

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 56

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 56

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Thursday
23 March 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Jeudi
23 mars 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 23 March 2023 / Jeudi 23 mars 2023

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Working for Workers Act, 2023, Bill 79, Mr. McNaughton / Loi de 2023 visant à oeuvrer pour les travailleurs, projet de loi 79, M. McNaughton	
Mr. Wayne Gates	3019
Mme France Gélinas	3022
Mr. John Jordan.....	3022
MPP Jamie West	3022
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	3023
MPP Jamie West	3023
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	3023
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	3026
Mr. Ric Bresee	3026
Mme France Gélinas	3027
Mr. Andrew Dowie	3027
Mr. Wayne Gates	3027
Ms. Peggy Sattler	3028
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	3029

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Lakehead University Thunderwolves men's hockey team	
Mr. Kevin Holland	3029
Troublemaker Radio podcast	
Mr. Joel Harden.....	3029
Employment standards	
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	3029
Municipal services	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	3030
U13A Cornwall Typhoons girls' hockey team	
Mr. Nolan Quinn	3030
Homelessness	
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3030
Lego Windsor and Essex county politics	
Mr. Andrew Dowie	3031
Hydro rates	
Mr. Ted Hsu	3031
Kraft Hockeyville 2023	
Mr. Rob Flack	3031
Schulich Builders scholarships	
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	3031

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Will Bouma	3031
Mr. Joel Harden.....	3032
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady	3032
Mr. Mike Harris	3032
Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	3032
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	3032
Mr. Chris Glover	3032
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	3032
Mr. Brian Saunderson	3032
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	3032
Mme France Gélinas	3032
Mr. Matthew Rae	3032
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	3032
Hon. Stan Cho	3032
Hon. Charmaine A. Williams	3032
House sittings	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	3032

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Fiscal and economic policy	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	3032
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	3032
Hon. Steve Clark	3033
Fiscal and economic policy	
Ms. Doly Begum	3033
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	3033
Indigenous affairs	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3034
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	3034
Automotive industry	
Mr. Rob Flack	3034
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	3034
Employment standards	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	3035
Hon. Monte McNaughton	3035
Employment supports	
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	3035
Hon. Monte McNaughton	3036
Public transit	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	3036
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	3036
Mr. Joel Harden.....	3036

Services en français / Fiscal and economic policy

M. Stephen Blais	3037
L'hon. Caroline Mulroney	3037
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	3037

Wildlife protection

Mr. Kevin Holland	3037
Hon. David Piccini.....	3038

Hospital services

Mr. Jeff Burch	3038
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3038

Agri-food industry

Mr. Nolan Quinn	3039
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	3039

Abortion images

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3039
Hon. Paul Calandra	3039
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	3039

Amateur sport / Tourism

Mr. Deepak Anand.....	3040
Hon. Neil Lumsden.....	3040

Arts and cultural funding

MPP Jill Andrew	3040
Hon. Neil Lumsden.....	3040
Mr. Chris Glover	3041

Animal protection / Protection des animaux

Ms. Natalie Pierre	3041
Hon. Michael S. Kerzner.....	3041

Autism treatment

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	3041
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton	3042
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3042

Health care funding

Mr. Matthew Rae	3042
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	3042

Business of the House

Hon. Paul Calandra	3042
--------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS**Social assistance**

Motion negatived	3043
------------------------	------

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES
ET VISITEURS**

Mr. Andrew Dowie	3043
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3043

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS****Standing Committee on Government Agencies**

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly)	3043
Report deemed adopted.....	3043

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI****Peter Kormos Memorial Act (Saving Organs to Save
Lives), 2023, Bill 84, Mme Gélinas / Loi de 2023
commémorant Peter Kormos (Sauver des organes
pour sauver des vies), projet de loi 84,
Mme Gélinas**

First reading agreed to.....	3044
Mme France Gélinas	3044

MOTIONS**House sittings**

Hon. Paul Calandra	3044
Motion agreed to	3044

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS**Hospital services**

Mr. Jeff Burch	3044
----------------------	------

Adoption disclosure

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	3044
---------------------------	------

Adoption disclosure

Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	3045
----------------------------	------

Adoption disclosure

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	3045
----------------------------	------

Adoption disclosure

Ms. Doly Begum	3045
----------------------	------

Adoption disclosure

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3045
-------------------------------	------

Chronic pain treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	3045
---------------------------	------

**Subventions aux résidents du Nord pour frais de
transport à des fins médicales**

Mme France Gélinas	3046
--------------------------	------

Land use planning

Mr. Jeff Burch	3046
----------------------	------

Mental health services

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	3046
---------------------------	------

Alzheimer's disease

Mme France Gélinas	3046
--------------------------	------

Road safety

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	3047
---------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

2023 Ontario budget / Budget de l'Ontario de 2023

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy.....	3047
Debate adjourned.....	3053

**INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS /
DÉPÔT DE PROJETS DE LOI ÉMANANT
DU GOUVERNEMENT**

**Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures),
2023, Bill 85, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2023 visant
à bâtir un Ontario fort (mesures budgétaires),
projet de loi 85, M. Bethlenfalvy**

First reading agreed to	3053
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 March 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 mars 2023

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone. Let us pray.

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm always happy to speak to labour legislation coming from the Conservative government—for anyone who was around during the 1990s and witnessed the Harris government, we know how Conservatives really feel about workers. If you weren't around during the 1990s or don't remember the Harris government, I'll let you in on a secret: They're not big on standing up for workers. They love standing up for big business, but not workers. But this government and the Minister of Labour want us to forget that history. They put forward legislation like today, titled it Working for Workers, and hope that the window dressing is enough to erase the decades of attacking workers. But it's not enough, because they are still attacking workers today.

Speaker, before I get into what should be in this bill, I want to say that many of the changes in this legislation are supportable. Earlier this week, through media, we heard about a lot of changes the minister claimed he was making to support workers, but, strangely, not a lot is actually in the bill. I understand that the government has a pattern of introducing legislation and leaving a lot of the meat to regulatory changes down the road, but it's fair to say it's a little strange that most of what the minister claims he's doing isn't made law through the legislation he tabled. It's not even mentioned in the bill. It's concerning because we all know that regulatory changes do not go under the same level of scrutiny as legislation amendments. With this government, it's all about the details—and when it's done through regulations, I do get concerned about how transparent and open those details are.

It's important to note that the minister and the rest of the Conservative government wasted no time in legislating direct attacks on the collective bargaining rights of unionized workers like nurses, education workers, paramedics, corrections officers and many more with Bill 124 and Bill 28, both—Madam Speaker, you know this—unconstitutional bills. Yet changes that might actually make things better for workers, weren't included in the bill we're debating today.

Speaker, the government side may be critical—which they have been in the past—of my response to this bill, but for me, this is personal. I've been a worker my entire life. I worked in a plant, working steady midnights for 20 years at General Motors. My union is the reason I have the life I have today—make no mistake about that—including being able to provide for my children, my three daughters, helping my five grandkids. It's because of the union. Without that support of my brothers and sisters in the labour movement, working to advance the quality of life for their members, I wouldn't be here today.

I'm passionate about this issue. I remember that my passion for standing up for workers and the labour movement was criticized by the PC Party. Listen to this, even to my other colleagues: When I ran in Niagara Falls in a by-election, it was our current labour minister himself who warned the people of my community that they should be scared if I win, because I was from a union. Now the minister walks around and acts like unions are his best friends, and he wants to pretend that he stands up for workers.

Make no mistake about it: His opinion on workers' rights hasn't changed. This member wanted Ontario to adopt a US-style right-to-work law, going back to when Tim Hudak was the leader of the official opposition—which I really want to mention, because the Conservatives forget about this: The PCs were in opposition for 15 years.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Supporting the Liberals.

Mr. Wayne Gates: They supported the Liberals, but not only that, I would like somebody to stand up and tell me what you did in those 15 years. It's a little off the subject, but I thought I'd just throw that in. I've got lots of time left, so I just thought I'd add a little line here and there.

He was the first member on the government side to not only stand up—I'm going to repeat this. He was the first member on the government side to not only stand up and vote in support of anti-union, anti-worker Bills 124 and 28; he also was the first to clap.

We found out yesterday their government doesn't even support paid sick days. I'm going to add to that:

Everybody in this room—everybody—if you’re off sick, you get paid. We’ve had members who had long-term sicknesses in this chamber, unfortunately; they got paid. Workers deserve paid sick days. You shouldn’t have to go to work because you can’t afford to put food on your plate or pay the rent. Paid sick days are important in the province of Ontario.

Now, some people might say, “Look at this legislation. It’s helping workers in our province.” Well, when it matters most, when it isn’t the public relations exercise of this government, they go back to their old ways. We saw that in the two bills, as I’ve already said.

Think about this, Madam Speaker: Look no further than what they did to the lowest-paid education workers in this province, the people making an average of \$39,000 who are going to food banks at the end of their week, the people who make our schools function every day and those who support students with special needs. This government attacked them and took away their charter rights. They used the “notwithstanding” clause to strip those workers of their rights, and they did it to workers in a largely women-led sector—a pattern, I believe, from this government.

Do you know what happened? Those workers, mostly women, stood up to this government, and we rallied with them. I rallied with them in front of my office. There were close to 1,000 that day, the day that they rallied at my office, and do you know what? This government threatened them with fines of \$4,000 a day if they didn’t go into work. Do you know what most of those women said? They stood up to the government and they said, “Fine us, because you’re not taking away our rights.” I know it’s early in the morning, but I think the women deserve a round of applause for standing up for themselves in the labour movement. And the PCs—you can clap on that, because you have some women on that side who I respect and I talk to all the time.

0910

What does this mean for workers? It means that they can’t trust this government when it comes to protecting their rights. It means that they have to rally and stand up for themselves when this government steamrolls their basic constitutional rights. This approach has a ripple effect in our community. It sows distrust for the government, and it negatively impacts so many areas of the province.

As the critic for long-term care, I’m going to give you some examples.

The title of the bill before us is Working for Workers—and I’m going to speak about Bill 124 and how that worked for workers, but before we get into the details of that horrible anti-worker legislation, let’s take a look at what it has caused. It has created a staffing shortage in health care. It has created a staffing shortage in long-term care, retirement homes and home care.

We all know, and I repeat it as much as I can here because I don’t want people to forget, that 5,400 seniors—our moms, our dads, our aunts, our uncles, our brothers and sisters—died in long-term care and retirement homes,

and 78% of those died in for-profit homes, because it wasn’t about care; it was about profit.

Workers don’t feel respected.

I know everybody knows about this, but I’m going to repeat it again: Staffing agencies are ripping off non-profit long-term-care homes at the rate of \$150 per hour because of this crisis. And, yet, we continue to fight in court with Bill 124 and limit wages at 1%, including benefits—it’s a total compensation package of 1%. When inflation is running at 6.5%, 7.5%, that’s a pay cut of 6% to our heroes. All this is happening under this government’s watch because they don’t truly stand up for workers.

I want to talk about this government and about their record on workers. We’ve been hearing a lot about how this government has been working for workers. They’re talking a lot about how they care about workers, trade unions, and how they want to have a new type of Conservative party, but their record is very different. It’s a different story. This government has one of the worst records on labour issues in the history of the province of Ontario and, quite frankly, all across Canada.

We learned this week that this government will be ending the paid sick days program next week. Does that sound like something a government that is working for workers would do? They can make as many excuses as they like, but the government could absolutely include paid sick days if they wanted. If they really cared about workers and their rights and their well-being, they would absolutely include paid sick days, but they made a choice not to. Nobody in the province of Ontario should be forced to go to work when they are sick. This is unacceptable in one of the richest provinces in the country.

But that’s not all—in fact, it’s part of a pattern of this government going after workers.

Of course, there’s Bill 124, a bill that opened up the collective agreements—negotiated, fair collective agreements—of our nurses and our front-line health care workers and imposed a 1% wage increase, including benefits. That’s disgusting in and of itself, but you have to remember that this happened during 7% and in some cases 8% inflation. So, in fact, this government forced a 6%—at least 6%—pay cut on our nurses, front-line health care workers and the other occupations that I already mentioned in this speech.

We were happy in November of last year to hear that the courts—rightly, in my opinion—struck down Bill 124. The Ontario Superior Court ruled on November 29, 2022, that Bill 124 was unconstitutional and a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That decision was a hard-fought victory for nurses, front-line workers and the other workplaces I’ve mentioned who have given up so much over the last few years, working through a deadly pandemic, working through staffing shortages, emergency room closures, increased violence and harassment in our hospitals.

But it didn’t stop Premier Ford and the Conservative government. You know what they did? They challenged those nurses in court. They weren’t satisfied to move on and accept the court’s decision that it was unconstitutional.

Instead, they decided it was a good use of their time—and, quite frankly, taxpayers' money. All the court cases this government has lost have been paid for by taxpayers. I want everybody to understand that, and it's in the hundreds of millions of dollars which could have gone, quite frankly, to paid sick days, to mental health and all the other things I think they could have done.

Again, this government's actions are simply not matching their words. Premier Ford and the Conservatives talk the talk about our health care heroes and how much they love and respect nurses, but when it comes to walking the walk and actually having the backs of our health care workers, instead they attack their collective bargaining rights and force them to accept a net pay cut. We know Bill 124 has actively made the staffing crisis in health care worse. Their own documents—your own documents prove it.

Then, of course, we have Bill 28—which was an attack not just on education workers but on the constitutional rights of every single worker in the province of Ontario and Canada.

Some of you may know that before I was an MPP, I was a city councillor, but also a union president, Unifor Local 199 in Niagara. I'm very proud of that. I was involved in the labour movement in the Mike Harris days. Those were tough times for the labour movement—make no mistake about it—where he took away anti-scab. But you know what? I want people to hear this—especially on that side: Even Mike Harris, one of the most conservative Premiers we've ever had in the history of Canada, quite frankly, even he never used the “notwithstanding” clause to attack workers. Think about that. That shows you just how extreme this government really is.

What do Bill 124 and Bill 28 have in common? Besides attacking collective bargaining rights of workers, of course—what do those bills have in common? They are both examples of a government attacking female-dominated professions. It's this government time and time again attacking jobs that are disproportionately women—this government and this labour minister, quite frankly, talk about supporting women in the trades, but again their record tells a very different story. It shows them attacking, stripping away the rights of female workers in the province of Ontario.

And then we have the government's record on WSIB and, in particular, deeming. I cannot believe I'm still talking about deeming three years later. It just doesn't make sense—particularly since we have Working for Workers 3 and I'm sure I'll be standing up here in two years, three years from now on Working for Workers 49. I'm sure it's just going to continue to go on.

Deeming hasn't been in one of those bills yet. By the way, we've asked the government to do it over and over again. I introduced a bill just this past December, and what this bill would do is end the practice of deeming that leads to so many of our injured workers here in the province living in poverty. In fact, I introduced a bill in 2019. It passed first reading, but the government chose not to move forward—disgraceful. So I introduced it again—I'm like a

boomerang, I just keep coming back. You know, you can do whatever you want to me, but just like you throw that boomerang, I'm coming back. If I believe it should be there, I'm coming back. Just so you know, I'm not going away. Would a government that is actually working for workers have injured workers living in poverty in the province of Ontario?

I also want to address something the Minister of Labour said the other day in the House, because I think this is important. The minister mentioned that he was happy to go after “scumbag employers” in the province of Ontario, which again we're seeing a pattern here: sounds nice, sounds good, but what action has the government taken?

What about the employer that passed Bill 124, opening up the collective agreements of nurses and health care workers and keeping their wages under the rate of inflation in the midst of a global pandemic? What about the employer that passed Bill 28 which attacked education workers and used the “notwithstanding” clause to attack their collective bargaining rights? What about the employer that still deems injured workers, keeps them living in poverty in the province of Ontario? What about the employer that won't pass anti-scab legislation? Madam Speaker, by the way, anti-scab was brought in under the Mike Harris government—

Interjection: No, it was taken away.

0920

Mr. Wayne Gates: Taken away; sorry, I apologize.

Let's take a look at increases to maximum penalties to the OHS and the ESA. Look, I'm not going to deny that's important. Employers who put the health and safety of workers at risk deserve to be fined. Those fines, by the way—I've walked an injured worker out of my plant. I've actually taken a worker who died in the workplace out of the plant. You know that company, General Motors, got fined \$350,000. But that money doesn't go to the family. I want people to understand that. A lot of people say they get the fine and it goes to the family so their kids can go to school. It doesn't happen. What happens is, that single mom now may have to live in poverty because she lost her husband, in this particular case, Joel Murray. Everybody in the plant thought that that money went there. It doesn't, not one penny. It should go to the family so they can raise their children, make sure they get a good education. That's something that they should take a serious look at.

I'd also raise our concern with changes outlined in schedule 1. How will they be enforced, when migrant workers have been asked to call into a complaint line or file paperwork with the minister to have these changes actually enforced? Also, will the information on these changes be adequately communicated to migrant workers and available in multiple languages? Because we know they come from all over the world.

I think those concerns are legitimate. It's something that should be looked at by this minister. We know that migrant workers are afraid of retaliation from their employer—I've seen that in my own riding—and do not use the rights they have now. We can't continue that going forward if we want to fully protect them.

This government likes to talk about how much they are doing to help certain workers in this province. That includes their recent announcement to cover certain cancers as occupational diseases for firefighters in Ontario. But that comes from the same government that just a few weeks ago made a cruel decision to vote no on a motion that would cover PSA tests in Ontario for men. Think about that for minute. How awful of this government to come forward and make this big show about supporting firefighters and covering occupational cancers that they've been fighting for years for, and then they turn around a few days later and not support a test that would prevent late-stage diagnosis of cancer. This is just another example of how this government talks out of one side of their mouth and turns around and does something completely different.

I'll tell you, yesterday, five people in the province of Ontario—men—died of cancer, prostate cancer, and the only speaker you put up was a woman, who doesn't have a prostate. You know who else has prostates, Madam Speaker—I'm not going to get to the rest of my—firefighters have prostates. They deserve to have that test as well.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was quite pleased to hear my colleague talk about anti-scab legislation. We had in Sudbury, in Nickel Belt, a one-year-long strike, where scab labour was used. They prey on vulnerable workers who need money to support their kids with autism, who need money to support their wives fighting cancer, and bring them in as scabs. Then it destroys them. Why? For absolutely no good reason. The smelter didn't work, Vale didn't produce any nickel, but it destroyed many parts of my community. It destroyed families. It destroyed the entire community. Why is anti-scab legislation important?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to talk about anti-scab for a minute; I think I get a minute to respond. Scabs are not necessary in the province of Ontario, for all the reasons that my colleague talked about—what it does to families, what it does to communities. But in the province of Ontario I've had the privilege over the course of my career to bargain 150 collective agreements. I had one three-day strike. That employer didn't use anti-scab—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Scab.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Scab, sorry. It's early in the morning; I haven't had any water yet.

I want to say this to everybody who's out there bargaining collective agreements, and to the government—because there are a lot of new people here who might not know—do you know in the province of Ontario 98% of all collective agreements are negotiated at the bargaining table? Why are we protecting the 2% that won't go to the bargaining table and do a fair collective agreement?

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

Mr. John Jordan: Speaker, this is a good bill, and it's crafted to address the here and now. That's this century,

for the member opposite. It's good for the military, both men and women. It's good for workers on site and off-site, both men and women. It provides employer accountability, with contracts and terms documented, for both men and women. It's good for our firefighters, both men and women.

How could anybody not support this bill? Speaking just to this century, I'd like the member opposite to explain that.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I know it's early in the morning, but I don't look like I'm 100, so I can't go back the full century. At the end of the day, I think I was very clear in my comments. Madam Speaker, I was clear. There are some things in here that are supportive. I was very clear on that. A lot of the stuff that has been raised over the last few days is not in the bill.

But I will talk about the firefighters. The firefighters have been fighting for cancer to be covered for years. We should protect firefighters. The firefighters in my area, whether they're volunteer, whether they're—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, they saved my wife's life. The firefighters in my area, whether they're volunteer, whether they're firefighters, whether in Chippewa, whether in Niagara-on-the-Lake, whether in Niagara Falls—I know all about firefighters. I respect firefighters. I've gone to firefighters' funerals. So any time we—

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Niagara Falls. Early on in this debate, he questioned Working for Workers as a bit of a smokescreen. And he talked about Bill 28, which punished the lowest-paid public sector workers. He talked about Bill 124, which froze wages for public sector workers at 1% so every year it was a massive wage cut and violated their ability to collectively bargain. He talked about the removal of sick days, which were removed when the Conservative government was first elected and then removed again yesterday.

He also talked about his involvement in the union, how it allowed him to care for his three daughters and his five grandchildren. This morning, I was reading an email from the United Steelworkers, Local 1944, the Telus workers. There's 6,800 members. They bargained wage increases, enhanced job security, paid domestic violence leave, benefit increases and pension increases.

The Conservative government loves to talk about how much they love unions, especially the trade unions. If they really love unions, do you think it would make more sense for them to make it easier to join a union, like passing card-check certification?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd really like to thank my member for the question and actually thank him for being our labour critic. To the first part of your thing: Yes, we should all have the opportunity for it to be very easy to join a union. I've said very clearly, Wayne Gates isn't an MPP today without my union. Wayne Gates isn't an MPP without my community as well. But the trade union movement does one thing that we should be very proud of.

They bargain fair and just collective agreements on behalf of their members.

We've had this conversation here, but I know some of the people here don't really pay attention when we're talking about this. Do you know if it wasn't for the unions standing up for workers, we'd have more people living in poverty? We wouldn't have sick days and collective agreements. We wouldn't have vacation time. We wouldn't have pensions. Imagine where we'd be without pensions today when we see the number of our seniors that are living in poverty today—

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for Niagara Falls for passionately talking about firefighters. This bill addresses firefighters. Firefighters are everyday heroes who put their lives on the line to save our lives. We go to sleep because we have wonderful firefighters in our city and the province.

Firefighters are diagnosed with cancer up to four times higher than the general population. Will the member support our proposal to expand WSIB presumptive coverage for thyroid cancer and pancreatic cancer for our province's firefighters?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm glad you're asking a question around firefighters, because I was cut off last time. It's not in the bill around firefighters—it's not in the bill. Show me the page it's on.

But I don't mind talking about firefighters. When we're running out of the house, what's the firefighter doing? He's running in, not knowing what's behind those doors. They're risking their lives every single day. I've already said that I've gone to a few funerals of my brothers who are firefighters. One passed away with cancer that I'm aware of; I know there are more. I've attended their funerals. We all need to respect our firefighters and we should do all we can. Every single cancer that they're exposed to should be covered in the bill—every single cancer. Because, when they pass away, do you know what happens? It's the spouse who doesn't get the benefit, who loses out—

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

0930

MPP Jamie West: The member spoke very eloquently about the importance of bringing back anti-scab legislation. The Conservatives like to talk about Bob Rae. They bring it up all the time, but they forget that Bob Rae built more affordable housing than any other government. They forget that Bob Rae brought in anti-scab legislation so that contracts—as the member said, 98% bargained without labour disruption. Contracts can be bargained fairly when labour disruption is minimized.

I wonder if the member from Niagara Falls wants to talk about how important anti-scab legislation is and why it's long overdue—even though the Liberals had promised for 15 years to bring it back. It's long overdue that we finally bring it back.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before I recognize the member, I would like to remind members in

the House: When I stand, please refrain from continuing to speak.

Back to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll apologize for that. I didn't see you stand. My apologies. It was my fault.

To answer your question around anti-scab and Bob Rae: Bob Rae brought it in under an NDP government. One of the first things the Conservatives under Mike Harris did is they got rid of it. I've never understood it. I'm going to repeat it again, and you repeated it, and I know, the member beside you from Niagara Centre, he bargains a lot of contracts. I believe it was SEIU. Am I right? I think you were with SEIU. He knows that the Conservative government attacked workers right away. Actually, for those eight years, we were under attack under Mike Harris, let's be honest, including the days of action and all that stuff.

It is so important, and I want to congratulate—because, on Wednesday of next week, there is a bill coming forward that this government can support, and, when we go to amendments on the bill, we can put it right in the bill—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I wasn't sure if you were standing. I didn't want to get in trouble again.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will be soon.

Mr. Wayne Gates: As soon as I heard your voice I said, "I'd better sit down before I get in trouble again." Anyway, thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We no longer have time on the clock for questions and answers. We will continue with debate.

Further debate? I recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair. Great to be here on a big day today, budget day. We're excited to unveil a budget later today.

I'm honoured to be speaking on the government's bill today, Bill 79, Working for Workers Act, 2023. I would like to recognize and thank the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development for putting this bill forward. I think he has done a great job. I'd also like to thank his two parliamentary assistants who I know brought a lot of hard work to preparing this bill as well, the member for Mississauga–Malton and the member I see across, part of our team, from Scarborough Centre. Thank you for the work you did in putting this bill together. Our minister's dedication to workers is providing opportunities for people to enter the skilled trades, which is so critical.

Working for Workers Act 3 brings three important sets of legislative amendments to help position Ontario as the most competitive jurisdiction in North America. First, it sets out to enhance employment experience by making workplaces more attractive, including and reflecting the reality of modern work. We all know that, today, a lot more people work from home.

This particular bill focuses on military leave to support our Canadian Armed Forces—who couldn't support that—information requirements and mass layoff requirements.

Secondly, it introduces legislative amendments to protect vulnerable workers by making sure they are safe, protected and treated fairly. This includes:

- presumptive coverage;
 - Occupational Health and Safety Act fines;
 - hygiene on construction sites;
 - PPE, personal protective equipment, in construction;
- and
- fines for holding passports.

Thirdly, this proposed legislation seeks to build a competitive labour market by increasing the labour supply and attracting new workers to Ontario, which we so sorely need. It will develop a grade 10 skilled trades pathway, improve the Ontario Works job pathway and advanced credential recognition.

The proposed change in government will support communities and the workers in my riding of Oakville and across Ontario for generations to come so that they can find rewarding careers.

Our government has been getting down to work to ensure that talent remains and thrives within our great province.

As our province witnessed under the previous Liberal government, there were hundreds of thousands of jobs leaving this province. We know the condition of the province under their leadership: Businesses left, and investments were diverted to other jurisdictions. The province's economic growth was lagging behind other provinces. Ontario, for many years, was not the economic engine of Canada. This was unacceptable to Ontarians who needed jobs to support themselves and their families.

Speaker, jobs are returning to the province now in droves because of the investments and policies introduced by our government. For instance, the manufacturing sector is growing. This is in part because of provincial funding to build a domestic supply chain for electric vehicles. Oakville, my community, is a key municipality in the domestic supply chain. Our government provided \$295 million to retool the Ford assembly complex for electric vehicle production, securing 3,000 direct jobs and countless indirect jobs. Just yesterday, we had an announcement in my riding of Oakville with the Premier and Minister of Finance and Minister of Economic Development initiating a manufacturing tax credit, which will further help manufacturers in this province—small and mid-sized private manufacturers—to be able to buy new equipment so they can produce more goods more efficiently and faster. And I can tell you, the support we saw yesterday from the employees, from the workers, from management was incredible.

Speaker, Ontarians want jobs, and our government is creating the right economic conditions. That is absolutely critical to create the proper environment for business to flourish. It's essential to note that we are fortifying worker protections with this job growth, as well. They go hand in hand.

Last year, the Working for Workers Act, 2022, was carried in this Legislature. This bill increased fines for employers who do not comply with health and safety laws

to ensure their workers are protected. It established foundational rights and protections for digital platform workers, such as rideshare and delivery drivers, ensuring they are paid a fair wage and have their disputes resolved in Ontario. It also worked to address Ontario's historic labour shortage by allowing out-of-province workers to register in their profession or trade within 30 days, helping them find jobs faster and contributing to our province's economic growth.

I was proud to speak in favour of that legislation, just as right now I am proud to speak in favour of this third Working for Workers legislation. Improving labour conditions creates a workforce that benefits employers and the general economy. I believe every member of this Legislature can support this proposed legislation. The Working for Workers acts in 2021 and 2022 have already provided millions of Ontarians with the protections they deserve. These new changes will continue to ensure that Ontario workers are protected and supported in every aspect of their work.

First and foremost, our government recognizes that vulnerable and migrant workers are often at the most risk for exploitation in the workforce. That's why we're establishing the highest maximum fines in Canada for businesses and individuals who are convicted of withholding a foreign national's passport or work permit. With fines of up to \$200,000 per passport withheld, offenders will face significant consequences for their illegal actions. For individuals convicted, the fine could be up to \$500,000 and corporations found liable could face up to \$1 million in fines. These penalties will ensure that businesses and individuals who attempt to exploit vulnerable workers will be held accountable for their actions.

0940

We are also proposing amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that will increase the maximum fine for corporations convicted of an offence, from \$1.5 million to \$2 million. This increase will give Ontario the highest maximum corporate fine under workplace health and safety legislation in Canada. It's essential that corporations understand the importance of workplace safety and take the necessary steps—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member for Oakville. However, pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Please continue the debate, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Oakville for debate.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

As I was saying, it's essential that corporations understand the importance of workplace safety and take the necessary step to protect employees. With this new legislation, we are sending a strong message that we will not tolerate corporations that put their workers' safety at risk.

Furthermore, we recognize the importance of protecting workers during times of mass terminations, especially in the age of remote work. That's why we are proposing changes to protect workers during mass terminations and, on the other hand, expand the reasons reservists can take military leave.

We are also proposing amendments to require women's-only washrooms on construction sites and to expand cancer coverage for firefighters. These changes reflect our government's commitment to ensuring that all workers are protected at their workplace regardless of their situation or job.

The Working for Workers Act, 2023, builds on the groundbreaking actions we took in the previous legislation, in 2021 and 2022. These previous pieces of legislation have already provided important protections for Ontario workers, and we are proud to continue building on that. We believe that Ontario should be a province where hard work pays off and big dreams can come true, and we will continue to use every tool in our tool box to ensure that that's the case.

The Working for Workers Act, 2023, represents a significant step forward in protecting Ontario workers. By establishing the highest maximum fines in Canada for those who exploit vulnerable workers, by increasing the maximum fine for corporations convicted of OHSA offences and proposing important changes to protecting workers during mass terminations as well as expanding cancer coverage for firefighters, we are ensuring every worker in Ontario is supported and protected. Our government is committed to building a province where everyone can work safely, thrive and succeed.

It's an honour to speak on a matter of great importance to the people of Ontario and my riding of Oakville. As many of us know, our province is currently facing an historic labour shortage, with over 300,000 jobs going unfilled across the province, costing us billions of dollars in lost productivity. The issue has become more pressing as our province's population continues to grow, and we need to train more skilled workers to fill in-demand jobs. However, I'm pleased to inform the House that our government is taking proactive steps to tackle this challenge and help more people enter rewarding careers in the skilled trades.

We are investing \$224 million in a new capital stream of the Skills Development Fund to support innovative training projects focused on building and modernizing the infrastructure Ontario needs to train workers to fill in-demand jobs and lead purpose-driven careers. This investment is part of our broader commitment to support the growth and development of the skilled trades in our province. The new SDF capital stream, launching in late spring, 2023, will help eligible training providers, including unions, to renovate, retrofit, repair and expand existing

training centres or help them construct new training facilities. This initiative will complement the existing Skills Development Fund that launched in 2021, which has already helped launch 388 projects, assisting almost 400,000 people across the province in taking the next step in their career.

Furthermore, to address the immediate needs of the labour market, our government is investing an additional \$75 million over the next three years to support the operations and programming at new and existing centres to prepare workers for in-demand careers such as electricians, welders and mechanics.

As we build Ontario, we are providing more women and men with opportunities to begin or advance their careers in the skilled trades. We are working hand in hand with labour unions, with business groups, colleges and universities to train the skilled workforce that will build the roads, highways, houses, public transit, hospitals, infrastructure and schools that our economy and province needs. It's all hands on deck, Speaker.

Applications for the new SDF capital stream are expected to open in late spring, providing eligible applicants, including unions, Indigenous centres, businesses and industry associations, with funding to build the new training centres or to upgrade or convert their existing facilities into training centres with state-of-the-art design and technology. This includes facility renovations, retrofits, expansions, repairs and building construction.

I am proud to inform this House that we have received support from private sector unions, employers and training providers on this particular initiative. The International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793 and the Operating Engineers Training Institute of Ontario, from my riding of Oakville, commend Minister McNaughton's commitment to advancing the skilled trades.

Skilled trade workers are at the front line of our economic recovery, with unions and businesses playing a crucial role in training our next generation of workers through apprenticeship programs. Financially supporting training institutes will help attract more people to the skilled trades, better prepare them for good-paying jobs and address market demand.

Ontario's 2023 budget will be released today, and will detail the government's responsible and targeted approach to support people and businesses while laying a strong foundation for future generations. Our investment in the skilled trades is just one example of how we are building a strong, resilient and prosperous province.

Speaker, our government is ready to take bold, decisive action in order to do what is best for Ontarians. That's why the measures we are proposing first and foremost are worker-focused. After speaking with many businesses, unions and workers in my riding, I fully support this bill and want to ensure that it is passed, and I certainly hope the opposition will support us in this legislation.

Our government is proud that Ontario is a destination for many newcomers who have come to Canada in search of greater economic opportunity for themselves and their families. My community of Oakville has hosted thousands

of Ukrainian newcomers, providing them with stable living and a new opportunity in their life, many of whom are highly educated, motivated and want to contribute to the success of our great province. We have welcomed them with open arms and support as a government and a country.

Newcomers create businesses in our communities, fill much-needed roles in our society and spark our entrepreneurial spirit, and they actually account now for up to 33% of Ontario's labour force. In 2016, only one quarter of internationally trained immigrants in regulated professions were working in a job that matched their level of qualification. And most recently, about 300,000 jobs were going unfilled across the province, costing billions in lost output. This is an issue when international professionals, scientists and engineers and workers, come and are invited to our country to share their expertise and contribute to our economy, and it's unfortunate they're trapped in jobs that do not utilize their skill and talent.

I have met with constituents that have 20 years experience in the engineering industry, with experience in teaching, in research. These people are internationally skilled and want to make our country a better country—safer, renewably sustainable—and they've been cut from that opportunity because of red tape. To create a clear path for them and to fully apply their skills, the Ontario government intends to propose changes that would, if passed, help remove barriers for those newcomers to get licensed and find jobs that match their qualifications and skills. That will be good for the workers, for the newcomers, for industry and for our province as a whole. Removing these barriers will help more newcomers find jobs and boost our economy so they can support their families.

0950

Reducing immigrant unemployment and helping them find good jobs could actually increase Ontario's GDP by \$12 billion to \$20 billion in each of the next five years. That will help us have the money to be able to fund the infrastructure that we so sorely need in this province, whether it's hospitals, highways, public transit. Our changes, if passed, would build on the work the province is already doing to help skilled, internationally trained immigrants find work in their field of expertise.

The Ontario government is investing \$68 million to help internationally trained immigrants access programs designed to bridge their experience with the needs of employers in their community. This would impact 23 trades and 14 professions such as lawyers, engineers, architects, plumbers, electricians, accountants, hair stylists, teachers and early childhood educators: an extremely diverse group of individuals.

I want to emphasize that the investment in the skilled trades is absolutely critical to the well-being of our province. It will create more opportunities for Ontarians to receive training and find rewarding careers while also supporting the growth of our economy. There is no doubt with the largest investment in Ontario's history in infrastructure, including the largest public transit investment in the history of Ontario, building new roads and

highways across the province so businesses can get goods to their markets quicker, so families can see their family members after a day of work quicker, spend less time driving their kids to soccer practice or hockey practice—these are all essential to make the lives of Ontarians better, to give quality time back to families, to give quality time back to businesses, making our province more efficient and allowing better-quality family time.

But with that, we need skilled workers. It's a problem we have in this province. It's a good problem, but it's a problem. We need the opposition's support to be part of team Ontario, to say, "Yes, we're going to bring people into this province. We're going to match their qualifications with the skills and qualifications that they have learned from other countries. We're going to work with our partners in the private sector, with labour unions, with training providers to address this once-in-a-generation labour shortage and build a brighter future for all Ontarians."

I am very confident that our government is improving the conditions, setting the right environment to lead this country back in economic growth, and at the same time, protecting workers and attracting new people to the province of Ontario to have a better life.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I was glad to listen to the member opposite talk about Working for Workers. Toward the end of his remarks, he was painting a picture of what it is like for workers to want to come home at the end of the day and get to where they want to go and spend time with their families. I'm glad that the government is thinking about what life is really like for workers, because one of the things that is happening is—albeit it's a flawed program—the COVID-19 Worker Income Protection Benefit, only three days. We've got concerns with it in the first place, but it ends on the 31st, and then there's going to be nothing. Right now, we're hearing from workers that they want to be able to take time to get well, that they don't want to go to work sick. There's nothing in this bill.

Why won't this government support 10 paid sick days, any paid sick days? Why won't they support workers as they do their best to stay healthy and well with their families?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. I should point out that with the difficult situation we've been through with COVID, which was obviously a worldwide pandemic, Ontario actually led the way in Canada and was the first to legislate COVID-19 paid sick days. That's a fact. I don't think that's debatable. We were the first province here to do that. Our COVID-19 Putting Workers First Act—which, I will add, passed unanimously—gave workers flexible paid sick days, no sick notes needed. And we were also the first to introduce unlimited job-protected leave so that nobody had to choose between a job and their health.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, I'm relatively new to this House and I will admit that I'm oftentimes perplexed by

some of the presentations made in the House. A little while ago, we heard the member from Niagara Falls speaking about the things that are not in this bill. And in that, I always thought that as we presented speeches here, we were supposed to speak to the items that are in the bill. So I really appreciate the member from Oakville for speaking to the items that are in the bill.

But I would like to ask the member from Oakville, if I could, what else has this government done to provide services and support to the workers here in Ontario?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. It's great to have you in the House. And you are correct: When we are in the Legislature, we are supposed to speak to what is in the bill because any bill is not going to have lots of things in it; that's the nature of what we do here.

But having said that, our government is committed to workers. We're committed to a strong economy. We have one of the fastest-growing economies in North America. We are a government that's committed to workers, and the best thing we can do for a worker is give them a job. We are short labour in the province right now because we've helped create that environment that's attracting investments back into the province of Ontario. After 10, 15 years of a very dark time when manufacturing literally fled, it is coming back to the province. I can tell you, in my own riding, we have Ford of Canada that's going to be staying here for decades to come. They were on the verge of leaving and going to Mexico. And we, of course, had the big announcement last week with Volkswagen near London, Ontario. These are huge investments in the province and a commitment that people are showing in our province—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would love to be able to talk about presumptive legislation for firefighters, but it's not in the bill. I, too, would love to talk about women needing to be supported with things as small as having a washroom on their work site when they work in a construction site, but it's not in the bill.

But I also want the government to really think about homemakers. They are not in this bill. They are not covered by the labour laws. This is such a small step. Homemakers are hired by all sorts of for-profit home care agencies who know full well that they are not covered by the labour laws, so they abuse these women day in and day out. Bring them under the labour laws. We have a labour bill right here, right now. How hard would it be to say that homemakers will be covered by the labour laws?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. Again, this legislation—sometimes perhaps the opposition moves to other aspects because they can't find anything negative in the legislation, maybe. I think that's probably the reason they go and deflect onto other things. I get it: As opposition perhaps you have a job to certainly critique government. But at the end of the day, if there's good legislation, let's show we're team Ontario. Be a part of what we're doing in this great province: attracting

investment, jobs. Let's take the partisanship out of it and come together, at least on some issues which are non-partisan.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I appreciate the presentation from the member from Oakville. There's a lot that speaks to me in this bill, having worked in various construction industrial sites. And the one that will come back to haunt me, thanks to Google, is the matter of construction—personal protective equipment. There's only a limited number of sizes for vests, for hard hats, for work boots, and sometimes it just doesn't seem right. You're not getting the best-fitting equipment. I'm wondering if you could elaborate a bit on the proposed PPE changes that are present that help keep women and men with diverse body types, certainly like mine, safe on work sites.

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Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from Windsor. You are absolutely correct that, traditionally, a lot of these construction and even skilled trades have been male-dominated. That's changing, but in order to encourage more trades, we need to reach out to people. We need to reach out to women. We need to reach out to people who come in different shapes and sizes. You're absolutely correct: Not all PPE, not all construction helmets, fit certain people, so I think by broadening what we are doing, it will allow more people to come into the trades.

We've certainly had great feedback. I can tell you that Victoria Mancinelli from LIUNA is absolutely thrilled that we're also bringing women's washrooms to large construction sites. About 10% of construction workers today are women. We need to ensure that they have a safe environment where a simple thing—I know it sounds simple—like just going to the bathroom in a safe environment makes them feel more comfortable.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to ask a question to the member from Oakville, because he did raise the Oakville plant—which isn't in the bill, by the way—and just did it again. But let's be clear on what happened in the auto industry: The auto industry, including the Oakville Ford plant, was saved by that bargaining committee. It was the bargaining committee that went to the bargaining table.

It was Premier Ford, very clearly, who said that ship had sailed in Oshawa. Very clearly, he said that. Also, when they laid off 1,000 workers in the Windsor plant under Local 444 and the president tried to call, they wouldn't return his call for a year.

I want to be clear to everybody in this room: It was Unifor and that bargaining committee and those incredible workers, who produce some of the best products in the industrialized world—as a matter of fact, I think the Canadian auto worker is the best in the world—and who saved those plants.

My question to you is: Can you just say thank you to the unionized auto workers on the bargaining team?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I will agree and disagree with the member opposite. I will agree with you that the Unifor workers in Oakville played an important role in keeping the Ford plant in Oakville. I will agree with you and I will clap my hands for those great workers who worked collaboratively—yes, I will.

I will, however, also congratulate the Ford Motor Co. of Canada and Ford North America. I will also congratulate Premier Ford and Minister Vic Fedeli for the great work they did in ensuring that not only is Ford staying here, but we've got new plants being built in Windsor and St. Thomas. We are attracting more auto investments than you can imagine. It's team Ontario. It's a team effort.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we do not have time for further questions, but we have time for further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the people I represent in London West to participate in the debate on Bill 79, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters. We've heard from the government that this is their third iteration of their efforts to work for workers, and I can tell you that workers in this province view the government's working for workers efforts as falling far short of what workers actually need. It has been interesting throughout this debate to observe this disconnect between what is actually in this bill, Bill 79, and what the government is talking about when they refer to this bill.

This bill has seven schedules. It amends a number of different pieces of legislation that already are in place. Schedule 1 deals with the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act. This schedule increases the fines for employers who employ foreign nationals and take away their passports or work permit. Speaker, that is something that is desperately needed. We know that migrant workers, foreign national workers, are very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by employers. They're very vulnerable. We saw during the pandemic how vulnerable they were to COVID because of the working conditions they were facing.

Now what is not in this bill—while it talks about the increased fines, there are no details as to how enforcement is going to take place. How are we going to hold these employers accountable?

There's no details about whether there are going to be proactive inspections of workplaces that employ foreign nationals. There's no details about whether the ministry simply intends to create a new helpline for foreign nationals to call if they have been exploited by their employers. There's no details about how migrant workers will find out their new protections with these increased fines. There's no details about whether information will be available in multiple languages for migrant workers, and we know they come from many different countries around the world. There's no details about the protections that would be available for foreign nationals, for migrant workers from reprisal if they report an employer. So those are the kinds of details that are missing from schedule 1.

But the most glaring omissions from this act—the details that we see nowhere in the legislation before us—are the things that the government is highlighting from this bill.

Schedule 5 of this bill talks about the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Again, it increases maximum fines for corporations that are convicted under the act, and yes, as in schedule 1, we need an increase in maximum fines to create effective deterrents to employers for contravening their legislative obligations to keep workers safe on the job. But what we don't see in schedule 5 is any mention whatsoever of the addition of pancreatic and thyroid cancers as presumptive occupational illnesses for fire-fighters. Despite the government's continued references to that being part of this bill, it actually does not appear in the legislation before us.

The other thing that is nowhere in this legislation is any mention of clean, gender-based bathrooms on construction work sites, which is what we have heard many times repeated by this government, that this legislation is going to make sure that women on job sites will have access to washrooms that are clean and decent. That is definitely something that is needed on job sites throughout this province. It is something that I think will help get more women into occupations that are male-dominated. It would be great to see this in this legislation, but it's not here—it's not here.

If this government is planning to pursue these measures through regulation, that would be important for people in this province, but the problem with regulation, of course, Speaker, is that it doesn't have the same kind of accountability and due diligence that legislation has. There's nothing that would have prevented this government from introducing the measures in the bill rather than through regulation. But even then we will wait to see if these regulations materialize, and we will wait to see if they actually do what this government has been talking about doing.

Schedule 2 of bill deals with the Employment Standards Act. Now this schedule does not increase fines for contravention of the Employment Standards Act, which would have been something that is desperately needed. We know that, for decades in the province, wage theft has been an ongoing and unresolved problem that workers experience in Ontario—that is employers who withhold money from workers, who don't pay them what they are entitled to under the Employment Standards Act, who don't pay vacation pay, who don't even pay minimum wage sometimes. They pay them under the table to avoid the accountability that is in the legislation. Currently, what employees must do if they experience wage theft from their employer is make a complaint to the Ministry of Labour and wait for the results of an investigation. All too often, they wait months for the investigation to start. Many times, the investigation results in an order against the employer to repay those stolen wages to the employee, and that order is not enforced. In fact, we know that only one third of employers will repay the wages that are stolen from their employees in this province once they are

notified that a complaint has been made. So two thirds of employees whose wages and benefits are stolen by their employer do not see the money that they are owed. This has been an ongoing problem in this province.

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I want to share a couple of experiences of workers who have faced wage theft.

Helena Borody worked for three months without wages and then was fired without notice. She went to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Labour slapped her former boss with a \$4,800 order to pay. A year and a half later, no payment was received. Helena Borody said that going to the Ministry of Labour was a useless exercise because the Ministry of Labour did nothing to help enforce her rights and to help get that money that she was owed back from the employer.

In this Legislature, a couple of years ago, I shared some other experiences.

Isabelle Faure had an employer who was ordered to pay her \$5,000 in back wages. The Ministry of Labour made that order to the employer, but nothing happened. Isabelle was unable to get those back wages paid. She said that she had no way of knowing that the Ministry of Labour would do essentially nothing to enforce its own regulations, and she has yet to receive her money.

Another employee in this province, Juan Jose Lira Cervantes, was owed more than \$25,000 in lost wages and benefits. He went to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Labour made an order against his employer, Domino's Pizza, and the bill has never been paid. He has not been able to collect on those lost wages and benefits that were withheld by his employer. That is because of gaping loopholes in the Employment Standards Act that allow employers to get away with wage theft on a regular basis in Ontario. It's because of inadequate fines in the Employment Standards Act to make sure that there is an effective deterrent for employers to steal the wages of their employees—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member. We are out of time for debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY THUNDERWOLVES MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thunder Bay has a strong hockey community with no fewer than seven players currently in the NHL coming from our great city and region. In fact, Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario have produced the highest number of NHL players per capita than any other city. But, today, I'd like to speak to you about the Lakehead University Thunderwolves hockey team. The Thunderwolves had an outstanding season this year, capturing their first OUA West Division crown since

2008. This was a major achievement for the team, and they should be commended for their hard work and dedication.

It's important to recognize the individual achievements of the team as well. Head coach, Andrew Wilkins, was named OUA West Coach of the Year, while defenseman Josh Van Unen was awarded OUA West Rookie of the Year. Defenseman Troy Williams was also recognized for his contributions to equity, diversity and inclusion within the team. In addition, forward Spencer Blackwell earned an OUA West Division First-Team All-Star team nod, and defenseman Kyle Auger received an OUA West Division Second-Team All-Star team nod. As well, Josh Van Unen and goaltender Christian Cicigoi were named to the OUA West Division all-rookie team.

In conclusion, the Lakehead Thunderwolves hockey team had a fantastic season, and their achievements are a testament to their hard work and dedication. I congratulate them on their success, and I will look forward to seeing what they will accomplish in the future.

TROUBLEMAKER RADIO PODCAST

Mr. Joel Harden: I rise this morning to give this House good news: Troublemaker Radio is back. What is Troublemaker Radio? Troublemaker Radio is a podcast we started up in our MPP office to lift up and spotlight the hard work of community organizers who sometimes have to ruffle a few feathers to get some things done. It is inspired by the great American politician Representative John Lewis, who once said, "Do not get lost in the sea of despair. Be hopeful. Be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month or a year; it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

President Biden is in our country. I wish him well, and I wish him all the best in his meetings with the Prime Minister. But when I think about the great legacy of our friends and neighbours in the United States, I think of John Lewis, who we lost in 2020.

And I'm excited to tell this House that our first episode of Troublemaker Radio that we're going to be bringing back is going to feature someone who is going to make a lot of great trouble in this place, Sarah Jama, someone who is going to roll into this place next Monday and is going to give us the kind of spirit from the great city of Hamilton we so desperately need in this place, give us that optimism, give us that courage to fight for social justice.

I am so glad to feature a conversation with Sarah Jama on Troublemaker Radio. I invite all members of the House to tune in, because we have a lot to learn from her, and we have a lot to learn from each other. If you have ideas on what we should put on the podcast, shoot me an email. We can't wait to talk to you.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's an honour to rise in the Legislature today. Before I get into my member's

statement, I would like to wish all those people celebrating the beginning of Ramadan a Ramadan Mubarak.

We have taken concrete action to support workers in this province. We've had recent legislation that has increased the fines for employers who do not comply with health and safety laws. We've established foundational rights and protections for digital platform workers such as rideshare and delivery workers. We are also addressing Ontario's historic labour shortage by allowing out-of-province workers to register in their profession or trade within 30 days, helping them find good jobs faster.

Our government is committed to continuing this work and improving the employment experience for all workers. Just on Tuesday this week, our government announced it is tackling the province's labour shortage and getting more people into rewarding careers in the skilled trades.

In my town of Oakville, we are proud to be home to two great labour organizations, the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793, led by Mike Gallagher, and we're also fortunate to have the Labourers' International Union of North America, also known as LIUNA, led by Joseph Mancinelli, who is the international vice-president and regional manager of central and eastern Canada. I want to take this time to acknowledge and thank them for their critical role in building Ontario's infrastructure. We're proud to have you based in Oakville.

To all the workers here in Ontario, thank you for contributing to the work of Ontario.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Twenty years ago, I arrived in Toronto with my family, like so many immigrants before us, searching for a better life. We started to rebuild our lives, and the city services were there to help us along the way. I used to spend hours at the Parkdale library, working on my university applications. As a young woman, I felt safe on public transit, exploring all that the city had to offer. I fell in love with Toronto. It was a place full of optimism, potential and promise.

1020

Over the years, I've seen the city's spark slowly fade away. The decline is hard to ignore. We have big issues to tackle, like affordable housing, reliable transit, the climate emergency and a new deal on city finances. But the city must also be able to deliver basic services properly. Right now, walk out the door and there's garbage everywhere, overflowing and broken bins. Winter comes every year, and we still haven't figured out proper snow clearing. Homelessness has spiked, with more and more unhoused people seeking refuge on the TTC because there isn't space in the shelter. There are potholes on every street. The limited recreation programs for kids are getting even fewer. Basic things aren't being delivered properly.

We've all been worn down by the last 12 years. It's time to turn the corner. We cannot be a world-class city without first getting the basic things right. To my fellow Torontonians: A mayoral by-election is upon us. We have an

opportunity here. Let's get the basics right. Let's demand it.

U13A CORNWALL TYPHOONS GIRLS' HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to congratulate the U13A Cornwall Typhoons girls' hockey team on winning the 2023 Good Deeds Cup by Chevrolet Canada. The official announcement was made by Hockey Night in Canada host Ron MacLean Saturday night.

The Good Deeds Cup is a challenge for minor hockey teams across Canada to take the values they learn on the ice—determination, leadership and teamwork—and use them to support their communities off the ice.

I want to acknowledge and congratulate the players: Anneke, Makya, Hailey, Charlotte, Mya, Annabella, Mackenzie, Leightyn, Teagan, Abygail, Sarah, Lexi, Olyvia, Embry, Jane, Sloane and Lilli, as well as their coaches, trainers, managers and the parents for their efforts in supporting and inspiring our community.

With over 300 good deeds performed, the team won the grand prize of \$100,000 to donate to a charity. The Typhoons chose the Beyond 21 Foundation in Cornwall, who do important work. Beyond 21 helps adults with developmental disabilities identify their dreams and empowering them to learn the skills and build the connections they need to achieve them.

Once again, congratulations to the U13A Cornwall Typhoons girls' hockey team. You have certainly made a big difference in the lives of many in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, everyone in London recognizes the homelessness crisis, and understands the dire need to ensure unhoused, marginalized Londoners have supports to rebuild their lives and finally be safe. More than 200 people have died on London's streets in the past three years. No one among us should be able to turn and look away from human suffering and preventable tragedy.

In response to this mounting crisis, London city council engaged a broad spectrum of Londoners in their Health and Homelessness Summits. They created a collaborative plan known as the Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response, which will create 24/7 community hubs with on-site care, as well as build the desperately needed 100 supportive housing units this year and 600 in total.

London leaders have stepped up. After an historic \$25 million gift by an anonymous London family, millions more have been donated by London's amazing business and community leaders who have rallied to join the fight. The Health and Homelessness Fund for Change, fundforchange.ca, is administered by the London Community Foundation. The need is there. Community support is there and engagement is there.

London is a leader, Speaker, but we can't do it alone. The province now has a chance to stand with London and support this noble and worthy cause. I echo the calls of community leaders, experts, local organizations and city council. I encourage the province to provide emergency homelessness funding to London in the 2023 budget.

LEGO WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY POLITICS

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Local politics in Windsor-Essex was turned on its head this month. The revelation, you ask? The new Lego Windsor and Essex Politics page on Instagram. Riley Richard, the page's creator, depicts local political leaders from across our region in all of their four-centimetre yellow mini-figure glory.

Riley's mission: to reverse declining voter engagement through creativity and positivity in politics.

Riley's many human skills shine through in his work—his graphic design, his knowledge of history and his knack for noticing detail, right down to our hair. If our Legislature is destined to have young Ontarians like Riley sitting here in these very seats in the future, we can truly be optimistic for a bright number of years ahead. I encourage all Ontarians to visit @legowindsorpoli on Instagram to see Riley's handiwork in action.

Riley, on behalf of all of us here at the Ontario Legislature, thank you so, so much for being part of the solution.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Hsu: In 2018, this Premier and his Conservatives promised to cut hydro rates by 12%. Rates went up. A couple of years later, the Premier reimagined his promise. Rates still went up. Now the government is spending \$6 billion a year—an enormous chunk of the budget, about as much as it spends on long-term care—to hide the cost of electricity.

Are you worried about housing, cost of living, health care or education? Here's the truth: This government's hydro shell game doesn't help. If we build new hydro-electric, nuclear or natural gas plants, it will cost more than what we pay on our hydro bills—

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I can see I'm upsetting the government members here because I'm telling the truth.

What we need is electricity that really costs less. Conservation is still the cheapest way to go. Solar and wind with storage have become comparable to other sources of power, and continue to get cheaper. You can rely on both of these to avoid price spikes from overseas turmoil. There has been no long-term energy plan since before the Conservative government. Six years later and all we have is an election cycle plan.

The economy is a big ship. Household budgets, taken together, are a big ship. We need a plan. We can't change the subsidy by a lot all of a sudden. But future electricity usage is sensitive to plans for housing, transportation,

industrial strategy, so the plan can't be delegated to the IESO. It has to be done—

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

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2023

Mr. Rob Flack: It may be budget day, but it's hockey day every day in this country, and based on my member's statement, that's what I want to talk about today. It is my pleasure to rise in this House today to share an exciting opportunity for the community of West Lorne, which is on the western edge of my riding in Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Impressively, Speaker, West Lorne is the only Ontario finalist for the Kraft Hockeyville competition. This is a Canadian competition, with West Lorne, again, being the only community representing our province with promise and pride. The winning community will get to host a future NHL game and receive \$250,000 to upgrade their arena.

West Lorne's arena dressing rooms are too small and—get this—of late, it's often difficult to keep their ice frozen. Just imagine a growing and thriving community in Canada with a faulty ice rink.

Over the past 17 years, Kraft Hockeyville has proudly awarded \$4.5 million to 93 communities throughout Canada, and we thank them for their hometown support. Voting for this competition opens on March 31 at 9 a.m. and closes on April 1 at 5 p.m. I sincerely ask and encourage all members of this Legislature and those watching from home to support our small-town southwestern Ontario community of West Lorne. For more details on how to vote, you can google “Kraft Hockeyville.”

SCHULICH BUILDERS SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Lorne Coe: Durham College in my riding is partnering with the Schulich Foundation, who recently announced a game-changing program, Schulich Builders, a scholarship program dedicated to students pursuing a career in the skilled trades. In its first year of operation, more than \$3 million is committed to combat labour shortages and to highlight the importance of the skilled trades, with \$300,000 going directly to Durham College students.

Don Lovisa, the president of Durham College, says that with these scholarships, they will continue to lead the way by developing knowledgeable and experienced skilled trades graduates, able to step into rewarding careers that can make a difference in Durham communities.

I'm proud to promote the skilled trades and support Durham region students pursuing their rewarding career path in the skilled trades.

1030

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Will Bouma: I would love to welcome to our House the delegation from the Serbian Orthodox Church,

His Grace Bishop Mitrofan from the Serbian Orthodox Church Canada and Father Jovan from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Thank you for coming today.

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, I am very proud to say thank you for watching question period today to my absolute favourite friend from Nova Scotia, Pat Roscoe. Happy birthday. This is my wife's mom. It's great you're watching, Pat.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: She's not going to like this, but I'm extremely proud to introduce and welcome to Queen's Park today my daughter, Addison, who was up at the crack of dawn to go to the mutual insurance prayer breakfast with me. Addison is in her fourth year of university at Mac and will someday be one of Ontario's front-line health care heroes.

Mr. Mike Harris: Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me, I have a couple of introductions today. I want to say a big congratulations to page Felicity, from my riding, who is page captain today. Her mother, Leslie Toews, is here as well.

I also wanted to give a warm welcome: Former member of Parliament for Nipissing, Jay Aspin, is here as well.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It must be bring your daughter to work day, because I am also proud to introduce my daughter Mira Pasma-Helleman, who is missing out on a day of school today to join Mom for a day of civic education instead.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I would like to welcome to the Legislature, in the members' gallery, Lucas and Lily Howe, who are here with their parents, Brendan and Jessica. I understand that Lucas was here before on a class trip before the March break, and he enjoyed it so much he couldn't wait to bring back the entire family. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my great pleasure to welcome to the House the University of Toronto New Democrats: Jake Barton, Emma Hartviksen, Samuel Leach Jarrett, Chaitri Shah, Nicole Ling and Sarah Pittimen. Let's give them a round of applause.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I, too, would like to welcome a dear friend of mine, Jay Aspin, the former Nipissing MP, the long-time member of the Near North District School Board and former chair of that board as well and current Ontario Health board member.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the House a resident of my riding, Sophia Burkitt, who is the proud mother of page Morgan Burkitt.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Please welcome to the Legislature of Ontario Renée Beaulne, who is the mother of our page Cole.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's not very often we have people from Nickel Belt coming down to Toronto, so I'm really pleased to see Samuel Leach Jarrett, who is from Nickel Belt, at Queen's Park today. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I just want to wish my fiancée a happy birthday. It's her birthday on Saturday. Happy birthday, Meghan.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I, too, want to give a very warm welcome to University of Toronto NDP and a

special shout-out to Parkdale–High Park's star campaigner and volunteer, Emma Hartviksen.

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, I see you clearly saved the coolest member for last. Thank you for that. I'd like to introduce the family of page captain Evelyn Yeung, visiting in the Legislature today: Paul Yeung, Isabella Szeto and Margaret Szeto. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Today is my mom's birthday. I want to wish her a very happy birthday. Thank you for creating a generation of strong women. Enjoy the sun—she's in Jamaica, making us all feel jealous. Happy birthday.

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, March 27, 2023, for the proceedings of orders of the day.

QUESTION PERIOD

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. The lack of transparency in the finances of this province are becoming increasingly concerning. Fortunately, we have the FAO, who tracks actual spending against government announcements. The FAO has said, "Ontario's Conservative government is not being transparent about how it plans to spend money over the next several years."

"The government's current spending plan contains \$40 billion in program funding shortfalls over six years, though it also contains \$44 billion in unallocated contingency funds."

"The contingencies could be used to address those shortfalls but it is an unusual way of budgeting," he said. He also points out, "What we haven't seen is this level of shortfall, but we haven't seen this size of the contingency fund before."

Speaker, this budgeting practice is irresponsible when there are such pressing issues in this province on health care, on education, on housing. Will budget 2023 actually focus on the real priorities of Ontario?

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. I'll tell you, we as a government are so excited today. Today is budget day. It's a big day in the province of Ontario. And while we can't get into the specifics of the budget—we'll be announcing that at 4 o'clock—what I can tell you is that we are going to continue to move ahead in this province with investments in hospitals, with investments in infrastructure, with investments in public transit,

with investments in highways to get people to and from home quicker and safer.

I will also add that, with respect to the underspend question that you mentioned, the member opposite is a member of public accounts. Take a look at the public accounts numbers. Those are the actual facts as to what we spend every single year. You'll see that we are spending more than any government in the history of Ontario on the investments you just touched on.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: One area that didn't receive the budgeted amount promised was municipal infrastructure. Now, we all know that because of Bill 23, municipalities are struggling to complete and fulfill housing development plans because of infrastructure deficits. Bill 23 is a piece of legislation that removes the development charges for cities and towns, thus creating barriers for housing. This also caught Ontario's 444 municipalities by surprise.

In fact, this is what the AMO president said: "In 125 years, it's the biggest affront to Ontario's municipalities that I've ever seen." You are clearly not very respectful of our municipal partners.

Will budget 2023 make municipalities whole, as the minister has promised, so that they can address the homelessness crisis that this government won't even acknowledge exists?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: What this member is hiding from Ontarians is the fact that her party stands shoulder to shoulder—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on his language.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the caution.

They are standing in favour of fees and charges that represent, in some municipalities, \$150,000 on the price of a new home. If you don't think that that's a factor, listen to CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.: "Government charges can represent more than 20% of the cost of building a home in major Canadian cities."

We believe that affordable housing, attainable housing and non-profit housing should be incented, and that's exactly what Bill 23 does.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: AMO ED Brian Rosborough has said that in rural communities people are "living in seasonal trailer parks and encampments in woods."

There are encampments in Greater Sudbury, in Waterloo region and in Peterborough, among other communities. Ontario spends \$2,000 less per person on services and programs than the average province across Canada. AMO has said that Bill 23 is "undermining the financial capacity of municipalities to support growth."

1040

The simple question is, will budget 2023 reverse the damage you've done to municipalities? Will it assist municipalities with water, sewage, transit, parks, electricity

and waste infrastructure costs, which those development charges pay for, so that housing can actually be built in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: The one thing that we've learned this week in the House is that New Democrats stand shoulder to shoulder with taxing affordable housing, with making sure that housing is out of reach for too many Ontarians.

Our government will always stand with young families, with new Canadians, with people who want to realize the dream of home ownership. I believe that all three levels of government have a responsibility, not just the province of Ontario.

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. We're facing some extremely challenging times for the people of this province. Today's budget is an opportunity to address these challenges and provide the support Ontarians need.

My question is very simple, Speaker: Will this government take this opportunity that the budget provides and chart a new, hopeful course, one where the needs of everybody in this province—every single person—are met?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. Listen, we're excited by the budget today. We're excited that Minister Bethlenfalvy is going to announce, at 4 o'clock, what initiatives this government is going to undertake.

What I can tell you is in the past—that will give you a sense as to what our direction is going forward—what we've done is put the right critical investments in place to support those in need, whether it's those on ODSP or low-income seniors with GAINS support or the low-income tax credit, which was the largest tax credit in the history of Ontario for low-income families. More importantly, we need workers to work. We're going to make the right investments and create the right environment for business to flourish.

We had an announcement just in this past week. The Minister of Economic Development was down in London with the largest investment in Canadian history in electric vehicle manufacturing. This is the beginning of a manufacturing renaissance in Ontario, and we're going to continue on that path.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: The member mentioned ODSP. They'll need to do much better than what they did last time. People on ODSP are lining up at food banks; they're going homeless. So they'll need to do much better than what they did in the past.

Speaker, budgets are about priorities. Time and time again, this government has shown that it doesn't share the priorities of folks who aren't the insider friends of this government. A recent FAO report found that the Premier's

plan for health care falls \$21.3 billion short of the funding needed for hospitals, home care and long-term care. We have seen underinvestment in social services, education and infrastructure.

My question is, will budget 2023 reverse course and make up for the shortfalls this government has manufactured?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Again, thank you to the member opposite. As a government, we have nothing to reverse course on. Au contraire, we're going to move ahead with investments in infrastructure, with investments in public transit, with investments in highways and hospitals. I will add, as a member of public accounts, which gives a snapshot of what was actually spent, not projections of what may be spent at some certain point in time from the FAO, you'll see that we've had the largest investments in the history of Ontario in health care and transportation and infrastructure. So we'll continue on the same path.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, it's hard to trust this government and their budgets when they deliberately under-spent \$6.4 billion and diverted millions away from health care and education in last year's budget.

Groceries, gas and rent are through the roof. The people of this province deserve better. They deserve a government they can trust to follow through with their actual funding commitments. So this time my question is, will this government actually invest the money that they budget for in 2023?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Again, thanks to the member opposite. I think what the province needs is a more effective opposition because we are on track to deliver for the people of Ontario. We are on track to deliver the hospitals, the infrastructure, the jobs—economic growth we haven't seen in decades. We're bringing back manufacturing jobs. We had 300,000 jobs leave the province of Ontario in the decade and a half under the Liberal administration. Putting those workers into great high-paying jobs is going to pay the bills for our health care, our infrastructure, our education, and we're going to continue on that path.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.* Good morning. My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Last month, Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug wrote a letter to the minister about the ongoing historical trauma of his people due to the enforcement of provincial laws and policies on KI members. This includes the desecration of graves and the interference to our ways of life, such as confiscation of fishing nets and disturbing traplines.

Simple question: Has the minister responded to the chief's letter?

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the honourable member's question. Of course, we're always in a position to work with communities. I know the chief personally and I'm well aware of the positions that they take, particularly with respect to traplines. We'll ensure that we make an appropriate follow-up with Chief Donny Morris and try to understand better moving forward what kinds of opportunities he sees to make sure that his community and the quality of life of those members is realized.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Back to the minister: The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has no relationship with Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. One of the ways Ontario can build a real relationship is to spend time in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug.

Speaker, will the minister visit Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug to start addressing Ontario's historical harm to the people of KI?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Yes, I will be visiting Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. In fact, I think we're scheduled for mid-April. I look forward to that visit. It's a return home for me, having lived there for quite some time as a nurse, and I'll be happy to sit down and talk with an old friend who I stay in regular contact with, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to talk about opportunities—that's what we're going to do.

I realize that there are ongoing challenges and issues, but we're going up there to experience on behalf of another one of my ministerial counterparts, the historical opportunity for KI, and I look forward to talking about a host of other opportunities, staying positive and moving forward on opportunities for Indigenous communities in our Far North.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rob Flack: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. When our government was elected in 2018, Ontario was in no position to build the cars of the future. Jobs were fleeing the province to go south of the border. And in just a few short years, we've used all the tools in our tool box to rebuild our auto sector and establish a best-in-class auto and EV ecosystem.

Last week's announcement of Volkswagen's historic—and I would add generational—investment in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London reaffirms that our efforts have indeed paid off, which is why it's no surprise that this announcement has been celebrated far and wide.

Speaker, will the minister please share an overview of the reception and feedback our government has received over the last 10 days?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Firstly, thank you to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for the integral role he played in landing Volkswagen into his riding in St. Thomas.

And the member is correct. We landed an historic investment from Europe's largest automaker and it's

making headlines around the world: the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and, overseas, the Financial Times—all positive stories about Ontario's skilled workforce, clean energy, our EV ecosystem, critical minerals, all the things we wrote in our Driving Prosperity plan when we began this monumental turnaround of our auto sector and our move to lead the EV revolution.

1050

Speaker, the auto world now knows what Volkswagen saw, that Ontario has everything a company needs to be part of the EV future.

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

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you to the minister for his answer. It has indeed been an exciting week in my riding with the news that Volkswagen is coming to Elgin county. We've heard from lots of constituents, and this investment will have long-lasting benefits for generations—I repeat, generations—to come, with lots of new, good-paying, sustainable jobs to replace the hundreds of thousands of auto and manufacturing jobs that were chased out of this province by the previous government.

Speaker, will the minister please elaborate on how the turnaround of the auto sector occurred in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In 2019, Reuters revealed that car companies planned to spend \$300 billion globally, but none of that money was planned for Canada or Ontario. So we put our Driving Prosperity plan in place. It started with lowering the cost of doing business by \$7 billion each and every year. We met worldwide with companies looking to be part of the EV revolution and told them about Ontario's skilled workforce, our clean energy, our EV ecosystem, our critical minerals. Within 24 months, we attracted \$17 billion in EV auto investments in Ontario, and that's before the Volkswagen announcement.

This year, Bloomberg ranked Canada as second in their annual global battery supply chain, first in North America, ahead of the US. We went from zero investments to the global leader.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, we now know that this government's flawed paid sick days program will end on March 31 with nothing to replace it. Instead of fixing the flaws in the program, instead of increasing the days from three to 10, instead of making them annual and permanent and employer-paid, instead of making them available for all illnesses, not just COVID, this government is abandoning sick workers.

Why does this government believe that workers without paid sick days should be forced to give up their pay if they have to stay home when they are sick?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud that our government was the first in the country to bring in paid sick days during the pandemic. I'm also proud of the fact that we've been able to help 558,000 workers across the province.

Many provinces, as the member opposite knows, didn't bring in paid sick days.

But the other thing we should all be proud of is that we have one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, and that's because of our paid sick day program during COVID that supported workers to allow them to go out, take time off work and to get vaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, I'm now looking forward to being the first in all of North America, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to start working on our plan to bring in portable benefits, health and dental benefits, for millions of workers who don't have those benefits today.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, this week the Financial Accountability Officer reported that a record number of Ontario workers, over 400,000, did not go to work last year because they were sick. Many Ontario workers, however, don't have that choice. They drag themselves into work sick because staying home means not being able to pay the rent or buy the groceries—it could even mean losing their jobs. Forcing sick workers to go to work sick is not only bad for worker health and public health, it's bad for productivity and our economy.

Speaker, BC understands this; 15 US states with paid sick days understand this. Why doesn't this government?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: The member opposite should tell all those small businesses that have struggled during the pandemic that if the NDP were in power and they legislated 10 paid sick days and made those businesses pay for those 10 paid sick days, you would force hundreds of thousands of businesses into bankruptcy. We're not going to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we've taken a balanced approach to help 558,000 workers get through COVID, to have those paid sick days in place. We've increased the minimum wage; there's another increase coming soon. We're going to be the first place in all of North America to have portable benefits for millions of workers that don't have them today. We'll continue everyday working for the workers of this province, helping them get better jobs and bigger paycheques.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. For 15 years, under the previous NDP-supported Liberal governments, Ontario's employment services failed people across our province. The Auditor General's report revealed that only 1% of people on social assistance were leaving for a job every month. While this has been enough for the Liberals and the NDP, it's proof that the status quo is letting down those who need our help the most. Most people who are unemployed or receiving social assistance want to work. What they need and want is practical help to secure a fulfilling career to support themselves and their families.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what changes our government is making to employment services to support Ontarians in securing gainful work?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member for Whitby for that question and being a true champion of the skilled trades. I know for many, many years in this place, he's been calling on government to do more to get people into these rewarding opportunities.

Speaker, since day one, our government has taken action to address the years of neglect by previous governments. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're on a mission to help people who are unemployed or on social assistance find long-term, meaningful work in their own communities.

Our new customer service approach is helping more people find the dignity of a purpose-driven career. With the changes we've made so far, we have helped over 63,000 people find gainful employment, including more than 23,000 people that were on social assistance.

Speaker, my message is clear to anyone on social assistance: If you're able to work, we need you, and we're here to help.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's encouraging to hear that under the leadership of Premier Ford and this minister, our government is implementing measures that demonstrate our government's support for workers. Clearly, these new approaches are already showing positive results for job seekers across our province. However, more can be done to ensure that employment services are accessible, convenient and coordinated.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is expanding and improving employment services in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member for the follow-up question.

Speaker, earlier this month I was pleased to announce that our new one-window approach is coming to Durham region, and by the end of 2023, we'll have this new framework province-wide.

Our new employment services are opening doors. We're providing free training, support for rent and child care while you learn, basics like work boots, tools, uniforms, bus passes to help people get to their first shift and help with interviews and resumé-writing. For anyone looking for work, I encourage them to visit ontario.ca/employment.

Speaker, our government is supporting job seekers, and how we will continue to help people find better jobs and earn bigger paycheques is through this new approach.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. On Monday, March 26, Toronto transit services will be cut across the city, and transit riders will be left waiting longer for the bus, streetcar and subway. This is unsafe, will cause

more crowding and will make trips on transit take even longer. It doesn't make sense to cut transit services at a time when more and more people are returning to the TTC. Cutting services will only drive people away from the TTC and increase traffic and congestion.

Toronto cannot thrive without proper TTC services. Will the Premier commit to play his part and fund the economic engine that moves our city?

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for her question.

During the pandemic, our government recognized how essential public transit is for Ontarians across the province, and so we were there to support municipal transit agencies to the tune of over \$2 billion, and the Toronto Transit Commission was the largest beneficiary of that.

1100

We are committed to supporting public transit. We know that the city of Toronto has been underserved by public transit for so long, and that's why our government put forward the largest transit expansion plan in Canadian history—anywhere in North America.

But if the member opposite thinks that public transit is so essential, what she should have done is voted in favour of our subway plan instead of voting against, as did her entire party.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question: the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to the transportation minister: As my colleague from Toronto just said, transit riders and transit workers are at their wits' end in this province. In Ottawa, too, we are facing service cuts, and the folks who are driving those buses and trains are exhausted because there's not enough support for them.

We just heard the minister talk about future transit plans, but what I know about the Eglinton Crosstown LRT is that this is a plan right now that's a \$1 billion over budget and two years past due.

So I'm asking the minister plaintively: Their transit sector allies are telling us they need \$500 million in emergency funding for the operating system. Will the government come through on that today?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As I indicated in my previous answer, our government has provided over \$2 billion of support for public transit systems. We have been there. We do it through the Safe Restart Agreement, but also through our gas tax funding, which we continue to give every year to public transit systems for operating budgets.

With respect to the Crosstown LRT, our government has been waiting for this system, just as everyone has, to open in a way that is safe and reliable. That is what is essential.

We have been supporting public transit since the beginning. We're building more public transit to make sure that people can get where they need to go, and we're doing it in a way that's more efficient. We brought forward the Building Transit Faster Act to make sure that the delays

that occur because of permitting and municipal service work can be coordinated with our construction work.

The member opposite and his party voted against the Building Transit Faster Act. They voted against our subway plan for the greater Toronto area, our support for GO expansion. They talk about supporting public transit, but, really, Mr. Speaker, they're—

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

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

M. Stephen Blais: Ma question s'adresse au ministre des Finances.

Le Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans est un centre communautaire essentiel à Orléans pour les francophones et les francophiles de l'Ontario. Construit par la communauté, le MIFO est un endroit où les francophones et les francophiles peuvent se rassembler pour participer aux arts, à l'activité physique, à la programmation pour les enfants et bien d'autres choses.

Au fil des décennies, des milliers de résidents dévoués, engagés et courageux ont fait du MIFO le plus grand centre culturel et communautaire franco-ontarien en Ontario. Le succès du MIFO a été vanté par des leaders communautaires, commerciaux et politiques—même par des membres de ce gouvernement.

Pour plusieurs années, le MIFO demande au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'investir dans la construction d'un nouveau centre pour répondre aux besoins communautaires. Le ministre va-t-il mettre de l'argent derrière ses louanges et fournir au MIFO le financement nécessaire dans le budget cette année?

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

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le député opposé pour sa question.

Le MIFO est, en effet, un centre communautaire très important dans la communauté d'Orléans, dans sa circonscription. J'ai eu la chance de rencontrer la directrice du MIFO pour bien comprendre leur plan. J'ai été très heureuse de voir le travail important qui se fait dans la communauté d'Orléans.

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement est là pour appuyer les organisations et les organismes communautaires à travers la province. C'est pour ça que nous avons mis en place et nous appuyons les organismes à travers le PAFO, le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne, un programme de base pour les francophones à travers la province. Nous octroyons des fonds importants pour les organismes communautaires à Orléans et partout à travers la province de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the minister's endorsement of the great work MIFO does and I look forward to having the Minister of Finance provide funding in the budget later this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the budget, middle-class families have been struggling with higher food prices, higher hydro rates, higher transit passes and higher property taxes. In virtually every aspect of life, costs are up. Some might say costs are through the roof. Even the Premier's \$15 haircut cost him 26 bucks, Mr. Speaker. Rising costs are adding up. Summer is just around the corner. That means gas prices are about to go up. Families will soon be facing summer camp and sports registration, increased hydro bills—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Stephen Blais: And their hydro bills will soon go up as they turn on their air conditioning. The pressure on families is getting higher and higher, and support from this government for middle-class families is harder and harder to see.

Mr. Speaker, why are so many middle-class families falling further and further behind under this government?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. It's interesting you bring up this question, because the carbon tax actually is going up in a matter of days. This is the largest, most penalizing tax in Canadian history on middle-class consumers. It's driving the price of everything up—everything: groceries, products. It's hurting businesses. It's hurting individuals. So we would encourage you to stand with us and stand up to the federal government to try to bring these costs under control. That would be a great first step.

But what we are doing is we are supporting middle-class families across the province. We brought about a gas tax of 5.7 cents per litre earlier this year, and if I recall, I don't believe the opposition supported us on that. That was a case in point where they should have stood with us in a non-partisan fashion and helped lower the cost for Canadian consumers.

We've also helped support lower-income individuals, with ODSP increases. So—

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

The next question.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Mr. Kevin Holland: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. I recently had the privilege of hosting the minister in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan for an announcement that is important to northern Ontario and the Indigenous communities. Across Canada and here in northern Ontario, boreal caribou are an essential part of our forest ecosystems. This announcement is welcome news because of the urgent need to safeguard boreal caribou populations and support recovery efforts of this important species.

Under the previous Liberal government, northern Ontario was all but forgotten when it came to understanding the unique needs of northern and Indigenous communities.

In fact, a member of the previous government referred to northern Ontario as a “no man’s land.” Their words were empty, and they were not backed up with action when it came to protecting endangered and threatened species and their habitat.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is protecting boreal caribou?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan for that question.

Speaker, it was actually just after that announcement, having thin pancakes, that I really realized what a strong voice we have in Thunder Bay in that member. I could barely get a mouthful in while the people came and engaged our member on the great work that he’s doing there.

One of those key elements is about how we protect the north, both for people and the species that call the north home. As minister I understand the importance of doing everything that we can do to protect the north. That’s why I was proud to announce with that member an investment of almost \$30 million to protect boreal caribou habitat in the place that they call home. This builds on the existing work that we’ve done to protect 11.2-million acres of caribou habitat that Ontario already protects with our parks and conservation reserves—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thanks to the minister for his response. I know that my constituents welcomed the announcement last week regarding caribou preservation. This announcement demonstrates our government is getting it done when it comes to responding to issues that are important to the people of northern Ontario and Indigenous communities. Investments that support the maintenance and recovery of boreal caribou populations are evidence that our government is committed to environmental stewardship as well as preserving our natural and civic heritage.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on the significance of this announcement in order to protect boreal caribou and their habitat?

1110

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member. This Premier and this government understand that it’s not protecting the environment from people and species but protecting it for. That’s why I was proud to stand alongside Anishinabek Indigenous leaders like Mel Hardy, Unifor leaders, United Steelworkers leaders and the northern Ontario municipal association, all of whom lauded this Premier and this government for getting it right when it comes to caribou.

We all have a role to play when it comes to caribou. That means working with the forestry sector on the fecal DNA project. That means working with the mining sector so that we can decarbonize in the south with electric vehicles while protecting caribou in the north. This is a team Ontario effort. We’re leaving nobody behind and that includes the great caribou in northern Ontario.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: On April 12, I put forward a motion to maintain full emergency department and acute care services at the Welland hospital. All parties voted in favour, including the member from Niagara West, who said he was “pleased to speak in support of this motion and to reaffirm our government’s commitment to the health of the people of Niagara and the Welland hospital.”

Last month, surgeries, an on-call physician and ICU capacity were cut from the Welland hospital permanently. Were this government and the member from Niagara West telling the truth, yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to caution the member on his use of that expression.

I’m going to allow the Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I’m struck by the fact that we have a member in Niagara who has been advocating for and working with Niagara Health. That, of course, is the member from Niagara West.

When this member had the opportunity to vote for investments in health in the Niagara region, they chose to vote against it. When the member opposite had the opportunity, through budgets, through fall economic statements, to vote for investments in their region, they chose not to. I again will contrast that with the member from Niagara West, who from the beginning has advocated and worked with their community to make sure the Niagara region has world-class health facilities.

Last week, through investment in Infrastructure Ontario, Niagara Health was able to announce a successful bidder to ensure that the Niagara region has increased access to health care in the system. Will the member opposite vote—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Now patients who present at the Welland hospital and need emergency surgery due to a burst appendix or other emergency will have to roll the dice with an ambulance ride to another hospital—if they can find one.

The minister has not responded to my request or the request of local mayors for a meeting—didn’t even respond. The member from Niagara West has suddenly developed amnesia. Why has this government broken its word and abandoned the citizens of south Niagara in Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold, Wainfleet and Pelham?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: A \$3-billion investment in the Niagara region that will actually increase bed capacity by over 159 additional hospital beds in the Niagara region: I would put the record of the member from Niagara West against any other Niagara region member because they have been consistent in their advocacy.

You need to work with your health care partners. You need to work with your communities. The communities understand that they want a world-class facility in the Niagara region, and under Premier Ford and our government, they’re getting it.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Nolan Quinn: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. For generations, the agricultural industry has relied on the newest technology and the newest innovations to increase productivity, reduce reliance on manual labour and grow more food than ever before. Farmers across Ontario and in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry rely on this research to grow their operations and to ensure that here at home and around the world, people can enjoy the food grown in Ontario.

It is essential that we continue to invest in the research to continue the march of progress and to support our \$47-billion agri-food industry. Can the minister explain what the government is doing to support research and innovation initiatives in the agri-food sector?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: I appreciate your advocacy in rural Ontario. It's valued very much.

The question matters because, just last week, I signed a \$343-million renewed Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance agreement just near Elora, at a dairy research centre. It was very important because we signed that agreement with Dr. Charlotte Yates, president of the University of Guelph, and it represents research that is going to generate action and outcomes that matter for all of Ontario's agri-food sector. It was a great day.

Reflecting on the previous alliance agreement that we had, we have generated outcomes that have seen high immune response technology that leads to healthier cattle herds. And we've also seen and celebrated the Guelph Millennium asparagus. It was a brand new variety created at the University of Guelph that is incredibly popular not only in Ontario but jurisdictions around the world—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It's projects like the ones done by Drs. Todd Duffield and Charlotte Winder that are providing resources to dairy farmers in my riding to help them with pain management practices for their calves. And it is welcome news that this renewed agreement will bring an additional \$343 million to our agri-food industry's new research priorities that will enable Ontario farmers to be more productive, more efficient and better equipped to meet consumer demand both domestically and internationally.

Speaker, can the minister explain what exactly this renewed agreement means for Ontario's agri-food industry?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: As I said before, this is research that is leading to real results. For instance, the previous five-year agreement generated and increased Ontario's GDP by \$1.4 billion and has supported more than 1,300 jobs. I'm so thrilled with this renewed alliance agreement because we're going to see research stations and partner institutions across this province contribute to best practices, innovations and new technologies that are

going to make Ontario farmers excel and continue to increase their yield year over year.

Speaker, we made a commitment in our government's Grow Ontario Strategy to build and maintain world-class research infrastructure for our agri-food industry. We're getting that job done, and we're generating positive outcomes.

ABORTION IMAGES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. London is a leader, having provided a bylaw solution to the growing onslaught of graphic images delivered without consent to doorsteps by anti-abortion groups, but we need the province to address this growing problem.

Earlier this week, I tabled the Viewer Discretion Act to protect families, children and those recovering from trauma from receiving these graphic images. Will the government do the right thing and pass this bill to protect Ontarians?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the honourable member. As I say on most private members' business, it is in fact up to the members of the House to decide whether they approve of a bill brought forward by a member, and we'll allow the members to make that decision on their own.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question: the member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Back to the Premier: PTSD is a mental health issue that affects our veterans and our front-line responders. This is exactly why the Viewer Discretion Act has been re-tabled this week. This is the solution to a growing problem of graphic images at our doorsteps. It has retraumatized Shawn Bennett, a veteran with PTSD in my community.

My question is to the Premier: Will this government support the bill that ensures consent about whether or not someone struggling with PTSD has to engage with graphic images and materials in their safe space?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I do appreciate the question from the honourable member. I think, in part, it comes from the fact that this government has passed more private members' bills, I think, than any other government since Confederation. I do appreciate the member's excitement about that, but at the same time, I think the member would appreciate that the government allows private members' public business to unfold the way it should, that members will have the opportunity to debate the bill in this House and make a decision on their own whether they will be supporting that.

I know on this side of the House, private members' business is handled by the members themselves. There is not a whip function for private members' bills. Each member makes their own individual decision on private members' business. I would suggest that that might be something that the opposition look at, as well. We have found that on our side of the House, one of the reasons we get so many private members' bills passed is because the

members are free to make a decision on each bill on its own merits.

1120

AMATEUR SPORT TOURISM

Mr. Deepak Anand: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Last week, I attended an exciting hockey game with the minister at Iceland Arena in my riding of Mississauga–Malton. It was one of the 487 games played across five arenas in Mississauga over four days. Thank you to the Nipissing First Nation for organizing and thank you for choosing to host the event in Mississauga–Malton.

So 184 teams played in the first Little Native Hockey League tournament to be held in three years. This tournament is more than just a series of hockey games: It is a special event that drew over 2,000 children and teens to Mississauga from several First Nations communities.

Speaker, can the minister please describe the impact of sporting events like this to Ontario and Mississauga–Malton?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Malton for standing with me at the bench as a guest coach, but making sure everyone understands—the team won; it had nothing to do with you or me, frankly. And I look forward to seeing you on your blades at some point down the road.

There are few things that I like more than getting into an environment where young people are doing something they love to do, and this tournament was a great example on so many levels of leadership, civility, pride, taking care of one another—it's one of the things that team sports does. And to be a guest coach at the Little Native Hockey League tournament—the NHL from now on—became an inclusive opportunity for us to contribute to see how young people truly understand how the game is played. Coaches take care of the kids, there was no harassment of players and parents loved being there. It was an environment that will foster—and 184 teams—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Minister, for that response, and I'm looking forward to being a sub coach with you again soon.

It's encouraging news to hear about the positive effects that sporting events have on tourism and the substantive impact on economic activity. However, when I speak with the tourism operators and employers in my community, they raise concerns about the future. I hear them express worries about many jobs going unfilled—of an uncertain labour market. Tourism operators are really concerned about potential lost revenue because of the challenges they are experiencing in recruiting people into the tourism industry.

Tourism is vital to the economic well-being of our province and the industry deserves support from our government. Speaker, through you, can the minister please

explain how our government is attracting prospective workers to consider employment and helping these operators?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Again, thank you for the question. To touch on the tourism piece, which you know I'm fond of and involved in, this tournament itself, because of the numbers—184 teams you talked about, 12 players—kids don't drive themselves there because they're 15 years old; at least not that I saw. The impact on the economy is just about \$7 million. So when you talk about local tournaments coming in and creating an impact from a tourism perspective, driving revenue—and culturally, it's a wonderful thing, and we've got to keep doing more of that.

The other side of is this tournament—not only was it unique in many ways, but it had an offshoot where the young people could go and look at tourism to see if this was in fact an opportunity not for a job, but for a career. It's not about jobs, it's about finding a career, and they did such a wonderful job at this tournament exposing these young people to opportunity on and off the ice. That's their job. That's one of our jobs, Mr. Speaker.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

MPP Jill Andrew: My question is to the Premier. This Conservative government has cut arts, culture and heritage since taking office in 2018. Its impacts continue today on the lives of artists like near-middle-aged Eli, a part-time shift and gig contract worker who is forced to live with family due to financial strains, struggling to make ends meet while working below a livable wage with no pension or benefits.

Artists are workers too, Speaker. They have physical and mental health needs they cannot afford to address. And I would love if the Minister of Culture would actually take our request for a meeting.

My question is back to the Premier: Will today's budget 2023 sustain or increase with inflation the \$65-million Ontario Arts Council budget, reinstate the Indigenous Culture Fund, bolster CMOG for our museums, bolster libraries and help ensure that all Ontario artists and cultural workers can actually stay in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thank you for the question. Wow—a lot to unpack there.

The Ontario Arts Council's funding is being maintained during the upcoming year, so be clear on that. And if we're going to throw numbers around, since 2018 we have invested \$1.1 billion in arts and culture through the ministry programs and agencies. This includes nearly \$340 million for the OAC. We are proud to support it, we've worked with—and about meetings: I'm glad you brought that up, because we've had a number of meetings with the stakeholders, and we've sat down and talked with them.

It's interesting: In our conversations, Mr. Speaker, they don't talk about what they don't have; they talk about what they do have, and what they do have is opportunity and

budgets to work with. We're proud of the way they work and how creative they've become, not only in their art but in their time and what they are doing.

So I guess the member—

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

The supplementary question: the member for Spadina-Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. The minister mentions that they've maintained funding, but inflation has eaten 14% of Ontario's arts budget over the last four years, and this afternoon this government may be cutting \$5 million in grants.

Arts contribute \$27 billion to Ontario's economy and cultural life. Quebec has raised their arts funding by 60%, because they recognize how essential the arts are. In this afternoon's budget, will this government invest in the cultural life and economy by raising funding for the arts?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Mr. Speaker, again, thank you to the member opposite for the question. I know that you care about the industry, as you both do, as we do. And when we talk about what they are doing and our funding, I will go back to the meetings that I had with them. It wasn't about what they don't have, it was about what they do have and what they were going to do with that, coming out of COVID-19.

Again, the creativity behind the way they looked at their industry and their businesses and how they continue to develop throughout the very difficult times—as it should make all of us stronger when we come out the other side, Mr. Speaker. This is a classic example in this sector, so I'm proud of what they are doing. We will continue to meet with them.

And yet again, I will tell you, when we sat at the table, when typically we are used to having somebody say, "Where is the money?" They didn't ask for the money. They said, "How can you help us? Because we're going to get better," because that's the way they think. That's the way we think, Mr. Speaker.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is for the Solicitor General. For many Ontarians, the issue of animal protection and welfare is important to them and is often personal. They are concerned about the conditions in which animals are kept and are counting on our government to make sure that measures are in place to provide accountability for individuals and organizations that are responsible for the care of animals.

Abuse, neglect and cruelty to animals in any form is unacceptable. With local SPCA organizations no longer having the role of enforcing animal cruelty laws, our government must step up to ensure that the protection of animals across our province remains a priority. Speaker, can the Solicitor General please explain what actions our government is taking to address this ongoing issue?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I really want to thank the great member from Burlington for her question.

Just like we believe that people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, we think that animals should be treated with dignity and respect too. All animals, Mr. Speaker, deserve to be kept in safe conditions and live without distress and abuse.

Animal welfare is of crucial importance to our government, and that's why, in 2019, the Ontario government passed the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, PAWS Act, to develop a robust, transparent and accountable system to protect animals. This was the first of its kind in Canada, and the PAWS Act helps ensure that animals are protected and treated in a humane manner.

I want to assure this Legislature and the people of Ontario that the PAWS Act is enforced by very dedicated provincial inspectors.

1130

Monsieur le Président, c'est un honneur d'assurer la protection des animaux de notre province. Pour moi, c'est personnel.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the Solicitor General for that response. Unfortunately, there are situations where distress, neglect and abuse to animals continue to occur throughout the province. As a few examples, dogs can become victims of puppy mills, where they are kept in inhumane conditions, and animals that are kept outdoors can be exposed to unsafe conditions such as lack of shelter or water. Another situation that illustrates the urgency of this problem is the detrimental effect on pets that are left in cars in extreme weather conditions.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General please elaborate on how the PAWS Act protects the welfare, health and safety of animals?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to thank my colleague for that very important question. The people of Ontario care about the welfare of animals, and so does our government. We are committed to developing a strong system to protect animals, and we have delivered on that promise.

Ontario has the strongest penalties in Canada for people who violate animal welfare laws. Just last year, regulations under the animal welfare act were passed to increase standards of care for dogs kept outdoors. Our government takes animal welfare and safety very seriously.

But everyone has a responsibility to protect animals. If you suspect that neglect or abuse of an animal is taking place, please report it. The number you can call is 1-833-9-ANIMAL, and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. April 1 is fast approaching, and parents of children with autism are worried. After meeting with local trustees in Oshawa, it is clear that parents of children with autism who will be transitioning from the ending legacy autism program and into schools don't have answers about what will happen after April 1, once that legacy program is over.

Parents who are going in to register their children for school are met with surprised principals and no plans for support. At a time when special education needs are already terribly underfunded, my question is: What is this government doing to support students with autism to ensure a successful, smooth and supported transition from the legacy program into the classroom?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: What we've been doing is reaching out to thousands of children's families through emails, letters and phone calls, to make sure that they understand this process. We have ensured that the children are aware and their families are aware that they need to be registered for the OAP—which is a new, comprehensive, needs-based program—and we've been working across multiple ministries, including with the Ministry of Education, to make sure that those transitions are what they need to be, because that's what we've heard from families: that the transition points—whether it's entry to school, whether it's movement from childhood to adulthood—are hard for families. They're hard for children. That's exactly why we've doubled the funding for autism. That's why we have five times as many children receiving supports. Tens of thousands of families and children are receiving more supports than ever before under this program, something that the previous government never planned to do and never built the capacity for.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question: the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I don't think the minister heard the question of what was being asked, and again has gone back to the OAP talking points and their funding. This is not what we're talking about. We're talking about a program, the legacy program, that is ending March 31. Children will be transitioned into schools across all of our communities on April 1 without programs in place.

We don't have enough teachers in the classroom. We don't have enough EAs in the classroom. We have no extra supports happening April 1. Nobody knows what's happening. We need answers from this government and we obviously need them soon, since April 1 is around the corner.

Can the Minister of Education possibly tell us what is going to be happening April 1 to ensure that there are supports in the classroom to support all of these children, who have never been in school and need services?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I will take absolutely no lessons from the member across, who voted no to the highest amount of funding for special-needs children in this province's history, who voted against the funding for the children's treatment centre, who voted against all our measures to create better care and more programs and more support.

This government has done more than any government in the history of this province. And while the member opposite wants to share dramatics, I'm hard at work creating the programs that are needed to support the children of this province.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Matthew Rae: I would like to ask a question to our great Minister of Health—to share with this House what we are doing for the great people of Niagara and the historic investments we are making in Niagara.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to rise in this House and share details about the investments in health care that are being made in Niagara, under the leadership of this Premier and this Minister of Health.

We're seeing a new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital for the first time in our region.

We're seeing 1.3 million square feet of new health care coming on board in the new South Niagara Hospital.

We've seen the doubling of the nursing program at Brock University, going from 300 to 600 new nursing students each year.

We've seen free tuition and expanded personal support worker supports at Niagara College, bringing many new PSWs on board.

Palliative care expansions—adding over 24 new beds to the region, going from 16 to 40 palliative care beds in Niagara region.

We're seeing hundreds of thousands of dollars in increased supports for Pathstone's youth mental health.

We've seen the new mobile health mental clinic going in through the south Niagara region as well.

We're seeing \$8 million for a new community paramedicine program, supporting seniors aging in place across the province.

We're seeing a new youth—

Interjections.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm rising on standing order 59. Again, I thank colleagues for a very productive week in the House. I'll just outline the business for next week.

On Monday, March 27, we will begin debate on the budget bill. In the afternoon, there will be opposition debate number 3, and then we will return to the budget bill.

On Tuesday, March 28, in both the morning and afternoon sessions, we will be debating the budget bill, and in the evening, Bill 73, from the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—I think it's his first private member's bill—Supporting Ontario's Community, Rural and Agricultural Newspapers Act, 2023.

On Wednesday, March 29, in the morning, there will be debate on the budget bill, and in the afternoon, we will continue with the budget bill. At some point, we'll also continue with debate on Bill 79, Working for Workers Act, 2023. In the evening, we will have private member's Bill 56.

On Thursday, March 30, in the morning and afternoon, we will continue debate on the budget. In the evening, we will be debating Bill 74 in private members' business.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: In my response to the member from Orléans, I mentioned the gas tax. I just wanted to clarify for the record, if there's any ambiguity, that what I was referring to was our government passing legislation to reduce the gas tax by—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll just point out that it's entirely appropriate for members to rise to correct their own record, but not necessarily to add additional information to an answer that they had given earlier during question period.

DEFERRED VOTES

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 34.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

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

Ms. Armstrong has moved private member's notice of motion number 34. All those in favour will please rise and remaining standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Rickford, Greg
Barnes, Patrice	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bressee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Mulrone, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.

Flack, Rob
Ford, Doug
Ford, Michael D.
Fullerton, Merrilee
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
Ghamari, Goldie
Gill, Parm

Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David
Pierre, Natalie
Pirie, George
Quinn, Nolan

Tibollo, Michael A.
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Wai, Daisy
Williams, Charmaine A.
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 30; the nays are 73.

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

Motion negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's my sincere pleasure to introduce, from the town of Tecumseh, Councillor Brian Houston, who is in the east members' gallery this afternoon.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to welcome and introduce Bruce MacIntosh, who's here from the Ontario Autism Coalition, for the budget reveal today, in hopes that there will be a good impact for people with autism.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 23, 2023, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PETER KORMOS MEMORIAL ACT (SAVING ORGANS TO SAVE LIVES), 2023

LOI DE 2023 COMMÉMORANT PETER KORMOS (SAUVER DES ORGANES POUR SAUVER DES VIES)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to the removal and use of tissue from a human body for therapeutic purposes, medical education or scientific

research / *Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne le prélèvement et l'utilisation de tissus d'un corps humain à des fins thérapeutiques, pour l'enseignement de la médecine ou pour la recherche scientifique.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Would the member like to make a statement?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill is called the Peter Kormos Memorial Act. This is something that my colleague Peter Kormos was really adamant about.

The Gift of Life Act currently requires that consent be obtained before tissue can be removed from a human body to be used for therapeutic purposes. Under the proposed amendment, consent would no longer be required, except for children, and a person may object to the removal and use of a tissue prior to their death, or a substitute decision-maker after the death has occurred. Those changes would make sure that the more-than-1,300 people presently on the wait-list for a transplant would get quicker access to life-saving care.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, pursuant to standing order 7(c), the House shall continue to meet past the ordinary hour of adjournment until midnight on the following dates: Wednesday, April 26; Thursday, April 27; Monday, May 8; Tuesday, May 9; Wednesday, May 10; Thursday, May 11; Monday, May 15; Tuesday, May 16; Wednesday, May 17; Thursday, May 18; Monday, May 29; Tuesday, May 30; Wednesday, May 31; Thursday, June 1; Monday, June 5; Tuesday, June 6; Wednesday, June 7; and Thursday, June 8, 2023.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The government House leader has moved that, pursuant to standing order 7(c), the House shall continue to meet past the ordinary hour of adjournment until midnight on the following dates: Wednesday, April 26—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Dispense.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Carried, on division.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: I am happy to present several hundred signatures on this petition to save the Welland hospital emergency department.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Niagara Health system restructuring plan approved by the Ontario Ministry of Health includes removal of the emergency department and associated beds and ambulances service from the Welland hospital site once the Niagara Falls site is complete, creating inequity of hospital and emergency service in the Niagara region and a significant negative impact on hospital and emergency outcomes for the citizens of Welland, Port Colborne and all Niagara;

“Whereas the NHS is already experiencing a 911 crisis in EMS, a shortage of beds and unacceptable off-loading delays in its emergency departments across the region;

“Whereas the population in the Welland hospital catchment area is both aging and growing;

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature passed a motion by Niagara Centre MPP Jeff Burch on April 13, 2022, to include a full emergency department and associated beds in the rebuild of the Welland hospital;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Niagara Health system to implement motion 47 to maintain the Welland hospital emergency department and adjust its hospital plan accordingly.”

I’ll affix my signature and hand it to the Clerk.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is being tabled on behalf of Lynn Mayhew, from families of incarcerated women and girls at the Andrew Mercer Reformatory, and submitted by Katie-Marie McNeill. It reads:

“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 ... 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 (identifying 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 and will affix my signature to it.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present this petition on behalf of Lynn Mayhew, from the families of incarcerated women and girls at the Andrew Mercer Reformatory. This petition was submitted by Lorraine Vasiliauskas. The petition reads:

"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 (identifying information) to next of kin, and/or extended next of kin, if an adult adopted person or a natural/birth parent is deceased."

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

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: On behalf of Origins Canada, I'd like to present this petition submitted by Valerie Andrews:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

I'd like to attach my name to this petition and then send it back to the centre table with page Jing.

1310

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here on behalf of Lynn Mayhew, from families of incarcerated women and girls at the Andrew Mercer Reformatory. This petition has been submitted by Susan Duncan of Whitby, Ontario, and the petition reads:

"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 (identifying information) to next of kin, and/or extended next of kin, if an adult adopted person or a natural/birth parent is deceased."

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

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to read a petition on behalf of Lynn Mayhew, from families of incarcerated women and girls at the Andrew Mercer Reformatory. This petition was submitted by Mary Joe of Thornhill and Lisa Auger of Guelph.

"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 (identifying information) to next of kin, and/or extended next of kin, if an adult adopted person or a natural/birth parent is deceased."

I fully support this petition, sign it and pass it to Stefan to deliver to the table.

CHRONIC PAIN TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition titled "National Chronic Pain Society petition."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas one in four Ontarians over the age of 15 suffer from chronic pain, with 73% reporting that the pain interferes with their daily lives and more than half reporting issues with depression and suicidal thoughts; and

"Whereas pain is the most common reason to seek health care, with chronic pain making up approximately 16% of emergency room visits and 38% of frequent visits, adding to the already lengthy wait times and delaying treatment; and

"Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) is threatening to impose changes to how

nerve block injections are administered which would only apply to pain clinics, while leaving similarly in-hospital procedures unaffected. These changes have been proposed seemingly without any consultations with patients or health care workers; and

“Whereas the most common treatment for pain provided by family doctors and hospitals is opioids, despite the current national crisis leading to an estimated 20 opioid-related deaths in Canada every day during the COVID-19 pandemic;

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

“Prevent OHIP from applying a one-size-fits-all solution to the issue of chronic pain, and allow for consultations with health care workers and pain sufferers to determine the best way to treat chronic pain without resorting to opioids.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Shah to bring to the Clerk.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Cyrille Guy de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Réparons les subventions aux résident(e)s du nord de l’Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales...

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

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

« 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 l’Ontario « de créer un comité ayant pour mandat de corriger et d’améliorer » la situation. « Ce comité consultatif ... 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. Je vais la signer, et je demande à la page Evelyn de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Jeff Burch: I was pleased to get this petition from students and faculty at Notre Dame school in Welland.

“Protect the Greenbelt and Build Real Affordable Housing: Repeal Bill 23.

“In the middle of a climate and housing crisis, we as students and staff at Notre Dame College School in Welland, Ontario, are calling on you to repeal Bill 23. This

bill will destroy wetlands, farmland and woodlands and undermine important environmental protection. We need real investment in affordable housing, and this bill will only deliver more money to developers while worsening the housing emergency.

“We, the undersigned, urge you to stop Bill 23. Our school community values our environment, and we want our lands protected for this generation and future generations. Specifically, the Niagara region has some of the most valuable farmlands and ecosystems in all of Ontario. How can a greenbelt be considered green if you plan to allow the land to be built upon and developed?”

“This petition was signed by members from our entire school community, including staff, educational assistants, secretaries, custodians and students.”

I affix my signature and send it to the Clerk.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is on behalf of the psychotherapists of Parkdale–High Park and across Toronto. It reads:

“Making Psychotherapy Services Tax-Free.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas mental health care is health care; and

“Whereas the mental health crisis facing Ontarians has gotten worse with the pandemic; and

“Whereas BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ folks, women, and people with disabilities have historically faced significant barriers to accessing equitable health care services due to systemic discrimination; and

“Whereas registered psychotherapists provide vital mental health services, especially as an early intervention; and

“Whereas a 13% tax added to the cost of receiving psychotherapy services is another barrier for Ontarians seeking this vital care; and

“Whereas registered psychotherapists are still required to collect HST from clients, while most other mental health professionals have been exempted;

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

“To pass the Making Psychotherapy Services Tax-Free Act, 2023, immediately, to remove this barrier to access mental health services.”

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

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Jasmine Richer from Capreol in my riding for this petition.

“Ontario Dementia Strategy....

“Whereas it takes an average of 18 months for people in Ontario to get an official dementia diagnosis, with some patients often waiting years to complete diagnostic testing and more than half of those suspected of having dementia never get a full diagnosis;

“Whereas a PET scan test approved in Ontario in 2017, which can be key to detecting Alzheimer’s early is still not

covered under OHIP and research findings show that Ontario will spend \$27.8 billion between 2023 and 2043 on alternate-level-of-care (ALC) and long-term-care (LTC) costs associated with people living with dementia;

“Whereas the government must follow through with its commitment to ensure Ontario’s health care system has the capacity to meet the current and future needs of people living with dementia and their care partners;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to commit to “fund a comprehensive Ontario dementia strategy.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Stefan to bring it to the Clerk.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Protect Vulnerable Road Users.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas vulnerable road users are not specifically protected by law; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, facing only minimal fines; and

“Whereas the friends and families of victims are unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government’s responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to a vulnerable road user;

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

“—direct the government of Ontario to commit to reducing the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users;

“—create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users;

“—allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person in court by the driver responsible;

“—pass the Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act.”

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

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The time for petitions has expired.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), this House stands in recess until 4 p.m.

The House recessed from 1321 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2023 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2023

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Finance has moved, seconded by the Premier, that this

House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I will now ask the pages to deliver the budgets to the members.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That has got to be a new record. Well done.

Have all members received their copy of the budget?

I will recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Before I begin, I would just like to acknowledge that we lost a great Canadian last week, Helen Vari. Helen Vari and her late beloved husband George came to this country with nothing but the shirt on their backs and they helped build Canada. They were great visionaries and they were great philanthropists. And you know, Mr. Speaker, they had a saying: They came to Canada with nothing and Canada gave them everything. So I’d like to acknowledge the great legacy that Helen and George bestowed on us, and condolences to the family of Helen Vari.

I also want to acknowledge the great work that my parliamentary assistants do to help me come to this point. The parliamentary assistants, of course, that I’m referring to are the great parliamentary assistant from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the great parliamentary assistant from Oakville behind me.

I also want to acknowledge the great parliamentary assistants who went there before them and did such a great job: from Brantford–Brant, from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill—where are the other ones? There’s Stan Cho from Willowdale—how can I forget? And Rudy Cuzzetto from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin.

On behalf of Premier Ford and our entire government, it is my honour to introduce the 2023 budget.

Building a Strong Ontario.

Au nom du premier ministre Ford et de l’ensemble de notre gouvernement, j’ai l’honneur de vous présenter le budget de l’Ontario 2023.

Bâtir un Ontario fort.

This plan is our blueprint for building a strong province during a time of economic challenges and change.

It is a plan for a strong economy. Now and for the future.

It is a plan to build more roads, more highways, more transit and more broadband.

It is a plan to build new long-term-care homes, new hospitals, schools and child care spaces.

It is a plan to build the critical minerals sector in Ontario’s north.

At the same time, invest in clean, green steel in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie and connect them with a globally competitive manufacturing sector in the south.

It is a plan to build a health care system.

That connects people to the right care.

It is a plan for us to do all of this ...

... To invest in our future.

While, at the same time, returning Ontario to a balanced budget.

This plan is our government’s blueprint.

And Ontario's path.

Rooted in strong fundamentals. A long-term vision. And real action.

To not only face the current turbulence that we see in the global economy.

But emerge from it—stronger than ever.

Mr. Speaker, today, I want to start with the numbers.

Thanks to robust revenue growth, prudence, disciplined planning and clear priorities ...

I am pleased to report that in the 2022-23 fiscal year, the deficit is projected to shrink to just \$2.2 billion.

In 2023-24, we plan to further reduce the deficit to \$1.3 billion.

And starting next year, we will return Ontario to the black, with a modest surplus of \$200 million.

Mr. Speaker—this is more than just a strong fiscal record.

While uncertainty persists, it puts us in a position of fiscal strength.

In fact, Ontario's net-debt-to-GDP is now forecast to be 37.8% in 2023-24, down 3.6 percentage points.

And with this progress, the people of Ontario can have confidence that tomorrow will be better than today.

And to be clear, a return to balanced budgets would not have happened under a Liberal or NDP government.

And in this budget, we are showing it is possible to balance a budget.

While investing...

More in housing;

More in highways;

More in transit;

More in the skilled trades;

More in new manufacturing; and

More in health care;

More in education; and

More in the north.

This is what we promised the people of Ontario that we would do in the last election.

We promised we would get it done.

And Mr. Speaker.

We are delivering on that promise today here, in front of all of you.

Now, Mr. Speaker.

A lot has changed since we were first elected, particularly since we first introduced a budget in 2022, just last year.

The world is, to be frank, a more unsettled and uncertain place.

Ontario is part of the global economy and is not immune to the impact of global forces, including geopolitical tension provoked by Russian aggression against Ukraine, the reopening of China's economy, the energy transition, and policies such as the United States' Inflation Reduction Act.

More and more global trading partners have begun looking inwards. Supply chains have become disrupted or strained.

The post-COVID-19 pandemic environment has been defined by elevated inflation that puts the squeeze on the wallets of families and businesses.

People are finding it harder to afford housing. To afford groceries. To afford other household goods.

And as I have said many times, Ontario is not an island.

While we remains resilient, the seas around us are stormy.

And our budget must reflect that with continued prudence and planning assumptions that leave room for future surprises or shocks.

Alors que l'Ontario demeure résilient, la tempête fait toujours rage autour de nous.

Et notre budget doit en tenir compte en demeurant prudent et en s'appuyant sur des hypothèses de planification qui prévoient une marge de manoeuvre pour faire face aux surprises ou chocs qui pourraient survenir.

1610

And there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic. I want the people of Ontario to know that, despite the turbulence of the past year, we are doing better than most and we have a flexible plan to address these ongoing economic challenges, because serious times call for a serious budget.

This is a serious budget.

And while much has changed since our last budget ... economic circumstances have confirmed our plan was—and is—the right one.

In fact, our plan is already showing early results.

Ontario's population is growing, jobs are being created and we are attracting manufacturing investments.

Ontario's population is now over 15 million people.

We have over 275,000 more people a year moving into Ontario.

This is good news.

Because with this growth, we are seeing stronger communities across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I am as confident about Ontario's future as I ever have been. But while I see a brighter future in front of us, success is neither automatic nor guaranteed. We will have to work for it by taking a responsible and flexible approach.

And that's why we have a plan to build a strong, more resilient and more competitive economy right here at home.

We must increase our self-sufficiency and reduce our dependence on imports from parts of the world that have no intention of being reliable or fair-trading partners.

And Canada, particularly Ontario, is as well-equipped as any place in the world to not only decouple from these adversarial regimes but thrive in doing so.

Take the Ring of Fire, Mr. Speaker.

The Ring of Fire is our ticket to reduce our dependency on unstable or unfriendly foreign regimes.

But that, of course, requires us to tap into the wealth, and tapping into that wealth, in turn, requires political will.

For decades, previous governments ignored the immense wealth in Ontario's north—for no other reason than the work of developing that resource was too hard.

Well, our government is not afraid of hard work.

We are working hand in hand with the First Nations in northern Ontario to build the true partnership that will ensure both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can benefit from these untapped riches.

Just a few short weeks ago our government approved the First Nations-led plan for the northern road link. This is a major milestone, to finally build all-season roads. This is an important step forward to unlocking the full economic potential of the Ring of Fire.

Of course, building the road to the Ring of Fire is not, by itself, the solution. We have to get the minerals out of the ground. You've got to build the mines.

Our government is, once again, taking this challenge head-on.

We have committed \$1 billion to unlock the critical minerals of Ontario's north. We continue to call on the federal government to match our commitment.

We are also incenting and encouraging exploration by providing an additional \$3 million to the Ontario Junior Exploration Program this year and next.

Of course, getting the minerals out of the ground is not the final step.

We need to connect them to our world-class manufacturing sector.

Now, you wouldn't know it, perhaps—but I would think we all do now—Ontario happens to have just what it takes to create a world-class manufacturing sector.

Nous devons les relier à notre secteur de la fabrication de calibre mondial.

Et il se trouve que l'Ontario abrite justement celui-là.

Mr. Speaker, join me in a little thought experiment.

Imagine if you headed out back and jumped into a car parked in the legislative parking lot—perhaps it's an electric vehicle.

Because we'd be going on a little road trip.

We'd start by jumping on the Don Valley Parkway, heading to the 401 eastbound, which we have a plan to start widening, at Brock Road in Pickering.

We'd drive straight through Durham region—maybe grabbing a coffee in the great city of Pickering (or as I call it—the Pic), then through to Oshawa—by the way, if Drake can call Toronto the Six, I think we can call Pickering the Pic. We would drive through to Oshawa, which is benefiting from part of GM's more than \$2-billion investment that will protect thousands of jobs.

We might then double back a bit, turn north on the toll-free—did I say that? The toll-free Highway 412 and hop on Highway 7—maybe make a detour to Richmond Hill where Tesla is manufacturing the equipment to help make the batteries of the future—but ultimately end up in Alliston where Honda is making a \$1.4-billion investment to make hybrid vehicles.

So, we then need to get back south and hop on the 401 West to the 403, and pass through Oakville, where Ford is making a \$1.8-billion investment to produce EVs.

Let's keep going. Let's continue down the 403 to Hamilton where ArcelorMittal Dofasco is making a \$1.8-billion investment in producing clean “green steel.”

But, folks, we're not there yet. We continue. We're going to go west on Highway 8 and we could swing by to Cambridge, and then keep on the 401 until you get to Woodstock—two proud auto towns where Toyota has invested \$1.4 billion to make vehicles, including hybrids.

And hear me out, Mr. Speaker: We could keep going further west on the 401 until we get to Ingersoll, where GM is building Canada's full-scale EV manufacturing plant.

And to cap off an amazing trip, we're going keep going southwest until we get to Windsor—where Stellantis and LG Energy Solutions are investing more than \$5 billion to build Ontario's first-ever large-scale EV battery manufacturing plant ... with 2,500 new jobs.

And by the way, Mr. Speaker, on our way back to Queen's Park, we'll take a brief detour, if that's all right, to St. Thomas ... the future home of Volkswagen's first-ever overseas battery cell plant.

Mr. Speaker, that trip is so exciting, not once would you ask me if we're there yet! It would be a beautiful road, Mr. Speaker—a scenic one—but most importantly, this is a road trip that would take us through some of the communities that are benefiting from over \$16 billion in investments by global auto manufacturers and suppliers of EV batteries and battery materials.

And thanks to the leadership of Premier Ford and the great economic development minister Vic Fedeli, Ontario is now the heartland of Canada's electric vehicle revolution.

It's difficult to overstate the incredible significance of that statement. After all, in 10 years, people buying a new car will choose between an electric vehicle ... and an electric vehicle. And when they do, we're making sure they choose an Ontario-made electric vehicle.

The global economy is changing. And we are seizing our competitive advantage as a province. We are not just going to keep up—we're going to keep prospering under the leadership of this government, and this Premier, and we are going to thrive in the economy of the future.

L'économie mondiale est en évolution. Et nous saisissons les avantages concurrentiels dont nous disposons en tant que province. Nous n'allons pas simplement suivre la cadence. Sous la direction du gouvernement actuel, et du premier ministre Ford, nous allons prospérer dans l'économie de l'avenir.

1620

But we must continue to find ways to boost Ontario's competitiveness. This is why our government is working with partners to have shovel-ready industrial sites available for new manufacturing projects.

And we are already seeing success with this, as evidenced by Volkswagen's recent announcement.

So, let me say it again, Mr. Speaker.

Ontario is now the heartland of Canada's electric vehicle revolution.

And not one dollar of this investment. And not a single one of these jobs was automatic or guaranteed.

The previous government let more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario flee.

This government is bringing the cars of tomorrow, the jobs of tomorrow and the investments of tomorrow right back to Ontario, right here, right now, today!

It took a lot of rebuilding, but Ontario manufacturing is back, Mr. Speaker. And it's time to keep that momentum up.

That is why today we are proposing the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, a 10% tax credit to help more Canadian-controlled corporations expand, invest, create jobs and become more competitive.

Our message is, if you are prepared to bet big on Ontario, then Ontario is prepared to bet big on you.

You know, seizing this immense opportunity will also require energy.

We are proud to support the continued safe operation of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station and the refurbishments of the Darlington and Bruce Nuclear Generating Stations.

In fact, we've already started construction on the small modular reactor at Darlington.

And we are leading in record battery procurements, with the largest battery storage project in Canada being built right here in Ontario in partnership with the Six Nations of Grand River Development Corp., Northland Power, NRStor and the Aecon Group.

This government will continue supporting the development of small modular reactors, which will be essential to future supply.

Now we know, companies are refusing to invest in jurisdictions that don't help them achieve their environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals.

And once again, Ontario is poised to thrive.

For example, to help boost competitiveness, the government is launching a voluntary Clean Energy Credit Registry.

Mr. Speaker, we are seizing our clean energy advantage today, for tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker. If I can take you back to our little thought experiment. Our manufacturing road trip. Do you know what it depends on for that road trip? It depends on having functioning highways, doesn't it? And our plan is the right plan for transit and highways, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals and NDP never spared much thought to highways or the people stuck on them.

In the last election, it seems that the voters of Peel region and across the GTA noticed.

Well, we don't take drivers for granted.

We told them we would build more highways and we are.

Highway 413.

We said we would do it.

We're building it.

The Bradford Bypass.

We said we would do it.

We're building it.

The QEW Skyway.

Widening the 401 east through Durham.

And the new Highway 7 in Kitchener.

We said we would do all of them.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are building them.

Mr. Speaker, we are also continuing to make large new investments in transit.

Including increasing GO Transit service to Niagara from Union Station and bringing back the Northlander from Timmins to Toronto.

And making progress on the Ontario Line.

We're also investing in new schools, in child care spaces, in hospitals and in long-term-care homes.

Our plan to build new hospitals and expand the existing ones.

It is a plan that is supporting a full continuum of care at Runnymede Healthcare Centre for first responders experiencing post-traumatic stress injury and other mental health challenges.

And today we're making that additional investment of \$9.6 million for this project to advance towards construction and accelerate it in the next round of approvals.

It's also a plan to build a brand new hospital serving Mississauga and Brampton.

It's a plan, Mr. Speaker, to redevelop St. Mary's General and Grand River hospitals in Kitchener-Waterloo.

It's also a plan to build a new hospital in Uxbridge and a new one in Windsor.

It's a plan to build new schools in communities including in Pickering, Ottawa and Atikokan.

It's a plan to build, right across this province, safe and comfortable long-term-care spaces in Cornwall, in Kitchener and in North Bay, in Ajax, in Owen Sound, in North Grenville and right across this great province.

We said we were going to build them.

We're building them.

Mr. Speaker, you might even say we're getting it done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about something else we are building in Ontario.

And that's a better deal for workers and their families.

Because everything we are building and everything we plan to build depends, on the Ontario worker.

Every day we ask ourselves:

Do we have the right plan to fill the open positions across the province?

To recruit new skilled workers from abroad.

To fill skills gaps.

To encourage more people, and young people, to enter the trades.

And, to give them better protections on and off the job site.

This has been the mission of this government, for many months now and years, and today with this budget we are taking this mission to the next step.

It starts with a simple declaration.

Ontario needs more skilled workers.

The greatest single obstacle we face to reaching our full potential is a shortage of workers in the sectors that need them.

In construction.

In the skilled trades.

In health care.

And while, yes, the talent shortage is global, that is a challenge—not an excuse.

Ontario must do more.

And with this budget. With our plan. We are.

It starts with investing more money into helping more workers upgrade their skills or transition into the skilled careers that need them.

The Skills Development Fund has been an unqualified success in helping nearly 400,000 workers gain the skills

they need to find better jobs and more stable careers in the sectors that badly need them.

Whether we are providing a worker with tools and a pair of work boots for training. Or giving an Indigenous worker in northern Ontario a path through which they can build up their home community. Or offering a Ukrainian refugee, the opportunity to build a new career and new life in their new home. This fund has been a life changer.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're putting more money into it. That is why budget 2023, our plan to build, will invest an additional \$75 million over the next three years into the Skills Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker, in order to give more workers more opportunities, we also have to give them more new and modern places, where they can learn and train.

That is why we also will be investing \$224 million in a new capital stream of the Skills Development Fund to partner with private-sector unions and others so they can upgrade and expand union halls and other training centres right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this will prepare more workers for careers with secure, well-paying jobs that our economy needs so badly.

Nobody, and certainly nobody in government or the public sector, is more in touch with the real-world needs of our skilled trades workers than private-sector unions. They told us they are ready to work with us. And we are ready to work with them.

Mr. Speaker, we are also making it easier for more high school students to pursue careers in the trades and other sectors that need them. This includes health care—where I know our doctors, nurses and other health care workers are already sacrificing so much to keep people healthy and safe.

1630

We are going to expedite the training of more health care workers through expanding access to dual credit opportunities to provide more students with a head start in their journey to becoming nurses, personal support workers, paramedics or medical laboratory technicians.

It is long overdue that our education system from our schools, to our colleges, universities and apprenticeship programs—prioritized creating job-ready graduates in the sectors that need them. This is what our government is doing.

And, we know that more skilled immigrants have to be part of the solution.

Mr. Speaker, as the child of Hungarian immigrants—of refugees, in fact—myself, I know first-hand how Canada and Ontario have transformed the lives of so many people in their hour of need. Work that continues to this day with refugees from Syria or Ukraine or elsewhere.

And newcomers, in turn, want to do more to contribute to their new home.

There are so many people who want to come here.

They're prepared to come to Ontario.

The federal government has committed to at least 18,000 newcomers a year by 2025 through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP).

Mr. Speaker, we asked the federal government to double our allocation, and they have. We thank them.

We're going to do our part. We're investing an additional \$25 million over three years in the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program to ensure we can help immigrants hit the ground running and start contributing to Ontario right away.

My message to anyone considering Ontario for your home—you are welcome. We welcome you to our great province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, many families are feeling the financial pressures the current economy is putting on them.

And while our government does not control the global forces driving inflation, there are things that do lie in our control.

Which is why we acted early to keep your costs down.

We eliminated licence plate renewal fees as well as licence plate stickers and refunded two years' worth of fees for eligible vehicles.

We cut the provincial gas tax and the fuel tax rate until the end of the year.

We have eliminated double fares when taking GO Transit and local transit throughout much of the greater Golden Horseshoe—and we are expanding this initiative to include Toronto, so a commuter coming into the city only pays one fare per trip, saving you money each way.

Mr. Speaker, we focused on those who are most vulnerable, offering a hand up to our neighbours who need our support the most.

We have doubled the Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS) payment for eligible low-income seniors through to the end of the year.

And today, we are proposing to expand eligibility for the program so that an additional 100,000 seniors would be eligible for the program.

We are also proposing to index the GAINS benefit to inflation so that when costs rise, so would our support, something no previous government has ever done in Ontario.

Nous avons doublé la prestation du Régime de revenu annuel garanti, RRA, pour les personnes âgées à faible revenu, ceci jusqu'à la fin de l'année.

Et nous proposons d'élargir l'admissibilité au programme à compter de juillet 2024, ce qui permettrait à environ 100 000 personnes âgées de plus d'y devenir admissibles.

Nous proposons également d'indexer la prestation du RRA en fonction de l'inflation, de sorte que, lorsque les coûts augmentent, notre soutien augmenterait aussi.

We've also increased Ontario Disability Support Program rates ... and we're removing barriers for those with a disability receiving support who can and choose to work.

Mr. Speaker, our government will give a hand up to those that need it the most.

Sadly, many around us don't have a roof over their head or a place to call home. Our government continues to be there for these neighbours.

So today, we are making an historic investment of an additional \$202 million each year in supportive housing

and homelessness programs to provide not only a hand up, but hope for a better life for those who need it most.

Mr. Speaker, in order to tackle the ongoing housing affordability crisis, governments at all levels need to work together to get more shovels in the ground.

We're taking bold action, under the leadership of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier and all of us—on that side, on this side—to build 1.5 million homes, but we cannot do it alone.

The Ontario government is calling on the federal government to defer the harmonized sales tax (HST) on all new large-scale purpose-built rental housing projects.

This is part of the government's plan to spur the construction of more rental housing units, while helping to create jobs, drive economic development and support growth.

We are also working to improve services you and your family need. Starting with health care.

We are investing every single dollar we receive from the federal government's recent health care funding down payment—and a whole lot more—into better health care services.

While we will receive \$4.4 billion in additional funding over the next three years from the federal government under the recent agreement in principle, negotiated by our Premier ...

Ontario will invest a total of \$15.3 billion into health over that same period.

Mr. Speaker, this plan to improve health care starts with home care.

Through the 2022 budget, the government announced a plan to invest \$1 billion over three years to get more people connected to care in the comfort of their own home and community.

Our government is now accelerating investments to bring funding in 2023-24 up to \$569 million, including nearly \$300 million to support contract rate increases to stabilize the home and community care workforce.

This funding will also expand home care services and improve the quality of care, making it easier and faster for people to connect to care.

We also recognize the incredible toll the COVID-19 pandemic has had on people's mental health across the province.

We are investing an additional \$425 million over three years in mental health and addictions supports, including a 5% increase in the base funding of community-based mental health and addictions services providers funded by the Ministry of Health.

We are also investing more than \$200 million to connect children and youth to care at hospitals and close to home in their communities. And we have set aside more funding to work with our front-line partners and identify additional needs requiring our investment for the health of our children and our youth.

To make care more convenient for people and families, pharmacists will soon be able to prescribe medication to treat more common ailments that they are eminently qualified to do.

And we are investing in community surgical and diagnostic centres to speed up care while ensuring patients will always pay with their OHIP card, not their credit card.

Pour offrir des soins plus commodes aux personnes et aux familles, nous allons élargir encore davantage le champ d'exercice des pharmaciens afin qu'ils puissent soigner un plus grand nombre d'affections courantes pour lesquelles ils sont hautement qualifiés.

Et nous investissons dans des établissements de santé autonomes pour accélérer les soins et faire en sorte que les patients paieront toujours avec leur carte Santé, et non avec leur carte de crédit.

1640

Our plan includes hiring and training thousands of more health care workers, including doctors.

Our government understands it is challenging for Ontario residents in medical school to find residency spots here at home.

We believe if an Ontario student wants to become a doctor and care for their fellow citizens, the government shouldn't stand in their way, we should get out of their way.

So we are.

And we will also add 100 seats for medical undergraduates and continue to prioritize Ontario students for these spots.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, our government invested billions to protect people, communities and businesses. We went to extraordinary lengths to support our province. Unprecedented times called for unprecedented investments in our pandemic response. Now, as we look ahead, because of the miracle of vaccines, we're able to move forward. That means starting to wind down COVID-specific spending, which was always intended to be time-limited, and reinvesting in priority areas, like connecting people to family doctors, home care, pediatric care, mental health and addictions supports care, because we're investing in bringing connected and convenient care to the people of Ontario. So while spending on the pandemic is winding down, investments in a stronger future are ramping up.

Our government will also be investing more to protect our most vulnerable.

Youth leaving the child welfare system are at a higher risk of being trafficked or experiencing homelessness.

That is why our government is providing \$170 million over three years to the Ready, Set, Go Program which supports the success of youth leaving child welfare care.

Les jeunes qui quittent le système de bien-être de l'enfance sont plus susceptibles d'être victimes de la traite de personnes ou d'être en situation d'itinérance.

C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement consacre 170 millions de dollars sur trois ans au programme À vos marques, prêts, partez, qui aide les jeunes à réussir lorsqu'ils quittent le système de bien-être de l'enfance.

We are also expanding program eligibility, which currently ends at 21 years old, to include those up to 23 years old.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are also acting now to keep Ontario communities safe.

We are providing resources to local police and communities to protect law-abiding citizens from illegal gun and gang violence.

Some measures—such as bail reform—must be taken on by the federal government.

There are too many criminals who should be behind bars who have been allowed to roam our streets due to weak federal laws.

The time for action is overdue.

There are too many criminals who should be behind bars, and that's why we're acting.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close with our plan for a strong Ontario, which is truly a comprehensive plan.

For everything we do is connected.

We are tapping into the resources of Ontario's north to supply the critical minerals that can be used in modern electric vehicle batteries that can be produced right here in Ontario.

This new, modern manufacturing, in turn, depends on a stable supply of skilled workers, supported by private-sector unions who will ensure they have the training and other supports they need.

These workers will revitalize local communities that in turn help us build the modern highways, transit, hospitals, schools, broadband and other infrastructure that Ontario families need.

This strong economy is what allows us to invest in health care, housing, and safer streets, while staying on course for a balanced budget.

That is the Ontario I want to see.

I believe that is what all Ontarians want to see.

Cette économie forte est ce qui nous permet d'investir dans les soins de santé, d'investir dans le logement et d'investir dans des rues plus sûres, tout en maintenant le cap sur l'équilibre budgétaire.

Voilà l'Ontario que je veux voir.

And Mr. Speaker.

With these global economic challenges, the road ahead remains uncertain.

And so, our job is not done.

We must continue with our flexible, prudent approach so we can be ready to take on challenges that come our way, while still delivering on our plan.

We can do it.

We can build it.

And we can build it, Mr. Speaker, right here in Ontario.

We have the right plan.

We have the right Premier.

We have the right team.

Mr. Speaker. This is our plan to build an Ontario that will continue to have a resilient economy.

An Ontario that has the best infrastructure in place in the world.

An Ontario that has skilled workers trained for the jobs of tomorrow.

An Ontario that connects you to the care you need.

An Ontario that has a bright future for you, for your family and generations to come.

An Ontario, Mr. Speaker, that is strong.

Now, let's get this budget passed.

Let's get it done.

Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the official opposition, I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Vanthof has moved the adjournment of the debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR UN ONTARIO FORT (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to implement Budget measures and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à modifier diverses lois.

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 Minister of Finance care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, if you're going to give me another 45 minutes. But I'll maybe give you a pass.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1649.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Mike Civil

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
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	