ontario's ongoing housing supply crisis clearly demonstrates, the effect on ordinary Ontarians is serious. This is a very serious situation that our communities are facing today. Too much red tape has a similar impact on industrial investments, and in this case that we're speaking about this morning as part of Bill 63, it can also deter major investments and desirable, good-paying jobs from our communities. That's why we need to act now. We need to act today to make the site in question ready for investment. It's very important that I tabled the bill yesterday and it's even more important that we're going to take today's legislative time to debate it, because time is of the essence.

The site that we're speaking about currently straddles the municipal boundary of the city of St. Thomas and the municipality of Central Elgin, which is a lower-tier municipality in Elgin county. This means that the permitting and approval processes would involve three municipalities: Elgin county, the municipality of Central Elgin, and the city of St. Thomas. In other words, this process has the potential to involve lots of red tape, lots of delays in approvals and, potentially, the fact that it could drive away this very important investment. Speaker, we can't let this happen. We cannot let red tape get us on the sidelines and out of the game when there are so many other jurisdictions that have put this as a priority.

0910

If municipal boundaries are not changed, a potential investor would have to work with all three municipalities for all the necessary permits and approvals—these include things like site preparation, infrastructure upgrades, planning approvals, building permits, fire protection enhancements. That would be a very onerous process. It would drag out timelines for building on the site, certainly a disincentive for any potential investor. Changing the municipal boundaries so that all of the site is within the jurisdiction of the city of St. Thomas—which is, again, a single-tier municipality—would make site improvements and construction faster and more efficient.

Our government has been focused on greater efficiency and building Ontario since the very first day we took over as government in 2018. That is why, with the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, we're proposing to restructure the municipal boundaries so that the land comprising the site can all be under one municipal jurisdiction. Anyone who has spent any time in a municipal council chamber who now sits in this Legislature understands this process and knows exactly why we're here and why we need to act quickly.

Moving the municipal boundary line is really in keeping with this government's objective to deliver simpler, faster and better services to the people and businesses in our province. One way we're doing that is making one municipality, St. Thomas, the single point of contact for a potential investor to conduct this essential business at the municipal level. This is going to encourage the speeding up of site improvements. It's going to ensure that construction is faster and, I suggest, more efficient, while at the same time, it's creating the potential to bring thousands of new jobs to the community, the region and the province.

Many of us have sat in this Legislature and talked about making sure we put everything in place to ensure that our communities are investment-ready. I've sat on both sides of the House; I've talked about this over and over again. And finally, we've got the opportunity to create a mega site to compete with other jurisdictions, and we need to act quickly. We need to ensure that we move forward with this legislation.

Speaker, I'm very excited about the economic development in municipalities across Ontario, and I know that Minister Fedeli feels the very same way that I do. I'm very, very encouraged by the clear evidence that we have seen that has many municipalities coming forward indicating they're ready and they're willing to work with us to help build Ontario.

Last month, I had the chance to meet with many, many municipal delegations, as did PA Holland, as did Associate Minister Parsa, at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference, or ROMA—as municipal officials who now are provincial MPPs know and use that term well. At ROMA, the message from mayors and from councillors was clear: Our government needs to continue its focus on removing barriers to growth and to economic development so that we can secure the very real and tangible benefits that this growth will bring to Ontario. We need to work with our municipal partners to ensure that they have the infrastructure and other supports that are in place to attract this type of investment, including in less population-dense areas like Elgin county.

That's why, for instance, the government has been making historic investments in rural Internet services as well as traditional infrastructure like roads and bridges. And that's why my ministry is also focused on getting housing built across Ontario, both in densely populated areas, but also in big cities like Toronto and Ottawa. As we saw at ROMA, we've got willing partners in rural and northern municipalities in every corner of the province.

Last fall, for instance, we introduced our third housing supply action plan, More Homes Built Faster. This builds upon the previous housing supply action plans, More Homes, More Choice, which we tabled in 2019, and More Homes for Everyone, which we tabled early in 2022. These plans are a part of a government-wide strategy to build Ontario and ensure the conditions necessary to support growth are in place.

That's also why my colleague the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, the Honourable Monte McNaughton, has been working so tirelessly to ensure that Ontario has the workforce that it needs to support economic growth—while investments in skills

development, education and support for newcomers in our province are all very, very important as part of our plan to help build Ontario.

We have to ensure, as well, given all that great work that Minister McNaughton is doing, that we have enough housing for the increased labour and the increased immigration as we welcome new Canadians to the best province to live, work and play in the world. We know that workers will drive Ontario's economic growth, but they also need a safe and attainable place to call home.

Our policies are working. In the last two years, we've seen the highest level of housing starts in Ontario in more than three decades, while we're within striking distance of going up over the 100,000 housing starts in a year. Minister Parsa actually talked about it yesterday in the House. Last year we saw close to 15,000 purpose-built rental housing starts, which is the highest level of housing starts in Ontario's history—great news. The policies that we've enacted in our most recent housing supply action plan are sure to add to this record. We've made it cheaper and easier, for instance, to build affordable housing, non-profit housing and purpose-built rental housing, and we're working with our partners in government, industry, labour and the non-profit sector to build homes that Ontarians need.

Speaker, we know that for Ontario to continue to thrive we need homes of all types to be built to reflect the individual needs of Ontarians. That's why we're making it easier to ensure that there is gentle density in existing communities by allowing three units to be built as of right in many of our existing communities, both in urban and rural areas. This means Ontarians will now have access to the types of homes people have been talking about for years, like laneway homes, garden suites, basement units—things that we need to incent. We need to encourage our municipal partners to get shovels in the ground faster, which will provide more housing options in the areas that are already densely populated.

But we're not stopping there—and I want to make it very clear: We're not done yet. Our government has also provided billions of dollars to support vulnerable Ontarians. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we've allocated about \$1.2 billion through a program called the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund.

I've said this in the House before; I can remember it like it was yesterday. Minister Smith, my seatmate to my right, and I came up in the middle of a snowstorm, much like the one we had last night, in the middle of the pandemic—I think we were on day 4. We thought the pandemic was going to last three weeks. Nobody knew, right? So we announced the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund, a very modest fund to allow our service managers to get on the ground, help our most vulnerable citizens, get PPE, hire staff and do whatever it takes to make sure people are safe.

It's hard to believe that after that modest announcement that the two ministers made—it wasn't even live; it was in front of a teleprompter, because even then everybody was working from home. To be able to take a modest program and then build it over the last three years to \$1.2 billion is

a real testament to the work that all MPPs did in the middle of the pandemic to make sure people had a safe, secure place to call home.

The total of what we've invested as a government is \$4.4 billion over the last three years to help grow and enhance community and supportive housing. Our government knows that helping more Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and their budget is really in the best interests of all Ontarians. It is that context in which changes that we're proposing today in Bill 63 should be viewed. I want to stress that. We need to look at all of the measures that government has done when we deal with why Bill 63 is on here today.

0920

Economic development in an increasingly competitive, often protectionist global economy is never easy. The challenges of the last few years have clearly demonstrated that jurisdictions that are unprepared to support growth fall behind. That's something that Ontarians simply cannot afford.

The government is creating world-class transit. We're making record investments in new housing while we're also making historic investments in infrastructure.

I want to thank Minister Surma for all of her work on the infrastructure file. She is doing great things in Ontario—not just with roads and bridges, but a tremendous progressive agenda on the expansion of broadband in communities across Ontario.

We're also, as a government, cutting red tape. We're easing the regulatory burden on ordinary Canadians, so that we can move forward quickly to deliver on the priorities that we were elected to pursue.

The changes that we're proposing today are all about making it easier to invest in Ontario, easier to bring jobs to our province, easier to enjoy the substantial public benefits that a thriving economy gives to all Ontarians. That's what we're here for today.

Speaker, as a former mayor myself, a former CAO, I know that municipalities play a critical role in making these public benefits a reality. For one thing, municipalities help deliver the preconditions for economic growth, the policies that I was discussing earlier that benefit Ontarians. For instance, we need municipalities on board if we're going to tackle Ontario's housing supply crisis, since we know that they are playing a critical role in cutting red tape and making it easier to build homes that Ontarians need. Municipal governments also play a critical role in building public transit and public infrastructure, requiring public services that support economic growth. Often, they do it in close partnership with the provincial government.

As Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I've got the opportunity to see first-hand municipalities across this province and their great desire to work with our government to deliver important public services to Ontarians. Just last month, for example, I was pleased to announce that the provincial government is extending the deadline for implementation projects under the latest intake of the Municipal Modernization Program, and also the Streamline Development Approval Fund. This is going

to help municipalities streamline, digitize and modernize their services—very important, because once again, they need to deliver the conditions that are necessary to support economic growth and prosperity in our province. This is a key partnership that we have with municipalities. We need to work together.

I'm very excited by the past successes that we've had working with our municipal partners—all 444 municipalities—as well as the opportunity to build on the success with the bill that's being debated today.

I want to thank my colleague behind me, the local MPP, Rob Flack from Elgin–Middlesex–London, for his tremendous advocacy for his community. I really appreciate his support with Bill 63 today. He's doing a great job.

I also want to talk about my ministry. As I've said, with MPP Flack supporting us—I want to talk about the MMAH support for the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. I want to take a moment to look back on the changes made by several acts under my ministry's purview that increased investment and created more jobs. We got shovels in the ground on a bunch of critical infrastructure projects, including housing, broadband, highways and transit. An example that I'll give the members this morning is, we made changes to regulations under both the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act which enabled Ontario municipalities to directly access financing from the Canada Infrastructure Bank for capital projects, including the financing of zero-emission buses. To get shovels in the ground faster, we're also streamlining the land division approval process under subdivision control provisions of the Planning Act.

We're also working with our partners in the building and development sectors to modernize the delivery of building code services and help accelerate housing construction across the province. We're supporting efficiency in the building and construction sector by updating the building code to clarify that building officials have the discretion to use alternate methods to conduct remote inspections. We did this because we needed to work with our partners to remove these types of barriers while still making sure we have a safe, secure system. Our building code is one of the best in North America, and I want to thank all the officials at the ministry for the great work that they do.

We're so proud that municipalities now have the flexibility to design and implement their own internship program for building officials—something that I remember talking to municipalities about the first month that I was here as minister, something that had long been discussed with municipalities. We've moved on those types of things because we needed to accelerate construction activity, but we also needed to address both current and future staffing shortages.

Additionally, we recently consulted the sector on potential changes to the qualification program for Ontario's building practitioners that would be implemented in the near and the long term—very, very important stuff.

Our majority component of the work with the building and development sector is further harmonization of Ontario's building code with the national construction codes. Increased harmonization of these codes—while it doesn't sound that sexy, it does, in the long run, help reduce red

tape, and it helps overcome barriers related to trades. It also includes product manufacturing along with building design and maintenance. Again, we have a very strong building code. We're the envy of many jurisdictions because of its safety and its innovation. In turn, the market standardization across the country is so very important. Harmonizing our building code with the national code just makes sense. Our next edition of the building code is expected to be released later this year.

One of the things that I'm particularly proud of on the economic development side is the fact that our government, through my ministry, has been using minister's zoning orders to accelerate priority infrastructure projects, something that I think was long overdue in the province. Minister's zoning orders—some people call them MZO—help kick-start the planning approvals process by getting zoning in place for critical local projects. They include housing, long-term-care homes, health care facilities, transit-oriented communities—lots of economic development initiatives. In partnership with our municipalities, these zoning orders are a really important part of the government's policy tool kit to help these types of local projects move at a pace that Ontarians both need and deserve. They're making really positive changes in communities right across Ontario. They're currently in place and they are creating jobs, they're helping to build exciting new business investments, and they're accelerating new housing builds.

In the past, I've been proud to make MZOs to support economic development projects in conjunction with my friend the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The example I'll use is the request from the city of Windsor and Minister Fedeli that I make an MZO to accelerate the development of a 4.5-million-square-foot facility for NextStar Energy. The plant in Windsor will be a battery plant for electric vehicles. It's a joint venture between LG Solutions and the automaker Stellantis. Once fully operational, that facility will provide approximately 2,500 well-paying jobs. It's a great boost to the city of Windsor and all those surrounding communities. That's how our government works together to boost our economy.

0930

Also, last year, at the request of the township of Oro-Medonte, I made an MZO to help speed up the expansion of manufacturing and warehouse facilities for Wolf Steel. That's the manufacturer for the famous Napoleon brand of fireplaces and barbecue grills. Wolf Steel is the township's largest employer, and the expansion, once complete, will provide another 180 jobs to Oro-Medonte. Again, that's our government working to boost Ontario's economy.

In 2021, at the request of the city of Markham, I made an MZO to expedite the creation of a tremendous program. It has a studio, film production facilities, a science park innovation hub, office space, a hotel, art galleries, child care centres and theatres. It actually will eventually employ about 6,000 people—6,000 new jobs and an estimated \$1.5-billion investment in annual economic output. That's, again, our governments working together, our ministries working together, to boost Ontario's economy.

Our government is proud of the partnerships we've developed with municipalities. We're going to continue to work with them and to listen to them to create the tools that they need to address local challenges.

I want to give one last example of the power of MZO's to help expedite and create new jobs. I've made a total of 13 MZO's to support transit-oriented communities, one of the government's most exciting programs we have. Those are the developments on the Yonge North subway line and the all-new Ontario Line that will help create almost 55,000 jobs.

I could go on with many, many other examples, Madam Speaker—it's great to see you in the chair this morning. I'm so proud of our government's record on MZO's. In fact, minister's zoning orders under this government are helping to create over 150,000 jobs. It's a great-news story and, again, another example of our government working together to boost Ontario's economy.

When we look to the city of St. Thomas, one of the communities that's in this bill today—the primary community we're dealing with—it's a growing community, an area that's ready for industrial growth. It's the heart of southwestern Ontario, also known as Canada's manufacturing heartland, I've heard people say.

Since the first day we were elected, our government was both committed to protecting and also expanding good-paying jobs. Our best salesman, as the Premier says—Premier Ford always says this, that Minister Fedeli is our best salesman; Minister Fedeli, in turn, says that Premier Ford is the best salesman. I'll use a baseball analogy: Vic is the set-up man and the Premier is the closer. So it's a great team. We're very fortunate to have such a committed minister and such a committed Premier on job creation, and I want to thank them, just before I turn it over to Minister Fedeli.

The region that we're talking about has traditionally been one of the most prosperous in Ontario, but it has also seen difficult times. Fierce competition over investment is a continual challenge in jurisdictions. This area has so much to offer. It's so well positioned. It's close to the US border and the Great Lakes, which makes it ideally suited to support enhanced international trade, both from our traditional trading partners in the United States but also beyond. The area is also home to Ontario's advanced manufacturing supercluster.

We know that further development of our province's manufacturing capabilities will help Ontarians prosper in good times and protect them from economic fallout in bad times. So I'm really looking forward—and I'm eager to support the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade as we help new investments in southwestern Ontario.

This land is of high value when it comes to strategic investment opportunities. It's just a great program. And you can tell this morning that if I'm excited—you can't wait until Minister Fedeli hits the stage, because he's even more enthusiastic. I'm just the legislative tool that gets this mega site ready.

Our government has a strong record of clearing away the impediments and barriers that stand in the way of both

progress and growth while maintaining regulations that keep people both safe and healthy.

Changing the municipal boundaries through the proposed St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act gives this community, this region and, indeed, this province a fighting chance at attracting investments and the potential to create jobs. We're trying to reduce duplication. We need to manage our resources in a way that is sensible, to attract businesses and the people who run them.

I know that the city of St. Thomas has seen its population grow by about 10% from 2016 to 2021. The labour force is led by a large manufacturing sector.

We're very excited about this opportunity. We want to continue to open our province for business. We want to build Ontario up. This is a great project. I encourage all members of the House to support our efforts in creating this mega site.

Thank you, colleagues, for allowing me the opportunity to open debate.

I'll take this opportunity now, at the 26-minute mark, to let Minister Fedeli be the closer, to talk about all the wonderful things we're doing with Bill 63.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for bringing this bill forward. You have heard for the last 32 minutes how very important this is. I want to congratulate you and your team for bringing this to the closing line, Minister Clark. This is excellent work.

So why are we here? Because there is a critical shortage of shovel-ready industrial mega sites in Ontario, and this shortage places Ontario at a significant disadvantage when competing for high-value projects that we are seeing all around the world. Without immediate action, we risk losing the opportunity to compete and win these huge, transformative investments.

Think about other jurisdictions around North America, especially in the US. They have projects that are ready to go. They have land that is ready to go. They have a full-some inventory all around North America, and we don't. There are hundreds of thousands of jobs that will go with all of these properties around North America, and we're not where we need to be. We need to show that we're not just open for business, but that we're ready for business.

So let's understand why we got to where we are. I'm going to be very blunt: Years of mismanagement under the previous government cost Ontario 300,000 manufacturing jobs. In fact, I remember sitting in opposition and looking at the previous government's final—thank God it was their final—report on the economy, and it's very clear: They threw the towel in on manufacturing. They completely gave up. They did not think ahead and start to assemble land in Ontario, and you wonder why.

I'm going to read a quote now. This is from that government's report on the economy: "The structure of the Ontario economy will continue to shift from goods-producing to service-producing sectors." That's their admission. They said "no more" to manufacturing. They went on to say that that will result in "shifting employment from

goods-producing industries, in particular manufacturing, to” the service sector.

Speaker, they threw the towel in. They gave up on those 300,000 people who lost their jobs in manufacturing. The previous government just said, “That’s it. We’re throwing the towel in. We’ll give up on manufacturing.” Forget the fact that for more than a century, Ontario has been the manufacturing hub of Canada. We’re the economic engine of the country, and they said, “No, we’re going to give up.”

In fact, we heard even further—and I’ve said this in this Legislature many times—that the auto sector was starting on a downward spiral under the previous government. High costs, high taxes, high energy rates, red tape—all of those together were watching the auto industry spiral downward.

Sergio Marchionne was the former chair of what was then called Fiat Chrysler. He sat on a stage with former Premier Kathleen Wynne, and she mused out loud, “Would Chrysler be expanding in Ontario?” He looked at her with this quizzical look on his face and he said to her, “This is not what I would call the cheapest jurisdiction.” Then she pushed him and he went on to say, “You need to create the conditions to be competitive.” That was like a real gut punch to Ontario—that we have gone from this worldwide envy of manufacturing to this humbled loss of 300,000 men and women. Every single company in the auto sector was reducing production instead of increasing. Instead of fixing the mess they created, they just threw the towel in and gave up.

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Enter Premier Ford. Premier Ford brought us together as a caucus and said, “We’ve got to do everything in our power to lower the cost of doing business in Ontario.” We visited every one of the auto manufacturers, and they all told us, “Your costs are out of control. You’re not business-friendly in Ontario. We’re not here.” He said, “Give us a chance. We’ll come back to you with a plan,” and we developed Driving Prosperity. That’s the name of the plan that was going to bring back the auto sector.

It started with a reduction of WSIB, workplace safety insurance—a 50% reduction in the cost to business of WSIB. That is a \$2.5-billion savings every single year to the business community who reinvested that money—no reduction in the benefits of WSIB, just in the cost. It was so stuffed with cash at the expense of all these businesses with high WSIB rates that it was lowered. That’s a savings of \$2.5 billion annually.

Then we put in what’s called a capital cost allowance. What that meant was that you can write off the cost of your brand new equipment. If you decided to invest in Ontario and bring in brand new equipment, you can write that equipment off in the first year. That’s a huge advantage to Ontario. It saved a billion dollars annually by businesses.

Then we had red tape reduction. We have our own Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Nine bills have come through the Legislature—two a year—that reduce red tape. It’s about a \$500-million annual savings in red tape. A couple of them are very specific to the auto sector. We sat with them and we said to them, “Show us, tell us what red tape you need—that is duplicative with the federal government, or other reasons. Tell us what you need.

Show us what you need to create new jobs.” And that’s what we did.

We lowered the cost of industrial and commercial hydro rates by an average of 15%. We lowered the provincial share of municipal taxes in every community of Ontario so that they all have the same low tax rate now: 0.88%. That’s a \$450-million annual savings to the business community.

Add it all up—\$7 billion a year in lower cost to do business in Ontario. That is this huge advantage.

We went back and started knocking on the doors of all of these auto companies that were abandoning Ontario and said, “We’ve done what you’ve said.” It immediately put the brakes on them leaving and began the accession. We first heard from Ford in Oakville, with a \$1.8-billion announcement; then Honda in Alliston, with a \$1.4-billion announcement; GM in Oshawa and in Ingersoll, with a \$2.3-billion announcement; Stellantis in Windsor and in Brampton, with a \$3.6-billion announcement; Umicore in Loyalist, with a \$1.5-billion announcement; and, of course, the LG NextStar Energy battery plant in Windsor, with a \$5.2-billion announcement.

Last week, Magna announced their half-a-billion-dollar investment at their six plants in Ontario. Half of that money—more than half of it—goes into Brampton for a brand new facility on EV battery decks, basically; they’ve also got Newmarket, Belleville, Guelph and Penetanguishene.

These are all communities that are adding, collectively, 1,000 new jobs in Ontario, and that brings us to \$17 billion from zero—from worse than zero, if you could imagine, to \$17 billion in announcements from the auto sector in two years alone.

But it doesn’t just stop at the auto sector. When you think about the other kinds of investments, we’ve done about 150 deals across Ontario in the last couple of years. There’s \$3 billion from the life sciences sector, with companies like Sanofi, Roche, CCRM in Hamilton, Resilience and others. Billions of dollars in the tech sector—Telus announced \$23 billion in Ontario; Nokia, in Ottawa, a \$340-million investment.

Again, we’ve done 150 deals and five trade missions to eight countries, just since the last election. And we’ve heard the same two things from every single company—they love Ontario. This is their words. Think about the turmoil that’s created around the world, coming out of the pandemic. We have Russia’s illegal war on Ukraine. We have the whole China question. All of this turmoil is consuming the business world and families, and they look to Ontario as a sea of calm. They say, “That’s where we want to be. We want to be there.” They also say to us, “We also like Ontario because it’s a safe jurisdiction.” They know that it’s safe for their employees to be there. They know that it’s safe for their executives to go over. They know that it’s safe for families. They all said the same thing in the nine countries that we visited since the election—eight countries plus the United States.

The end result of all of this action over the last few years, since the day we were elected to a week ago: We’ve seen over 600,000 new jobs created in the province of

Ontario—300,000 before the pandemic and 300,000 new jobs since the day the pandemic struck Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: That is applause-worthy. It really is.

The auto sector accounts for 100,000 jobs throughout the province, and for the very first time in the history of the auto sector, northern Ontario will now be included. The auto sector now, because of electric vehicles, takes in critical minerals, the processing of critical minerals, the production of the parts for batteries, batteries, the production of auto parts—we have 700 parts makers in Ontario, and 450 tool and die and mould makers in Ontario. We've got 300 companies that are in the connected and autonomous vehicle business.

Think about the very first electric vehicle in Canada that came off the assembly line only a month or so ago, GM's BrightDrop. It's basically a FedEx delivery vehicle, the very first electric vehicle rolled off the assembly line. It was designed and engineered in Markham, Ontario, by GM. Seven hundred employees are there.

Ford has 500 of these types of employees in Ottawa. BlackBerry QNX has about 500 in Ottawa as well.

In Windsor, Stellantis has about 800 employees. They've put in almost a billion dollars and have two—two—North American centres of excellence, research centres. It is their head location for battery design and battery research.

That's what's happening in Ontario, and it's because we're competitive that we have this edge. We have a talented workforce. We have state-of-the-art research and development. We have award-winning manufacturing.

Look at Toyota. Toyota won the J.D. Power award for the best production plant in the world. This isn't the best Toyota plant; it's the best auto plant in the world. And because of electric vehicles, we now have this critical mineral part of it that's added.

But we've also got a clean energy advantage. Speaker, if you bought an electric vehicle in the United States, you would think you've made a contribution to society by buying an electric vehicle. But in the US it's made, sadly, with energy that's made from burning coal. So if you buy a car that has a battery made in Kentucky, you've got about 6% clean energy. If you buy a car that has a battery made in Indiana, you have about 7% clean energy. You've got assembly plants that are made without clean energy. You've got steel in the doors and the hoods that are made with coal-produced steel.

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Shift to Ontario for a second. You've got a clean energy environment—94% clean energy is what we build our cars with. Our battery companies will be able to buy an equivalent of 100% clean energy. At Dofasco and at Algoma, they're now making steel not from coal, but from an electric arc furnace, which means we have green steel building our cars, with clean energy building our cars. So when you buy an electric vehicle, as they start to come off the assembly lines in Brampton and in Oakville and in Windsor, you will have a car that you can be proud of because

it is not just an electric vehicle, it is a zero-emission—a green—vehicle, which will be the envy of the EV sector. That is a very, very big component. Think about Dofasco alone. You're talking about the equivalent of taking a million cars off the road a year just by that one conversion alone.

The critical minerals are something that I think will be the sleeper story this year. I think it was the Windsor Star that did an interview and they asked, "What is going to be the exciting news this year?" And I said, "You watch. The sleeper story will be a lithium hydroxide plant for northern Ontario." I genuinely believe that. I don't normally over-promise because we don't like to ever underdeliver, but I can tell you I really believe that we are going to see lithium projects in northwestern Ontario start to happen, and they're going to need a lithium hydroxide plant. You need that liquid to make a battery, and we believe that the minerals of northern Ontario should be processed here in northern Ontario and tie the auto sector into the north for the very, very first time.

We have a real competitive advantage. Ontario is one of the very few jurisdictions that has every mineral necessary to make a lithium ion battery. We've got great, great new nickel finds around Timmins, if you can imagine—a gold town like Timmins. South of Timmins they have a fabulous new nickel find. Just north of Timmins, Canada Nickel is there with a great new nickel find.

In Sudbury, where we've seen Onaping Depth go down—it's an old mine that couldn't get any deeper because of the technology. Well, today you can actually send electric vehicles down there. You don't need to worry about ventilation anymore because you've got electric vehicles doing the heavy work. They're going to go deep, as deep as they possibly can. That's because of the electric vehicle revolution.

Then we look at the Ring of Fire. Initially, the play was all about the chromite that is there. I think you'll actually see them move the chromite out of the way to get to the nickel that's there.

That's why we've got this road to prosperity that we're building. We've got \$1 billion committed. We hope our federal partners will commit their \$1 billion into that plan.

Bloomberg has acknowledged everything I've just said here today. Bloomberg ranked Canada as second in their annual global battery supply chain report. Think of where we were three years ago. We had zero—zero—electric vehicle production. Some \$300 billion was invested in North America in electric vehicle and battery announcements. We got zero of it under the previous government—zero. We were able, through our Driving Prosperity plan, to put a plan together—\$17 billion. I'll be very frank: We have at least that much in the pipeline. We won't win it all, but we've got a big pipeline of projects lined up for Ontario over the next two years. Bloomberg moved us from nowhere in sight of anybody to second in their annual global battery supply chain report. We're first in North America, ahead of the US, second globally. That confirms that we have indeed created the right conditions to attract investments, create jobs and remain competitive.

That brings us to the one missing piece: why we're here today. We are in fierce competition right now for large investments. As I've said, we have a big pipeline filled with projects, but we just don't have the land. We need to assemble, very quickly, large pieces of land for large potential investments. Close to 40 US jurisdictions offer a certified mega site program—key competitors, all through the States. They have shovel-ready sites and an expectation of an investor locating there. That's why we are laser-focused right now on securing large anchor projects in the auto and in the EV space, but this critical factor will be having a suitable site.

Timing is known. Costs are known. Project timelines are out there. We know we needed this land, and that's why, in November 2019, we launched the Job Site Challenge program. This is Canada's first challenge that went out where municipalities, economic development agencies and industrial property owners can put forward large tracts of land—500 acres, 1,000 acres, 1,500 acres—so that we can use them to support large-scale manufacturing operations. Just think about it. For context, 500 acres—that's almost 400 football fields. That's what 500 acres looks like. And 1,500 acres obviously can support three times that.

We need to immediately build an inventory of what we call mega sites. These are sites that are investment-ready. These are sites that would be owned, contiguous pieces of property, either serviced or ready to be serviced. We've seen the successes of LG Energy in Windsor. We've seen the success of Umicore in Loyalist township. There is a significant demand for shovel-ready sites.

Again, I've said we have a big amount in our pipeline. We've secured \$17 billion, with several more announcements coming. We have about that much in our pipeline. But what we need is to give the investors and those potential companies the confidence in the future of Ontario—that we have land available for them.

This particular site in St. Thomas that we're speaking about, and in Elgin county, is considered a highly attractive mega site. It has been identified as one of the very few potential mega sites in the province. It has a vast amount of acreage. It has close proximity to the major routes. It's fully serviceable for electric, gas, water, waste water. And it has a high probability that it could be sold to one of these investors.

The site, as you've heard from Minister Clark, straddles two municipalities: the city of St. Thomas and the municipality of Central Elgin, which is in Elgin county. These two municipalities have very different steps in permitting requirements. They have different timelines for permitting. It creates confusion and complexity. You could imagine an investor who wants to buy a big hunk of land but has two municipalities with different rules and guidelines—a building that could potentially straddle two municipalities. We need to take the piece of one and join it to the other. There's a lot of red tape that could come. There's a lot of delay in meeting timelines.

Speaker, we need to unlock the full potential of this site, and that's why the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has introduced legislation that would change the

municipal boundary so that site would be completely located in St. Thomas. It would reduce red tape. It would ensure that the St. Thomas site is truly shovel-ready in a very near term for a potential investment. This legislation would allow the city and the province to proceed quickly with permitting, proceed quickly in preparing the site to meet any potential investor timelines. It's going to allow Ontario to remain competitive. It will allow us to position the province as an attractive place to invest and to grow.

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These proposed changes have the potential to bring significant economic benefits to the people of St. Thomas, to the people of Central Elgin and all of the surrounding communities. We're going to work very closely with the affected municipalities with respect to proposed legislative changes. We're going to continue to consult with Indigenous communities about the St. Thomas industrial site.

And we will continue to work very, very hard to identify large-scale industrial sites throughout Ontario, where we know that we have so many prospects and so little assembled land.

We continue to say that Ontario is the ideal destination for manufacturers. We have a world-class auto supply base, we have a growing EV and battery-supply-chain footprint, we have reliable clean energy, we have northern Ontario's critical mineral resources—we have an ecosystem in Ontario.

Certainly, we have one of the greatest auto ecosystems. We're the only jurisdiction in North America with five different auto manufacturing companies. That's unique in all of North America. We are the number two automaker in North America.

Speaker, we're also the number two tech cluster in all of North America. When you look at the cars of the future, it's basically going to be a computer on wheels. Well, as the number two tech cluster in North America, we have that tech ability, and as the number two automaker, we know how to attach them to wheels. That's our expertise. We have absolutely great and spectacular days ahead of us in Ontario in the auto, in the EV sector.

But these mega sites can be for all kinds of projects, whether it's in the tech field, whether it's in the life sciences field, whether it's in the aerospace sector, whether it's in the chemicals sector. We have so much potential in Ontario, and I won't say it's untapped potential, because look at what we have achieved: 600,000 men and women went to work today in a facility in Ontario that they did not work at only four and a half years ago. This is a monumental shift in what was happening.

We saw the decline of Ontario's manufacturing—the former government that threw the towel in and, in writing, gave up on the manufacturing sector.

Premier Ford came along, and Driving Prosperity was written. It was our blueprint for success. That's why we have 600,000 men and women working today who weren't working.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the members opposite.

When the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was speaking, he talked about housing and supporting municipalities.

Our city council is working on the budget this year, and they're very concerned about property taxes going up. One of the reasons they're concerned is because citizens are very upset about paying more taxes but having potholes and snow plow issues all the time. One of the issues that they're struggling with is the downloading of developer service fees from housing and the fact that, in Sudbury, for the supervised consumption site, the province still hasn't chipped in \$1.1 million.

I'm asking the minister: Do they plan to compensate the city of Sudbury for the shortcomings from the province?

Hon. Steve Clark: Good morning to everybody again. I'm very excited that we had the opportunity to table this game-changing bill in the Legislature. I appreciate that the member wants to ask a question about Bill 23.

We are continuing to work with municipalities to understand the financial costs that they'll be under. Many municipalities already incent development, already incent affordable housing, already incent attainable housing, so this is not a new concept. It might be new for Sudbury.

We will be pleased to take a look at the numbers that the member obviously has received from his council, and we'll be more than happy to give him a very lengthy, detailed response.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: To the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade: We lost roughly 20,000 manufacturing jobs in Waterloo region under the tenure of the former Liberal government. That was a huge blow to our region.

I only caught about the last 10 minutes of his dissertation, if you will, but I was wondering if he could touch a little bit on what these types of investments mean to communities not just in southwestern Ontario, but all across Ontario—I think it does truly speak to the prosperity that is ahead when we see this type of investment coming to the province—and what they mean to the average, everyday person.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member for the question.

It's interesting, in the auto sector—you always hear about these indirect jobs that are created. When I was mayor of the city of North Bay and my economic development team would say, “Well, they're going to bring 10 jobs, but there are going to be 40 spinoff jobs,” I never understood and never acknowledged that that was actual. They were talking about a big stretch. But in the auto sector, they're not talking about a stretch, because the auto companies assemble vehicles; they don't make many of the components. So for every \$1 that's invested, for every job that goes to an auto plant, you can see about \$7 to \$9—some will say \$12—invested in the other sectors. You will see seven to nine to 12 jobs created in the other sectors. They don't make a tire. They don't make a steering wheel. They don't make a windshield. Somebody else makes that

for them. So when you have an increase in a plant, you have an increase in jobs all around.

Because it's critical minerals now from the north—no matter where you are in Ontario, you are now going to benefit from the auto investment.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I am having a great deal of difficulty hearing the minister of housing and the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan make claims about supporting more homes for everybody—including supports for non-profit housing—since you know very well that the two shovel-ready projects I've been talking about for the last six months in Thunder Bay have not been able to access any support or funding from this government. There doesn't appear to be a funding stream available for not-for-profit housing projects. These projects would bring 100 new living units to Thunder Bay.

I'm wondering when the government will be creating the appropriate revenue stream so that these projects can be supported and go ahead.

Hon. Steve Clark: I know the member opposite is very interested in this program. I know that she has spoken to my fantastic parliamentary assistant, who is also from the Thunder Bay area.

Again, I want to encourage all of the members opposite to have a relationship with their service manager. Those are the people who are on the ground, the DSSAB—she's shaking her head; I guess she doesn't want to have a good relationship with her DSSAB. But if there's an affordable housing project that a community wants, the first opportunity they should have is to sit down with the district social services administrator to talk about the available programs that the government of Ontario has, along with the federal government, under the National Housing Strategy. This is our system. We work collaboratively with our service managers. They do great things on the ground. Despite her shaking her head, I happen to be very supportive of what her DSSAB does, and I look forward to continuing to work with them.

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

Mr. Nolan Quinn: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

It's reassuring to know that our government is making every effort to attract new investments, remain competitive and create new, good-paying jobs. I applaud the government for introducing legislation that will continue showing the world that Ontario means business and that Ontario is open for business.

As the government continues implementing its ambitious plan to build Ontario's economy, I'm reminded that this legislation is not the only wrench in the tool box.

Can the member elaborate on the other efforts the government is using to attract investments, while also ensuring that our own businesses and entrepreneurs here at home have everything they need to create jobs and build the Ontario of tomorrow?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thanks to the member for a great question.

We've got a number of other advantages that I did not have an opportunity to speak about. I talked about the fact that we have this ecosystem here in Ontario, but it's supported by this beautiful talent that we have, which is rejuvenated every year by 65,000 STEM grads—science, technology, engineering and math—every year. We have this unique ecosystem that also includes trade deals with 50 different countries around the world. So when you are building something in Ontario, you have the opportunity to export that, tariff-free, to most countries in the world—an extremely competitive advantage.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to stand up in this House.

I've been involved in the auto sector for the last 40 years, and I can tell you, what really killed the auto sector in the province of Ontario was when the Harper government allowed our dollar to go to \$1.10; today, it's at 75 cents.

I want to talk to the minister directly. As you stand up and continue to take credit for the electric vehicles in the province of Ontario, I'm going to tell you who should get credit for it—and it certainly isn't the government: It's the bargaining committees of GM, Chrysler and Ford that went to the bargaining table under the threat of the Oshawa plant closing. It was the rally they had—including the union taking out Super Bowl ads at an incredible cost to the membership. But do you know what happened? They went to the bargaining table, and they were able to negotiate exactly where the auto sector is going. They saved the auto industry.

So I think what you should do, when you stand up, is thank the unions, thank the workers who are in those plants that are putting out the best product—not just for the last four years; they've been putting out the best product in North America for the last 40 years. We have the best auto workers in the world. That's why we're getting the work—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you. Response?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: When I have visited our prospects worldwide, we bring up the fact that Toyota was named the number one production facility in all of the world—again, not just the number one Toyota facility, but the number one auto plant worldwide.

And I have to say that the lowering of the cost of doing business in Ontario is a key factor—\$7 billion. Premier Ford and I visited every auto plant, and they all told us, “You need to lower the cost of doing business in Ontario,” and you saw us do that by lowering the cost of business by \$7 billion.

Plus, we have incentives that we have provided to every one of the companies I've mentioned. They tally about \$2.5 billion. We have decided to put our \$2.5-billion investment in the EV sector, into the plants, to hire these workers.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we do not have time for further questions and answers, but we do have time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. Deepak Anand: February 21 is International Mother Language Day.

Born and raised in Punjab, Punjabi is my mother tongue—the language in which I uttered my first word. Punjabi is the mother tongue of almost 400,000 residents serving Ontario.

Punjabi Arts Association is one such organization that has been working tirelessly for over 31 years to promote the Punjabi language and its culture through intergenerational platforms of expression where conversations and addressing community issues and concerns are highlighted through theatre, music and other art forms.

Madam Speaker, art binds and strengthens communities. It helps promote and preserve Canada's cultural diversity. In Ontario, our government and its granting agencies are the biggest champion of artists and arts organizations.

In 2022, PAA produced seven scripts, held monthly acting workshops, and hosted fun and engaging improv events in Punjabi.

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending PAA's Canadian Punjabi Kavi Darbar, a night of Punjabi poetry. I was impressed to see our Ontario youth tackling social issues with choices of words that were thought-provoking.

Thank you to the board members, volunteers, sponsors and supporters of PAA for serving and promoting mother language. You make us all proud. *Remarks in Punjabi.* Punjabi Arts Association, my best wishes, always stay in high spirits.

EVENTS IN MUSHKEGOWUK—JAMES BAY ÉVÉNEMENTS DIVERS À MUSHKEGOWUK—BAIE JAMES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The winter Carnaval period and March break are upon us, so today I would like to highlight some of the activities that will be happening in my riding from Hearst to Jogues, and all the way through to Smooth Rock Falls, over the next few weeks.

Starting as early as today, to name a few activities, there will be night skiing at Moonbeam ski hill, a crib tournament, a dabber bingo, a casino and wine-tasting evening in Moonbeam, an adult social evening at the Smooth Rock Falls Curling Club, a virtual bingo and public skating.

There are multiple children's and family activities across the community, such as big-screen movies, road

hockey tournaments, a soapbox sled competition, a polar bear dip in the Kapuskasing River, multiple concerts at the centre de loisirs and a Ski-Doo poker rally.

I can't name them all, but I encourage our residents to take a look at the great carnival schedules prepared by our municipalities on Facebook, as there's something to do for everyone.

I would like to wish everyone lots of fun and a happy and safe winter carnival and March break.

C'est le temps des carnavals d'hiver et le congé de mars arrive à grands pas, et nos communautés n'ont rien laissé à leur épreuve. Je vous invite tous à regarder aux calendriers préparés par les municipalités sur Facebook pour ne rien manquer.

J'aimerais souhaiter à tous les résidents beaucoup de plaisir lors de cette période de carnaval, et un beau congé d'hiver.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Aris Babikian: This year is the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This act virtually banned the entry of Chinese immigrants for 24 years. This tragic exclusion separated families for almost a quarter of a century. To commemorate the anniversary, the Tribute to Early Chinese Immigrants Canada Foundation, the Markham Museum, and the York Region District School Board, together with researchers at the University of Toronto and many other stakeholders, will create a rotating exhibition for the GTA. In addition, there will be commemorative events such as concerts, tree-planting, workshops and cultural performances.

The launch of the activities will take place on Tuesday, March 21, which is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and it will culminate with Asian Heritage Month.

The intention of these activities is to bring “final closure to this unjust treatment,” as one of the organizers stated. Furthermore, it is their wish to ask Canadians to join hands in making our country more harmonious, inclusive and respectful to one another, and moreover, to educate and sensitize future generations with the devastating consequences of racism.

The early Chinese immigrants' hard work, perseverance and determination contributed to building Canada as the best country in the world. Many of the descendants of the head tax and the exclusion act—are now residing in Ontario. It is our duty to bring healing and closure for the survivors and their descendants.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank former citizenship judge Nancy Siew for her diligent work on this file.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: The Welland hospital is a full-service hospital that serves the fastest-growing area of the Niagara region. This hospital would not exist without the endless

support from our community. In 1945, the Welland hospital auxiliary formed to help fundraise for the site. Over the years, they've continued that work, raising \$750,000 to renovate the ICU and \$1 million towards a dialysis unit named after them. Countless community organizations, like the Hungarian cultural society, saw the need for this hospital and contributed what they could.

Unfortunately, Niagara Health recently confirmed that services at the Welland hospital will be significantly reduced. As of February 27, emergency surgical services in Welland will be cut in the evenings and on weekends. Families in Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold and Pelham who show up at this hospital and need to be in an operating room within the hour will have to wait for an ambulance to take them to another hospital. Doctors and nurses at the hospital have told us this will create dangerous situations for patients, leading to poor outcomes and unnecessary deaths.

1020

In April 2022, this House passed my motion to maintain full emergency department services and acute-care services in Welland to ensure that there are safe, equitable hospital services throughout the Niagara region. I look forward to working with the minister and this House to ensure the government honours its commitment to maintain these crucial emergency services.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I rise today to say it's an honour to represent the people of Ajax.

February is Black History Month. It's a recollection of our collective past and present achievements and a celebration of Black excellence.

Earlier this month, I was honoured to be a part of the 16th annual Durham Black History Month event, the largest put on by Cultural Expressions Art Gallery. Esther Forde and her team did an amazing job. Every year, this event presents the Madiba Award, named in honour of Nelson Mandela. This year's Madiba Award was presented to Adam Brown.

Adam was born with retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disorder that affects peripheral vision, depth perception—and profound night blindness. Adam has led an amazing life despite his vision challenges. He took to TikTok with a lighthearted, self-revealing appeal to the public to join with him to reach out to their local MP to encourage the government to fully fund the treatment which would help thousands of men, woman and children with RP not to go blind over their lifetime. Almost three years later, with over 450,000 likes and 15,000 letters sent to the Ontario government, the gene therapy Luxturna was fully approved.

I would like to personally thank Adam for his advocacy and leadership in trying to make life better for thousands of Ontarians.

There's no better moment than now to celebrate and remember the numerous ways in which Black people have continued to shape Ontario culture, economics and society.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, as you know, Ontario has over 1.5 million residents with no access to primary care. They have no family physicians, no nurse practitioners.

In my riding, close to 30,000 people do not have access. In a part of my riding called the Valley, we had three physicians retire in the last year and, sadly, two weeks ago today, a very well-loved physician, Dr. McAlister, passed away quite suddenly, leaving behind thousands more patients, and there's no physician replacement in sight. But we have solutions. We have nurse practitioners who are willing and able to take on those orphaned patients. All we need is the minister's signature.

Carol, Dr. McAlister's widow, called me and asked if I could get a nurse practitioner for her husband's patients.

The Capreol Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic has asked multiple times for \$293,000—not millions; \$293,000—for an additional nurse practitioner, receptionist and social workers. They will be able to supply primary care to hundreds of additional patients, offer same-day appointments, after-hours appointments, provide mental health services and much more. The Sudbury nurse practitioner clinic also presented a reasonable plan.

We could, in a matter of weeks, change the lives of thousands of people by giving them access to primary care. We could support Dr. McAlister's orphaned patients.

Minister, the good people of Hanmer and Capreol need you to sign off on more nurse practitioner positions right now. Will you do it?

WELLINGTON DUKES

Mr. Ric Bresee: This past Sunday, I had the opportunity to attend a wonderful event. I was invited to drop the puck at a local hockey game. In various roles, many times over my municipal career and now as an MPP, I've had the chance to drop a puck. It is always an honour, but this one was special.

The young teammates of the Wellington Dukes, including four members of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, decided to make this game have a cultural message as well. They recognized that, for many of us, hockey is a Canadian thing. Young or old, male or female, settler or First Nation, one of the things that almost everyone in this country shares is some level of passion and a knowledge of hockey.

Another common element is the collective heartbreak that we have all felt as the discoveries of graves at residential school sites across the country have occurred.

As a country, we have not done a good job in providing the education and the cultural understanding of the devastating impact of the imposition of the residential school system for multiple generations and the long-term impact of this horrific chapter in our history.

So I was very pleased to see the efforts to bring more awareness to that history. Using hockey to cross all cultures within Canada, and specifically in my area of eastern Ontario, is both very appropriate and should be very effective.

I want to thank the Wellington Dukes, the participants and the audience in attendance. I hope they enjoyed the game, and I hope they will take some time to learn the truth. We need to recognize the past to build a better future for all Indigenous persons and for all of Canada. Thank you, Speaker. Meegwetch.

TEMPORARY NURSING AGENCIES

Mr. Adil Shamji: This week, the government released their legislation to bring surgeries and diagnostic services out of hospitals. While there could be merit in such a strategy if implemented in a not-for-profit manner with credible guardrails, it alone cannot be a solution to all the challenges in our health care system.

The bedrock of our health care system is its people, and that bedrock has been eroded by Bill 124. This wage-constraining, unconstitutional legislation has pushed health care workers out of the public system. Meanwhile, temporary, for-profit nursing agencies, operating with limited oversight, have been pulling them out. As this has happened, we have learned how some temporary, for-profit nursing agencies exemplify some of the most corrosive elements when profit is mixed with health care.

That is why today I will be tabling a private member's bill that, if passed, will license and regulate temporary nursing agencies. It takes aim at the most outrageous and predatory practices in a fair and reasonable way. For the first time, nursing agencies will be required to obtain a licence that can be suspended or revoked. They will be forbidden from unethical recruiting practices, unfair negotiation tactics and price-gouging. There will be transparency and accountability achieved through inspections, along with a prohibition against unconscionable pricing.

The bill is fair. It is not onerous. It borrows from accepted practices by this very government, and it won't destabilize our health care. What it will do is level the playing field and prevent siphoning of health care workers from our public system, and it will stop runaway profiteering.

RIDING OF BRUCE-GREY-OWEN SOUND

Mr. Rick Byers: Good morning, colleagues. It is my pleasure this morning to tell you about something very exciting that happened recently in our Grey-Bruce community. I know many of you would expect me to be telling you about Groundhog Day on February 2. Well, it was indeed a great morning in Wiarton. The fireworks at 7 a.m. were spectacular, and Willie was his usual eloquent self communicating his forecast. As you heard, he said it would be an early spring this year.

But no, colleagues, this morning I want to tell you about something more exciting than Wiarton Willie, and that's a new school in Markdale. On February 7, I was thrilled to announce that the Bluewater District School Board had been given approval to proceed with the new replacement for the Beavercrest public elementary school in Markdale. This will be an investment of \$15.5 million, an increase of \$6.9 million. The new school will be an absolute jewel. It

will have 328 new student spaces, 39 new child care spaces, two new child care rooms and a two-room EarlyON family centre.

Thank you, Minister Lecce, for your constant support. You have been there from the start for Markdale.

Thank you, Minister Surma, for your great leadership in the government's infrastructure program.

Thank you, Bill Walker, for your energetic support over the years.

Thank you, Warton Willie.

And thanks to this government for your support of Markdale.

ANNIVERSARY OF INVASION OF UKRAINE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I stand today to recognize that it has been one year since the horrific Russian invasion of Ukraine. As a nation, we must continue to support Ukrainians as they struggle for peace, freedom and democracy. They have shown the world incredible bravery and resilience as they face unimaginable challenges. I stand today to honour them and the thousands of people who have lost their lives and loved ones to this selfish act of terrorism. In my own community of Oakville North-Burlington, I've heard so many tragic stories about displaced Ukrainian families. I stand today for them, for the pain they've had to endure, and yet I remain humbled by the remarkable resilience and strength of the human spirit.

1030

At a Christmas celebration with the families at St. Volodymyr's Ukrainian church, Father Jaroslav told me that Ontario has provided a sense of community and safety that was desperately needed amidst the horrors of the war in Ukraine.

I'm proud of the work we have done by welcoming refugees and providing them with health care, emergency housing, education and other assistance like mental health supports.

We will not waver in our commitment to the people of Ukraine. We will continue to provide them with the support they need to rebuild their lives. We stand with Ukraine.

Let us never forget that the freedom and dignity of every human being is a fundamental right that must be protected at all costs.

Slava Ukraini.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to introduce Emily Trudeau. She is the director of research for the NDP caucus. She started as an OLIP intern back in 2016. She went on to be my legislative assistant and executive assistant. She is moving on. Tomorrow is her last day. I just want to say a special thank you. We can't do the work that we do without our amazing staff.

Hon. Stan Cho: Visiting us from the centre of the universe, Willowdale, is a special young woman: Grace Sun. Grace is the recipient of the 2022 Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement, which recognizes her exceptional contributions to heritage, conservation, environmental sustainability, biodiversity, cultural and natural heritage. Watch out for Grace, everyone. She's going places.

Mr. Joel Harden: Rather like my friend from Waterloo, I want to thank Sharon Lee, who has been an OLIP intern in our office. She has done really tremendous work. She is here today.

Sharon, I'm going to miss you, we're going to miss you after this week. Thank you so much for your work. You've been terrific.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park this week Mark Kaluski. He's my executive director. He's also of Ukrainian origin, and I'm grateful for his support this week.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I just want to wish my twins happy birthday. Today is their 11th birthday—the two that threw me over the edge.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to welcome and thank my OLIP intern, Téah U-Ming. Today is her last day, and I want to say a big thank you for all of her work this past term.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome two wonderful women, Anushka Goswami and Jiya Sahni. They are part of the Women in House program through Western University. It's always great to have women in the chamber. We need a heck of a lot more of them here.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd also like to welcome Anushka Goswami from the Women in House program here at Queen's Park. She interned with me, shadowed with me on Tuesday, and we had a great time. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais dire un gros merci à Thomas Forget, qui a travaillé avec le député Mike Mantha pendant plusieurs années. C'est sa dernière journée aujourd'hui. On apprécie tout ce que tu as fait pour nous, Thomas. Merci.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would like to welcome two women in the House. We've got, from Western University, Tamsen Long and Anaum Farishta.

MPP Jill Andrew: Today, we are welcoming Centennial Infant and Child Centre straight out of St. Paul's, where they're supporting children with complex development challenges and their families through innovative—and fun, I might add—individually designed programs, services and supports. I want to welcome Shemina Ladak, Fatima Mulla, Matthew Lee, Kasia Ziemba, Lorraine Chiarotto, Ali Arshinoff, Brett Balaban, Chris Butler, Grace Lowe, Katherine Newton and Jessica Rotolo—who, by the way, is the winner of the LotsOfSocks design competition; Jessica's fantastic sock design was selected from hundreds of entries to inspire the #LotsOfSocks design for #WorldDownSyndromeDay2023; rock on, Jessica—Sherene Karmali, Tonia Griffith.

And this cat shirt—Kaleb, you fantastic drag storyteller, this one's for you.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I, too, would like to welcome some Western University women to the House

today. They have a great initiative happening. I'd like to specifically welcome Michelle Wodchis-Johnson as well as Tiffany Lin.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would like to present and welcome our newest page for this season from Thornhill, Mr. Jaden Musharbash.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(h), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required. Therefore, the House shall commence at 9 a.m. on Monday, February 27, 2023, for the proceedings of orders of the day.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph has a point of order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak on second reading of private member's Bill 41.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak on second reading of private member's Bill 41. Agreed? Agreed.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. This morning, I filed a complaint with the Integrity Commissioner requesting an investigation into the Premier's actions surrounding their family fundraiser and his cozy relationship with developers. Will the Premier fully cooperate with this investigation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It has been a rather—I'll be charitable and say an unimpressive start for the Leader of the Opposition. We have some real challenges that this province is facing. The drive-by smear of the Leader of the Opposition—tried this once; the Integrity Commissioner has said that there was no issue with it. The Premier has answered the question. So let's try another smear tactic; let's try bringing the family into it.

What we are going to do instead is continue to focus on the priorities of the people of the province of Ontario—building this province up. While they continue to talk the province down and the achievements that we're seeing in the province of Ontario, we're going to do just the opposite—build better roads, build better schools, build

better colleges and universities, give our workers more opportunity to succeed in the province of Ontario. Thousands of jobs are being created, billions of dollars in economic activity coming right here to the province of Ontario. We'll focus on that. She can focus on the drive-by smear, which accomplishes nothing for the people of the province of Ontario.

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

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: Yes, we should be talking about the issues that are facing Ontarians. You're right. But how are Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You give yourself a round of applause, but how are Ontarians supposed to trust that this government has their interest at heart with this cloud of suspicion hanging over them about this government and who has access to them? Ontarians deserve a government they can trust.

Are there any other events or parties of this nature that the Premier or his staff have organized recently that may be worth also asking the Integrity Commissioner to investigate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Even in her own letter to the Integrity Commissioner, she ends it by saying, of course, "in my opinion"—in her opinion. No facts, no real evidence; just the member's opinion.

Here is the opinion of the people of the province of Ontario. In June, they cast their ballot, and the opinion of the people of the province of Ontario was that the PC government was doing the right thing for the people of Ontario. They returned us in larger numbers for the first time in decades and reduced the opposition. So what we're going to continue to do is focus on the priorities of the people of the province of Ontario.

Just this morning, I received a notice from a constituent of mine who was visibly upset at the fact that her \$300 gas bill includes a carbon tax of \$47. She said in her email, "How can I continue to afford to pay the cost of living when a \$47 tax is added to my bill? What am I supposed to do? I can't turn off my furnace. I can't afford to put solar panels on my roof." She said, "Continue to do what you've got to do to fight carbon taxes to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario." And that's what we'll do.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to go back to the Premier again, and I want to remind this government that invitees at this fundraiser said they felt "browbeaten" and "dirty" after receiving flyers and emails requesting donations of \$1,000 for the Premier's family fundraiser.

Just this morning, it was revealed that developers, insiders and government appointees also attended this wedding. One guest is a lobbyist now working for a company pushing to built on greenbelt land. Another received a paid provincial appointment just months later.

Will the Premier commit now to sharing the details of which developers and which government lobbyists were

invited to this event, who approached them for funds and what, if any, land deals or appointments were discussed?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let's look at what the Leader of the Opposition is saying here. She wants the Premier of this province to ask his daughter to table in the Legislature the guest list to their wedding. That is what she is asking. I don't even know what to say about that, Mr. Speaker.

We have real issues in the province of Ontario, not who went to a Ford family wedding. We have constituents paying \$50 for a carbon tax and trying to decide whether they can heat their homes. I have a small business person, Daniella Pantallea in Stouffville, who is saying she sees that things are changing and she wants the government to continue to focus on building the economy. That's what we're going to do.

I have meetings with constituents on Friday who want to come and talk to me about the ability to buy their first home—some who have been looking for a very, very long time and are getting frustrated and want us to continue on the path. They've heard of our plan to build 1.5 million homes, and they are coming to talk to me about how they can participate in the dream, because they want, just like generations—

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

HEALTH CARE SOINS DE SANTÉ

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ontarians deserve a government they can trust, Speaker. They're not getting that. They don't trust this government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ontarians deserve a government they can trust.

Nurses in this province deserve a government that values them.

Health care is a tough but rewarding profession. Health care workers deserve our respect and our admiration, but in Ontario's health care system today, they are simply not receiving it.

Nurses have felt undervalued for years. In January, they started bargaining a renewal contract with the Ontario Hospital Association. Their main demands are very reasonable: Ensure better staffing and wages so that Ontarians get the care they need when they need it.

Will this Premier finally show that he values nurses and health care professionals by raising their wages and negotiating a fair contract?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I think we have shown just how much we value nurses across the province of Ontario. In her own question, she highlights what we're doing. We're negotiating with nurses with respect to their contract.

But at the same time, Speaker, I hope the Leader of the Opposition will think twice about the NDP's previous lack

of support for what we're doing in health care—billions of dollars of health care investments. I know in Niagara, there's a \$3-billion commitment to building a new hospital in Niagara Falls. There will be more nurses in that hospital. There will be more doctors. There will be more PSWs. But the NDP do not support that. And 60,000 new long-term-care beds across the province of Ontario? The NDP does not support that. A new hospital in Brampton? They don't support it. Two new medical universities? They don't support it. Thousands of new nurses who will be brought online because of the hard work of the Minister of Colleges and Universities? They have not supported that.

In addition to paying our nurses and the negotiations that are happening, I hope that they will consider voting in favour of the billions of dollars in—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Billions of dollars that have remained unspent on health care, 4,000 hours of ER closures—that's the story of this government.

Speaker, this government claims that they're bringing in new health care workers but never talks about a plan to actually keep them in the profession. Thousands of nurses are leaving. Instead, they've suppressed nurses' wages, ignored their concerns. Now they're set to force more of them out of our public hospitals and into for-profit clinics.

Speaker, it is a sad state of affairs in Ontario when Ontario's nurses have become one of our most valuable exports.

Will the government act today to address the working conditions and wages of nurses and health care professionals so we can keep them here in Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: How rich, coming from the NDP, right? This is an NDP who had the opportunity to govern this province once, and what did they do? They laid off thousands of nurses across the province of Ontario. They held the balance of power under the previous Liberal government. Did they support new hospitals? Did they support long-term care? No, nothing—not a peep.

We have brought in incredible resources to build our health care system. We are investing in hospitals in every part of this province—north, south, east and west. We're tackling the divide that used to exist between urban and rural medicine. We are balancing the budgets between our small and medium hospitals and the large hospitals. We are educating more nurses in the province of Ontario than has ever happened before. We're bringing more doctors into the system. We're building new hospitals in Brampton, Niagara; we're building new hospitals in Ottawa, in Windsor—all over the province. Do you know why? Because nurses have told us they want to work in new facilities that respect the work they do.

That's why we're making those investments. What the Leader of the Opposition could do is vote in favour of any of them.

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

M^{me} Marit Stiles: Les infirmières et infirmiers se battent depuis les années pour les meilleurs salaires and conditions de travail. Mais au lieu de les soutenir, ce gouvernement a

présenté une loi inconstitutionnelle pour plafonner leur salaire. Ils ont poussé les infirmières à quitter la profession. Ça, c'est la cause de la crise en ce moment.

Pourquoi le premier ministre n'admet-il pas finalement que la loi 124 était une erreur, et que pour retenir les infirmières, il faut leur payer un salaire juste?

L'hon. Paul Calandra: Comme vous savez, nous avons fait beaucoup d'investissements dans la santé. Nous avons commencé en 2018 pour investir dans nos hôpitaux, dans la santé de longue durée. Chaque fois que l'opposition avait l'opportunité de voter avec nous pour supporter le système de santé dans cette province, l'opposition a voté non, a voté contre tous ces investissements.

Et maintenant la chef de l'opposition, elle dit : « Nous supportons ces investissements. » Mais on avait l'opportunité plusieurs fois durant ce terme de ce gouvernement—il y a un budget à venir. La chef de l'opposition a l'opportunité de supporter ce gouvernement, de supporter le système de santé, de supporter le système de longue durée.

1050

Je pense que la chef de l'opposition et le NPD vont faire la même chose et voter contre tous ces investissements, mais ce gouvernement va voter pour notre système de santé et va bâtir un nouveau système de santé pour toute cette province et pour tous les citoyens de l'Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

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

Medicare is a program that defines us as Canadians, as Ontarians. With medicare, care is based on our needs, not on our ability to pay. Canadians and Ontarians are good people. We care for one another in good times, and we care for one another in times of need, sickness or injury. Medicare is something that every Ontarian and every Canadian is proud of, but Bill 60 puts all of that at risk.

Speaker, why is the Ford government destroying medicare?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the parliamentary assistant and member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: The opposition's objective is fighting change. Our objective is improving Ontario's publicly funded, OHIP-covered services for patients.

As journalist Kelly McParland recently stated, the opposition's approach "is a big reason health care in Canada has reached a cliff edge. Even as cries for improvement go up, any effort to change a system that clearly isn't functioning effectively is met by an avalanche of objections from organizations skilled in the art of ... delay and obstruction, convinced only their" initiatives and "remedies are acceptable, and only if implemented as they prefer.

"Alarmism and obstruction got us to where we are now, and if it has its way we'll stay stuck with a crumbling system for years to come."

That is not good enough for this government. We are taking action to improve services for patients.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The government is inviting private, for-profit, investor-owned corporations into Ontario's health care system. The body of evidence is strong and well supported: The government's actions will lead to investors making hundreds of millions of dollars off the backs of sick people. I'm really sad to stand witness to this destruction of medicare.

Why is this government bound and determined to destroy medicare?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Recently, a constituent from Thunder Bay–Superior North wrote to my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and said the following:

"I want to write to you about my successful surgery. Premier Ford is absolutely correct about getting the private medical clinics and hospitals involved to ease the backlog of surgeries. Had it not been for the private hospital I had my treatment at, I would still be dealing with the pain and suffering of my medical issue. I got the surgery done in two months instead of having to endure the pain and suffering for an additional 18 months. All options should be on the table—options for the benefit of the patient and not the political agenda of the other political parties. In fact, the NDP suggested I go to a private hospital"—that's the Shouldice hospital in Thornhill. "Full speed ahead with this caring legislation. At least the PCs are concerned with my well-being and others like me.

"Sincerely,

"Jon Swaggart"—

Interjections.

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Deepak Anand: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Mississauga is home to large, knowledge-based industries including advanced manufacturing and life sciences. Talented and vibrant residents know that Mississauga's competitiveness in these industries cannot keep growing on a business-as-usual trajectory.

After 15 years of anti-business Liberal government policies, where we saw 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving this province, thanks to this government's job creation-friendly policies we have seen an increase in Ontario's competitiveness in creating 600,000 jobs since 2018.

Minister, my constituents want assurance that this government will continue attracting new investments and showing the world that Ontario is not just open for business; Ontario is ready for business.

Speaker, through you: Minister, please explain what the government is doing to continue creating good jobs and attracting investments to Mississauga.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: By reducing the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion every year, we've shown that Ontario is open for business. We're attracting record investments and record jobs—\$17 billion invested in the auto sector; \$3 billion invested in life sciences; billions of dollars invested in the tech sector.

And our support for Mississauga's world-leading advanced manufacturing sector has never wavered.

Mother Parkers recently announced their \$33-million investment in Mississauga. They're a made-in-Ontario success story. They're going to be producing private-label coffee and tea for the world's largest retailers and restaurant chains. They will be creating new jobs, new markets, making cold coffee and tea extracts in a brand new manufacturing facility. We were pleased to support them with a \$5-million investment.

Speaker, that's what we're doing to attract investments and jobs.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

Mississauga's economic prosperity has been made possible as a result of this government's success in supporting our businesses and bringing thousands of manufacturing jobs back to Ontario.

I want to take a moment and thank the hard-working workers of Ontario. We could not have achieved this success without your hard work.

These investments that the government has attracted have been transformational, protecting Mississauga's standing as a Canadian pinnacle of innovation. These investments have ranged across tech, aerospace, life sciences, chemicals, even the auto sector—that's right, Mississauga will play an important part of this province's EV revolution.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, further to these investments, can you please highlight how our government is going to support Mississauga's entrepreneurs as well?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our investments are game-changers for Mississauga. We supported Cyclone's \$21-million aerospace investment, where they reshored 60 jobs from facilities in the US. We've helped numerous Mississauga auto parts manufacturers, through our Ontario Automotive Modernization Program, to join Ontario's new auto and EV revolution. We invested in Mississauga's life sciences sector by supporting Bora Pharmaceuticals' \$2.5-million project to reinvestigate their development capacity and create new good-paying jobs in Mississauga. We've helped Mississauga businesses get online through the Digital Transformation Grant.

In addition, Mississauga's Small Business Enterprise Centre receives \$420,000 annually so they can supply entrepreneurs with all the tools they need to be successful, and that includes \$112,000 to help students and young entrepreneurs get their businesses off the ground.

We're building Ontario, Speaker.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: When the Minister of Education promised a normal, stable and enjoyable school year, he forgot to mention the asterisk that said, "kids with accessibility needs not included." Every day, children with disabilities are being sent home because there is no EA available to support them—kids like Desmond, whose mom has to keep picking him up from Cootes Paradise Elementary School in Hamilton because of an EA shortage.

Why is the Minister of Education refusing to provide the supports children need to be at school?

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

We believe every child has a right to be in school without disruption right to June. I would hope the members opposite will advance that principle as we carry on our negotiations with teachers over the coming months.

For children with special education needs, we actually increased the budget this year by an additional \$90 million. The special education budget is now at the highest levels ever recorded in Ontario history.

I appreciate that we have long-standing challenges of staffing. It's why this Progressive Conservative government has hired 7,000 additional education workers since we came to office in 2018. We know there's more to do. For mental health, for example, we increased funding by 420%. I appreciate that there are challenges within our school boards. We can expect them to have the staffing in place to support our kids.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's insulting to tell parents that you're making historic investments when you're underfunding education so badly that there are parents who have to sit outside of their kids' school every day just to help their kids use the bathroom.

Children like Sumi Saeed in Hamilton and Colette Cousins in Toronto deserve to have the supports they need, without their parents needing to sacrifice everything to keep them at school.

So why won't the Minister of Education commit to adequately funding education and making sure every kid who needs an EA gets one?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We agree that children with special education needs need to have the supports in place. It's exactly why we hired 7,000 additional education workers in the province of Ontario. It's why we've hired roughly 900 additional educators since starting in office in 2018, notwithstanding the members opposite. But enrolment, when it comes to children, has actually remained flat. The enrolment of staff, the increase of staffing, is still taking place.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, the member speaks about the need for funding. It is this government that has increased funding for this current school year by an additional \$683 million for publicly funded schools. That's a 2.7% increase—more funding for school boards, more funding per child, more funding in every community.

We recognize there's more to do. We're working across party lines to continue to ensure children have the best education system possible and that kids are able to graduate and get a good-paying job in this province.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Canada's economy, and indeed the world's economy, is changing and innovating every single day. Many technical and digitized jobs in demand today may not have even existed a generation ago. The knowledge and skills previously required for work must reflect and adapt to meet our future needs.

Parents want assurances that our education system is keeping pace with the ever-changing future job landscape, so that their children have the best possible chance at obtaining good jobs with stable paycheques.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to ensure that Ontario's curriculum is providing students with forward-thinking skills for the jobs of the future?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Markham–Unionville for this question.

We recognize, as Progressive Conservatives, that the world is changing, the market is changing, and our curriculum must change with it. Technical education is fundamental to ensuring that we have the skilled labour needed to fuel our economy, and yet, this curriculum was last updated by the former Liberal government in 2008, when smart phones, automated vehicles and the rise of social media had taken hold—and yet, it was not reflected in the skills and the curriculum children were learning within our schools. So we've now updated the technical education curriculum for the coming school year, which will include a focus on artificial intelligence. It will include a focus on cyber security, on the advancement of automation in sectors from advanced manufacturing to agriculture to construction. This will help ensure we have a highly skilled workforce that our economy needs.

Mr. Speaker, we graduate 65,000 STEM graduates a year, and even still, there are 17,000 vacant seats today in computer and information system professionals.

This advancement will help support our kids and give them the competencies they need to succeed in the ever-changing economy around us.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Knowing that students will learn about increasingly critical technological concepts is encouraging. The much-needed changes to course content will certainly reflect the knowledge and skills that are necessary for careers and occupations that are emerging across many sectors.

What is also true is that many jobs in the skilled trades are currently unfilled, and the vacancy rates continue to rise by the day. The reality is that Ontario's population is growing rapidly, and workers for many occupations are desperately needed to build infrastructure and housing.

Speaker, can the minister please explain our government's plan to connect students with in-demand skilled trades jobs?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We want Ontario students to be not just the users of technology, but the creators of technology in this country. That's why we've updated the curriculum with a real emphasis on life and job skills, on reorienting the curriculum around the labour market needs that are going to help these young people to get a good-

paying job, to own a home and live a life of dignity and purpose in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we do need more skilled labour. We need them to fuel the economy, to build the infrastructure necessary to improve our lives.

It's why we expanded the Dual Credit Program just in December—a significant increase. We're talking about roughly 24,000 students benefiting from this type of investment that's going to help them to do reach-ahead courses and really take courses in high school allowing them to graduate and complete their studies in college.

We've expanded the Specialist High Skills Major program, which allows students to gain credits in high school related to the skilled trades.

And 15,000 students are participating in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.

All of this is designed to give them a leg-up and a competitive advantage to get those good paying jobs in the future.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: Back in April, all parties in this House supported my motion to keep full emergency department services and acute-care services at the Welland hospital. Yet, recently, folks across my riding in Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold and Pelham were shocked to learn that Niagara Health is permanently removing after-hours emergency services in Welland as of February 27, next week. So if someone in need of emergency surgery shows up at the Welland site, they will be put in an ambulance and sent to another hospital.

What specific steps will this government take to stop these cuts and uphold my motion to ensure that full services remain at the Welland hospital so that families in south Niagara have safe and equitable access to health care?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, we know that the status quo isn't working. Like the rest of the health care system, emergency departments across Ontario have been experiencing significant health human resource challenges. Our government is taking action, launching the largest health care recruitment, training and retention initiative in the province's history. And our Emergency Department Locum Program averted over 1,900 closures of emergency departments in 2022.

Building on the 12,000 new nurses registered to work in the province last year, our government is investing in a range of initiatives to attract, train and retain more nurses and get them into our health care system, including our Learn and Stay program.

We're working hard every day to make sure we have the health care resources and staff we need to deliver services across Ontario.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, if the Welland hospital were to lose these life-saving services, the nearest hospital to offer them would be the Niagara Falls site, which is half an hour away by ambulance. That does not include the time it takes to load the patient into the ambulance, processing, stabilization and off-load delays by EMS, which are currently in crisis across Niagara. As many front-line doctors and nurses and medical professionals made clear to me, these changes will almost certainly result in avoidable deaths for patients who need to be in an operating room within the hour, for example, with a burst appendix.

Is the government willing to leave the people of south Niagara without timely access to life-saving care, or will the minister honour my request and meet with me immediately to resolve this dangerous situation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thanks to the member for Niagara Centre for raising this issue.

I think it's important to consider the reason for so many of the investments that we're making into the province of Ontario and into the Niagara region, and it's to address the health care concerns of constituents in all of our ridings and also to ensure that we're building up a health care system that meets the needs not only of communities that are large and urban, but also smaller communities such as those also in southern Welland.

That's why our government has introduced measures to not only increase the amount of new internationally educated nurses, but we've doubled the nursing program at Brock University, going from 300 nurses to 600 nurses—including five other nursing programs across the province.

We've launched two new medical schools to ensure that we're graduating hundreds of new doctors who are able to provide the services that are needed.

But where was the member opposite when it came to funding these important investments to ensure that services were being maintained across Niagara and Ontario? Nowhere to be found, voting no every single time when it came to making sure that the rubber hit the road and the money was put where it's needed.

We're the government that's going to get the job done for the people of Niagara, for health care across your riding and mine.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mme Lucille Collard: My question is to the Attorney General.

I think everybody here can agree that human trafficking is a terrible crime. When the victims become survivors, they need to be able to rebuild their lives, and it takes a lot of resilience to come out at the end of the tunnel and look forward with hope.

However, survivors of human trafficking often encounter one significant barrier when trying to move forward with their lives, and that is having to defend themselves against debts that their traffickers incurred in their name. In fact, these debts have the effect of re-victimizing the survivors, because these debts damage their credit and

are real barriers to moving forward and being able to leave their past behind.

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Bill 41 proposes to address this important issue by stopping the collection of these debts and the publication of such information on consumer reports.

This government has taken steps to address human trafficking in the past, and there is one more opportunity for you to stand in solidarity with survivors of human trafficking.

Will the government support Bill 41 tonight at second reading and help ensure that the control traffickers exert over their victims is severed for good?

Hon. Doug Downey: I thank my friend for raising this very important question and this very important area that we're all focused on.

I want to give a special shout-out to Laurie Scott, the MPP. Mr. Speaker, she was on this file, she was on this problem long before this government was even elected. When we were sitting in opposition, she was driving forward change, and she's made change after change after change and helped educate people about what's actually happening in our communities with this heinous crime.

So I want to say that we're following Laurie Scott's lead and that we're engaged in this bill. We look forward to the debate tonight—and I'll answer more in the supplementary.

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

Mme Lucille Collard: I do look forward to hearing more.

While Bill 41 is an excellent step forward in the fight against human trafficking and will ensure victims are better supported as they move forward, it is only one step. More work needs to be done. Addressing human trafficking requires a holistic approach that not only focuses on enforcement but also puts in place preventive measures to keep our young people safe and supportive measures to help survivors move forward.

We must do more to educate our young people on ways to recognize and avoid dangerous situations that could lead to them being trafficked.

We must do more to ensure survivors are supported as they heal from this traumatic experience and rebuild their lives.

My question is: What is the government going to do to hear the voices of the survivors who know the solutions to prevent human trafficking from occurring, and to better support survivors as they deal with the impacts of the crime?

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, we're taking a multi-ministry approach. There are five different ministries engaged in combatting this heinous crime. We've put significant resources into battling the people who are perpetuating this and, of course, supporting those who are victims of it.

We have done small things like making sure in Smart Serve that they have embedded training programs for those on the front line who are most likely to encounter those involved in human trafficking. We're doing big

things like investing tens of millions of dollars to support victims of this crime.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that Laurie Scott, who I mentioned in the first part of my answer, is actually a co-sponsor of this bill this evening, so I look forward to her words and to the others as we move forward to continue to combat this very heinous crime.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development.

Last week, the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance, NOFIA, had their annual conference in person for the first time in several years. The conference presented an opportunity for farmers, stakeholders and industry experts from northern and remote communities to gather and discuss ideas for the agri-food sector. Farmers are a critical component of Ontario's economic strength. Without their hard work and their dedication, our communities and our province would not thrive.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to support the hard-working men and women of our northern and remote agri-food sector?

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

Northern Ontario farmers feed cities, and increasingly our vast region is in play for Canada's agri-food agriculture sector in a meaningful way.

I can feel the palpable enthusiasm we shared with the people of the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance around some of the work that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is doing to ensure that they have the tools to be a major player in agriculture and agri-food production in Canada.

We're expanding capacity, lengthening the ability for seasons with farm technology. We're investing in tile drainage in Thunder Bay with the agricultural research group. We're creating terminals in places like Rainy River, in my riding, which have allowed Rainy River to become the largest canola and corn producer in northern Ontario.

These are real developments that are putting our agriculture sector in northern Ontario at the top of the list as destinations for farming.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you very much to the minister for your response.

It's clear that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is providing much-needed leadership in supporting our agri-food sector in the north. Under the previous Liberal government, many of our farmers from northern and remote communities felt like they were not respected. Seeing the minister engaging so collaboratively with this vital industry is incredibly encouraging.

Northern agriculture is vital to the strength and the success of our province's economy, with northern farms generating over \$230 million in revenue and an increasing number of individuals joining this sector.

Can the minister please explain how changes to the NOHFC will better support the agri-food industry across the north, as well as help new farmers enter into this sector?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I've got colleagues asking for a heritage fund in their region.

Anyway, I want to recognize another important aspect of agriculture. It's very near and dear to me, and it's important, I know, to the member for Kiiwetinoong. That is food security and food sovereignty for our Indigenous communities. Whether they're in the southern part of northern Ontario or in isolated communities—we're working with no less than four or five Indigenous communities on really serious and important agriculture projects.

Mr. Speaker, I promised the member from Kiiwetinoong that we would work with April Mckay at Keewaywin First Nation as she grows out her community gardening capacity, teaching young people how to operate community gardens; Eabametoong in agriculture technology and storage; Thessalon First Nation's Bio Centre. And, of course, we appreciate the work being done in Wikwemikong First Nation on some other farming.

We're going to be there for Indigenous communities.

The entire north is going to have a strong presence in the agriculture footprint of Canada.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier.

Nurses across Niagara are braving literally an ice storm to rally in St. Catharines today. Their message is quite clear: It is time to stop calling nurses heroes while supporting unconstitutional legislation that is wreaking havoc on the staffing crisis.

Some 60,000 nurses across Niagara and Ontario are negotiating their first contract since working through a global pandemic.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Will you commit today to direct the Ontario Hospital Association to compensate nurses fairly so Ontario is able to recruit and retain nurses to end this staffing crisis?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, we'll allow the Ontario Hospital Association to continue its negotiation with our nurses. I think that's the right thing to do.

At the same time, no, we're not going to stop calling our nurses and front-line workers heroes, because that's what they are—it's not just during the pandemic; it is all the time—and we've always felt that they are. So I'll let the NDP go down that road. We will continue to thank them for their service, and we'll continue to do it by building and investing more in health care across the province, because we think that's the right thing to do.

Health care is not just about people and making our communities better and providing better service for people; it's also about building a better economy. So when the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and

Trade goes out there to sell Ontario, he can sell the investments that we are making in health care as an opportunity, another reason why to come to Ontario, where we build broadband across northern parts of Ontario. It is another opportunity.

So, no, we will not stop calling our front-line workers and our nurses heroes, because that's what they are. And we'll respect them by investing in those services.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Speaker. Again, through you to the House leader—600 vacancies in the Niagara health system.

It was heartbreaking to hear of a nurse who sat and cried at her desk because she was put in charge of a floor with over 30 patients in her unit. Despite being only one year out of nursing school, she was somehow the most senior staff member at the time.

1120

I have heard too many stories like this. This is far from normal. Nurses working in understaffed hospitals right now are counting on us.

Speaker, through you to the House leader: Can you explain to nurses across Ontario why you are willing to commit public dollars to private, for-profit clinics and commit public dollars to pay lawyers' fees to appeal Bill 124 before you are willing to compensate nurses fairly so we can end the staff crisis and shorten hospital wait times?

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

To respond on behalf of the government, the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

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

We are making record investments in health care in Ontario. That starts with the high-calibre education at our world-class education facilities here.

We are ensuring we have more nurses. Brock University now has a stand-alone nursing program. As well, multiple colleges across this province are now able to offer nursing programs closer to home to ensure that students who are practising and learning at those universities and colleges are also working in those communities.

We are making investments that you continually do not support—record investments in more registered nurses, more PSWs, stand-alone programs, our new Learn and Stay program to, again, ensure that we have students who will learn and stay in those communities.

We are seeing record numbers of students who are wanting to get into the profession, and that's because of the investments that are being made in new hospitals and in new long-term-care centres. We have our new Brampton medical school and our Scarborough centre—record investments made by this government ensuring that more students are wanting to get into the health human resources field.

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

The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Many people in northern Ontario know the difficulties of winter weather and how it can create travel conditions that make it hard to travel to Toronto from rural, remote and northern parts of our province. In the past, many individuals and families in northern Ontario relied on the service provided by the Northlander train system to help them. Individuals would use this service to visit their families, attend medical appointments, conduct business trips, and for work. Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government that was supported by the NDP did not believe this service was important and cancelled passenger rail service between Toronto and Cochrane. Our government needs to demonstrate leadership and restore this vital transit system.

Can the Associate Minister of Transportation please provide an update on how our government's progress to resume the Northlander is going?

Hon. Stan Cho: That was a great question from a great member, who does amazing work for her constituents.

I'm very happy to inform this House and that member that on December 15, just before the holidays, I announced our government's \$140-million purchase of three beautiful new trains for the restored Northlander.

Speaker, make no mistake: We're bringing the Northlander back, and we're delivering the trains the north deserves after the Liberals cancelled this vital transportation link to the north. These trains will feature spacious seating and modern amenities, WiFi, audiovisual announcements, built-in wheelchairs, food services, and fully accessible washrooms.

This is a huge milestone in restoring the Northlander, which will unlock economic opportunities for the north and make it easier for people to access work, health care, education and other critical services.

After the NDP propped up the Liberals when they wrongfully ended the Northlander, our government is bringing the Northlander back.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the great Associate Minister of Transportation for that wonderful update. I want to take a ride right away.

This is encouraging news for many of the individuals and families from our province's rural, remote and northern communities. People and businesses in these communities rely on a safe, convenient transportation network to get where they need to go and to keep our goods moving.

Passenger rail supports families, tourism, manufacturing, jobs, innovation and economic growth, all while keeping the people of Ontario connected—even to WiFi. That is why it is so vital that we, as a government, ensure the essential transit service is restored.

Speaker, can the associate minister explain what further measures our government is taking to ensure that the Northlander service is fully restored?

Hon. Stan Cho: I'm going to buy that member dinner on that train trip all the way up to Cochrane.

Our government is working tirelessly alongside Ontario Northland to resurrect this vital link. Future implementation activities include design, engineering, environmental assessment, local consultations, station and track improvements. Just last winter, Ontario Northland performed important schedule testing for the Northlander by using existing Polar Bear Express equipment.

Speaker, to the member's point, the revamped Northlander will deliver tremendous benefits. The planned service route between Toronto and Timmins, connecting to Cochrane, will provide passenger rail access for 176,000 residents in northern communities, deliver up to \$132 million in economic benefits and, by 2041, reduce 4,400 tonnes of auto emissions annually, and generate up to 60,000 in annual ridership.

Unlike the opposition, who called the north a no man's land—this government disagrees. The north is a valuable partner in our prosperity. We're bringing the Northlander back.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

SERVICES DE SANTÉ DANS LE NORD

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is to the Premier.

Residents of the James Bay coast do not have access to adequate health services. These fly-in First Nations must travel from one community to another, or even further, such as to Timmins or Kingston, for adequate care. The travel, as we know, is very costly for the province and poses a burden on these families. Fort Albany has space for such a department in their hospital and has many patients who require daily support.

My question: What will this government do to get adequate dialysis care for these fly-in First Nations?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: When it comes to health care, we know that the status quo is no longer acceptable. That's why we're taking bold action to eliminate surgical backlogs, reduce wait times, increase publicly funded services and procedures and make sure that services are available for residents across Ontario, like in the member's riding.

Ontario now has introduced our three-step plan, the Your Health plan, that better integrates the use of community surgical and diagnostic centres and their state-of-the-art facilities to speed up how quickly people are able to get their surgeries. We know that taking innovative steps like this is the way to improve our health care system to make sure that we can have services across Ontario, in people's communities like the member opposite's.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Comment est-ce qu'on peut être déconnecté des communautés du Nord qui sont isolées? La réponse, elle l'a bien démontrée. On parle des personnes qui ont besoin de la dialyse, qui n'en ont pas dans leur communauté. Ils sont obligés de se déplacer à Kingston. Ils sont obligés de vivre à l'année dans des chambres de motel. Essayez ça, de vivre un an de temps dans une

chambre de motel, puis vous viendrai m'en parler de comment c'est apprécié.

Je pense qu'on a une responsabilité d'écouter le cri du coeur de ces patients-là, de ces résidents-là, dans ces communautés qui sont isolées. On a besoin de services. Fort Albany peut accommoder et peut adresser ce problème-là. Ne donnez pas une sentence à vie à ces patients-là. On a besoin de services.

Alors, je vous repose la question, encore : What will this government do to get adequate dialysis care for these fly-in First Nations?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Our government obviously is doing everything we can to ensure services are available across Ontario, in every community. That's what our initiatives are about. We've been making record investments—\$14 billion a year—and we will continue to invest in health care to make sure the services are available when and where people need them. That's why we're proceeding with our Your Health Act, which we hope the opposition is going to support us in.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Hon. Ross Romano: Under the previous Liberal government, the concerns of the people of the north were ignored when it came to jobs, the economy and our environment and park system. The Liberal government focused on the concerns of the big cities, while northern families felt ignored in their own province.

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As part of Liberal budget cuts, many of our northern provincial parks faced staff, service and program reductions. These decisions led to job losses, program cancellations and the removal of overnight camping services. These actions were disrespectful to all people of the north and diminished the value of our parks system.

Speaker, can the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks please explain how our government will protect and strengthen our northern park system?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that question. I value his friendship, mentorship and leadership. And most of all, he has been a true champion and strong voice for the north. He spoke to me of visiting fly-in communities in the north, and it's in that spirit that I recently visited the north and the beautiful community of Elliot Lake. I cannot thank my hosts enough for the incredible, warm welcome that they extended to me. It's true, Mr. Speaker, that northern Ontario hospitality is second to none. And they're glad that in these members from the north, they now have a government that's listening and championing their needs.

Ontario has signed a historic co-partnership agreement with the Mississagi Park Foundation, who will maintain and operate Mississagi Provincial Park. Under this agreement, parks operation will be shared between Serpent River First Nation, led by Chief Brent; Mississauga First Nation, led by Chief Bob; and the municipality of Elliot Lake, led by Mayor Andrew. I had the opportunity to sit down with all of them, and there are so many more—

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Speaker, I thank the minister for his response. It's great to see all that enthusiasm working on behalf of the people of northern Ontario.

It's so encouraging to hear that our government is correcting the mistakes that were made by the previous Liberal government when it comes to supporting our park system. Under their leadership, Mississagi park was one of the parks that was slated for closure. This park remains open today thanks to the leadership and the advocacy of our strong municipal partners and Indigenous communities.

As a government, we must continue to support and respect our northern community partners and protect our northern park system and environment.

Can the minister please elaborate on how this new agreement will ensure that Mississagi park continues to thrive for many, many more years to come?

Hon. David Piccini: We share a commitment with the north to build Ontario, to build a prosperous Ontario.

And sometimes you just have to listen, so I was honoured to have the opportunity to learn from those Indigenous leaders, to learn from that municipality, who have signed a historic agreement.

We're getting the job done—

Interjection.

Hon. David Piccini: —and I'm pleased the member opposite acknowledges we're getting the job done with this park foundation, this historic agreement. This groundbreaking agreement will allow the foundation to participate in the management and operation of this beautiful park—a park the previous Liberal government let go. They called that park and the people up there “no man's land.” Well, we say, Mr. Speaker, that this is an incredible land, a land that deserves stewardship. That's exactly what's happening with this incredible partnership.

This is a win for all residents of Elliot Lake, especially Serpent River and Mississauga First Nations, and most importantly, for all Ontarians, for our next generations who are going to learn from the Indigenous teachings and participate in the great outdoors for generations to come.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: One third of housing in London is owned by real estate investors who scoop up entry-level properties away from first-time homebuyers. This is on top of the 86% of condo apartments already owned by investors—86%; that's more than twice the provincial average.

Speaker, this government is telling the people of this province that they're building new homes. It remains to be seen whether these will be truly affordable homes.

What is this government doing to ensure that first-time homebuyers can actually get into these new homes?

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

We're in a housing supply crisis all over the province, including in the member's riding, and I'm glad that he's raising this concern—because we're the only party that has been talking about it.

If you go back—and I'll just tell you, Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis that we're in, the supply crisis that we're dealing with right now, the Minister of Finance addressed this by making sure that the percentage that has been added, the 25%, is across the province, not just a portion, to make sure that there's more supply in the province of Ontario for Ontarians.

But we need to do more. If you look at the work of the municipal affairs and housing, this minister—the last two years, we've seen record housing starts in the province of Ontario. Do a comparison to when the previous government was in power and they held the balance of power—the lowest housing starts. It's not enough. We need to build more homes all across the province, including in that member's riding, and we're going to get it done.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: This government didn't answer the question.

They talk about record housing starts, and the reason for that is that you have removed rent control. You've created a power imbalance between the owner and between renters.

Professor Diana Mok from Western stated: “Interest in housing used as an investment tool likely spiked in Ontario after the province removed rent controls on new builds after 2018.” Again, this has led to an unfair power imbalance where landlords can jack up the rent in between or when someone completes their tenancy, because there is no rent control. You did that. You did that to renters.

Young families are being completely left behind. The Housing Stability Bank, a local program that helps renters get out of arrears, is reporting a 35% increase in demand for their services. People are sinking even more under water each day.

Will this government close the loophole that allows foreign investors and real estate investment trusts to stockpile rental properties across Ontario?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Again, I thank the member for the question.

We've done that. We're not going to stop there. We're going to continue going forward. As I mentioned, we're in a housing supply crisis.

I'm glad the city of London adopted the targets that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing put forward, because they know these are attainable targets.

When it comes to rent control—I have to tell you this, Mr. Speaker. Through Bill 184, when we put in measures, the measures that this government has put in place—no government in the past 70 years has provided more protection for tenants than this government. Every single protection that we put in Bill 184 for tenants—guess what the opposition did? They voted against it.

Only one party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Michael Parsa: —stands up for tenants and makes sure that they're protected while we increase housing supply for all Ontarians across the province—and that's this government, this Premier and this minister.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Kevin Holland: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

It was with sadness that we learned of the passing of the Honourable David C. Onley, Ontario's 28th Lieutenant Governor. Mr. Onley was appointed Lieutenant Governor in 2007 and faithfully served our province for seven years. Mr. Onley was an advocate for advancing accessibility rights for Ontarians.

After contracting polio as child, Mr. Onley used a motorized scooter throughout his life. However, he was not deterred in any way, working for more than two decades as a Citytv reporter. His legacy of service and advocacy for equal rights for people with disabilities should not be forgotten.

Can the minister please explain how our government will uphold Lieutenant Governor Onley's important vision of a more accessible Ontario for everyone?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for such an important question.

David Onley was a dear friend of mine, and I miss him greatly. I will never forget the time I met him at his home to discuss the importance of accessibility for all Ontarians. Mr. Onley was a friend, leader and champion when it came to all things accessibility. I spoke with him regularly, and the number one thing he said to me was to find meaningful jobs for people with disabilities.

Accessibility is an ongoing effort. We will continue to work toward improving the lives of Ontarians with disabilities.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Point of order: I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding standing order 40(e), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the ministerial statement this afternoon on the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Madame Collard is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding standing order 40(e), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the ministerial statement this afternoon on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Agreed? Agreed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I rise in accordance with standing order 59 to outlay business for next week, and just to thank, again, all members for a wonderful first week back in the service of the people of the province of Ontario.

On Monday, February 27, we will be continuing debate on Bill 63. In the afternoon, we will have opposition day motion number one.

On Tuesday, February 28, we will have further debate on Bill 60. In the afternoon, we will return to Bill 63. In the evening, there will be private members' business standing in the name of the member for Don Valley West, which is Bill 50.

On Wednesday, March 1, in the morning, we will have further debate on Bill 60; in the afternoon, debate on Bill 63; and in the evening, we will have private members' business standing in the name of the member for Peterborough–Kawartha, which is Bill 31.

On Thursday, March 2, in the morning, we will be debating a bill which will be introduced soon. In the afternoon, we will continue debate on that wonderful bill. In the evening, we will be dealing with the member for Niagara Falls's private member's motion number 22.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN AN EMERGENCY ACT (EMERGENCY POWER GENERATORS), 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA PROTECTION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE EN CAS D'URGENCE (GÉNÉRATRICES DE SECOURS)

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

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and the Condominium Act, 1998 to require emergency power generators / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums pour exiger la présence de génératrices de secours.

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

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

On February 22, 2023, Ms. Pasma moved second reading of Bill 47, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and the Condominium Act, 1998 to require emergency power generators.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 30; the nays are 66.

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

Second reading negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

WEARING OF RIBBON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Beaches-East York has a point of order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I seek unanimous consent to be able to wear this blue and yellow ribbon to honour Ukraine.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches-East York is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear the ribbon she referred to now. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome, on behalf of the government of Ontario, on behalf of all of the MPPs here at Queen's Park, Oleksandr Shevchenko, the consul general of Ukraine; Alicia Markson, representing the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto branch, Stand with Ukraine committee; Teresa Lubinski from the Toronto Catholic District School Board—she's a trustee in ward 4—as well as Luba Slavatyńska, Ukrainian Canadian Congress Ontario Provincial Council. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have three young women with me today from the Women in House initiative. They've been here other times this week, but I want to welcome Sara-Emilie Clark, Lara Suleiman, and Sthuthi Satish, who are here today to shadow me.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: On behalf of our leader, Marit Stiles, and the entire official opposition, I too would like to give a warm welcome to the consul general of Ukraine and all of our guests today. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TEMPORARY NURSING AGENCY LICENSING AND REGULATION ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA DÉLIVRANCE DE PERMIS AUX AGENCES DE SOINS INFIRMIERS TEMPORAIRES ET LA RÉGLEMENTATION DE CES AGENCES

Mr. Shamji moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act respecting the licensing and regulation of temporary nursing agencies / Projet de loi 67, Loi concernant la délivrance de permis aux agences de soins infirmiers temporaires et la réglementation de ces agences.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to invite the member for Don Valley East to briefly explain his bill, if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Adil Shamji: The bill enacts the Temporary Nursing Agency Licensing and Regulation Act, 2023. The act adds a new licensing requirement for operators of temporary nursing agencies. Applications for these licences must be submitted to the registrar appointed under the act. The applications must contain a credentialing and monitoring plan, as well as a compliance plan.

Licences are subject to several terms and conditions. These include a predictable fee requirement, a prohibition on unconscionable prices, limitations on work assignment and recruitment practices, and certain disclosure obligations. Contravention of the act or the regulations is an offence and is punishable on conviction by a fine.

UPLOADING HIGHWAYS 174 AND 17 ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE TRANSFERT DE COMPÉTENCES RELATIVES AUX VOIES PUBLIQUES 174 ET 17

Mr. Blais moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to the jurisdiction and control of Ottawa Road 174 and County Road 17 / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun en ce qui

concerne la compétence relative aux voies publiques connues sous le nom de Ottawa Road 174 et de County Road 17.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Ottawa Road 174 and County Road 17 were downloaded to the municipalities of Ottawa and Clarence-Rockland, respectively, in the late 1990s. These two roads function as one single inter-regional highway that has tens of thousands of drivers on it every day. This act would effectively transfer these two roads back to provincial responsibility.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ANNIVERSARY OF INVASION OF UKRAINE

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Good afternoon, everyone. Today, colleagues, we are marking a tragic anniversary. One year ago, Putin began the most recent phase of his illegal attack on Ukraine, launching a brutal, unprovoked war of aggression. We have witnessed the naked greed of his attempt to steal additional territory from the sovereign nation of Ukraine and the brutality of targeting of civilians.

The arrogance and duplicity of Putin's attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government to replace it with one of his own choosing cannot go unchallenged. We will not turn a blind eye to the horrors of seeing cities, homes and hospitals bombarded by Russian artillery and the attempt to destroy Ukraine's power grid and leave people to freeze in the winter cold. Putin's reckless bombardment near Chernobyl threatened to unleash another nuclear disaster on Ukraine, Europe and the entire world, and we will never forget the mass graves of murdered civilians in Bucha, Mariupol and Izyum; the shelling of civilians; the relocation and deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. For all these reasons, Mr. Speaker, Ontario and Canada have joined the rest of the world in condemning this aggression and demanding an end to the illegal Russian invasion.

All this was shocking, but sadly, not surprising. Almost a decade ago, in February 2014, Putin ordered the invasion and annexation of Crimea. But it wasn't enough for him, Mr. Speaker. He moved next into the Donbas region, but he wasn't satisfied with that either. As history has so often shown, an aggressor is never satisfied. No matter the misery he inflicts on others, no matter the cost he inflicts on his own people, Putin will not stop until and unless someone stops him.

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Speaker, this is happening today in the heart of Europe. War is not far away, but a modern-day reality. We can imagine, as President Zelenskyy called on us to imagine, this happening to us, and how we would need help from

our friends to aid in our resistance. He called on us to imagine the CN Tower, not far from here, under bombardment; Vancouver under siege; our power grids destroyed. He called on us to imagine the bombing and shelling of our airports, our schools and our hospitals—even our very homes.

In Ukraine, in Kyiv and Mariupol and many other once peaceful cities, these things are happening night and day. As Ukraine bravely re-establishes control of their land, we are learning the full extent of Russian atrocities: the torture facilities, the mass graves, the real genocidal intent of Putin's war. We can't look away. This is the face of the Russian occupation: towns and cities turned into mass graves. There must be justice.

As President Zelenskyy said, Putin seeks "to destroy our future, to destroy our nation, our character." This is the practical modern-day history of Ukraine. This is why Ukraine must fight and why we must stand with them.

Speaker, I think many were surprised by the astounding bravery of Ukraine's resistance. We watched in awe when President Zelenskyy said he needed ammo, not a ride, and Ukraine mounted a historic defence against the invasion. The Ukrainian military and Ukrainian people rallied behind his leadership, but we feared that, despite their courage, the outcome of the war would be swift, tragic and unavoidable. Few predicted not only the bravery that Ukrainians have shown, but their valour and their success. They defended their capital and drove the Russian army back. They pushed back the invaders on multiple fronts, and today, a year after the war began, after a year of battle, sacrifice and heroism, they continue struggling to free their homeland.

Countries around the world have rallied to support Ukraine, Canada among them. Canada and other nations have imposed strong sanctions on Russia, Russian companies and Russian officials responsible for the illegal invasion. Ukrainians have been provided with weapons, ammunition and other support. In fact, I'm proud that vehicles manufactured right here in Ontario are on the front lines. Roshel, which I had the pleasure of visiting, has delivered more than 200 armoured vehicles to Ukraine and plans to deliver 1,000 by the end of this year. Canada has also donated 39 light armoured vehicles from GDLS Canada, based in London.

Our province's manufacturing expertise is making a real contribution to Ukraine's defence. But they have fought alone, defending their freedom and their democracy, and defending freedom and democracy against aggression for all of us. And they fight on.

As a consequence of Putin's brutal invasion, many Ukrainians have had to flee. Over eight million refugees have been displaced by this war of aggression. Ontario has become the refuge for more of those fleeing the invasion than any other province in Canada. Our province has now welcomed more than 60,000 displaced Ukrainians with open arms. Ontario will continue to work in partnership with the federal government, across our government, with businesses, unions, municipalities and with community organizations to ensure those coming here to Ontario have access to supports they need to start a new life here.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're doing everything we can to help those fleeing the war and arriving at our door, whether temporarily or to make Ontario their new home. Last spring, we announced supports, including a dedicated job-search hotline, access to health care, emergency income assistance for those in need, free kindergarten-to-grade-12 education, access to child care and more.

My ministry has also provided \$4.4 million to help new arrivals with settlement, language training services, housing supports, employment services and mental health supports. These supports are helping to make sure Ukrainians arriving in Ontario have access to the programs and services they need to start a new life here. To date, more than 3,700 Ukrainian newcomers have access to our Employment Ontario services; of those, more than 1,200 have found employment so far.

Not only our government but, as I said, community organizations, union partners, employers and people across the province have come together to support those fleeing the invasion. Ontario stands proudly with the people of Ukraine. We will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine. Canada is home to 1.3 million people of Ukrainian origin, the third largest Ukrainian population in the entire world. Our countries are bound by the ties of friendship and family bonds that unify us. We will help those who have come to our shores to find sanctuary and rebuild their lives. We stand by those who fight to free Ukraine from Putin's illegal invasion and to restore their freedom and sovereignty.

If Putin thinks the world will look away, if he thinks the world will soon forget, he has gravely miscalculated. We have seen, if he thinks Ukrainians will give up, if he thinks he can defeat them, he is utterly wrong. If he thinks he can erase an independent Ukrainian nation and a free Ukrainian people, we have seen that they will never, ever permit that to happen. We have seen the valour and bravery of Ukrainians defending their land and their homes. Ukraine must and will prevail. As President Zelenskyy said, "We want to live. We want to have peace."

We must continue to support them in their struggle until that dream is achieved. Glory to Ukraine. Slava Ukraini.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I stand today on behalf of the leader of the official opposition and the Ontario NDP caucus along with the entire House to solemnly mark the first anniversary of the brutal escalation by the Putin regime's long, bloody, nine-year invasion of Ukraine, a peaceful and democratic country. It has led to hundreds of thousands of innocent lives lost, millions displaced and the destruction of homes, communities, entire cities. We cannot turn a blind eye to the blatant violations of international law and of human rights.

New Democrats and all Canadians stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and we will continue to do so. We will provide aid to the people of Ukraine and work together to bring an end to the war.

Canada is home to a large number of people of Ukrainian descent. Canadians have always stood with Ukraine and Ukrainians to help them in their struggle to change

their country from a repressive, corrupt, colonial subset of a large, autocratic empire to a free, open and democratic state. When the war escalated and waves of Ukrainians were fleeing, people and countries around the world mobilized to provide support. I remember the solidarity rally at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto. The square was packed with people, and the Ukrainian flag was flying proudly at city hall. Toronto stood in solidarity, and that solidarity was felt strongly.

As legislators, we were all eager to do our part. MPPs from all parties were vocal in our support for the people of Ukraine. Several of my colleagues from the government side and I met at the Polish consulate with both the consuls general of Ukraine and Poland to learn more and figure out what we could do and how we could offer support.

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I spoke to the then Minister of Health and Deputy Premier and urged that Ontario drop the three-month waiting period for Ukrainian refugees who were coming to Ontario, so that they could get immediate medical support, especially for children escaping the war. This was echoed by my colleague the member from London West in this House as well, and the province did follow through with that, and also provided funding for various programs for Ukrainian refugees. That was the right thing to do, and we commend the government for that.

In my conversations with members of the Ukrainian Canadian community, they are urging for continued support and action from the province, particularly funding resettlement agencies to provide services for help with integration, language assessment and ESL classes; funding for job training and apprenticeships in areas where skilled workers are needed; funding incentives for newcomers to move to northern and rural areas; fast-tracking Ukrainian nurses and doctors to help them with registration and certification; and allowing Ukrainian students on CUAET visas wanting to attend college or university to qualify for domestic fees and not international student fees. These are some of the steps that we in the province can and should take.

Speaker, all levels of government were hands-on and involved in various efforts. I do want to also mention the school boards and the schools, who were very quick to support the kids coming into Ontario and transition them into our public school system.

One of the things that moved me greatly and showed the deep support for the people of Ukraine was how everyday Ontarians were going the extra mile and acted to be a part of the various efforts to support Ukraine. I want to share some examples that happened in my community of Parkdale–High Park. A solidarity march was put together in September 2022 by the Ukrainian festival organizers in Bloor West Village. The Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society, a non-profit based in my riding, has been working hard around the clock to provide settlement assistance to refugees; so has Romero House. Small businesses like Shakey's in Bloor West Village and Noctua in the Junction showed their support by raising funds for various Ukrainian aid organizations. The Rotary Club of Parkdale-High Park-Humber recently hosted an event at

the Roncesvalles United Church to help raise money to clear landmines in Ukraine.

These are just some examples in my community, but there are so many examples in communities across Ontario. The people of Ontario continue to stand with the people of Ukraine, and must do so.

Speaker, all people have the right to freedom and self-determination. The Ukrainian people want dignity over subjugation. The Ukrainian people want peace. Ukraine shall overcome. Ukraine will prevail.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: One year ago, people across Ukraine were launched into a panic, having to flee their country and experiencing a type of terror that is difficult to even put into words. Their country was at war.

As Russian tanks began rolling into Ukraine, the rest of the world watched in horror. Sanctions and other actions were tried by many governments, including ours in Canada. With bravery and courage that surpasses their size, Ukraine's military has held its ground, reclaiming control and fending off Russian attempts to advance in the east, where battles are continuing to this day.

What has struck me throughout the past year is the resilience of Ukrainian people. It has always become clear through times of extreme crisis the ability for humans to form connections and create community despite tragic circumstances.

Last year, Canada and Ukraine forged a connection of their own. The Canada Ukraine Foundation and Ukrainian Canadian Congress established a partnership, the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal and joint Ukrainian Humanitarian Relief Committee, the UHRC, to efficiently and cost-effectively deliver crucial humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and Ukrainians displaced to their neighbouring countries by war. This alliance represents the essential collaboration both our countries are strengthened by. Around the globe, Ukrainian flags were placed in windows, donations were made and regular people took a stand against the tyranny of the Russian government. In my own riding of Beaches–East York, I saw selfless displays of hope, compassion and humanity.

One of my residents, Kosta Demirov, came to Canada as a Bulgarian refugee in 1990. Knowing first-hand the hardships and struggles newcomers displaced by war face, Kosta, a conscientious developer who created a purpose-built rental building so needed in our riding and every corner of the city and country, took a widely avoided risk in the developer world and offered Ukrainians new to Toronto a place to call home in his seven-story building on Main Street at Kingston Road. He now rents 28 units—over 40% of the whole building—to Ukrainian families new to Canada. It is people like Kosta who fill us with hope in these difficult times.

Sunflowers have long been a beloved symbol of Ukrainian national identity. Maybe you've seen the video of a Ukrainian woman in the southern port city of Henichesk giving sunflower seeds to armed Russian soldiers, saying "Take these seeds so sunflowers grow here when you die."

Following the sunflower movement, my own team and I crafted the initiative Sunflowers for Peace, handing out

sunflower seeds at the door and across our riding. Watching the sunflowers grow became a symbol of optimism and reminded us of Ukraine's bravery.

Another amazing Beaches–East York resident, Ron Wilford, made and distributed blue and yellow ribbons for Ukrainians at many rallies across Toronto, where he advocated for peace and had meaningful conversations with fellow attendees with and without Ukrainian heritage roots.

Ukrainians are fighting for democracy, independence and the future of our world as we know it. In times of war, a country can only achieve their goals effectively through the influence of leadership. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stepped up and has led with integrity and honour. He emulates the bravery and determination of Ukrainians. His country's admirable resilience to not succumb to the downfall of war demonstrates the meaning behind nationhood. Through his efforts and leadership, he continually projects the spirit of his nation for freedom.

The meaning of victory comes in different shapes and sizes. We should all be doing our part to assist in supporting and building awareness in any way we can. On this journey to justice, it is important that there are leaders like President Zelenskyy. I recognize his strong and brave leadership that I am hopeful will lead Ukraine to peace and healing. He is a role model for all of us in this room and beyond.

Yesterday I visited the exhibit *The Year of Resilience* presented by our Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. I was so struck by the people, structures and landscapes portrayed: A group of teens posing for a yearbook photo in a bombed-out building, a teacher with a bloody face in an apartment complex, a father making a heart gesture as his wife and daughter went by in an evacuation train car—faces and scenes that are universally compelling and all tell a strong story of mental and physical fortitude.

I encourage everyone to experience the exhibition, a year-long, pointed chronological story and descriptive words and photographs—a testament to what we already know, and a way to give us all perspective. We are all inherently compassionate and empathetic, and above all, resilient. Resilience is a process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. The demands of this war are immeasurable, and we owe it to this beautiful country to bear witness to it.

The exhibit is at Queen's Park until Friday, when it will move to city hall. The residents of Toronto and visitors to our city can see a mere sample of the enormous tragedy and hardships that have occurred, but also to be reminded of the resilience Ukraine demonstrates, the ability for endurance and the promise of recovery and for the future.

Today, my heart is heavy knowing thousands have lost their lives to this violent war and over 14 million have been displaced from their homes, but we will never give up hope. I see a future where Ukrainians rebuild and return to their country without fear, knowing their strength and resilience was a shining example to the rest of the world and myself, and all Ontarians included. Slava Ukraini.

Applause.

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PETITIONS

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My petition is “Extend access to post-adoption birth information.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas current legislation does not provide access to post-adoption birth information (identifying information) to next of kin if an adult adopted person or a natural/birth parent is deceased;

“Whereas this barrier to accessing post-adoption birth information separates immediate family members and prohibits the children of deceased adopted people from gaining knowledge of their identity and possible Indigenous heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend access to post-adoption birth information ... to next of kin, and/or extended next of kin, if an adult adopted person or a natural/birth parent is deceased.”

I support this petition, sign it and give it to page Vedant to take to the table.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs. Robin Martin: “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 support this petition and will sign my name here to it.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Repeal, Don’t Appeal: Save Our Public Health Care.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the nursing shortage across Ontario has doubled in the past five years to push our public health care system to collapse;

“Whereas public health care is a human right that must be available to all Ontarians when they need it;

“Whereas Bill 124 has capped the wages of public sector workers, including nurses, to a 1% increase per year, which once adjusted to the current inflation rate of above 8% in 2022, represents a pay cut of 7%;

“Whereas the Ontario Superior Court of Justice found that Bill 124 substantially interfered with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, declaring the law to be void and of no effect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to respect the court decision and immediately repeal the wage-suppressing Bill 124 as part of the solution to save Ontario public health care.”

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

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Madam Speaker, it’s always lovely to see you in the seat. My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario has one of the most dedicated and highly trained health workforces in the world. Over 60,000 new nurses and 8,000 new doctors have registered to work in Ontario; and

“Whereas hiring more health care professionals is the most effective step to ensure Ontarians are able to see a health care provider where and when you need to; and

“Whereas starting in spring 2023, the government will expand the learn and stay grant and applications will open for eligible post-secondary students who enrol in priority programs, such as nursing, to work in underserved communities in the region where they studied after graduation. The program will provide up-front funding for tuition, books and other direct educational costs; and

“Whereas with new as-of-right rules, Ontario will become the first province in Canada to allow health care workers registered in other provinces and territories to immediately start caring for you, without having to first register with one of Ontario’s health regulatory colleges. This change will help health care workers overcome excessive red tape that makes it difficult for them to practise in Ontario;

“Whereas” the government is “investing an additional \$15 million to temporarily cover the costs of examination, application, and registration fees for internationally trained and retired nurses, saving them up to \$1,500 each. This will help up to 5,000 internationally educated nurses and up to 3,000 retired nurses begin working sooner to strengthen our front lines;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario continue to build on the progress of hiring and recruiting health care workers.”

I fully support this petition and will hand it over to the Clerk through page Bianca.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Nolan Quinn: “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 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 this petition and give it to page Taylor.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further petitions? And I apologize. Now to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

DÉTACHEMENT DE LA PPO

M. John Vanthof: « Gardez le détachement de la PPO de Noëlville ouvert.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors qu’il n’y a pas eu suffisamment de communications et de consultations avec les collectivités et les intervenants concernés au sujet de la poursuite des activités du détachement de Noëlville de la PPO; et

« Alors que les résident(e)s et les visiteurs des municipalités de la Rivière des Français, Markstay-Warren, St.-Charles, Killarney et Britt-Byng Inlet ainsi que les Premières Nations de Dokis et Henvey Inlet méritent un accès équitable à une intervention policière fiable, rapide et efficace;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’ordonner au ministre du solliciteur général et à la Police provinciale de l’Ontario

de garder un détachement opérationnel à Noëlville de la Police provinciale de l’Ontario. »

I fully agree and attach my signature and give it to page Harry.

SUBVENTIONS AUX RÉSIDENTS DU NORD POUR FRAIS DE TRANSPORT À DES FINS MÉDICALES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Laurent Henri et Rachelle Trottier pour ces pétitions.

« Réparons les subventions aux résident(e)s du nord ... pour frais de » transports médicaux.

« Alors que les gens du Nord n’ont pas le même accès aux soins de santé en raison...des déplacements et de l’hébergement;

« Alors qu’en refusant d’augmenter les taux des subventions aux résidents du nord de l’Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales...le gouvernement Ford impose un lourd fardeau aux Ontarien(ne)s du Nord » de l’Ontario « qui sont malades;

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« Alors que le prix de l’essence est plus élevé dans le nord de l’Ontario; »

Ils et elles demandent à l’Assemblée législative « de créer un comité ayant pour mandat de corriger et d’améliorer » le programme de subventions aux gens du Nord à des fins médicales. Ce comité...réunirait des fournisseurs de soins de santé du Nord ainsi que des bénéficiaires...pour faire des recommandations à la ministre de la Santé qui amélioreraient l’accès aux soins de santé dans le nord de l’Ontario grâce au remboursement adéquat des frais de déplacement. »

J’appuie cette pétition, madame la Présidente. Je vais la signer, et je demande à la page Lindsay de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

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

“Whereas Ontario has one of the most dedicated and highly trained health workforces in the world. Over 60,000 new nurses and 8,000 new doctors have registered to work in Ontario; and

“Whereas hiring more health care professionals is the most effective step to ensure Ontarians are able to see a health care provider where and when you” they need it; and

“Whereas starting in spring 2023, the government will expand the learn and stay grant and applications will open for eligible post-secondary students who enrol in priority programs, such as nursing, to work in underserved communities in the region where they studied after” they graduated. “The program will provide up-front funding for tuition, books and other direct educational costs; and

“Whereas with new as-of-right rules, Ontario will become the first province in Canada to allow health care workers registered in other provinces and territories to

immediately start caring for you, without having to first register with one of Ontario's health regulatory colleges. This change will help health care workers overcome excessive red tape that makes it difficult for them to practise in Ontario;

"Whereas we are investing an additional \$15 million to temporarily cover the costs of examination, application, and registration fees for ... up to 3,000 retired nurses" to "begin working sooner to strengthen our front lines;

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

"To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario continue to build on the progress of hiring and recruiting health care workers."

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm presenting this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I'll sign my name to it and give it to Yonglin.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

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

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

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

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

"Whereas many First Nations individuals lost their status after serving in the wars off-reserve for more than four years in Europe fighting for Canada; and

"Despite this injustice, many continued to recognize the value in continuously giving back to their community; and

"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 endorse this, will sign my name to it and give it to page Vedant.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for petitions.

REQUEST TO THE INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a request by the member for Davenport, Marit Stiles, to the Honourable J. David Wake, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion pursuant to sections 2, 4 and 6(1) of Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Etobicoke North, Doug Ford, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ST. THOMAS-CENTRAL ELGIN BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA MODIFICATION DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE ST. THOMAS ET CENTRAL ELGIN

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of St. Thomas and the Municipality of Central Elgin / Projet de loi 63, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de St. Thomas et la municipalité de Central Elgin.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to stand and add the voices of the wonderful people of London North Centre to the debate on Bill 63, as the official opposition critic for economic development, job creation and trade. As I begin my remarks, Speaker, this bill is quite a surprise to the official opposition. I understand that there

have been talks that have been ongoing for many months, according to city officials and municipal officials in St. Thomas, as well as central Elgin, and I must make sure that it is on the record that the official opposition has requested a briefing from the government but none has been provided to us yet. It is important. This legislation really is something that could lead to great jobs in the area, and certainly that is something that we on the official opposition side support.

If I think back, my grandfather actually was an employee at Ford Talbotville, and it is as a direct result of his being a union member that my mother was able to go pursue university at the University of Western Ontario, now known as Western University. It was because of that union job she received a scholarship, you see. It changed the trajectory of her life, of course, and, as a result, needless to say, of my life and my sister's and my brother's.

I think it's wonderful to see that we have an 800-acre or 320-hectare site of land. Flavio Volpe has gone on the record to say many good things about this. He said it puts St. Thomas "at the head of the pack right now," and, "One of the most important things in chasing one of these investments is land assembly, being close to multi-modal access (highways, rail and airports) and labour. St. Thomas has all of that." He also goes on to say that he's glad that St. Thomas "has bought a ticket to the dance."

London was a great manufacturing city, as well as St. Thomas, back many years ago. Unfortunately, due to a lack of continued provincial investment and provincial attention, many of those manufacturing jobs left. London had Kellogg's, McCormick, major industries that unfortunately chose to leave. There was also General Dynamics Land Systems—pardon me, I'll need to correct my record. I'm misremembering.

In terms of Bill 63, it would be creating a mega-site. A land of adequate size, it's going to be a suitable location capable of accommodating this major new investment. What is unclear about this, though, is we don't know who the industry players are. This has not been revealed to us by the government. There is no indication of who will be occupying this site, what this is going to look like, how many people will be employed by this. It's all very unclear.

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In theory, this looks like something that we can absolutely support, because it will be the creation of good jobs—hopefully well-paying jobs, hopefully union jobs. What is surprising is that, on first glance—because, as I said, this was just dropped upon us with no briefing whatsoever—I'm pleased to say that there doesn't seem to be any poison pills in here, which is often happening with omnibus pieces of legislation, as I'm sure you well know.

But because this legislation seems short on details, we're being asked to go on trust. We're being asked to simply push this through. In this bill itself, I don't see any mention or use of any MZOs or changes to land use planning, but I would like to also make sure that it is on the record that this government recognizes that there does need to be additional investments for child care, additional

investments for housing. These are important things that this site is also going to require.

If we delve back into the history, a decade ago auto manufacturing facilities closed down. It cost the area thousands of jobs, and this is also part of this Job Site Challenge that the government has announced in 2019. Hopefully, if the rumours are true, this will be the site of an electric vehicle battery plant—but again, still pretty short on details.

Flavio Volpe has also said, "I like St. Thomas's story. Everyone loves a comeback, and 2008 to 2010 was not kind to this community that has an incredible manufacturing history. It would be great to see another major auto investment in a town with a past." I couldn't agree more, Speaker. This will be a great economic benefit for the city of St. Thomas as well as for the city of London, because there will be also people who are travelling to these great jobs.

Also, as we look towards this, I look forward to the briefing from this government. I am surprised that this has been dropped upon us—there have been no details—because this goes back all the way to June. In June, St. Thomas announced that it had assembled this site, and it announced that it was doing so to woo manufacturing. So we know that there have been discussions that the government has had with the city of St. Thomas and with industry players, and yet the official opposition has not been made aware of those discussions.

I also wanted to add to the record the voice of the London Economic Development Corporation's Kapil Lakhotia. He confirmed that the St. Thomas area—now, again, this is news from back in January. Kapil Lakhotia confirmed that the London-St. Thomas area is getting attention from manufacturers. And also recently in our news, there is an EV battery plant in Windsor that will employ almost 2,500 people when it opens in 2024. Lakhotia said, "As we work with EV suppliers, we're confident more investment will come to this region. If a facility is being purpose-built for Cami, that's wonderful. Winning a major investment bodes well for our region. It shows confidence to other (automakers) that we have the labour and capacity and business climate for EVs."

EV investment, of course, is going to require a number of things. It's going to require land. It's going to require a workforce. It has to make sure that there's a stable electrical supply and the access to raw materials. Southwestern Ontario really is the automotive manufacturing hub of Canada. There are so many different automakers as well as auto-parts suppliers; it is a wonderful industry. There are good-paying jobs—union jobs—which are capable of supporting a family, one where there are pensions, one where people can go to work, make a good day's wage, come home and know that they have benefits, that they will also be able to retire.

It is concerning. I would like to see more protections for workers from this government. This is wonderful; we see many announcements about jobs. But I want to make sure, with all these announcements about jobs, that they're also going to be well-paying union jobs. On the side of the

official opposition, we've always been in favour of things like card-check certification, making sure it's easier for people to be able to join unions, to make sure that they have those workplace protections, because without them, it is just a job. We want to make sure that these are jobs that, again, can sustain a family, can support young people when they eventually go to school and support people when they're in retirement.

As we look through this bill, it is interesting that this bill is being pushed, because clearly there is a lot of interest in this. With this, these tools that are being achieved within this bill are also possible within other means. Annexation is provided for in the Municipal Act, but this seems to be rushing it through. Perhaps that's because there is going to be a substantial investment from industry which, again, is a great thing, because our manufacturing sector had a major collapse almost 20 years ago. There were so many workers in southwestern Ontario who were the ones who were hit especially hard.

There have been fears for a number of years about the long-term viability of Ontario's auto sector. Many have even wondered if North American manufacturing would move to California with Tesla. But here in Ontario, things do seem to be turning around. There have been announcements with Stellantis in Windsor, the Project Arrow. Demo EV is another powerful demonstration of the strength of Ontario's auto sector in the EV era. I would like to say, from the side of the official opposition, we welcome this increase in manufacturing. We welcome these great new jobs.

As I said, Bill 63 bypasses that normal annexation process in the Municipal Act; I believe it's part 5. The government is jamming this through as fast as possible. We just would like to know why. That's all we would like is just some clarity. We would like to know who the industry players are and what we can do to support it, because on this side of the House, we're happy to support the creation of good, new jobs and long-term union jobs.

As well, I wanted to take a look toward—Sean Dyke, the chief executive of the St. Thomas Economic Development Corp. said, “If you look across Ontario, there is a general shortage of quality industrial land and we have to say, ‘We are open to business. We are ready.’” He has said that he is “definitely looking to pursue an investment in the EV sector. It is grown at such a rapid pace....”

If we look back, earlier this year, Stellantis and South Korean battery manufacturer LG Energy Solution announced it is building Canada's first large-scale vehicle electric battery plant in Windsor. It's a \$5-billion investment. As I said earlier, it's going to employ about 2,500, and it's going to be on more than 80 hectares of land.

These are really interesting, important investments for the province. These are important investments for the St. Thomas region. It's wonderful to see that a place that was so hard hit by the collapse of manufacturing will again have a manufacturing renaissance.

However, to this government, have they looked towards the necessary investments for housing? We've had many discussions in this chamber about investments in housing

that have been absent from the province. We've seen much of it being left up to the private, for-profit industry. We've seen the removal of rent controls. Young families or people hoping to save money to eventually buy that first home are being subject to—within the absence of rent control, their rent is going up, after they complete their lease, at a terrible rate.

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You know, you plan. When you decide to move into a new location, a new home, you do those financial calculations. You decide, “Okay, I have this much money I can spend on housing, this much on food, this much on entertainment,” and that's all part of that equation.

But many people weren't following what this government did back in 2018. With the removal of rent control—I believe it was Bill 147 where rent control was removed on all new builds that were first occupied after November 2018. What that meant was that these people, after completing a lease, then received the information that their rent would be increasing at a terrible rate, not subject to the year-over-year guideline. That is something that people can't factor in. They can't plan for that kind of dramatic increase. There are stories of people's rents going up by 10%, 20%. It could go up by any number.

Frequently within this chamber, we also hear about the dramatic increase in the number of rental starts since this government has taken power. And while that may be true, that is probably largely due to the fact that the industry now sees that there's an opportunity. In the absence of rent control, the creation of this new rental housing will allow people to exploit folks, quite frankly, because rent control protects people. The absence of it is exploitive. That's something that is deeply frightening.

As I said, you used to be able to save up money when renting. It didn't cost as much as a mortgage. Some people actually just choose it so they have that freedom. They might like to take vacations. They might like to spend money on other things. They might want to make investments in other parts of their lives, so they want to keep their housing budget rather low. That would be possible if rent prices were reasonable.

At this time, we've seen rents increasing at such a terrible rate that they're often larger than the cost of a mortgage, and that's unsustainable. In the London area, as I mentioned in a question earlier this morning during question period, the rent stability bank, a program that is to help folks who are in rental arrears or at risk of losing their housing, has seen a dramatic increase in its use. That's something that should be a concern to this government.

Further, we also remain concerned that the creation of new and affordable housing is not something that is being done by this government. On the official opposition side, we believe that there should be a public builder, one that is tasked with the creation of truly affordable housing that is also protected by legislation.

There have been measures such as Bill 23, which has been touted by this government as something that will create new affordable housing, but there's no provision for what that affordable housing will look like, what the rates

will be and how that will be protected with legislation. Unfortunately, it's affordable housing in scare quotes. It's affordable housing that might not be affordable at all. It's shocking to think that the greenbelt land swap that has been talked about with this government, that is supposedly going to be one that's going to create affordable housing, is in fact—it makes no sense.

I had the opportunity to travel with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—I believe I saw you there, Speaker—and we heard from many municipalities who are concerned about the removal of development charges paid by those private developers, that were paid to municipalities, those development charges that help with the creation of infrastructure, the creation of sewers, the creation of so many other things that are necessary for a housing development. The removal of those, which has been put forward by this government, is a measure that is supposedly something where private developers are going to pass down savings to the consumer. But there's no guarantee. That's the thing. Developers might not have to pay these development charges, but there's no protection in the legislation to ensure that that money that they are not having to spend to municipalities is going to then be passed through as a cost savings to consumers. That remains concerning.

In bills like these, with Bill 63, I think about all of those young families who will be thrilled and excited to get a good job, hopefully with an excellent employer who is paying them well, has union representation, has benefits, has a pension, has all the things that we know are vitally necessary for any young family. But what happens, Speaker, if they're not able to find that place that is truly affordable? Or even if they do, what if they find a place that's affordable, and then in one year their rent goes through the roof and they run the risk of losing their housing? What if they find a place that's affordable and then, with the market creeping up such as it is, they end up not being able to start a family? A young couple might find themselves in a one-bedroom place, never able to expand, never able to start that family, to have or adopt a child. That remains deeply concerning.

With this bill, I do hope that we in the official opposition hear very shortly from the government about when they intend to provide us with a briefing, when they intend to explain the need for this, the need for expedience. It's not to say that we don't want to say yes, because we are very much in support of good jobs. We are very much in support of investments—especially myself, being from the London North Centre area—in southwestern Ontario.

But another key attribute to this that I think is vital to discuss is when we think about young people who are entering this workforce, ostensibly created by this hopefully new EV plant: What about transit? Are we going to have regional transit available for these young folks? Just because somebody might first get a good job doesn't mean that they have a vehicle. There are some people who might be exiting post-secondary education. They might be re-entering the workforce from time off, for goodness knows what reason. But I know that right now is an economically

difficult time, so with this plan, has the government considered transit links between the city of London and St. Thomas? Have they considered what infrastructure improvements are going to be necessary on the area highways? Have they made sure that they have consulted with folks in the region about what's necessary, what's going to help and what needs to happen in this plan?

Speaker, I think that this is a great idea on paper. I don't see anything that is a major concern. As I said, we have only just started to delve deep into it, because it was only dropped upon us at the very last minute, but it's something that I think the official opposition is very interested in. We are very much in favour of large-scale investments in Ontario, in the region, when we think about the economic prosperity that that will bring to many families and a rejuvenation within the area, because not only with this investment, which is one part of a much larger, complex machine—there will be other off-site jobs which will help support.

We think about auto manufacturing—and yes, there are the places and the factories that assemble the auto vehicles, but then there are also the parts manufacturers. There are many smaller different locations that might make all the components that are necessary to go in the cars. And so I think this is very intriguing, because this could be part of a much broader and much larger investment within the region. It shows that clearly there is confidence in the area.

However, I must also state that in order for multinational corporations and other large players to have confidence in Ontario, we also need to buttress and to support our publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system, because when international eyes look at our area, they want to see a workforce that is healthy. And part of that health, firstly, is housing, as we've discussed, but the second is public health care—publicly funded and publicly delivered health care. They want to make sure that their workforce is not only able to come to a job, but is able to stay on that job, is able to work hard and contribute to the economic prosperity that each business in our province needs.

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If we have emergency rooms that have been closing, if we have people who are unable to have a primary care physician, if we have people who are endlessly waiting for surgeries because of the lack of funding that has been provided to our publicly delivered health care system, then I remain concerned. This investment may be good, but what about our long-term prospects? With the bill that we discussed earlier, Bill 60, the privatization and the profitization of our health care system is one that I think international players might be concerned about. They may look towards other jurisdictions that have better long-term economic prospects.

When we look at education—employers not only look at the health, the housing, but they also look towards education. The FAO report recently that the Financial Accountability Officer delivered was damning, quite frankly. It showed that in the next three years, Ontario

would be underfunding and cutting from health care by \$5 billion. The officer also showed that there would be underfunding of education by \$1.1 billion, and from justice by \$0.8 million.

At the same time, if that weren't bad enough, this isn't just money that was going somewhere else. It wasn't being moved to other program spending. It was being moved into a contingency fund. It was being moved into a place where there is no scrutiny, no oversight. There is no accountability for that money. It's really the antithesis of transparency. That \$20 billion—almost \$20 billion over three years—is money that has been called a slush fund. It's money that can be spent in any way the government sees fit. That makes no sense at the same time when there are these drastic, dramatic cuts from programs that we rely upon, like health and education and justice. It really makes absolutely no sense. So that remains a tremendous, tremendous concern.

And I would say for the record that I think that employers or people who are looking towards making investments in Ontario might see that and also become concerned. These investors and these multinational corporations would be looking for a willing partner, a trustworthy partner—a partner that they can rely upon and can depend upon. When the FAO exposes things like that, I'm not sure that they would feel that way.

It also remains a deep concern of ours that this government has not treated workers fairly and with respect. I would love to see, with this boundary adjustment, the creation of jobs but also the protection and the promotion of good union jobs.

I think this is potentially a very wonderful thing, but there are just some key parts missing. On the one hand, I am very thankful that it's not an omnibus piece of legislation, that there are no poison pills hidden in it, and that it seems to be relatively straightforward. But there are so many questions behind it. In the absence of a briefing, in the absence of clarity from this government, we remain interested but somewhat concerned just for the lack of detail, if I may.

As we take a look at this, Speaker, I'm very much looking forward to the government providing us with some clarity, with some assurances, and just letting us know what their plan is. There are many opportunities which are possible here, but Speaker, unfortunately those have not yet been provided to us.

I look forward to the questions from the members across, but I can guarantee you that as they're asking questions, I will probably be asking them my very own questions because there's just so much that is missing from Bill 63.

I think I'll leave my comments there, Speaker.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Really, I'm grateful to hear the comments from London North Centre. I know London and Windsor always have a good rivalry going, but we're both well-acquainted with the manufacturing sector.

One of the most common concerns that my constituents share with me is that they're worried about the future.

They're worried about future opportunities, future jobs, future careers. Inflation, cost of living and layoffs are dominating the headlines today. The people of Ontario are worried about their jobs, even despite the shortage of applicants [*inaudible*] the jobs—but they're not always distributed properly throughout the province.

That uncertainty about the economic future of Ontario exists, so I'm hoping the member can expand on his perception of the legislation and how it can actually help support the economy and secure the jobs for workers.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his questions. You quite rightly cited the deep concerns that many people have right now, which are about inflation and cost of living. There are two key areas which could be addressed with greater protections for folks, such as reinstating rent control and making sure that people have a safe place to call home. In the absence of it, we've seen terrible circumstances for a lot of people who are frightened about losing their homes.

With Bill 23, we've seen also that rental buildings can be purchased by some of these international key players, redeveloped into luxury condos—and what happens to those people who are in those units, Speaker? What happens to buildings full of seniors who have lived there their whole lives and lived there in a good way, in a comfortable way, in an affordable way, who are now at risk of losing their home? Those are key ways.

There are investments like these, but they also have to be backed up with union protections, good wages, benefits and a pension.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's always a pleasure to hear my colleague speak with no notes, no briefing notes, and get up and to be able to speak on a bill here that nobody really knows the depth of how important this could be to the communities.

We're talking about an EV battery plant, and my question to you would be—and I don't even know if you can answer it because I'm not sure you have any briefing notes in front of you with a bill that was just dropped this morning. But may I say, St. Catharines was just awarded a wonderful contract at our St. Catharines GM plant for EV cars. I was just wondering, do you think that they might have looked into giving this EV battery plant and more jobs to the St. Catharines area?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Well, I think this is one situation where I'm sure all MPPs would be in a locked battle in the middle of the chamber if it came to fighting for good jobs in their area, because everyone absolutely wants good jobs. Those are good jobs that are protected, with union benefits, as I said, with a pension and with affordable housing—that they're able to build a good life. Those are key factors which are absolutely necessary.

I think about so many different industries that closed. We look at what happened to the folks at Sears, who worked there for many years, and when it came time for them to close, the business looked after shareholders before it looked after workers. The loss of pensions was something that was deeply concerning.

We need legislation in this province that makes sure to protect workers—workers first. Business will look after itself, but a business is nothing without the people who comprise it.

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

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Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to the member for his remarks. I'm always impressed with his presentations at the financial committee meetings, where we were all over Ontario in these last five weeks—quite literally, starting in Kenora on January 9. I appreciate it.

I also appreciate his remarks about the need for the industrial growth here in our province, and economic development. He knows it has been a priority of this government, and so I appreciate that. We know things were introduced quickly, but I appreciate his flexibility in that regard.

My question is in relation to the economic development and looking at the opportunity throughout there. We've seen what is happening with EV plants around, and here is an opportunity to directly have one of those in our province, in our region—in your region directly—that has the high-paying jobs that we all talk about, to have those delivered. My question is: Is that opportunity not enough to have you support this bill and have that come to reality in your community?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his comments. It was wonderful travelling with you on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, getting to hear from folks all across the province who wanted to see investments from the province, who wanted to make sure that we shored up our health care system and made sure that there were those investments in education, ones that really contribute to the economic development across our province.

What we are arrested with as a province right now economically is that we don't see that wages are keeping up with inflation. We don't see that people are being paid very well. It is the era of the gig job, the gig economy, people not having those long-term and viable jobs. That's concerning for young people. I speak with many constituents in my riding who are concerned about their adult children who are never going to be able to afford a place to call home. They're never going to be able to afford that mortgage, because they're spending so much in rent right now that they're not able to save anything up. Heaven forbid that they're in a place that has no rent control when they're already paying those really incredibly punishing rates that might go up yet further.

People are concerned across this province, and I think what we need to make sure is that we have a province that is looking after people through health care, education and making sure people are being paid what they're worth.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's always a pleasure to see my friend from London North Centre hold forth in this place.

As our economic development critic, I'm wondering if my friend could share a little bit of insight with the government. If I'm not mistaken, this is the same party that ordered the ripping-out of EV charging stations at GO Transit areas years ago—if I'm not mistaken. And if I'm not mistaken, this is a game-changing possibility for us to develop battery capacity in the EV industry.

Are you concerned that we learned about this piece of legislation this morning? People watching this at home don't realize that this government will drop a piece of legislation on us the morning of and ask us to comment on it. Would you like a seat at the table so you could help these folks figure out how it's important to build EV capacity, not rip it out of GO charging stations?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for his question and for his good memory, because I do recall that time back in 2018 when this government, in a very ideological war, set about attacking all forms of green energy, whether that was ripping out the investments that had already been made in GO stations—I mean, it was throwing good money after bad to even pay someone to destroy something. It made very little sense.

I think, as well, that we are looking forward to working with this government to make sure that we have the greatest, most prosperous province in the entirety of Canada. But part of that, as well, is making sure that our expenditures match those other provinces. We are dead last when it comes to public spending on services such as health care, education, post-secondary education—you name it—and Ontario needs to really get it together.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I thank the member from London North Centre. Thank you for your presentation.

Madam Speaker, the bill we are debating today has a very specific cause: to ensure we have a site that is shovel-ready to attract a generational job-creating investment in Ontario. Our two ministers were talking highly about our achievements in attracting a lot of investment to Ontario.

My question to the member opposite is simple: Do they want to attract investment and create jobs in Ontario? Yes or no?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Forty-second response.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: There's no question we hope to make sure that Ontarians have great, well-paying jobs. There is really a lack of good-paying jobs. We have the gig economy right now. We have employers, such as in long-term care, who are looking to make money off underpaying their support staff. We also have a government that is looking to underpay nurses with Bill 124.

It's really unfortunate that we have seen the proliferation of this for-profit model within our province when we should all be able to share in the economic prosperity. That means that these big employers have to pay fairly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's it for questions and answers. Further debate?

Mr. Rob Flack: It's a great pleasure to get up today and talk about a very important bill that is obviously going to be of great benefit to my riding and to the ridings around. In particular, I look across the floor and I see my three colleagues here from London—London West, London North Centre and London—Fanshawe—and me, with Elgin—Middlesex—London. It is indeed great legislation that we're putting forward, with the potential of greatness in southwestern Ontario.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before this Legislature to Bill 63, which, if passed—and hopefully passed—will not only strengthen Ontario's competitiveness by consolidating a new investment-ready mega-site in St. Thomas, part of Central Elgin now, but will also attract large-scale manufacturing investments that will ultimately create thousands of jobs in southwestern Ontario—hundreds, yes, perhaps thousands of jobs in our region.

When I announced my candidacy last year for Elgin—Middlesex—London, part of my pitch, I would say, is that economic growth, number one, is the engine that will ensure our region creates good-paying—and I want to keep emphasizing “good-paying”; not gig-paying, good-paying—and sustainable jobs. A job is still the best social program there is in the world.

With economic growth comes more investment in our health care system, in our schools and in infrastructure. I want to point out—and it's what I truly believe and I said that then—yes, we need to cut red tape and make government more efficient. Yes, we need to lower the cost of government. But ultimately, you can't cut your way to prosperity. You have to grow the economy. By growing the economy, we will have the needed funds in this province to invest back in health care, schools, hospitals, doctors, nurses, teachers and support workers alike.

Number two: Creating the best possible environment for major investment is crucial—very crucial—for our province to attract potential investors financially capable to compete on a global scale right here in southwestern Ontario. That's the key, folks: global scale. You need critical mass to compete today. Without it, you're not competitive. You're going to hear me talk a fair bit about competitiveness and the fierce competition we are facing for investment in Ontario.

Finally, to succeed, we need the collaboration, I think all would agree, between industry, who are going to invest, and the provincial and federal governments, as well as our municipal partners, which I will talk about today.

Speaker, Bill 63, the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, builds on the province's efforts that came through the Job Site Challenge, which has proven to be a great initiative which was designed to attract impactful critical mass pertaining to investment, new job creation and spinoff, or tertiary, economic development. As Minister Fedeli stated, “Creating more shovel-ready mega-sites will help Ontario remain competitive as the province competes for major global investments.” Again, the word “competition” comes to mind. We have to compete if we're going to be able to grow our economy.

With Bill 63, if passed, we will have created a world-class competitive advantage for southwestern Ontario and,

indeed, our entire province. You could call it an unfair advantage. We are very blessed in this province, very blessed in southwestern Ontario, and I truly believe we have an unfair advantage compared to many jurisdictions throughout North America. We have to take advantage of those advantages right here in my riding and in southwestern Ontario, London in particular.

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What Bill 63, the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, ultimately accomplishes is a genuine opportunity proving Ontario is open for business on a global scale. Again, we come back to critical mass. By creating an industrial site in Elgin county, our region, our province and our country are creating the economic conditions for sustainable job creation—again, long-term, good-paying jobs—and economic growth, using the magnificent resources we've been given, all here in Ontario.

To attract major investors or an investor, we as a government need to ensure we reduce unneeded red tape. We need to reduce our costs. We need to make sure that any and all potential suitors only have to deal with one municipality. That's what we're up against throughout North America in this competition. Again, competition is fierce—I'll use the word “fierce”—which is good; it makes us better. Competition is fierce throughout North America for mega-investments, such as we are preparing to attract.

All residents of Elgin county will share in the future prosperity of this glorious opportunity, as will people in Middlesex and London and surrounding communities. I want to make sure that everyone understands that, and I will repeat it.

The proposed site requires municipal boundary adjustments. Why? Simply put, efficiency and speed. If we're going to attract a mega-investor to a mega-site, we can't have red tape and multiple government red tape initiatives getting in the way or hampering progress in bringing them to town. The key is many of our competitors throughout the States are shovel-ready now. We need to get ready and be ready when this investment opportunity presents itself.

There are three municipalities affected by this bill: the city of St. Thomas, the largest city in the county of Elgin; Central Elgin, which borders to the east, north and south of St. Thomas; and, indeed, the county of Elgin itself. A potential investor needs assurance we can move with more stealth and speed to compete with other states south of border who are, frankly, already targeting the same investors we are here in Ontario.

County infrastructure investments—and we'll talk about that today—will be required: power, roads, site preparation, waste water, storm water. Transportation hubs need to be developed as we go forward. We need to create a potential investor's choice easier, accommodating and welcome.

Speaker, allow me to make one point abundantly clear: Again, all of Elgin county and surrounding communities will benefit from any and all future mega-site investment. Whether it's West Elgin, Dutton Dunwich, Southwold, St. Thomas, Central Elgin, Aylmer, Malahide, Bayham,

Thames Centre, South Middlesex or, indeed, all of London, all are going to benefit from this wonderful potential investment once we get the mega-site in place.

The city of London—and I talked with Mayor Josh Morgan yesterday—is also very excited about this investment, as are all the mayors in Elgin county, and all have worked closely with the province to make this happen.

Again, all communities will experience job growth, and again, great, sustainable, long-term jobs and tertiary spin-offs—that we all know will happen whenever an investment such as we are speaking of, and can attract to secure, will bring to all of southwestern Ontario.

I think back to the Ford plant in Talbotville, outside of St. Thomas and outside of London. I remember that it closed, and it caused great economic hardship and pain in our region. We are replacing that and more as we go forward in this promise. I'm sure whoever ends up on this site is going to bring hundreds of thousands of jobs that we can all appreciate and all enjoy and benefit from, whatever walk of life we enjoy.

A few points: There's no time to waste when it comes to securing major industrial investments that will employ generations of Ontarians working in good-paying jobs.

Again, Speaker, Ontario is in a fierce competition with other jurisdictions. When you talk to Minister Fedeli, you hear that loudly and clearly. He has travelled the world. He sees what we're up against. When companies consider making large investments such as this in manufacturing and industrial operations, including multi-billion-dollar transformational projects, we have to make sure we are ready and ready to win.

Throughout my career, I can say—not on this scale—having invested in businesses and plants and people in industry, it's not easy. Competition is tough, and if you're going to compete on a global basis, or even on a local basis, you better have the right assets, including your plant, your equipment, your infrastructure. But most importantly, you have to be able to attract the brightest and the best people. I think preparing a mega-site such as this creates an opportunity for success, an opportunity to attract the brightest and the best, because this isn't small potatoes. This is a really, really big and significant investment, and I think everyone is going to enjoy the advantages of that.

We've got clean energy in southwestern Ontario. We're close to markets—think about it. We're close to two American borders pretty quickly. We're close to major hubs in terms of airports and rail, transportation and truck. We are close to millions and millions of people in southwestern Ontario that we enjoy because of being in the Golden Horseshoe. So whether it's clean energy, close to markets, our people, educational institutions—we are open for business. And we cannot take for granted—I mean this sincerely—we cannot take for granted the wonderful advantages we have in Ontario, especially southwestern Ontario. Government needs to create the environment for these advantages to help our economy grow and to perform and succeed, and that is again what we are going to do.

Ontario is currently in contention for several major manufacturing investments that require large sites with specific sets of requirements. Again, partly why we tabled

this legislation is to set the table for a great investment. A critical factor for securing new investment or expansion opportunities is having a suitable place to go, an industrial site where timing and associated costs are already known and streamlined to meet project timelines. With close to 40 jurisdictions—and, again, I think if you were here this morning, you'll have heard Minister Fedeli say there's close to 40 jurisdictions in the US offering some type of certified or mega-site program, and it's become an expectation among potential investors that sites are shovel-ready for development. That's big competition. A lot of states are vying for these types of investments, and we are right in the mix trying to compete.

Again, I think we have some natural advantages in Ontario that we need to take advantage of when talking to suitors or potential clients to invest, and our municipalities need to think that way. They are thinking that way, and that's why we have to end up with one municipality holding the mega-site to attract the investment, so site-preparation and infrastructure can be put in place.

Unfortunately, there's a critical shortage of shovel-ready industrial mega-sites in Ontario needed to house these projects that the province is pursuing. St. Thomas, frankly, folks, right now as we sit, is the best of the best we have in Ontario. I'm biased, I know, but it is the best of the best, and we need to take advantage of it.

Without immediate action, we risk losing the opportunity to compete for and win these transformative investments, along with the hundreds of thousands of jobs that come with them, to other jurisdictions that have a more fulsome inventory of fully serviced industrial parks, lands and shovel-ready sites. We need to get ready and get ready fast. Speed, speed, speed is imperative—again, a very competitive process.

That is why, through this proposed legislation, we are taking steps to ensure that Ontario can continue to compete with other jurisdictions, both in Canada but mostly in the United States, to secure these investments with shovel-ready mega-sites that allow businesses to set up shop quickly and easily and in a welcoming way. With a general shortage of quality industrial land, Ontario has to show we are not just open for business. We have to demonstrate we're ready for business with an investment-ready site, and the St. Thomas and Elgin county mega-site proposal, again, is the very best we have to offer today in the entire province of Ontario.

Ontario is the ideal destination for prospective investors, thanks to our world-class automotive and manufacturing sectors, reliable clean energy, critical mineral resources and, of course, the availability of a world-class workforce and an R&D ecosystem.

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Our focus on securing these large-scale anchor projects is indeed paying off. As a result of recent success in landing multi-million-dollar investments like LGES, Stellantis and Umicore, there is significant demand for shovel-ready sites. Investors are confident in the future of Ontario—we are seeing this—and they want to be part of it. That's our collective responsibility, to ensure that it does indeed happen.

As we've all talked about in this House, there are two million to three million more people coming to Ontario in the next number of years. We've passed a bill, Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster—1.5 million homes built in 10 years, and a lot of it is talked about being built in the GTHA and Ottawa, being the biggest sites where people will move. I would also suggest that now, with this bill passing and a potential investor coming in, southwestern Ontario—in particular London and Elgin county—is going to have people attracted to come to our region. For that reason, we need to be ready to build homes, and build homes fast as well.

Investments in housing, hospitals and schools are going to take place. Infrastructure is not just buying and putting lands together and bringing an investor in; you have to support it with infrastructure. Whether it's hospitals, schools, roads, waste water, storm water or transit links, we all need this investment. I know this government and this province is going to support that infrastructure every step of the way.

Speaker, I am so proud of the job our Premier, our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Vic Fedeli, and our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, have done to create the environment. Again, they planted the garden to successfully bring back the manufacturing sector to Ontario. It has been failing. It has been waning. It has been hurt. It has been painful. But we are well on the road to recovery.

It is also important to recognize the Ontario labour unions who are at the table with the province and automotive manufacturers to pave the way for the success we are all enjoying today. It's a team effort; it always has been and it always will be.

The creation of the Ring of Fire—our Minister of Mines here has done a great job. Think of that opportunity in EV.

Hon. George Pirie: I'm actually right beside you.

Mr. Rob Flack: Oh. There you are, brother.

As Premier Ford always says—with the critical minerals we have up north, people say, “Well, let's export them. Let's sell them abroad.” And he says, “No, no, no.” Minister Pirie also says, “No, no, no. Let's use this critical infrastructure, these critical minerals and opportunities and advantages to our own good use.” And you're seeing it pay off in dividends. I'm not sure what the investment is going to be yet, but if it has anything to do with automotive, I'm sure the Ring of Fire will be a big part of that success.

Thank you for the job you're doing. You're a great Minister of Mines.

In total, this government has lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario by over \$7 billion. Think about it. That success has paved the way for this Premier and this government to attract billions of dollars in new investment.

As Minister Clark stated, our government is taking concrete action to build on our record of attracting jobs and investment. We are taking a collaborative approach across the government and with our municipal partners to cut red tape and ensure the benefits of economic growth are enjoyed right across Ontario.

Since the last election, Minister Fedeli has been on five trade missions to eight countries. He's a world traveller.

He's a pretty capable guy. I'm excited to see the benefits that continue to flow from his great efforts and his great salesmanship.

I've said this before in the House: I'm a great believer in “well done is better than well said.” I think this government is putting those words to good use.

As the Premier says all the time, his best salesman is Vic Fedeli. I would second that motion. As it's been said, I think the best closer of deals is Premier Ford, and I would also second that motion. But I also have to give a shout-out to Minister Clark. What he's doing today by creating the environment, bringing these lands together, bringing these municipalities together—he is the best facilitator we have in this government. Thanks to this facilitation, when we bring these lands together and bring this site together, we are poised for greatness in southwestern Ontario.

Simply put, the facts speak for themselves. Ontario is not only open for business; Ontario is attracting and closing new and significant investment, more now than ever, and than in any province in Canada. Consider the amazing performance in Ontario in just four and a half years: 600,000 jobs have been created; 300,000 before the pandemic and 300,000 after. The auto industry was once a dying industry in this province and we're now moving again, forward to greatness.

Indeed, Speaker, Ontario is open for business. The proof is in the pudding. I believe it is results that count, and our government, with our Premier and his capable cabinet team, supported by an amazing caucus, continue to get it done for the people of Ontario.

With all the success experienced across Ontario, I am very excited about creating an investment-ready mega-site right here at home in Elgin–Middlesex–London. Again, all surrounding communities will share in the benefits of this abundant and exciting opportunity. With mega-sites available in St. Thomas to compete against these 40 states, we're going to do well.

Speaker, change is never easy. I want to take this opportunity to thank our municipal leaders in Elgin county, all of them very focused on their constituents' needs. They are very well represented. They need to be commended for their support thus far in this process. I want to work closely with them and this government to ensure all municipalities share in the greatness.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd also like to congratulate the three municipalities that came together to make sure that we do have a prosperous southwestern Ontario and grow our automotive industry.

I want to read from my BlackBerry here. This is a possibly familiar quote the member could remember, because he alluded to this as well: “American industrial giant Caterpillar is closing its locomotive plant in London and putting 460 workers out of their jobs just over a month after they were locked out for rejecting pay cuts of” up to “50 per cent.”

My question is to the member. The government is obviously going to have some investment in this megacity project. I'd like to know what strings are attached so that

we can guarantee that good jobs are coming to south-western Ontario—good-paying union jobs—and this company is not just going to take the government’s money and then leave to go to Illinois, like they did with Caterpillar.

Mr. Rob Flack: I appreciate the question from the member from London—Fanshawe. I find that—you know, no one likes to lose any jobs. Why did we lose those jobs? Probably competitiveness, is what I would suggest, at the end of the day. We have to remain competitive. And I would respectfully submit that I highly doubt someone is going to come to this province, buy a significant amount of industrial property, invest maybe billions in the facility or facilities and hire good people, only to close a few months later. I really think this is a long-term investment. It’s a long-term play, and whoever this investor is, is not doing it for the short term. We will succeed.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I very much admire the tenacity of the member who spoke so well about the opportunities this is not only going to have for his region but all of southwestern Ontario.

He talked about the next generation of people coming to this country. Of course, in his area, he has many colleges and many universities. What does that mean for the next generation of students who are going to those colleges or those universities, the economic opportunity for them and also for the college and university sector?

Mr. Rob Flack: It’s a great question. Really what an investment like this does, I think, is it does really invest in our youth. I know those of us who live in southwestern Ontario, in London, in Middlesex county and in Elgin county, when our kids, our students, go to our great educational institutions, we want to see them stay at home and work and be part of our community, be part of a vibrant and growing community. An investment like this, no doubt, will keep our kids at home.

But most importantly, I think it’s going to help strengthen our educational institutions. It will attract people abroad to want to come. And I know we’ll be working closely with whether it’s Fanshawe, Western University or other colleges, and University of Guelph as well, in terms of some of the training centres they’re looking at. We have the abundance now and the ability to really focus on where the jobs are going to be. We’ll train people properly, both in post-secondary education and in skilled trades. It’s going to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: I’ve enjoyed listening to the member speak. We met early, and since your election, I appreciate the expertise you bring to the table. But I’m wondering if you could help us help your government. Because as I was saying earlier in a previous question, our experience working with you so far is that in 2019, you ordered Metrolinx to remove EV charging stations from GO Transit. That sent a bad signal to the EV industry.

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The EV industry is coming soon, of course, here to the great city of Toronto. The big automotive show—the 2023 automotive show, first one since 2020—is coming. The headline story leading into the motor show says, “Electric Vehicle Numbers Have ‘Exploded,’ But Too Few Charging Stations in Ontario, Experts Say.” So the capacity we’re going to be building here has to be sustained by infrastructure elsewhere in the province. It’s not just a construction facility, a manufacturing facility; it has got to feed into a network of charging stations.

I’m wondering about the conversations—I just learned about this legislation this morning. I’m wondering about the conversations going on in the government right now to make sure that we respond to the demand from the industry here to rapidly increase our EV charging capacity and to make sure that we can increase the electrical load in a sustainable way so these cars can actually get from point A to point B.

Mr. Rob Flack: It’s a great question. As I believe I said in my talk, and maybe should have added that as one of the links of infrastructure, with an investment like this and other investments, mega-site investments, throughout this province, infrastructure is needed. Whether it’s electrical charging stations—we’re going to need more grid; we’re going to need more capacity with our electricity. If you listened to the Minister of Energy speak, we’re on that. Whether it’s small modular reactors—we’re going to be ready, and we’re going to have to get ready quickly. It’s going to take big-time investment in infrastructure—big time.

I agree totally with you. We’re going to get it done, but we need to continue to grow the economy so we can afford to do it and invest in it, and not take on burdensome debt so the people of Ontario are protected now and in the future.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: This legislation, if passed, will continue building on the government’s efforts to reduce red tape and to show the world that Ontario is open for business and ready for global investments.

Over the past four years, we’ve seen this government support and attract investments in every region of our province. My own Loyalist township, where I was previously the mayor, attracted one of those very large industrial projects through the efforts of this government, through the efforts of the minister and the Premier. I’m sure that the people in the entire region that this legislation applies to will benefit from the jobs and the economic activity that will come as a result of these investments.

Can the member explain how the past investments are now setting the stage for the increased demand we’re seeing for shovel-ready lands?

Mr. Rob Flack: I’m looking across the way here; the member opposite had another wonderful announcement in his riding in Loyalist township not that long ago. Like us, we are sharing the wealth across this great province. Investments like this don’t come easily. A couple of points

on that: I think it's safe to say the world is noticing Ontario right now, and we're competitive and we're able. It's going to continue to be very competitive. Specifically to your point, we have to share the wealth. As much as I'm proud that southwestern Ontario and Elgin–Middlesex–London is getting ready for a major investment, as you are, we need to share the wealth throughout this province.

Whether it's northern development, whether it's in eastern Ontario, the Ottawa valley or points beyond, I think you're going to see continued investments. Why? Because this government and this minister down here is the best salesman for Ontario in the world, and he's getting it done.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for his comments. As I mentioned in this House the other day, I was born and raised in Elgin county, so the economic prospects of people in Elgin county are certainly not far from my heart. Having said that, I think when we're talking about jobs and opportunities for people, it's important that we don't put arbitrary barriers in the way of creating them.

What the government has done here is put forward a bill with no time for consultation, no clarity on who the investor is, no opportunity to consult with anyone. We've seen this happen before with government legislation, that the government's utter refusal to actually listen to people and engage with people has led to the government being forced to backtrack a week later and repeal legislation that they just introduced. It has led to the government losing court cases that people warned the government that they were going to lose over the fate of that legislation.

My question is: Because this is so important, why not be as open and transparent as possible? Why not share as much information as possible with the opposition, with the public? Isn't it better to have everybody on board and everybody supporting economic development in our province?

Mr. Rob Flack: Again, it's great to see somebody with roots in Elgin county. Thank you for your question. Really, what we're doing is creating a site, and as much as everyone would like to know who the suitors are, I think everyone hopefully can appreciate that that's not for public debate right now, because there's nothing to announce.

Really, what this bill is about is creating a site for if and for when. As such, again, obviously, the government, the minister, the Premier—nobody is talking about potential suitors, because, quite frankly, the deal or deals are not done. What we've done is created an environment for success: new jobs, good jobs, sustainable jobs.

Again, I don't think, whoever this investor or these investors end up being, whether it's in the automotive sector, the food sector or whatever it may be, they are not going to invest millions of dollars—maybe billions when all is said and done—on a mega-site to just willy-nilly go about hiring just a few people. They're going to be good jobs, good-paying jobs. They're going to be sustainable

jobs with benefits, and this is really good news, so help us prepare—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That is all the time we have for questions.

Oh, point of order? I recognize the member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker. Earlier in my debate, I said “General Dynamics Land Systems.” I'd like to correct my record. I meant to say “Electro-Motive Diesel.” Thank you.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to be back in this place, debating important issues once again, on behalf of the people whom we represent in our communities. As a representative of southwestern Ontario, the member for London West, I certainly appreciate the importance of economic development tools and strategies, policy changes, legislative changes that support that very tightly inter-linked regional economy that we have in southwestern Ontario, and similar regional economies exist across the province.

I do want to raise, however, Speaker, a couple of process concerns regarding this bill, Bill 63, the St. Thomas–Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act. Some of us were sitting in this chamber yesterday at shortly after 3 o'clock, I believe, when the Minister of Municipal Affairs rose and announced that he was going to be introducing a bill, this bill. That was introduced yesterday. There was no government media release explaining why this bill, why now, what's in this bill.

We got an electronic copy of the bill. We requested immediately a briefing from the minister's office, so that we could understand the context for this bill being brought forward; we have yet to receive that briefing. Some of the comments that I heard just now from my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London were helpful, certainly, in understanding the context for this bill, but it is frustrating—as you can imagine, Speaker—when you are expected to meaningfully participate in debate on legislation that literally has just come off the printer.

That being said, I just want to say that on this side of the House, from an initial analysis of the bill, we don't see any major red flags. It is something that is very much supportable, especially when you consider the rumoured uses of this mega-site for an electric-vehicle-battery manufacturing plant and the as-many-as-2,500 jobs that would support. This is positive legislation. It has the potential to be very beneficial to southwestern Ontario—to London, St. Thomas and Elgin county in particular. It is something that we don't have any major objections to at this point. We will certainly be consulting with people who have had a chance to think about some of the implications of this bill, and we will raise any concerns that we hear as we move forward.

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I did want to emphasize, however, to the government that there are many things that this government could be doing to support economic development in our province.

One of the issues that I don't think has been addressed so far throughout this debate is the need for child care spaces. Child care is a fundamental economic development priority, to ensure that workers have access to high-quality, affordable child care so that they can go to work and feel that their children are safe.

I want to share an email that I received from a constituent, Kathleen Tevlin, who told me that she has been actively seeking daycare for her 17-month-old and her three-and-a-half-year-old so that she can return to work after her maternity leave. She says daycare spaces for even one child in the west end of the city of London are non-existent. She says, "I have been on the centralized waitlist for centre daycares since the moment my pregnancy was considered viable (April 2021), yet nearly two years on the waitlists have proven to be fruitless." She says that she is in the position where she sees her only option is to have to quit her employment, an employer that she has worked for for the past 13 years, because she cannot get access to a child care space.

What we have not seen from this government is a strategy such as my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park has been calling for to deal with the workforce challenges in the child care sector. We know that without any new measures, the province will be short 8,500 registered early childhood educators by 2026. This shortage of spaces that we are experiencing in the city of London and other communities across the province is really a reflection of a shortage of ECEs and child care professionals to work in child care spaces.

We understand—actually, the government's own documents show that the child care sector has been experiencing a staffing crunch over a number of years. The number of registered early childhood educators in licensed child care decreased by 7% between 2019 and 2021. I have to commend the sector who have been working diligently at trying to get this government to develop this strategy that's necessary to ensure recruitment and retention in the sector.

Just as we see in health care, we know that wages are an important aspect of recruitment and retention. I've participated in Zoom meetings with child care workers who are weeping because they love their jobs, they love working with small children, they love supporting children—

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As much as I have a lot of sympathy for what the member is talking about as a new mom, I will mention, pursuant to standing order 25(b)(i)—I ask the Speaker that the member opposite remember the actual subject of Bill 60 and that their remarks are actually about the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will remind the member from London West to try to pull their remarks closer to what we are debating this afternoon.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I will do that, Speaker. I do feel that—I listened to half an hour of remarks by the Minister

of Economic Development and Trade who positioned this bill very much as an economic development tool, and so I am just reminding the government that there are important issues that have to be addressed if we are to be serious about economic development in this province and ensuring that people are able to take advantage of all of the potential new jobs that are going to be generated by this bill. Sustaining a child care workforce is fundamental to that work.

Another issue that is very much tied to economic development is ensuring that people can find affordable places to live if they are to take advantage of all of these new jobs that are potentially going to be generated by this mega-site that will be formed by this bill. In London, and similarly in St. Thomas—although I don't have the data right at my fingertips. London is experiencing an intense housing affordability crisis, much worse than anywhere else in Ontario and most of Canada. Rents in London have doubled and have become beyond unaffordable for at least 60% of the residents who live in the city of London.

Affordability, of course, is measured by how much of a person's income rent represents. So if you're paying more than 30% of your income on rent, then that rent is not considered affordable for you given all of the other costs that you have to make in a year.

A London household needs to make \$59,000 a year or more to keep shelter costs below 30% of their income, but only 40% of London households make at least that much. So we have 60% of households in the city of London that are paying more than they should on rent if they were to meet that affordability threshold.

The CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., that recently released the report on housing affordability in London noted that it is particularly acute in London compared to the rest of the country. We have a 1.7% vacancy rate, which is the second-lowest level since 2001. Homes are hard to find; in particular, affordable homes, and that is what the NDP has consistently pointed out to this government. The huge missing piece of the government's housing plan is that there is nothing there to support affordable housing, deeply affordable housing, supportive housing—all of those housing options that are so desperately needed in our communities.

We also, in London, have been having a homelessness crisis, and once again, homelessness—the desperation of people who are experiencing homelessness—is not good for economic development in the city. As merchants in downtown London will tell you, that has been very challenging for them, and particularly since the pandemic. In London, we have lost more than 200 residents of our community who were experiencing homelessness and who have died over the last couple of years. Currently, there are an estimated 2,200 people experiencing homelessness in our city. That actually brought the city together in a series of summits. More than 60 social service agencies, business owners, municipal officials, a wide diversity of individuals and organizations came together over the course of three summits to develop a made-in-London housing and homelessness plan.

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One of the things that the city of London has called for in its pre-budget submission to the government is support to enable the city to move forward with that health and homeless system transformation. Fortunately, our community has a philanthropist who came to the table with \$25 million—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I'm going to remind the member to make these remarks relevant to the bill that we're discussing, Bill 63. Tie them back into Bill 63.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I do believe that housing affordability is a key piece of economic development. I am just basing my comments on what we have heard from members on the other side: that this is an economic development bill; that the purpose of this bill is to facilitate investment-ready land for a potential electric-vehicle-battery manufacturing plant. I am just pointing out to the province that in order to be successful with this project, they're going to have to do more, as I said, to make sure there's access to affordable, quality child care and to ensure that workers have access to housing that they can afford.

The other concern I wanted to raise—and this is an email that was shared with my office—is the government will also need to make certain that there is that skilled workforce available to take advantage of those new jobs. This is an email I received from Brett Gundlock. He says that three years ago, he began a career transition into the carpentry field to gain his Red Seal certificate. It took him a while to find an employer to sponsor him for the program, and now he estimates that it is going to take as much as two years in order to get into a classroom to complete the classroom requirements of that apprenticeship program.

He says that he was told by the Ministry of Labour that it looks like it will be next fall before he can begin the classroom aspect. Three other carpenters in his company are also waiting to hear about schooling. They were last in the class 12 months ago and haven't heard anything.

He says it looks like it will take him up to seven years to finish his Red Seal since he began working as a carpenter.

Making the investments in those kinds of opportunities for skilled workers, the kinds of skilled workers who will be needed by economic development projects, such as the one that will be facilitated by this legislation, will be very important if that project is to be successful.

Speaker, I did want to make a couple of other comments before I close, and one is to echo some of the questions that have been asked already about this bill. It is rather ironic that we have a government whose first order of business when they were elected back in 2018 was to rip out electric vehicle charging stations. And now, the government claims to be a champion of electric vehicles. That is the other work that will have to be done by this government if this site is actually successful in recruiting this investor. The rumour is that it's Volkswagen who is going to access the site to manufacture those batteries, but if that is to happen, the government has a long way to go on its

electric vehicle strategy and a long way to go on its climate action plans to deal with the carbon footprint that we have in this province and try to prevent some of those once-in-a-lifetime severe weather events that we are seeing with horrifying frequency across Ontario and around the world.

It's good to see the government trying to move forward to facilitate this investment in electric vehicle battery manufacturing, and I encourage them to take a holistic look at what is needed to ensure the success of an electric vehicle sector in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member opposite for her speech on multiple topics. I'm going to bring it back a bit to the bill we're talking about.

Our government is on a mission to build Ontario and create good-paying jobs for workers in Ontario. I know you mentioned the good-paying jobs quite often in your speech. We know that the majority of planned EV and battery-related investments are expected to take place in the mid- to late-2020s, meaning the window of opportunity to secure these investments for Ontario is now. These investments will bring countless jobs, well-paying jobs, economic opportunity and significant growth to regions across the province, but these investments require land.

The member opposite's speech mentioned almost every excuse in the book for why we should not be doing this. Why won't the opposition support our plan to bring more good-paying jobs to Ontario?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, I think it's unfortunate that the member wrote his question before listening to my speech, because never once did I say that this is a bad plan or we should not move forward with it.

What I did say is that we received the bill yesterday. We have not yet had a briefing from the minister's office. We are going to be doing some talking to stakeholders, which is what every MPP in this place should do when legislation arrives. But at this point, we do not see any major red flags in this bill and have not raised any objections to this legislation.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I would like to thank my colleague from London West for her speech. This bill basically is adjusting the boundary for St. Thomas and Central Elgin so that we can have a mega-site ready for a potential employer. It has been suggested that it is possibly an EV battery manufacturer.

On this side of the House, New Democrats support manufacturing jobs. We support good, green jobs. However, we would like to get more information from the government on exactly what is going on. We got no heads-up about this bill. We don't know what kind of public investment is going to go into this. And we also don't know if there will be conditions attached to the investments so that the employers who are coming in will stay in Ontario and ensure that the jobs that the people need and rely on will also be here for the long term.

I would like to ask the member if the government has shared any of this information with us and what else do we have in terms of questions that we'd like to know from the government?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park for her question. The government has shared nothing with us about this legislation other than what has been said during the debate, which started today. Normally, with a piece of legislation, there is at least a press release that provides the government's perspective on why the bill was necessary. It completely caught us by surprise.

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We were able to do a little bit of investigation to understand what this is really about, but there are all kinds of questions that we would appreciate answers to. Why this particular site? We don't have a map showing exactly which lands are proposed for annexation. We don't have any detail about what environmental attributes those lands may have. We don't know how invested the proposed investor is in this site. There is lots of information that—

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's great to be here in the Legislature this afternoon. I would like to point out to the member opposite—she mentioned electric vehicle charging stations being taken out of GO stations, and the member from Ottawa Centre, I believe, mentioned as well what the government is going to do to build the infrastructure for electric charging. I agree with you; what are we doing?

I just wanted to clarify for the member opposite that that was a failed experiment that the previous Liberal government did in putting charging stations into GO stations where commuters drive for the full day. They go downtown for the full day and their car is sitting there for 12 hours. It didn't make sense. What our government has done is put charging stations in places where they make sense, like the ONroute stations, so driving to Montreal or Ottawa you can charge your vehicle, rather than have a commuter sit all day at a GO station.

We certainly want to build the infrastructure around that. My question to the member opposite is, do you support us in building this infrastructure for green vehicles throughout the province?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I was very proud of our party's initiative in the last election to launch the Green New Democratic Deal. This was a bold, ambitious, detailed plan to bring jobs and protect climate in our province and get us where we need to be, with a 50% reduction by 2050.

We do support an electric vehicle strategy. That was a big piece of our Green New Democratic Deal. One of the things that we are committed to is a financial rebate for consumers to purchase electric vehicles. We know from other jurisdictions that financial assistance to purchase not the Teslas, not the luxury EVs, but the growing number of mid-range electric vehicles that are coming onto the market—if we want to really jump-start that market, we have to provide the financial assistance to consumers to purchase those vehicles.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: As my friend from Oakville just said, this is a discussion that we have to have and the member from London West has said it very clearly: The government made a decision in 2019, through Metrolinx, to cancel the project. I remember the early days of this government. To those of us who were here, it was like, "anything Liberal, Hulk smash." It was just this impulse to destroy anything that the previous-to-them government had done.

I had a lot of criticisms of that government, but Metrolinx made a terrible decision. You don't build charging stations—member, I'm asking you to react to this—in 2019 to pilot them and think about them—it was a three-year pilot—in a single year. There are people who lived close to those charging stations, not just people using the GO stations. There are communities that we want to hub around them. Having four or five chargers at ONroute stations doesn't meet the need.

Member, don't you think we need mandatory changes to the building code to get condominium buildings to put in EV chargers? We need EV chargers in communities. We need them to be affordable and accessible to support the cars this government wants to build. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on that for my friend over there.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much to the member for Ottawa Centre for his question. I absolutely agree that there is a lot more to building and sustaining an EV industry in Ontario than creating a mega-site for an EV battery manufacturing plant to locate. Having that infrastructure in place, having access to those charging systems, having financial incentives to consumers, having a grid that will support those batteries, having changes to the building code—there's a lot more involved to building and sustaining that industry than we currently see from this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have time for one final question.

Mr. John Jordan: Speaker, my riding has just lost a significant number of jobs—in the hundreds, actually. Industries change. We heard the minister this morning talking about how the majority of states south of the border are ahead of the game and already have certified mega-site programs in place to attract these investments. The fact is, we must do everything in our power to ensure they come to Ontario.

This bill is about creating a mega-site. Does the member opposite agree that we need to move quickly?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I certainly agree that creating a mega-site such as proposed in this bill is important to attract investors. I don't believe we need to move so quickly as to ignore the transparency requirements of this legislation. Every piece of legislation has to have some due diligence, has to have careful review, has to have input before it's rushed through.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm delighted to speak today in support of Bill 63, the St. Thomas–Central Elgin Boundary

Adjustment Act. As the member of provincial Parliament for Windsor–Tecumseh, how can I not support this bill, given the terrific developments that we have had the privilege to welcome in our riding as a result of similar circumstances?

Central Elgin is truly a gem for Ontario, with some of the most scenic and beautiful communities in the southwest: Port Stanley, Belmont, Dexter, Lawton's Corners, Lyndale, Lynhurst, Mapleton, New Sarum, Norman, Sparta, Union, Whites and Yarmouth Centre.

St. Thomas is truly the Railway City—and being an engineer, I love railways—and the place where the Canada Southern, the London and Port Stanley, the Grand Trunk, the Pere Marquette and the Canadian Pacific railways rolled right through. While we do try to somewhat compete on the number of railway crossings and railway delays in Windsor–Tecumseh, the sheer number of systems present in St. Thomas certainly exceeds ours.

The St. Thomas area, particularly Southwold, was home to the Ford St. Thomas assembly plant, where the Ford Crown Victoria, the Lincoln Town Car and the Mercury Grand Marquis were rolled off the lines by its industrious employees until 2011. Those Crown Victoria vehicles were a mainstay of the Ontario Provincial Police fleet. Residents of St. Thomas and Central Elgin could look at the work that they produced with sincere pride throughout Ontario any time that they travelled.

We in Windsor–Tecumseh truly know the devastating loss that St. Thomas and Central Elgin went through when Ford was lost in the industrial change. Just within my lifetime, I've seen the elimination of the GM trim and transmission plant, the Ford Nemark Essex aluminum plant, the Ford casting plant and Windsor engine plant, and the Chrysler Pillette van plant, all just within my riding. Directly adjacent, we had the Ford Nemark Windsor aluminum plant and Windsor casting plant. The Ford Essex engine plant had a happier end, in that it closed but then it reopened, and it continues to operate to this day.

Why is this important and vital? Automotive jobs are good jobs, and for every job in an auto plant, there are 18 others supported by it. When good jobs are lost, it's not just the local economy that suffers. It leads to displacement of family members. Our populations decline as people move to find work, and in turn, with reduced demand for goods and services, even more job loss.

It's hard to fathom this here in the vicinity of Queen's Park. You look outside, and construction is all around us. You visibly see people working, especially right next door at the MacDonald Block. There are cranes here. There are construction barriers. There is excavation. There are closures on the 401, although that seems to be three decades plus in the making, as the province demolishes narrow overpasses and constructs collector lanes to address demand. And really, an economically viable Toronto with vitality is the only Toronto that I've ever known. Whether in a period of economic growth or a period of recession, the building and improving here never seems to stop.

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But that's not our reality in southwestern Ontario. Years will go by where our communities will never see a

crane. A crane is a sign of growth; it's a sign of hope and delivering upon promise of hope and optimism for a better future, of revitalization. It brings forward a beneficial community impact that I could not do any justice in trying to describe. Bill 63 will dramatically support and accelerate economic revitalization for the people of St. Thomas, of Central Elgin and of Elgin county.

My riding of Windsor–Tecumseh is now home to the NextStar Energy electric vehicle battery plant, Canada's largest automotive investment in its history, an investment of over \$5 billion. We have experienced first-hand the benefits of the hope and promise of this facility already, and it is just getting built out of the ground as we speak, with an opening anticipated in the next two years. NextStar is not just a new plant, but a new lease on life for our existing manufacturing facilities in the city. NextStar on its own, separate from any other impacts, will create over 2,500 direct jobs to start. NextStar truly means that our largest industrial employers will continue to operate in our community for a new generation and will grow their workforce.

The NextStar development was no accidental event or stroke of luck to land this development. My own hometown of Tecumseh faced a remarkably comparable situation to what is being described in the bill, although with some differences. The city of Windsor had prepared a land use needs report in 1996; it showed more industrial land was needed to meet future growth. Collaboratively, the three municipalities—Windsor, Tecumseh, and the county of Essex—agreed to a boundary adjustment which transferred approximately 6,500 acres of land from the town of Tecumseh to the city of Windsor.

Undoubtedly, the decision to transfer jurisdiction over these lands was not entirely beloved. There were political consequences, but it was the right thing to do. Interestingly enough, while the specific lands around the Banwell Road corridor were not envisioned for this annexation at the front end of it, Windsor had the infrastructure, service capacity and fiscal capacity to service the land immediately. As a much smaller municipality, Tecumseh did not. This boundary agreement between Tecumseh, Windsor and Essex county took effect over 20 years ago now, on January 1, 2003.

The 2008 recession was devastating for our local manufacturing economy. The Windsor region is the first to experience the effects of an economic downturn and the last to return to prosperity, but in a roundabout way this paved the way for what was to come with NextStar. NextStar landed there because the land was available and was serviced. The boundary adjustment completed years before meant that the complexity of the project on the site was lessened dramatically. The NextStar site is located in that Banwell Road corridor. It's located on Banwell Road at the E.C. Row Expressway, right at the boundary of Windsor and Tecumseh.

The city of Windsor, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada collaborated on incentives to help make the business case for the NextStar site, including land assembly by the city of Windsor. NextStar officials only required consultation with one municipality instead of two. Having few complications and all partners on the

same page is very much a determining factor made by a company in where to site a plant.

NextStar coming to Windsor was never a sure thing. For one, the site was smaller than desired; it's about 800 acres. There was intense competition to land this once-in-a-lifetime investment. So with Bill 63, St. Thomas and Central Elgin can cross that potential complication off of their list. The consolidated industrial site that is the subject of this bill is large enough to meet virtually any company's needs. It is a site that has the incredible potential to create thousands of new jobs for St. Thomas and for Central Elgin and for our province; a shovel-ready site with railway access, electrical and sewer services and an easy connection to Highway 401 via Highbury Avenue.

This proposed legislation reduces the red tape that would have otherwise existed here. The government is proposing a change in the municipal boundary so that the site lies in one single municipality—the city of St. Thomas—to make site improvements and make any future construction faster and more efficient. By reducing the number of affected municipalities to one, it accelerates decision-making and approvals, ensuring the site is shovel-ready for investment.

The same laws and regulations will continue to apply; the same assets and advantages are present; the same approvals to build on this site are still needed. They will occur. The only difference is the removal of the duplication which would be corrected by this legislation.

The proposed actions show that the government is ready and willing to take the steps necessary to compete for the types of global, game-changing investments needed to create good-paying jobs in Ontario and to rebuild our economy.

Speaker, we know that in our region, there's truly a critical shortage of shovel-ready industrial mega-sites, and I've heard that in my own consultations across Ontario. This is not just an issue local to my region. We need to think innovatively. It means that to compete, municipalities may need to do exactly what our nearby neighbours are doing across the American border and have been doing so for many, many years.

Ontario is in fierce competition with other areas for these once-in-a-generation investments in manufacturing and industrial operations. There are close to 40 US areas, including Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, North Carolina, Missouri and Tennessee—all great vacation spots, but also only located within a few hours drive of us. That means they can be suppliers to everything that exists in our manufacturing footprint, and these jurisdictions offer certified site programs. Our competitors for these investments have shovel-ready sites, and it is now a widespread expectation that potential investors have of governments like ours and across North America who want to secure the investments that these shovel-ready sites be available.

In 2019, our government developed the Driving Prosperity plan that helped lead to the NextStar Energy electric vehicle battery plant. A Reuters analysis noted that car companies plan to spend \$300 billion globally on EVs, and Canada at the time had zero of that investment. That is why our government is laser-focused on securing these large-scale anchor projects, including in the auto and EV

space. What we learned was critical to securing these new investment opportunities: It's having a suitable site ready to go, where timing and costs of development are readily known, and where the owner knows that they can meet project timelines.

The Job Site Challenge program began in November 2019 and was Canada's first challenge where municipalities, economic development agencies and industrial property owners put forward large tracts of land of 500 to 1,500 acres to support large-scale manufacturing operations. Looking at the St. Thomas-Central Elgin site, it is 1,250 acres. That's pretty close to the top end of what the industry is looking for. It reflects, relative to the whole of Central Elgin, 1.8% of the land and 0.27% of the land in the county of Elgin.

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As mentioned earlier, NextStar isn't the only demonstrated success. Umicore in Loyalist township is a transformative investment for eastern Ontario. The benefits are not simply direct. As my good friend MPP Bresee noted, for the first time, the people of Millhaven will see public transit service near their community. And as a result of recent successes like NextStar and Umicore, there is significant demand for shovel-ready sites.

In my role as parliamentary assistant, I have seen ample opportunity to witness Minister Fedeli in action. Ontario is truly in good hands to secure more than \$20 billion in projects, but many of them require large-scale sites. Premier Ford and Minister Fedeli deliver investor confidence in industry, and it is helping us land these investments in the most competitive investment environment that we have seen in our history.

The shortage that we have of large, industrial sites is real. It puts Ontario at a significant disadvantage. While our communities make every effort to compete for these high-value projects, often our sites can have missing ingredients to them. This could be access to services or access to transportation infrastructure. By assembling and confirming the St. Thomas site and the governance of local regulations, it provides crystal-clear assurance to any companies locating on the site of what they need to do.

Economic developments do have uncertainty and risk, and on occasion, quick action by government is needed. Bill 63 is an example of that. It simplifies the complexity of developing the St. Thomas-Central Elgin site. Passage of the bill will make this parcel ready faster and stronger. There is no need to risk losing this opportunity to compete for and win when these companies are looking for a home. There is a lot of competition out there. Let us not give potential companies any reason to doubt our viability or our ability to deliver to them a great and sustainable business for generations to come.

For Ontario, for St. Thomas and for Central Elgin, it's an opportunity to create thousands of jobs and to build stronger communities together. We are ready for business. I ask all members of the Legislature to support Bill 63 and to ensure that St. Thomas, Central Elgin and the county of Elgin gain all of the economic opportunities and development that the region can support for its people.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his presentation on Bill 63.

You mentioned the importance of Windsor–Tecumseh in terms of the auto sector. With the Ambassador Bridge, that's a vital trade corridor. I wondered about the length of time it took for the Premier to act upon the Windsor Ambassador Bridge blockade. Flavio Volpe said it was “the single most disruptive event” of the last 20 years for the automotive sector.” Transport Canada said that \$2.3 billion in trade was put on hold while this government failed to act. Most damning, though, was the reputational damage to Canada and Ontario as a reliable trading partner.

My question for the member is, should the Premier not have acted faster to declare a state of emergency and protect Ontario's reputation?

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I was very happy to give my own comments on the Ambassador Bridge blockade at the time as a candidate in the election. What it was was a barrier to economic opportunity for many, many Ontarians. I think it was the Canadian Press who asked me a similar question. I was actually quite happy with the speed that the province did take action. Undoubtedly, as a former municipal councillor, I was aware of efforts that were under way. They may not have been public, but certainly, the effort to secure resources and deploy resources was there, and I am very happy with how that situation was resolved very peacefully.

We're in competition for several manufacturing investments, and having risk like the blockade provided is a diminishment of that. So we need to continue to make sure that we are an attractive place to do business and make sure that we give companies no reason to avoid Ontario.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for that wonderful presentation.

Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to see our government is continuing to take the economy seriously. I was listening to the ministers this morning and their statistics, and our achievement is really mind-blowing. The amount of investment, the billions of dollars pouring into Ontario, is really mind-blowing. I'd like to thank the ministers and our government for bringing so many investments. That means creating a lot of job opportunity for Ontarians, especially for the younger generation. I'm really thankful for that.

My question to the member: Elaborate on why the government is choosing to introduce the legislation now. What is the urgency to doing this bill?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: When it comes to securing transformative investments that will employ generations of Ontarians in good-paying jobs, there really is no time to waste. We need these sites ready today. We've got competition across North America that offer a host of incentives far beyond what we are able to do as a province, but we also have lots of great opportunities to secure them all the same because of our many advantages. So we are in

contention with many for many manufacturing investments. The proposed legislation, if passed, would help Ontario become a global competitor when it comes to attracting investments in jobs of the future, and there is no time to waste, because they're making decisions right now.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: To the member from Windsor–Tecumseh: The government acted very swiftly when it comes to the three municipalities to create a mega-site in order to bring jobs to southwestern Ontario. There are workers who, when you bring them to a territory, are going to need child care, housing, transit—all those things you talked about.

There was an announcement in the spring about moving the WSIB location from Toronto to London. I'd like to know why the government hasn't acted swiftly in that and if he knows if there are any plans to make that announcement so those workers can plan for those things when they get their job here in London.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe. I'm actually quite jealous of London. Back in the 1990s, when the NDP were in government, they cancelled the plans to move the WSIB to the city of Windsor, as well as the Ministry of Labour. So it's definitely a point of sensitivity for us in Windsor that London gained that investment and after it got cancelled by the NDP government of the day.

But really, coming down to this investment, there's really no time to waste when it comes to making sure that this site is available and securing major industrial investments in St. Thomas, Central Elgin and the county of Elgin to employ generations of Ontario workers in good-paying jobs. So it's going to be a tremendous boost for the London region and for the people who live there.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you so much to the member for his remarks. It's always great to hear from the communities, and particularly Windsor–Tecumseh, who are a great example—and, of course, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London as well. These communities had such great industrial development back decades ago, before Ontario was hollowed out, and now, what we're seeing is the reindustrialization of Ontario. It's very exciting, and this bill is very much a part of it.

I wonder if the member could outline the on-the-ground impacts for the community in terms of jobs and the resulting benefits that that will bring. You've seen it before. And what's the vision for your community and those around from this exciting announcement through Bill 63?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I appreciate the question from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Really, the Driving Prosperity plan is to make Ontario a global leader in a wide range of sectors, including the automotive, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and technology sectors. However, we've seen, under past governments, that the province became uncompetitive and companies left—certainly left my community, left St. Thomas—and

the world invested elsewhere. So now we're making up for lost time, bolstering Ontario's competitiveness.

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Certainly we've attracted nearly \$2 billion in investments by global bio-manufacturers, including Sanofi, Resilience and Roche pharmaceuticals, and \$17 billion in transformative investments by global auto-makers and suppliers of electric vehicle batteries and battery materials, including industry giants such as LG Energy Solution, Stellantis back in my hometown, GM, Honda, Ford, Umicore and Magna.

Those are just a few items where that's our vision: Bring good-paying jobs back to Ontario and bring prosperity to the people who live here.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I was listening to the remarks from the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and I wondered if he could provide any background information on the mega-site initiative. We understand that the province announced it in 2019 and then last year, or I guess in 2021, the government hired a consulting firm, Newmark, to oversee the site selection process. However, there has not been any release of the findings from Newmark, which would help us understand why this particular site was selected.

Can the member tell us why the government has not disclosed the report from that consulting firm that was overseeing the site selection process?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Obviously, we are in a very competitive environment and, really, when there are issues with sites that need to be corrected, let's do that without it being seen by all of our competition. The reviews give an opportunity for the municipalities to go and bolster their sites and make sure that they become ready in the long term.

That is predominantly the competitive nature of our industry, and we need to protect Ontario's competitiveness as we go forward and bring more sites online.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick question?

Mr. Ric Bresee: We've been listening to the opposition for much of the afternoon speaking about a number of concerns—the daycare, the agency location that was just mentioned, the Ambassador Bridge—none of which are actually relevant to this particular piece of legislation. They are imagining things that might go wrong, that might be negative. They are being relatively pessimistic, in my opinion. This government has been optimistic. We are optimistic about our future and the future of our children.

Through the Speaker, I ask the member if he would comment on whether this bill represents a positive step forward, a positive vision for St. Thomas and Elgin county.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: To MPP Bresee: Yes, absolutely. Positivity is what this is all about, building on our strengths, securing industrial sites that are competitive, that compete on the world stage and are attractive to worldwide companies so we can export our greatest and brightest ideas abroad and also to provide for our own communities back home.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House—I believe it's the first time since the break that I've been able to speak—and to start the debate, or my portion of the debate, on Bill 63, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of St. Thomas and the Municipality of Central Elgin.

I listened all day to the debate, particularly to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but before I talk about what's inside the bill, I'd like to talk just for a few minutes, in my role as House leader, about the process of the bill. The bill was dropped yesterday in the House—fine. That's the first time we saw it. Then, last night, it's up for debate. I don't know how long the government has been looking at it. I take it that they've been looking at this for a long time, and I appreciate that, but in my years of business, when you're burned a couple times, you get shy.

If you'll remember, a bill went through this House that you needed to use the “notwithstanding” clause to get something done, and you clapped and you hit each other on the back. You were so happy. And this had to be done right away. And a week later—it was the shortest life in history; it was the Men in Black bill—you rescinded the whole thing. It had to go so quickly.

If you will remember another bill, a bill about broadband, which I completely supported except for the middle part that had the MZO in—the minister of the crown at the time, when I asked him a question, said, “Well, if you don't like that part, just rip it out and pretend it's not there.” Now, in my personal career in business, if somebody did that to me twice, you know what? I wouldn't do business with them the third time, and I think every business person here would have the same opinion. So forgive us if we're a bit reluctant, when it's dropped, no briefing—so we're expected now to debate this bill. And it's our job as the official opposition, yes, to be critical, but also we are proud Ontarians. We want this province to move forward just as much as you do, believe it or not—just as much. The government can't even produce a briefing before this bill is likely going to get to second reading. So I hope with the businesses you're working with to secure these contracts, that you know how to do business with them better than you know how to do the business in this House, honestly.

It is really hard to do that. It's really hard. And notwithstanding that, when you get a bill—and I will give credit where credit is due on this bill. At least this bill is on one subject, right? We've had a few hours to look through it, haven't even had a full day, and it's on one subject.

So the first thing we do is you have to look for the poison pill in the few hours we're getting, and when you only get a few hours, you get suspicious right away, right? The bill is dropped, and then the next day, a full day of debate. Well, then you get suspicious: What are we missing. What are we missing? That's where it starts. So forgive us for being critical and a bit less than trusting of what the government is reporting. That's where we're starting from.

And just for future reference, if the way—and I'm going to sound like I've been here way too long, and maybe I have; there are lots of people trying to end that. In

days of yore, a bill could drop and you might have a week or two weeks to be able to do your research, to call the people who were involved in the bill, so you could actually have a fulsome debate. That hasn't occurred with this government, and it also hurts this government. It hurts your government because if you think that when you have to rescind a bill after a week—if you think that was a proud moment, then you are sadly mistaken, sadly mistaken. Every one of you could have stood in your place and said, "Oh, no, no. We shouldn't do the 'notwithstanding' clause," and you sat—oh no, you didn't. You cheered, until a week later, I didn't see any cheering. And that's hurting yourself. And I—

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I know the opposition member, who also happens to be their House leader, is well aware that pursuant to standing order 25(b)(i), we do need to stay on the topic of the bill. So Speaker, I would ask you that we return to the subject matter of Bill 60.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. I'm going to ask the member to keep his comments closer to the bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I will do that. I thought I was doing that, but I will do that.

I listened intently to the Minister of Municipal Affairs this morning, a minister who I try to work with. I don't agree with everything philosophically; often we disagree philosophically, but he's a good minister to work with.

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Coming from municipal government, as many of us do, his explanation of having a big project—and this is a mega-site for, obviously, a big project; we don't know what exactly. And I fully understand that in business there are certain commercial things we can't make public. I also understand, as a business, you want to deal with one municipality. As a former councillor, I understand that. That makes perfect sense to me. That explanation I don't have a problem with. You want a business, regardless of size, but the bigger they get—they want to be able to deal with one municipality. If you're dealing with rules—and I always go back to my own personal business; I had farms in a couple of townships, and even that was difficult sometimes. So I can only imagine what it is like when you're dealing with a huge business.

One part, as a farmer, and as someone who is very conscious of loss of agricultural land—there will be some loss of agricultural land here, and that is somewhat contentious. But as you will recall, the official opposition, under my name—we proposed something called an agricultural impact assessment. The government voted against it and said it was too much red tape. But I would put forward, just in my mind, how this would have worked on this project—yes, there's going to be agricultural land lost, but there is also, on one side, a huge benefit. So is there a bigger benefit for this project as a whole compared to the production capacity that's lost? And I think I don't have purview to everything that we're looking at, but the proximity to the 401, the proximity to the town, the size of the

project, the land that is needed, in my mind, the way I would see that process going, it wouldn't take years, it wouldn't take—it would—well, click, click, click, yes.

So there is going to be some opposition regarding the loss of land, but I think that the benefits of this project, if it is for batteries for electric vehicles—we all know where the car manufacturing sector is going. We all want the car manufacturing sector to succeed, regardless of where we are in the province.

Hon. David Piccini: Do you?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, we do. The Minister of the Environment questions that, but believe it or not, we all want this province to succeed.

So if you take that, the benefits, I think, would—knowing what we know now, after 20-some hours, the benefits would likely outweigh the loss of agricultural land. I'm saying that—I don't know, because I haven't had that long look at the bill, but that's where I am and that's where I think we are.

Having said that—and we've had a few comments about where we stand on this bill. I'm going to go way out on a limb here. We're going to support this bill on second reading.

Interjection: Oh, that is way out.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, just to make this clear—I'm a farmer; I'm fairly blunt. We hope that, after second reading, there's actually a committee process so we can have some stakeholders come forward and that—we're not in the interest of holding this up, but we want to make sure it's done right. I know the government wants to take credit, and I've got no problem with that. That's the way the political system works. But I also want to make sure that the companies that we're enticing to this province feel confident in our political system and in all our systems. Because one of the reasons that people come to look at this province is that we have what they perceive as a good health care system, a good education system—all those things.

We need to make sure that they have confidence in them, but they also have to have confidence in how this place works, and the way this place is supposed to work is you have some time to look at the bill before second reading, which we didn't have; you have some time during committee to look at the finer points of the bill; and then you have a final debate on third reading. And the bill doesn't actually pass into law until royal assent.

But this bill warrants second reading based on what we've seen. Much of the reluctance on this bill is the way other bills have been presented in the past and the way this bill was presented now.

So I'm not going to veer off the topic of the bill, but I am going to veer a little bit to the car industry. This hasn't been the case lately, because now the car industry is starting to come back with electric cars, but the car industry has had some tough times, St. Thomas especially. I know a little bit about that part of the world; I have some relatives there. Other members here who are from northern Ontario will have heard this refrain: "If only we had a car plant in wherever we were, things would be great." Well,

do you know what? When the auto sector wasn't doing that well, things weren't that great.

The mining sector—and the Minister of Mines will know this very well—is, I'd say, booming. There are lots of discoveries, and much of that is going to be working into the car sector—the nickel. Also, in the processing—in my riding, the Electra Battery Materials Corp. is going to be refining. It is encouraging that northern Ontario is going to play a role in the electric vehicle industry. Northern Ontario always played a role in the car industry—a lot of iron and steel came from northern Ontario—but now we're going to play, hopefully, a bigger role.

So please don't think that those of us who don't come from southwestern Ontario don't care what happens in southwestern Ontario, because we do. Because it impacts everyone in this province, in this country—it does.

I've got five minutes. In closing, I think this part bears repeating—I can repeat myself; the deputy House leader is going to knock me down again. We get along, but she's doing her job. If we could do one thing better in working together—we oppose each other philosophically. That's the great thing about this province: We can get along personally and oppose each other philosophically. Actually, I'm pretty sure that even in our respective parties, there are philosophical differences on various issues. But this would work much better if everyone had more time—and not to hold the process up, because I think the fact they're trying to rush through things sometimes actually makes things go slower than if we gave everyone the respect to have the time to look at the thing.

So I hope that when this bill passes second reading that we don't slow things down, but we actually have the respect of the Legislature, the respect to get this done correctly, to have it go to committee and make sure—not everyone's going to be happy but that everyone is heard.

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I think the biggest thing, the biggest aspect of our democratic system that we have to be cognizant of is that everyone has to feel that they're heard, and sometimes that doesn't happen. And when that doesn't happen, people become much more polarized. No one in this room who has worked so hard to be able to sit in this House wants that to happen.

I'd just like to repeat, we are going to vote for this on second reading. It's something we need to be competitive in this province, and everyone on all sides knows that. We all diminish ourselves when we really push the one side. We have philosophical differences, but if we really want to say, "This one side that we know, you know nothing about this"—that's not my style. It's not our style.

We are in favour of it, in principle, on second reading. Hopefully we'll have a good committee process, and hopefully we can attract generational businesses, green generational businesses, green generational systems, so that our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids can benefit from living in this great place as well and we can protect our natural resources.

In my closing two minutes, I'm going to go back to, we do need to have some kind of system in Ontario to recognize the gift we have of farmland, to recognize that you can't put a moratorium on it. You can't put a

moratorium: "Thou shalt not ever build on farmland." That won't work. But you have to realize that farmland is a resource that we just can't squander, and there's a difference. There is a difference. Until we have a process like that, we are going to keep losing it, and our kids, our grandkids and our great-grandkids that I spoke of just a minute ago when we were all talking about generational industries—agriculture is a generational industry too. No matter how we do it, we're going to need the soil. And we are going to lose some with this. We have to be cognizant of that, and we have to be careful.

With that, I thank you very much for your indulgence. I thank the deputy House leader. You're our deputy House leader still, right?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay. I thank the deputy House leader for her indulgence. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you to the member. It is now time for questions. I recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you, Madam Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): No, Windsor–Tecumseh. Sorry, I apologize.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be short so my friend member Babikian can ask his question quickly.

Anyway, I appreciate the comments from member Vanthof. Thank you very much to the NDP caucus for supporting the bill at second reading. I know that the crux of this bill is in our industrial land shortage.

I wanted to quote a 2021 report from the Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing on industrial land shortage, which says, "If suitable land and buildings are not available, prospective manufacturers will bypass Ontario and those already here will invest elsewhere."

It goes on to say, "The shortage of industrial land threatens" the manufacturing "sector that is vital to Ontario's economic and social well-being."

The goal of the bill that we are debating today is to try and solve this very problem in the St. Thomas–Central Elgin area. I wanted to find out if the member agrees with the findings of this report as a general part of supporting this bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: To be competitive, we need large areas of land to be able to be developed. But I will go back to the member: I believe there's over 80,000 acres of land in Ontario available for development and also for housing development. Did we need to go into the greenbelt before that 80,000 was used? That's the thing, right? Do we need to ignore brownfields and go into agricultural land? I think it's a valid question; both are valid questions.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for your excellent 20-minute presentation.

My question is this: When you rush a bill through like this, who loses out?

Mr. John Vanthof: When a government develops a pattern of rushing bills through, having to rescind them on occasion, having to make major changes, I think that some of the people they're trying to work with—we all lose,

because you question who you're working with. You question who you're working with. We all lose.

The government wants to promote business and jobs. I understand that. So do we, so do I. But when major changes have to be made—when I work with someone who has a plan and all of a sudden the plan has to change in mid-direction, you go, “Whoa, I’m not sure I want to keep working with this.” We all lose when stuff is rushed through and mistakes are made, simply because they’re rushed through too quickly, and you don’t respect others’ opinions just because you don’t agree with them philosophically.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: This time it’s my turn. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I always enjoy listening to the depth of analysis of the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. Of course, he has the experience and the wealth of knowledge, being a member of this House for a long time. I understand his concern regarding losing farmland. But the interesting aspect that I personally discovered during the finance committee’s pre-budget hearings in Windsor—we had a representative from the farm industry, and they brought to our attention that, because of climate warming, many of the lands in the north are opening now for farming. He brought his own personal experience; he’s using now—

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: The question is, do you share this farmer’s opinion that it is not all doom and gloom by losing farmland and that we have other opportunities to explore the northern lands for farming as this farmer’s done?

Mr. John Vanthof: I really appreciate that question. As a proud farmer in northern Ontario for the last 35 years, I don’t have any doom and gloom about farming, certainly not in northern Ontario or southwestern Ontario. I think every acre of farmland is precious and has to be treated that way.

There is a lot of potential in northern Ontario, but don’t think that you can just transfer what you produce here or south of here. We’re not going to be growing field tomatoes in Timiskaming any time soon. There’s a lot of things we’re not going to be growing. We’re not going to be growing 200-bushel-an-acre corn. We grow silage corn. We are way far away from growing profitable grain corn in northern Ontario. We are way far away from growing consistently safe soybeans. We have early frost. We grow soybeans, great soybeans—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: But every acre is precious.

And one other thing: The land in northern Ontario isn’t sitting there idling now. It grows trees, and you take 10 million acres out of trees—

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I would like to continue on that question. I appreciate the question from the member from

Scarborough–Agincourt and I want to continue on it, because there’s an assumption in that question that global warming is going to be a gradual warming. What we’re seeing around the world is actually climate chaos. We saw it last year in Pakistan, for example. A third of the country was flooded and the farmland was destroyed and the crops were destroyed. There were all kinds of problems. We’ve got fires in British Columbia. We had fires in California.

What I think people are saying when we’re saying what my colleague is saying—and I’ll ask him about this—is that we need to protect every acre of farmland because global warming means that we’re facing climate chaos. Places like Ontario are places where we have to protect the farmland because there’s going to be a greater need for this farmland in the future. Have I got that right?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much to my colleague. Just for the record, often my colleagues ask tougher questions than my opposition.

Yes, to a point. We have to treat every acre as precious. Some acres we have to give up for other projects, but we have to treat every acre as precious.

The thing that most people are missing with global warming is that in areas like California, if it gets to the point where they can no longer grow crops profitably, efficiently or possibly, they’re not just going to sit around and say, “Well, we’ll just let Ontario go its own way and things will be great in Ontario.” When climate change really impacts, it’s going to cause huge problems. It’s not just that we can grow better crops in northern Ontario, but that there’s going to be huge global food problems.

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

Mr. John Jordan: This is a relatively simple bill. It reduces the complexity of creating a mega-site. As a businessman, would you agree that sometimes you have to move quickly or opportunities are lost, and that this is one of those times?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for that question; I appreciate it. As a businessman, you need to move quickly and efficiently, and you need to be able to trust those who you’re working with. That’s why this bill, I think, is getting more resistance than perhaps—in past experience, this government has made huge mistakes, huge ones.

Across, they’re going, “No, no.” Having to rescind a bill a week after and actually kind of state that it never happened—“Oh, no, that happens all the time.” Well, if that happened in business, you’d never do business with that group again.

And this isn’t a simple bill; there’s no such thing as a simple bill. But this bill is fairly straightforward, compared to some. It deals with one area, one issue. If there had been more confidence in the government, I think it would have been easier—

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

Report continues in volume B.

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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	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	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	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	