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Mercredi
29 mars 2023

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 29 March 2023 / Mercredi 29 mars 2023

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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	
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	3177
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	3179
Mr. Anthony Leardi	3179
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	3179
Mr. Mike Harris	3179
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3180
Mr. Mike Harris	3180
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	3180
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3181
Ms. Andrea Khanjin.....	3182
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	3182
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	3182
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	3182
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	3183
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3183
Mr. Mike Harris	3184
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	3185
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	3185
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3185
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	3185
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	3186
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	3187

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre	
Mr. John Yakabuski	3187
Cost of living	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	3187
Women's Centre of York Region	
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	3188
Health care	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	3188
Elmira Maple Syrup Festival	
Mr. Mike Harris	3188
World Autism Awareness Day	
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3188
Police services	
Mr. Anthony Leardi	3189

Cabane à sucre du Muséoparc Vanier

Mme Lucille Collard.....3189

Paul Durdin

Ms. Donna Skelly.....3189

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	3189
Hon. Victor Fedeli	3189
Mr. Ted Hsu	3189
Hon. Charmaine A. Williams	3189
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	3189
Mr. Dave Smith.....	3190
MPP Jamie West	3190
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy.....	3190
Hon. David Piccini	3190
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	3190
Hon. Paul Calandra	3190
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	3190

Independent members

Mme Lucille Collard.....3190

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Ontario budget

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	3190
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	3190

Indigenous affairs

Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3191
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	3191

Public transit

Mr. Joel Harden.....	3192
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	3192

Manufacturing sector

Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	3193
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	3193

Social services

Miss Monique Taylor.....	3193
Hon. Michael S. Kerzner.....	3193
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	3193

Police services

Mr. Trevor Jones	3194
Hon. Michael S. Kerzner.....	3194

Health care

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3194
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3195

Electricity supply	
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy.....	3195
Hon. Todd Smith.....	3195
Autism treatment	
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	3196
Hon. Michael Parsa.....	3196
Education funding	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	3196
Hon. Stephen Lecce.....	3196
Skilled trades	
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	3197
Hon. Monte McNaughton.....	3197
Labour legislation	
Mme France G��linas.....	3198
Hon. Monte McNaughton.....	3198
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	3198
Services for children and youth	
Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos.....	3198
Hon. Michael Parsa.....	3198
Education funding	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche.....	3199
Hon. Stephen Lecce.....	3199
Housing	
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto.....	3199
Hon. Steve Clark.....	3200

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
D  P  T DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Protecting Ontarians by Enhancing Gas Station Safety to Prevent Gas and Dash Act, 2023, Bill 88, Mr. Anand / Loi de 2023 visant �� prot��ger la population ontarienne en augmentant la s��curit�� aux stations-service pour ��viter le vol d'essence, projet de loi 88, M. Anand	
First reading agreed to.....	3200
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	3200
J2M Collingwood Holdings Inc. Act, 2023, Bill Pr17, Mr. Saunderson	
First reading agreed to.....	3201
Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023, Bill 89, Ms. French; Mr. Gates; Mme G��linas; Mrs. Gretzky; MPP West / Loi de 2023 sur les briseurs de gr��ve, projet de loi 89, Mme French; M. Gates; Mme G��linas; Mme Gretzky; MPP West	
First reading agreed to.....	3201
Mme France G��linas.....	3201
414087 Ontario Limited Act, 2023, Bill Pr20, Mr. Saunderson	
First reading agreed to.....	3201

PETITIONS / P  TITIONS

Missing persons	
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3201
Arts and cultural funding	
Mme France G��linas.....	3201
Missing persons	
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	3201
Missing persons	
MPP Jamie West.....	3202
Missing persons	
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	3202
Health care	
Mme France G��linas.....	3202
OPP detachment	
Mme France G��linas.....	3203
Northern Health Travel Grant	
Mme France G��linas.....	3203
Scl��rose en plaques	
Mme France G��linas.....	3203
Public sector compensation	
Mme France G��linas.....	3203
Gasoline prices	
Mme France G��linas.....	3203
Front-line workers	
Mme France G��linas.....	3204

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023, Bill 85, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2023 visant �� b��tir un Ontario fort (mesures budg��taires), projet de loi 85, M. Bethlenfalvy	
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	3204
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	3204
Mr. Will Bouma.....	3205
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3205
Ms. Natalie Pierre.....	3205
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3205
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	3206
Mme France G��linas.....	3206
Mr. Will Bouma.....	3207
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3207
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	3208
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	3208
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	3208
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	3209
Mr. Matthew Rae.....	3210
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3210
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	3210
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	3210
Mrs. Daisy Wai.....	3211
Mr. Will Bouma.....	3211
Vote deferred.....	3212

**Working for Workers Act, 2023, Bill 79,
Mr. McNaughton / Loi de 2023 visant à oeuvrer
pour les travailleurs, projet de loi 79,
M. McNaughton**

Ms. Peggy Sattler	3212
Mr. Mike Harris	3213
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3213
Mr. Anthony Leardi	3214
Mme France Gélinas	3214
Mr. Mike Harris	3214
Miss Monique Taylor.....	3214
Mr. Matthew Rae	3214
Mme France Gélinas	3216
Mr. Brian Saunderson	3216
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	3216
Mr. Anthony Leardi	3217
Ms. Peggy Sattler	3217
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	3217
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	3217

Mrs. Robin Martin.....	3219
MPP Jamie West	3219
Mr. John Yakabuski	3219
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	3220
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	3220
Ms. Peggy Sattler	3220
Mr. Ross Romano.....	3220
MPP Jamie West	3222
Ms. Natalie Pierre.....	3222
Miss Monique Taylor	3222
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	3223
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	3223
MPP Jamie West	3223
Mr. John Fraser	3225
Mrs. Daisy Wai	3225
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	3225

Visitor

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly)	3225
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 March 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 mars 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR
UN ONTARIO FORT
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2023, on the motion for second 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): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm proud to be standing up today to speak to the budget bill. It was released last week. Quite frankly, this budget doesn't meet the moment.

Ontarians are struggling with affordability. When I think about my riding, I think about the food bank line I have to pass on the way to work, on College Street at Spadina, for the Fort York Food Bank. Every time I go by, week after week, it's astonishing how many people are waiting for food because they can't make things work anymore.

I think about the people I meet who cannot afford to pay the astronomical amount that they're paying for rent. Even when they have good-paying jobs, earning \$80,000 and up a year, they're astonished that they still cannot find a place that works for them and their family in my riding that's affordable, especially with rent upwards of \$2,500 a month if you're looking for a new one-bedroom apartment in our riding.

I also think about the hospitals in my riding as well: Toronto Western, Toronto General, SickKids. When I look at the emergency room wait-lists in my riding and in hospitals across Ontario, I hear that it takes 22 hours. The average wait is 22 hours when you go to the emergency room right now.

Unfortunately, I don't think this budget does enough to help people. Those examples that I gave explain how people in my riding are not going to be adequately met by this budget.

There was a Toronto Star editorial, "An Ontario Budget Without Vision." There is a sentence in here that I think

really summarizes nicely what this budget is about, and I'm going to read it: "If this budget were a Christmas present, it would be a three-pack of white socks. Not entirely useless. But an exercise in going through the motions." That's not a round of applause there, folks.

Especially at a time when we have record inflation of 6.8% and we have a budget that, overall, increases spending by 1%, what we are going to see is cuts in services. On a real level, we're going to see cuts in services. I want to spend my time going through some of the ministries and some of the sectors to look at the specifics.

The first one that I want to touch on is health care. Health care funding is essentially the same as last year. There's some COVID money that you've stored on to and you've put onto the budget for this year, but essentially funding is the same as last year. That is especially concerning given that emergency rooms across Ontario are closing on weekends—that's unheard of; I've never heard of that before—and when we're seeing that wait time in emergency rooms, and we're also seeing, according to the Financial Accountability Officer, thousands of people waiting for necessary surgery.

I've had a lot of parents reach out to me in my riding, because I have SickKids. I've spoken to the CEO of SickKids and their staff there to get an understanding of what kind of time period people are waiting there. We have 12,000 kids who are waiting for necessary surgery, and what is also concerning is that many of these children are waiting for surgery so long that they're beyond the point where they can get best outcomes. I can't imagine the stress that a parent would be going through to know that their child has moved beyond the window, where they're not getting their surgery in a time frame where their child can reach their full potential and fully recover. That's extremely concerning.

What's also concerning in the budget is that there is a decision to direct more money to for-profit health clinics. I'm deeply disturbed by that. The main reason why I'm disturbed by that is because I have seen what happens when you bring in a two-tiered system, a public health care system and a for-profit health care system that healthier and wealthier people can access. I saw it in Australia, and it is not something to replicate.

We're also seeing the impact of a two-tier health care system already in the situation that's happening in the Ottawa Hospital, where operating rooms are being rented out on the weekend to a consortium of doctors for orthopedic surgeries. We are hearing from nurses that the decision to rent out those rooms is resulting in an exodus of nursing staff time going to staff those operating rooms

on the weekend, and it has led to a reduction in the number of cancer surgeries that can be done during regular times at the Ottawa Hospital on weekdays, because the private surgery clinic can pay nurses a lot more, and they're walking with their feet. I'm very concerned about that model because it does seem like there are some unintended consequences with this decision to create two-tiered health care. I encourage the Conservatives to look into that, investigate and make up your own mind on that, because it is deeply concerning. What are the guardrails that are going to be set up to ensure that the kind of issue we're already seeing does not expand and continue?

When it comes to mental health, I do see that there is \$425 million dedicated to community mental health care and addictions. Personally, I see that as a good sign. I would like more, but that is a good sign. The reason why I see it as a good sign in my riding is because we have a horrible opioid crisis in our riding; we have people dying and overdosing in washrooms, Tim Hortons, McDonald's, and it is extremely concerning. These people need help. It is a step in the right direction. It's not enough, but it's a step in the right direction that there is an acknowledgement that funding for mental health needs to increase.

Then there's transit. When it comes to operations and maintenance, I am very worried about the provincial government's decision to not continue to fund operating funding in this budget. There was a decision by the federal government and the Ontario government to provide emergency operating funding during COVID, and that was a very good decision, because when operating funding and maintenance funding is provided, it provides this additional revenue when ridership is down, and it ensures that our buses run frequently and our trains run frequently. Now that that money is no longer there, what we are going to see is an increase in the cuts that we're already starting to see in Toronto. In my riding, we are going to see less service on line 2, which many of you might take to get to work. We're also going to see cuts to Queen Street and Dufferin Street.

0910

When you look at the cuts that are happening with the TTC, what's most disturbing is that the worst cuts are happening in the marginalized areas, the lower-income areas, the racialized areas—it's bus service. That's a shame, because the lines this government is looking at funding—the Ontario Line, the Yonge line extension—are not going to be in service for upwards of 10 years. What's going to happen in the meantime? How are we going to build the city that we need, where people can get from A to B at a cheap price and quickly, if we're not funding operations and maintenance? It's the lifeblood of our city, and I'm very disappointed by that decision there.

Then there's the issue of housing. I'm hearing the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talk on and on and on about how there is an additional \$202 million each year for two years for homelessness prevention and Indigenous supportive housing, but do not think for a second that this is new money. When you look at the budget and you go to how much money the Ministry of Municipal

Affairs and Housing was allocated in 2022-23, and you compare that to how much they were allocated in 2023-24, you see a \$124-million cut. For all practical purposes, municipalities are going to be seeing less funding for supportive housing, affordable housing and shelter services than they did in the previous year, and that is at a time when homelessness is on the rise. You know it. You see it. I'm sure some of you are living in towns where you are seeing the first encampment you have seen in decades, because people can't afford housing anymore. So it is deeply concerning that there is a cut there.

This is also happening at a time when the Conservatives are moving ahead with Bill 23, which is hampering and curbing municipalities' ability to require developers to pay their fair share for the partial cost of infrastructure, to pay for what is necessary for the new people who are coming in. Affordable housing, co-op housing—you like to say all this is about that. The vast majority of the cuts in development fee revenue will not be coming from co-operative housing and non-market housing, because most of that housing already gets a massive development fee discount. The city of Toronto has an Open Door program where if a developer is going to be building truly affordable housing, they already get their development fee waived.

The bulk of the cut is going to be taking place with the new market housing that is being built, especially on park services and on the thousand-dollar development charge that's allocated to housing services and shelter services. I'm urging this government to look at that, because infrastructure is necessary for Ontario to grow, and you are curbing municipalities' ability to build the infrastructure that is necessary to house new people and make our cities function well.

The final piece I want to talk about is about education. The Conservatives, with this budget, like to say that there has been a historic investment in education. That is not true. The funding increase that has been allocated to the education budget is overwhelmingly a result of the \$2.3 billion in federal money that is earmarked to child care, which you have merged into the education budget, then claiming it's your money and it's all about education JK to SK. It is not true. It is federal money, and it is going to child care.

We know the full extent of the cuts when we look at what school boards are saying are going to be the cuts. School boards across Ontario are developing their budgets right now, and what we are already seeing with the school boards that have developed their budgets and are projecting into 2023-24 is that they are experiencing cuts. The Toronto District School Board is estimating a \$61-million shortfall, with a loss of 522 staffing positions. The Toronto Catholic District School Board is also estimating a shortfall, and the Ottawa-Carleton school board is also estimating a shortfall.

I am very concerned that if this government does not address and increase the Grants for Student Needs funding, then our kids are not going to get the support they need in the classroom that will allow them to reach their full potential.

These are the comments that I have to make about the budget today. I'm looking forward to your questions.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was about as much of a sixes and sevens type of speech I've ever heard. In fact, I took great pains to listen each time the member opposite decided to mention the city of Ottawa. I welcome her there to actually see the great work that the Ottawa Hospital is doing, particularly with its partnerships—the partnerships that have been refuted by the members opposite yet have been chastised by our Ottawa Hospital to say that surgical care has improved. As an outpatient each week, I've seen that.

She also speaks about the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. I wonder what the member feels about some of the ongoing anti-Semitism that's happening at Sir Robert Borden High School and if there should be performance standards and if there should be accountability standards placed on our school boards for inaction when it comes to those issues.

I would like to know from the member from Toronto what she thinks about those critical issues—from this member from Ottawa.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Nepean.

I'm not exactly sure what sixes and sevens means, so maybe you can explain that in your question.

We are firmly committed to ending anti-Semitism in Ontario. In our riding, we have many shuls that have been targeted with hate crimes, and we have been working with them to make sure they get federal money to increase their security measures. We are fully in support of measures to bring in a comprehensive anti-Semitism curriculum into the school board, and I am proud to support that.

We are hearing from nurses at the Ottawa Hospital—they have been very clear about this. And I'll make sure to send you Kenyon Wallace's article in the Star so you can read it for yourself, where nurses have been very concerned that a four-day cancer blitz was reduced to a three-day cancer blitz because they were not able to find the—

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member, during her discourse, stated that the city of Toronto already exempts certain developments from development charges and that those exempted developments were either not-for-profit or low-income developments, if I understood her correctly. If I understood her correctly, she said that the city of Toronto already exempts certain identified homes from development charges. If that is the case, then it would logically follow that the city of Toronto is already implementing part of Bill 23 and agrees with Bill 23. Does that analysis follow? Does the member agree?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your question.

The city of Toronto has the Open Door program that developers, non-profits, for-profit, co-op providers can apply to, where development fees are reduced or waived in return for them building non-market housing or affordable housing.

The challenge we have with Bill 23 is that the definition that is being used for “affordable” is not affordable—80% of average market rent is not affordable; 80% of average sale price means a developer can get a 100% development fee discount and build a one-bedroom condo that is sold for \$440,000. There is no one on minimum wage who can afford a \$440,000 condo; it's not happening. So the definition of Bill 23's affordability program is concerning.

The final thing is that the city of Toronto is deeply concerned about Bill 23 and—

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to thank my colleague from University-Rosedale for her comments. I have the pleasure of working with her on the municipal affairs and housing file.

This government has broken its word to municipalities, their promise to make them whole, with the cuts to development fees. And leaving aside the issue of whether or not those fees should be paid, what are the effects of this government breaking its word? What kind of money would they have to pay to make municipalities whole, and what are some of the effects that municipalities are going to suffer because of that decision to break their word?

0920

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for that question.

We are already seeing the impact of this. We did a look at the projected property tax increases for municipalities all across the GTHA, and they're seeing an increase of upwards of 7%, 8% in property tax increases at the same time as we're seeing service cuts and infrastructure cuts.

AMO estimates that, overall, municipalities will lose about \$5 billion in infrastructure revenue over the next nine years because of Bill 23, and it's already impacting housing development and housing starts. Waterloo has a development that they have had to delay because they don't have the funding to provide the necessary infrastructure to hook that subdivision up to the broader community. So it's affecting your own goals.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: The NDP want to sit here and talk about affordability, but I just don't understand how that word can even be in their vocabulary sometimes. They have sat here time and time again and have voted against every single affordability measure that this Progressive Conservative government has put in place. They want the highest carbon tax in all of Canada.

How can you sit there and talk about affordability when everything that you stand for, the ideology that you perpetrate across Ontario, will literally take money out of people's pockets, will take food off of people's tables? We're going to see the carbon tax increase in, what, a week, colleagues—I think, about 6%. And you guys sit here and say, “Oh, the PCs don't want to put money back in your pocket,” and we're going to ruin everything. What say you?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Goodness, you seem angry.

Mr. Mike Harris: I am angry.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, okay.

The biggest expense that people have today is housing. When I look at the cost of housing in Ontario, when I look at the cost of rent, the legacy of this government is, it has made it extremely difficult for people to get by. Over the last five years, housing prices have gone up, the price of a mortgage has gone up, the cost of rent has gone up, and that is exactly what is making it difficult for people to find a home, live a good life, pay the bills, raise their children. That legacy is on you.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her comments and for pointing out the \$1-billion cut that AMO pointed out that this government has enacted through Bill 23, one that—they also promised that they would make municipalities whole and then failed to do so within the budget.

Right now, housing starts are stagnant—and I believe the member from University–Rosedale has called on the need for a public builder.

I want to ask the member, what kind of protections for renters would be responsive to the current moment that Ontarians face right now? What should have been done within this budget?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that question.

The government's response to addressing the housing crisis has been abysmal.

In order to address the housing affordability and housing supply crisis that we have, we certainly need to build 1.5 million new homes in areas zoned for development.

We need to end exclusionary zoning—so going further than the government went in Bill 23.

We need to stabilize rent prices, because 30% of Ontarians' rent—and they're paying more on average now, in some cities, than people are paying in a mortgage. They can't save up enough money for a down payment because rent is so expensive.

We need to clamp down on investor-led speculation—so we build homes for people who intend to live in them.

And we need to establish a public builder to construct affordable housing on public land at cost.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have time for one quick question.

Mr. Mike Harris: How much would a public builder in a Soviet-style system cost the province of Ontario?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that excellent question.

We have long called for a public builder to construct affordable housing on public land at cost. When you look at—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: At cost. When you look at using a public builder to build homes, you can get money at a far lower interest rate. You can reduce the 20% profit margin that developers typically take, and you reduce the costs by upwards of 30% because—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm answering your question—at cost. You can reduce the costs by up to 30% because you already have access to public land.

That is a very different approach than what this government is doing, where they're selling off land in secret contracts to for-profit builders to build luxury condos. That is not the—

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to take an opportunity today to speak to the Building a Strong Ontario Act, Bill 85, as it's enumerated.

I want to thank the Premier for his extraordinary leadership. Of course, our entire caucus colleagues go to extraordinary efforts to make sure that not only our voices are heard—but the opportunities in our various constituencies, and that they're reflected year in and year out in the objectives of the budget and the resources that are attached to them.

Budget 2023, Ontario's plan to build a responsible, targeted approach to help businesses and people today, is a reflection of a post-COVID world. Everyone agrees that there are still lingering challenges, both clinically and from a business perspective—an impact of COVID, as it was for a couple of years. I guess the question, and the opportunity moving forward, is really about how a government would respond, how we mobilize to ensure that we improve the lives, the perspective, the outcome, the opportunity for people and our communities that make this great province, our businesses, and the vibrancy of a dynamic economy that appears to be now and very much on the horizon for this province.

Still, there's no question that there's ongoing global uncertainty. At the same time, Ontario is trying to understand, moving forward, how we fit in as a sub-sovereign government to all of the challenges faced around the world. So with that as my pivot point, I'm going to take a northern perspective, obviously, and try to reflect on things in this budget that talk about the opportunity in Ontario, particularly in northern Ontario—folks from Capreol to Kenora want to know what's relevant about this budget—but also, of course, in context, are the very serious crises around the world that Ontario could and should and, as a result of this budget, will see as an opportunity to bring solutions to some of those challenges.

That would start, obviously, with mining and forestry. Resource continues to drive local economies across our vast region and, of course, the financial support for the Ring of Fire is important—as I like to say, “critical,” with no pun intended. This is an opportunity that I've been working on now in two chapters of my political career, and it sure is nice to see that the resources attached to the Ring of Fire are focused on the opportunity for governments, the work that we should be doing. Things like building a corridor to prosperity, from the Trans-Canada Highway into the central part of the most northern part of northern Ontario, aren't just about an opportunity to extract critical minerals. In fact, one might argue, having lived and worked in many of these isolated communities proximal,

it's an opportunity to develop important economic, social and health benefits for those isolated and remote communities.

0930

Of course, other features like the junior exploration program take a look at a conversation we need to develop even more, and that is the critical mineral opportunities outside of the Ring of Fire, which are moving fairly quickly. We saw that yesterday with the celebration of Taykwa Tagamou Nation and their partnership with Canadian Nickel Co.

None of this can be done without a clear commitment from energy, keeping energy costs lower for people—things like the Northern Energy Advantage Program, something that I started some time ago to make sure that our industries are competitive. It's not just about our resource sector; it's about things like steel production. My friend at Sault Ste. Marie with—the Algoma electric arc furnace is going to transform the sector in partnership, down here in southern Ontario, with a similar operation, but also to create green steel. Having grown up in the steel belt in my younger days, that's important. I think we've made a quantum leap there. These kinds of investments in energy competitiveness help to keep steel production in northern Ontario as good as or better than anywhere else in the world.

I want to take a little time to talk about roads. Our budgets operate in combination with some multi-year planning, so in previous budgets, as in this one, there are plans over the course of a number of years. This year, we highlighted an additional \$5-million investment in the northern roads. This is an important road network for people all across northern Ontario to be connected, especially through the winter months. We acknowledge that the effects of climate change, as they are, and the uncertainty around weather make the length of those winter roads a moving target, if you will. Some innovations, drainage, bridges etc., are often realized in different locations where we previously hadn't anticipated—or further fortifications, in an effort to keep those winter roads. They're valuable. They're important not just for people to move between the communities, but for us to get critical infrastructure into those places.

I want to talk a little bit about hospital infrastructure. Over the past couple of years, investments have been made in hospitals and health care facilities in Kenora–Rainy River riding; we are at the precipice of some more significant ones in the not-too-distant future. The commitment by the Premier, through this budget, to understand and recognize this opportunity will track very well for us in the coming years. The Lake of the Woods District Hospital, or the All Nations Hospital, as it's called, represents an extraordinary opportunity, and upgrades to some other health care facilities in our region.

Training and the capacity to do work will always be at the forefront of northern Ontario's community needs. I would just point to Greenstone right now—150 jobs available, 250 homes required to be built. Bricks-and-mortar training centres are required across the north.

Whether it's through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, where we've made another investment of \$100 million, or through the larger ministry allocations, there is no question that when it comes to training dollars, we stand well-positioned to build out in our communities where mining and forestry are on the move.

Madam Speaker, I want to use the last minute and a half or so to talk about a couple of other important pieces.

Agriculture in northern Ontario is on the move. It represents the largest arable land potential for agriculture activities in our province. We were delighted to hear that Lakehead University will become the third school in this country to offer a veterinary medicine program. Big-animal veterinary services are a critical piece for our agriculture sector to grow. The Rainy River district is in fact the beginning of the Prairies proper that span across western Canada. And the Clay Belt region, in and around Thunder Bay, extending out to Dryden—they are long-standing agricultural districts.

Homelessness and mental health, addictions—they should be read together given how closely they are attached. With more than half a billion dollars dedicated, in combination, I think we're going to be able to take a quantum leap forward to help people on our streets and with mental health and addiction. In Kenora, where I live, we have made a lot of great strides, but there's more work to be done. We're encouraged by some of the projects in the hopper now, in the government's consideration, through this budget.

And of course, finally, for health human resources—this is something that affects us province-wide, and I'm delighted to see a plan for new doctors, new capacities in nurses' training and ensuring that northern Ontario and northwestern Ontario have the tools they need to move forward in a vibrant, integrated economy.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the minister from Kenora–Rainy River. I listened intently to his presentation.

My question is with regard to this budget: It's a budget that has failed to meet the moment because across Ontario, students have struggled as a result of the closure of schools, the COVID pandemic, and school violence is something that is not addressed. It's not even mentioned within the budget, yet we know the numbers are staggering and the numbers are on the rise.

My question to the member is, why is this government sticking their heads in the sand when it comes to the safety of students in our schools?

Hon. Greg Rickford: That's a significant departure from the truth in terms of what the budget reflects. As much respect as I have for that member, he might want to read the budget a little bit more carefully.

Of course, our investments in education involve supporting the construction and renewal of schools and child care spaces. This includes new schools in Atikokan, Ontario, in Iroquois Falls and North Bay, and school renewals and expansions in Chelmsford and Sudbury. I'm

going to limit my discussion to northern Ontario; I'm sure there are myriad other examples. In fact, contrary to the previous government, where 600 schools were closed—many of them with the support of the NDP, in a minority situation—we're moving ahead to ensure that we have better education infrastructure so that the safety and security of our students is paramount and reflected—

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the minister for his great, great speech on the budget. I'm aware he was at the food summit on Monday, a huge economic forum bringing people from all walks of life there.

I want to ask him if he could update this Legislature on some of the things that he presented in terms of the economic and food security issues in the north.

Hon. Greg Rickford: There's always a method to my madness. I'm a bit of a farmer myself. I plant seeds in many of my speeches in an effort to work with my colleagues in the cabinet towards eventually arriving at substantive programs that can make a difference in the lives of northerners.

One of those key areas that I've been working on is food security and food sovereignty. Costs are high enough in northern Ontario by comparison. I don't dispute that costs of things like food are already high here in southern Ontario—but the farther north you get, the more expensive; this couldn't be more exemplified in our isolated communities. That's why we've been paying particular attention, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, to food security and food sovereignty. What we're building here is an exciting capacity, born from the leadership of these Indigenous communities, from micro-farming to community gardening, to ensure that they have some carriage and control of their ability to grow fresh fruits and vegetables.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I just want to talk a little bit about transit, as the member mentioned that in his debate as well.

In southwestern Ontario—in London, specifically—our Via Rail service was cut tremendously. Greyhound, the bus line, has stopped running. The government did have a pilot project for GO Transit in London, but it's just not adequate enough.

I looked through the budget, and there are so many infrastructure and transit projects here.

I want to ask the member why London was left out of the transit projects that need to happen so that the southwestern corridor is part of the economic hub that you're trying to build.

0940

Hon. Greg Rickford: Of course, I think back to a couple of chapters in my political career when we turned issues into opportunities. The member might benefit from listening to the experience that I had.

When Greyhound pulled off the Trans-Canada Highway, a lot of people felt like that was terrible. The reality

was that there were more and more people coming back and forth between Alberta and the east coast, and you couldn't actually get on the Greyhound in Kenora to get to Thunder Bay, or in the opposite direction. That's why our government invested, through the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, to ensure that bus service—and I'm talking about bus service here, to my member, to a vast region. No offence, but my riding is the size of a small European country. Now that bus goes all the way from Toronto to Winnipeg and every part in between, to many small communities across northern Ontario. Most—

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Minister, for your speech. I like how you highlighted energy and the investments and being competitive. Those are critical things for our province.

I would like to ask the member if he could speak to the voluntary Clean Energy Credit Registry work. And what are the environmental and economic benefits of this registry?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Madam Speaker, in a region the size of one of the largest European countries that you could think of—or a combination thereof; name them—and significant, intensive activities in the resource sector, we're always looking for an opportunity to have an advantage when it comes to energy—I mentioned the Northern Energy Advantage Program—but also to make the kinds of conversions that will contribute to a greener and cleaner environment.

Of course, it goes without saying that things like the Ring of Fire and critical mineral projects have to go ahead in order to live up to the opportunity of the single biggest environmental policy by a sub-sovereign government the world over, but also to ensure two things: one, that the activities we're doing in the resource sector have the cleanest form of energy—we now have mines completely operating by electricity—but also to have a cost and a tax credit system that makes them—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: There are over 80 First Nations members coming today, including five chiefs, and their message is very clear. They are sending a message to this government that they do not want mining on their land without full, free, prior and informed consent beforehand. Can you commit to that promise?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The member should know that the four or five communities that are here—I have very good relationships with their leadership. We work on a number of key northern development projects, and there are some exciting things moving ahead, forward.

I'm a guy who builds consensus. That is really what this is all about. If the member opposite is going to stand in her place and say that the consent of one specific community proximal to other Indigenous communities who want it is the way to go, she's going to have a really hard time helping this province move forward on some of the most responsible, environmentally sound projects the province

over. That is a substantive reality. It was echoed by none other than Jody Wilson-Raybould, a friend of mine who spoke in the House of Commons on these very kinds of matters.

I'm all for building consensus. I think it's high time that Indigenous communities and municipalities in northern Ontario join together for—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to commend the minister for his years here, as well as his years on Parliament Hill. I had the privilege of serving in Her Majesty's cabinet for four years with him, and I can say—and having seen him last night working with Indigenous leaders from throughout Ontario and, in particular, the north—that he has been able to bring in an engagement we have never seen in this place during my time here.

I'd like him to elaborate on some of the relationships he has worked on, particularly with our national chief, RoseAnne Archibald, as well as her brother, who were here talking about Indigenous rights and the responsibilities we all have.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): You have 50 seconds for a response.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Boy, that's not a 50-second answer, but I appreciate the opportunity.

It just reminds us that when we work with Indigenous leaderships, we're not just talking about "the" relationship, which is often imbued with crown relationships, which are important, but "a" relationship—working effectively with them.

Having the now national chief sit down and say, "Let's create a prosperity table. Let's see what kind of ideas we can generate," culminated and manifested itself in a \$25-million announcement we made in the fall economic statement to move forward on Indigenous-led economic opportunities, mapping in the supply chain in key sectors. This has never been done before, and it's pre-positioning these communities and Indigenous youth to have a better economic opportunity—

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today and provide the voices of the great people of London North Centre, as well as offer to debate many of the submissions to our pre-budget consultations that this government has chosen to ignore. I had the opportunity to travel the province with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, hearing many of the stories that affect Ontarians the most, and what we see, unfortunately, with this budget is a budget that has missed the moment. It's a budget that could have been truly progressive. It could have been forward-thinking. It could have shown that this government has listened to stakeholders across the province. And yet, we see a budget that shows this government is only listening to certain groups.

People are feeling the crunch at this time, and the government has done scarce little to address the affordability crisis and the stresses on families, seniors, people living with disabilities and students.

We often hear words in this chamber such as "transparency" and "accountability," yet this budget really seems to lack those aspects.

Transparency is a matter of being open. It's a matter of being frank. It's a matter of being clear and being less subject to interpretation. This government would like to use folksy, homespun language, and yet that does not mean their actions are transparent.

In terms of accountability—it should show that one can easily understand and explain what is happening within this budget. This government instead engages in pretense. They engage in a very complicated shell game in order to hide where they are cutting as opposed to where they're pretending to invest.

Within municipal affairs and housing, they have cut \$124 million, yet on the other hand, they talk about the money that they are investing in supportive housing. When we had the opportunity to travel to Kingston, the mayor of Kingston explained how the municipality had a very forward-thinking approach to the model of supportive housing that they provided within their city. That city spent \$18 million in one year to provide that continuum, that wraparound model of supports. And yet, this government would pat themselves on the back for investing scarce little across the province in supportive housing.

I'd also like to turn my comments to education.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to question the Minister of Education about why this budget did not mention violence in schools. Curiously—with this lack of transparency and lack of accountability—my question was not addressed in a really logical or fulsome way. Instead, the minister decided to talk about federal responsibilities on bail reform. Again, even in his answer, he never mentioned school violence and never mentioned why it was absent from the budget.

In my area, the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local reported that in June 2022, there were 463 reported acts of violence; in September 2022, 687; in October 2022, 982; in November 2022, 693; in December 2022, 490; and in January 2023, 502. And this government has chosen to ignore it.

It's shocking to think of the lack of investment that we have seen within schools. Again, with this very complicated shell game that this government would play, they're claiming to invest in schools while they're hiding the fact that what they are calling their investments is actually federal money in terms of child care.

0950

I wanted to add the voices in the pre-budget submission of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. They recommended that there would be an update to the Grants for Student Needs, that there would be funding that reflects the specialized needs of students who receive special education services. We know that the funding model has been broken for a number of years. We know that it is a mathematical model based on enrolment, not based on student needs. The government had the opportunity to stand up for families, to stand up for students living with disabilities, and they chose not to. Instead, in

terms of the funding model—as I said, it is a statistical model whereby the government provides an arbitrary amount of money to school boards with the hope that they spend it on students who need it, yet there are no guarantees within this. There is no guarantee that school boards will (1) spend the money on students who need it, and (2), even if they do spend it on students who need it, there's no guarantee that it will be spent in a way that is developmentally appropriate or addresses their needs properly. They've chosen not to do it.

What we also see in this budget is an increasing focus on privatization. We see the funneling of public money for publicly delivered services into the hands of private, for-profit health care providers.

I wanted to add the voices of OPSEU, who recommended ending privatization: “Public services and privatization simply don't mix. That's because public services are based on the core principles of equality, accessibility, transparency, and fairness. These principles stand in stark contrast to the goals of privatization—namely the ability to reward shareholders with profits by selling services only to those who can pay. Not only are quality and accessibility harmed, privatization costs more—especially in terms of the greater cost of borrowing and corporate profits.”

And yet, this government has ideologically tied their star to the concept of privatization, and it is going to erode our services across the province.

No one was in support of this government's wage-suppression, humiliating legislation, Bill 124, yet this government is still engaged in the costly appeal. They had the opportunity within the budget of 2023 to step back, to admit they were wrong, to follow the courts and admit that they are going to continue to lose. I think it's up to 14 or 15 cases that this government has lost in court now, and yet they are blindly and blissfully spending public money to appeal their losing court case.

Within the budget, we also saw submissions from community support services, who indicate—they do wonderful work. They are to be understood as also separate from home and community care. They cite that in 2020, the province estimated that it would cost \$103 per day to provide care for a long-term-care equivalent client at home with home and community care. This contrasts with \$201 per day to provide comparable service in long-term care and \$730 per day to support ALC patients in hospitals. I don't see the investment.

We heard from folks from Meals on Wheels, from the Alzheimer's Society, and from folks with hospices.

We don't see any funding where it needs to be to keep people in their homes, where they're happiest, where they're healthiest, and where it is the best place for them to be. Instead, we see funneling into private, for-profit enterprises.

As well, we see this government which has really neglected and rejected seniors. We see that they are going to provide \$1,000 more per year per senior, which is nowhere near enough. If you divide that out over 12

months, that is not nearly enough money that seniors need in order to address the cost-of-living escalation.

They're also withdrawing money from the unhoused, claiming that they are no longer going to provide them with health care services and a funding program that the government says is no longer necessary. It's as though the unhoused and their health care needs and people who are new to Canada only counted because of COVID, and now the government is prepared to simply ignore them.

What about seniors, who are going to have to wait 18 months in order to get an eye exam? It's reprehensible.

This government talks a lot about respecting seniors, about respecting students—and yet this budget fails to do so.

I wanted to add the voice of professor emeritus of public management at the University of Toronto, Sandford Borins. Sandford was talking about the budget consultation survey that was available online. He wrote:

“What is Missing.

“What is most remarkable about the choices” within that public survey “is that they never include the following words or phrases: climate change, environment, renewable, sustainable, conservation, green, or greenbelt. The environment is not the only priority that isn't mentioned. The word culture also doesn't appear, not even in the question about making Ontario an attractive destination. Higher education appears only in that question, but not in questions about improving health care, filling labour shortages, or improving community services.”

Sandford went on to talk about plausible deniability. He said, “The Ford government has often been secretive, for example”—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we have run out of time for debate, but we do have time for questions.

Mr. Mike Harris: While I do have a great deal of respect for the member opposite, when he talks about Bill 124 and people not supporting it, colleagues—I believe we brought Bill 124 in before the last election. On June 2 of last year, the people elected the Ontario PC government to a massive, 83-seat majority.

I propose a question to the member opposite: If people didn't like Bill 124, as he claims, why did they return us to government and them, again, back to opposition?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his question. I also have a great deal of respect for that member.

I would like to remind the member that in my discussion, I was talking about the pre-budget consultations. In the pre-budget consultations, we heard from numerous delegations, all of whom were deeply, deeply disturbed by Bill 124. They cited the labour shortages that it created, how it was humiliating, and how it also caused a great deal of disparity in certain hospital departments. This government has thrown good money after bad. They are really disinvesting in our public system by allowing this focus on temp agency nurses. Within the same department, there will be a nurse who is paid twice as much as a nurse who has been there for many years.

We also had the opportunity within this budget to address wage parity between home care, long-term care and acute care, and it's something that this government has ignored, because they don't care about nurses.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to commend my colleague the member for London North Centre on his remarks. We come from a community where there are currently at least 2,000 homeless people who are on the by-name list. There are many other people who are precariously housed. We have 6,000 applications for social housing, representing 11,000 parents and children in our community.

London has identified a need for a minimum of 600 net new supportive housing units. We know from a recent supportive housing complex, Embassy Commons, which has only 72 units, that the cost is significant. That was \$22 million for one 72-unit building.

Will this budget enable London or any other municipality to meet the need for supportive housing?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from London West for her very insightful comments and her very accurate portrayal of the struggles that London faces.

We also know that, in London, one in four children live in poverty. With so many people waiting on an endless list for supportive housing, it is unconscionable. The government has it within their power to address this by making sure that there is a public builder, by actually creating these units and not leaving it up to private industry to create them themselves. There are many great people who are doing wonderful work within the space of providing those supports, but this government has chosen not to fund it properly.

We also heard from CMHA across the province, who are calling for an 8% increase to their services. This government blinked and gave them 5%.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member for his speech.

We do understand that we are in uncertain economic times right now, and the people who are being hit the hardest are our most vulnerable.

The member from London North Centre made a comment about the stresses on seniors right now.

So I have to ask the question: Will the opposition support our proposed expansion of the Guaranteed Annual Income System program, starting July 2024, so that another 100,000 seniors will be eligible to receive monthly payments?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her question. She is absolutely right that we are living in uncertain economic times. What I am certain of is that this government has plenty of money, but it chooses to spend it in ways that do not address the crisis.

The FAO has shown that this government, in the last quarter, failed to spend \$6 billion—money that did not go

out the door; money they could have spent on any number of services to make life better, especially for seniors, for young people, for people living with disabilities.

This government would pat itself on the back for the measly 5% increase they've given on the ODSP program, but that's nowhere near enough to address the rising cost of living. We on this side of the House have firmly advocated for doubling ODSP as well as OW.

This government could also protect seniors by making sure that there are increased rent controls and by not allowing REITs to gobble up rental properties to redevelop them into luxury units. But this government again has blinked when it comes to the rights of seniors.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank the member from London North Centre for his in-depth debate on the budget.

In Hamilton, we definitely have a huge homeless problem. We've seen, in the last half of last year, 22 people die while homeless; the average age, I believe, was 43, and men highly grouped—a lot of criminal activity, drug abuse, mental health issues.

We've definitely seen this budget miss the mark when it comes to our vulnerable population.

Can the member talk a little bit more about what he sees in his community when it comes to homelessness and whether the \$202 million will even touch the mark when addressing supportive housing in our communities?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for accurately addressing the struggles that many people face within our communities—because the vulnerable are not vulnerable; they have been marginalized. They have been pushed to the margins of society because of bad policy, because of governments that have chosen not to act.

The last Liberal government sat on their hands for 15 years while social assistance rates dwindled, while they didn't keep up with the cost of living. There were the dramatic and drastic Mike Harris cuts back in the 1990s, but the Liberals did nothing to make it better for folks.

We know that people are struggling because they're unhoused, and they're struggling with their mental health largely because they are unhoused.

In London, we have a whole-of-community response plan to create 600 supportive housing units. That is something that has been community-led. We also need the province to step in.

To the member: \$202 million is a drop in the bucket when it comes to the need that is all across Ontario, and this government has missed the mark.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's great to hear the member from London North Centre.

Speaking of construction—I think there's definitely a consensus in the House that we have a shortage of housing, and we want to take action. We've got a bold action plan

in order to get homes and rental units built, and we've got proposals with the federal government.

One part of this budget bill is supporting training centres, to the tune of over \$200 million to organizations and unions such as LIUNA and the operating engineers, which are in my riding of Oakville. They're the crane operators. We've got to thank them, because they do all the great work to build high-rises across this province. They need money to build their training facilities. I looked at their website. I've talked to them. These unions are ecstatic with the budget. You may not agree with all that's in the budget—I understand that—but can you support this component?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Oakville for his comments. We had the opportunity to travel the province together on the standing committee, which I greatly enjoyed.

When I think about this government's response to unions, I also need to cite the most recent court loss by this government when it comes to third-party advertising. Their legislation, which they had mirrored from the Liberals, was unfortunately something that was struck down.

When it comes to the creation of housing, this government isn't even following its own recommendations from the housing supply action plan. The housing starts across this province are at an all-time low, and the province needs to do its part by enlisting a public builder to create those homes, to spur investment, to make sure that we are creating affordable and supportive homes—not leaving everything up to private industry, but actively engaging with the economy and not sitting on the sidelines.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: The 2023 budget, Building a Strong Ontario, will allow our province to navigate the current global economic uncertainty by using a targeted and reasonable approach to help people and businesses today, while laying a strong fiscal foundation for our future generations. These measures will keep costs down for families and businesses. They will address the province's labour shortage and will help build our economy to ensure that Ontario is a place to grow, a place to live, and a place to prosper for many years to come.

Although this budget is doing truly wonderful things for the entire province, I want to highlight the amazing initiatives that are outlined for the residents of York region.

For far too long, residents of Newmarket–Aurora have complained about the gridlock on our roads and highways, with a public transit system that left riders longing for a transit system that is more accessible, easy to use and, most importantly, more convenient to use.

Earlier this week, I was reading an email from a constituent of mine. He voiced his concerns to me about how our transit system is not convenient if you are planning a trip downtown. This constituent was trying to get to the Scotiabank Arena to watch a Leafs game. He

wanted to know, what is our government doing to improve transit?

Madam Speaker, this is part of our Building a Strong Ontario Act. We are investing \$70.5 billion over the next 10 years for transit, including the electrification of our GO Transit system and building a second track so that the residents of my riding can expect 15-minute, two-way GO trains from Aurora to Union Station and back again. This means that Steve, my constituent, can get to that Leafs game conveniently.

By the way, Steve, you're going to be able to pay for getting on the GO train with your credit card. Just tap and go.

Building a strong Ontario means that we will eliminate double fares for most local transit services when commuters use GO Transit.

Our government is also working on the largest subway expansion in Canadian history by building the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the Yonge North subway extension and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension.

We will make the necessary improvements required to finally create an easy-to-use and connected public transit system which will serve generations to come.

We have also designated \$27.9 billion to support the planning and construction of highway expansion and rehabilitation. Part of this money will go toward constructing a bridge crossing over the future Bradford Bypass, which will allow Yonge Street, between 8th Line and 9th Line, to cross over the future Bradford Bypass. The project will also widen County Road 4, from two to four lanes. For my constituents—both businesses and residents—they will have faster access and lesser commute times.

I recall speaking with a constituent last May who is a driver for one of the big courier services and, oh, what praises he sung to me about how he will be able to deliver packages faster, instead of sitting in heavily congested traffic, and he'll be able to do his work much more efficiently.

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Our plan to continue helping to grow the economy by getting shovels in the ground to build key infrastructure projects will provide jobs for years to come.

Ontario is helping workers, job seekers and apprentices get the skills they need to take on new opportunities and advance their careers with an additional \$75 million over the next three years to enhance the Skills Development Fund. In my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, there are many great benefits for my constituents that extend to all of York region and even Peel region.

Construct, a Blue Door enterprise, is a non-profit that has been a recipient of the Skills Development Fund grant program. They have people in their program who come from Ontario Works and other social programs—people who are looking to learn a trade, gain a pathway to a good-paying job. The results speak for themselves: Over 240 people have graduated from their program in less than two years and are now working in good-paying construction jobs with benefits and a pension. This program is helping

people go from minimum wage jobs, where they found they had no purpose, to a job that is allowing them to realize their dreams.

By creating jobs and helping Ontarians gain the skills they need to obtain good-paying jobs, our government is helping Ontarians build themselves a prosperous life while also building the province together.

As I shift into the health portion of my remarks, I would like to express my appreciation to all of Ontario's health care professionals for your work, your dedication and your commitment to delivering exceptional care to the people of Ontario during the pandemic, and continuing today.

I am proud to say that our government is making health care more connected and convenient for the people of Ontario. Since the fall economic statement was released, the government has increased health sector investments by an additional \$15.3 billion over three years.

It is my privilege to stand in this House today and detail how our government is investing in care for Ontarians that is more easily accessible and connected.

Our health care system has been under great pressure; specifically, during the pandemic. However, in the decade-plus leading up to the pandemic, we were dealing with an abundance of hallway health care. This is not good enough for Ontarians. We have a world-class health system but one that needs our help to improve quality of care.

We are helping the system to succeed in serving Ontarians by reducing surgical wait times and increasing diagnostic imaging accessibility. The sooner patients are diagnosed, the better the outcome.

We knew we needed to be innovative and creative to solve hallway health care.

I am proud to announce that the government is reducing wait times for people across the province by investing an additional \$72 million over the 2023-24 fiscal year to make more surgeries available at community, surgical and diagnostic centres, to connect people to care faster. This investment will allow hospitals to focus their time and efforts on more complex and high-risk surgeries, will ease the pressure on emergency departments, and will reduce surgical wait-lists.

Speaker, I want to focus specifically on what we are doing to help young Ontarians access care. We have committed more than \$200 million—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member, but unfortunately we have run out of time for debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENFREW COUNTY VIRTUAL TRIAGE AND ASSESSMENT CENTRE

Mr. John Yakabuski: What do you do when you need health care but you don't have a family physician? Well,

in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you call on the Renfrew County VTAC. That's the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre. Renfrew County VTAC was born out of the pandemic and since that time has continually demonstrated its value and that it deserves permanent funding. Last Friday, at the Renfrew county paramedic base, I was able to deliver the good news that permanent funding has been approved. Throughout the pandemic and beyond, I heard from Renfrew county residents and health care professionals about the importance of this program.

The county of Renfrew and its staff have to be given a great deal of credit as not only the designers but, through their paramedics, the deliverers of this tremendous service. I want to thank them for continuing to be innovative and persistent in bringing health care advancements not only to Renfrew county but designing them in such a way that can be adapted to any rural area in the province.

I certainly want to thank Premier Doug Ford and, in particular, health minister Sylvia Jones, who could not have been more receptive in learning about, understanding and becoming a strong supporter of VTAC.

The people of Renfrew county, particularly those without a family physician, are grateful for this announcement, and as their MPP, I share their gratitude.

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This week, my office received a voice mail where a woman just said, "Butter at the only grocery store I can walk to is \$9/pound, just thought you should know," and then she hung up. She sounded hopeless, and I don't know how to give her hope. I'd like to be able to say that her cost of living is going to improve, but we saw the government's budget last week and there's no hope there.

Food prices, in particular, have been a pain point for Ontarians. Grocery prices are 11% higher than they were a year ago.

Have wages kept up with the cost of living? No.

The government refuses to increase the minimum wage, so low-income workers will continue to struggle more.

And after inflation, social assistance programs are providing less help than they did a year ago.

The government's own numbers show that Bill 23 has failed, and their policies will result in fewer new homes being built this year than last year. Between that and no real rent control, housing costs won't get any better.

This government wants Ontarians to think that the higher cost of living is a new normal, but this is not normal.

Our vision for an Ontario with more opportunity and prosperity is possible and provides more hope for everybody, and it's shameful that this government and their budget don't share in that vision.

WOMEN'S CENTRE OF YORK REGION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Speaker, I would like to recognize the Women's Centre of York Region, which has been—and continues to be—a driving force in York region for more than 45 years. They offer unique programming and services to women who are seeking a positive change in their life. Their goal is to fully support each woman on their personal journey of discovery.

Earlier this week, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and myself visited the Women's Centre of York Region in Newmarket, as they were selected to be part of a \$6.9-million investment over three years, as part of the Investing in Women's Futures Program. This investment will provide a range of flexible services and employment-readiness supports for women facing social and economic barriers, including those experiencing gender-based violence and social isolation.

In 2021-22, the Investing in Women's Futures Program helped more than 1,300 women across the province secure employment, start their own business or pursue further training or education.

I am truly excited to see the positive changes that the Women's Centre of York Region will achieve for women in my riding and throughout York region.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I just want to note that I think I fully understand now what the health strategy is for the Conservative Party. We saw yesterday, with the information about people having their eye examinations reduced, that obviously people with problems are going to have to pay. I now can see where the future is.

When people go to hospital for a hip replacement—you'll go in, and there will be a menu at the door that will say, "Hip replacement surgery: covered by OHIP; anaesthetic, extra. What's it worth to you? Post-surgery recovery: nurse prices vary—but for free, we'll pin a note on your gown saying, 'They just had surgery. We urge you to be cautious.' Hallway: free, but to get into a room, you'll have to pay extra."

1020

Speaker, that's where we're headed. The sleight of hand, the shell game with this government is, they'll cut the services; they'll cut the services; they'll cut the services. You'll get something or other covered by OHIP, but everything else will be like an American hospital, where you pay for each juice and each Aspirin. You will be skinned.

I urge people to reject the direction this government has taken, because we know it will be a disaster for the health care of the people in this province.

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members' statements? The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you're sitting down, because this is big—it's even Guinness World Records big. After three long years, the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival is back. It is the single largest maple syrup festival in the world, and I'm very glad to see it return on Saturday, April 1, this weekend.

I want to talk about a few changes that are being made this year.

Historically, the pancake tent has been downtown. It is moving indoors this year, to Lion's Hall, right beside the Woolwich Memorial Centre at South Street and Snyder Avenue. Come meet mascot Flapjack when I try my hand at our world-famous pancake flipping contest, Mr. Speaker—and I think you may have done that once or twice over your years representing a great part of Woolwich township.

Again, this year, we're hoping to break a record and see 60,000 to 70,000 people returning to the streets of Elmira.

I want to talk about what benefit we see to the community. A lot of the funds raised from this fantastic event go to Community Living Elmira, the Elmira Theatre Company, the Woolwich sledge hockey team, Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region, the local schools, and more.

Our deep thank you to the new chair, Matt Jessop, and the planning committee.

I'm looking forward to this weekend.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Miss Monique Taylor: This Sunday, April 2, is World Autism Awareness Day. As many of you know, this topic is close to my heart, so I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak more about this important day.

World Autism Awareness Day was unanimously declared to be April 2 in the United Nations General Assembly in 2008. This day is about more than just awareness; it is about recognition, celebration and acceptance.

People with autism are integral members of our communities.

This year's theme focuses on celebrating the contributions people with autism make to the world, including at home, at work, in the arts, and in policy-making.

However, people with autism still face challenges and discrimination. It is important to recognize that there is still work we need to do, especially in our roles as MPPs.

We need to ensure we are building an inclusive, accessible province for everyone. Building an accessible province means ensuring people have access to services.

Right now, an overwhelming number of children with autism are not getting the services they need. It was disappointing to see that the government did not keep the autistic community in their mind when drafting their budget, as they did not mention autism a single time.

So for this World Autism Awareness Day, I encourage members to think about what they can do to build a more equitable, accessible province for people living with

autism and how their work can directly impact people's lives.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We all know that guns are being smuggled across the border from the United States into Canada, and that these illegal guns are getting into the hands of gangs, and the gangs are using these guns to go after some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

That's why we have a strategy. It's the anti-illegal guns, gangs and violence reduction strategy brought forward by this government and this Premier, and it's funded through the budget. We know the NDP don't support this. We know they want to defund the police. But because of the compassionate policies of this government, we actually fund these services—and in the 2023 budget, \$13.4 million is continued to provide funding for these police services to go after the illegal guns and go after the gangs.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance for continuing to fund police services.

And I encourage the Solicitor General to please continue to go after the illegal guns and go after the gangs.

CABANE À SUCRE DU MUSÉOPARC VANIER

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Cette fin de semaine, nous procédons à l'inauguration officielle de la nouvelle cabane à sucre Vanier. Cette cabane à sucre est spéciale pour de nombreuses raisons. À moins de cinq kilomètres du centre-ville d'Ottawa, la cabane à sucre du Muséoparc Vanier est la seule cabane à sucre en milieu urbain au Canada, et j'ai la chance d'habiter juste à côté.

Malheureusement, en août 2020, la cabane à sucre a été ravagée par un incendie criminel. Heureusement, les arbres qui produisent le sirop d'érable sur ce terrain de plus de 17 acres ont été épargnés, et aujourd'hui la cabane renaît de ses cendres. C'est grâce au travail acharné de la directrice générale de Muséoparc Vanier, Madeleine Meilleur, et du conseil d'administration qui ont également pu compter sur une aide précieuse de la ville pour rebâtir encore plus grand.

Donc après trois ans de fermeture, le Festival des sucres est de retour, et en fin de semaine, nous aurons la chance de nous sucrer le bec et de participer à de nombreuses activités qui rassemblent un nombre impressionnant de membres de la communauté et d'ailleurs.

Mon voisin acériculteur, Marc Madore, puise beaucoup de fierté à guider tous ceux qui veulent découvrir comment on fait le sirop d'érable en participant à l'entaille des érables. De nombreux nouveaux arrivants sont souvent au nombre de ces apprentis.

J'en profite donc pour remercier les nombreux bénévoles qui sont vraiment le moteur du festival des sucres et je vous invite tous à nous rendre visite à Vanier pour venir déguster des délices à l'érable et peut-être vous joindre à moi pour le concours de bûcherons.

PAUL DURDIN

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm so pleased to speak about an incredibly selfless and humble individual named Paul Andrew Durdin. Paul Durdin has been a member of the Kinsmen organization for 37 years, and last month he was recognized by the Kin Club in Flamborough with the Kinsmen's highest honour, which is life membership.

Paul has served the Kinsmen organization at various clubs throughout the Golden Horseshoe, including Lakeshore, Oakville, Stoney Creek and, currently, the Kin Club of Flamborough. His dedication to community service has truly been inspiring. He has stepped up to serve the Kinsmen Club in so many ways, including accepting various positions on the executive, which requires a lot of time and responsibility. Whenever there was a job to be done, Paul would be among the first to volunteer to help, and he never expected any accolades in return. People who know him say he brings a spirit of positivity and joy wherever he goes. When asked about him, a common response is that Paul is a blessing to have in our lives and it's an honour to know him and to call him a friend.

It was an honour for me to be at the awards dinner to meet Paul and to see him receive the life membership.

I want to thank Paul Durden and the entire membership of the Kinsmen Club for making Flamborough and the province of Ontario a better place to live.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have the pleasure of hosting a Speaker in the Speaker's gallery this morning: the member for Olds–Didsbury–Three Hills in the 29th and 30th Parliaments and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, my friend and colleague Nathan Cooper. He is joined by Jackie McMaster, who hosted him in Australia when he was an exchange student.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. We're delighted to have you here.

1030

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to recognize James Scongack. James is the chair of the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to welcome everybody from the Ontario Waterpower Association today. I'm looking forward to talking with them about some of the local small hydro projects near Kingston and also potential hydro projects in other parts of the province, like northern Ontario. I encourage everybody to come to their reception this evening.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today the family of page Jonas Boyce: Derek and Lorraine Boyce, and his siblings Aria and Sarah Boyce. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome Patty Coates, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the enthusiasm from my colleagues, but I wasn't done.

I'd also like to welcome workers from Windsor Salt: from Unifor Local 240, president Jodi Nesbitt, Karrie Burrows, Lindsay Meloche; and Unifor Local 1959 members Eric Brown, Dario Zuech, and Chad Girard.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Waterpower Association. It has its headquarters in Peterborough–Kawartha. They are here today with Stephen Somerville, Jonathan Atkinson, Nicholas Pender, James Carter, John Wynsma, Brianne McMullen, Janelle Fonseca and Paul Norris.

We do have a reception tonight downstairs, in the legislative dining room. I'm looking forward to having everyone there.

MPP Jamie West: I've often said that steelworkers make great leaders. We have a steelworker here today, the vice-president of the Steelworkers' Toronto Area Council, my good friend Roopchand Doon.

Roop, welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I am proud to recognize, in the members' gallery today, four students from Ontario Tech University in my riding: Dakota Cluett, Joshua Sankarlal, Corey Law, and Megan Good.

Welcome to your House.

Hon. David Piccini: I won't repeat introductions to the Ontario Waterpower Association—but a special acknowledgement for a constituent of mine. When you don't find him in a suit, he looks great in jeans on the farm, up in Indian River.

Welcome to Queen's Park, Paul Norris.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I have here with me today in the galleries my incredible team from Treasury Board: my chief of staff, Jenna; Natalie; Ian; Melvin; David; Hamish; Chiara; Mary; Rikin; Catherine; Nuri; Ali; and Christopher. I want to welcome them here to the House.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I hope all colleagues will join with me and turn their attention to the Speaker's gallery, where we have Deputy Minister Nancy Matthews and executive assistant Greg Robinson. These are two individuals who have provided close to 60 years of service to the people of the province of Ontario, and in Deputy Minister Matthews's case, to the city of Toronto as well. They are taking their retirement very, very soon. They have both been absolutely instrumental, not only in making Ontario one of the best places to live, work and invest over the last number of years that they have been here, but in helping guide us through the COVID pandemic.

I hope all members will join with me in thanking them for their incredible service to the people of the province of Ontario.

Applause.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm really pleased to welcome to the Legislature today a lot of visitors from a number of First Nations communities and leaders, including Cecilia Begg from KI—she's the KI head councillor—Chief Wayne Moonias from Neskantaga First Nation; Chief-elect Christopher Moonias from Neskantaga First Nation; Chief

Rudy Turtle from Grassy Narrows First Nation; Sherry Ackabee, who is the Grassy Narrows deputy chief; Chief Charlie Beardy from Muskrat Dam First Nation; Allen Brown from Wapekeka First Nation; and Alvin Fiddler from Muskrat Dam.

I'm very, very pleased to welcome all of you and other members from your First Nations to the Legislature. Thank you for being here today.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member from Ottawa–Vanier has a point of order she wishes to raise.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(4), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Madame Collard is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(4), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today. Agreed? Agreed.

QUESTION PERIOD

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Marit Stiles: We know that last week's budget failed to meet the moment that we're in. The more you dig into this, the worse it gets. Hidden in the back pages of the latest budget, they've snuck in billions of cuts to services that people rely on.

My question is to the Premier. Will he explain why his government buried \$6 billion in cuts at a time when the people of this province are really struggling?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

I don't know—you look at the budget. Look at the numbers. I'm a numbers guy. The increase in the budget to \$204.7 billion includes a \$6-billion increase to health care spending next year. That's an 8.1% increase. That's an increase. I don't know.

Secondly, education, which includes child care funding, it includes funding for catch-up, it includes funding for mental health, it includes funding for literacy and a whole range of things—more funding per pupil, as the Minister of Education highlighted. It's going up \$2.3 billion; that's 7.1%. I'm looking at numbers.

Maybe their world looks at numbers very differently, but I'm looking at the facts.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let's talk about the facts, and let's talk about priorities, because budgets are about priorities.

What we're seeing is that this government has the wrong priorities.

Perhaps the members over on the government side should take a second look, because they are making cuts. They should check out page 150 of the budget book, which reveals that this government is cutting funds to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing—cuts to tourism, culture and sport; cuts to francophone affairs; cuts to agriculture.

Will the Premier, again, explain what these cuts are going to mean for homelessness programs, for the Ontario Arts Council, for local transit, and for bilingual services?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Clearly, the budget focused on lifting up everybody in Ontario—everybody—all 15.4 million people, almost, in this province. That increase in population underscores why we have a sense of urgency on this side of the House to get things done. We have a housing shortage, a housing crisis, in Ontario. We don't have enough hospitals or long-term-care facilities.

In fact, you mentioned homelessness. Thank you for raising that very important point.

What did we do last week? We increased funding for homelessness by \$202 million—a record increase for people who need a hand up.

We're not going to let down the people coming to this province, nor are we going to let down the people in this province.

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

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, all you have to do is look at their expenses from this year and compare them to what's actually in the budget. It's not just a difference in reporting; it is a shell game. This government is hiding cuts that are going to eliminate services at a time when people really need them, and that's not right. They're cutting funds to the Attorney General, to infrastructure, to transportation, to seniors and accessibility, and to the Solicitor General.

Back to the Premier: What is that going to mean for Ontarians who are waiting for health care, who are at the Landlord and Tenant Board, who are looking for legal aid or seniors' home care programs?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Only NDP math could come to that conclusion.

The base programs have increased from \$175 billion to \$190 billion. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because we are investing in the people of Ontario. We are investing over \$15 billion of new funding, new money over the next three years for health care.

Why don't you go talk to the OMA? Go talk to the OHA. Go talk to the CMHA. Look it up. These are organizations that deliver acute care, mental health care, home and community care, long-term care. They all said thank you to the government.

We're hitting the priorities that the people of Ontario need and want.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.*

My question is to the Premier. This government has granted thousands of mining claims on treaty territory and is trying to fast-track dangerous projects against the will of the people who live there, eat the fish and drink the water. Look in the gallery, and you will see leadership and over 80 rights-holders of five First Nations who are here to stand up for their homelands.

Will this government commit today to obtain the consent of First Nations before making any plans for their homelands?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the honourable member for his question and welcome members from the isolated northern communities.

From the outset, our government has been focused on consensus and relationship-building when it comes to resource projects and legacy infrastructure—in fact, it started a couple of years ago.

I know that Alvin Fiddler is in the galleries here today.

I think back to when the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and we revamped that piece of legislation to reflect consensus. I appreciated that then—the ability for us to sit at a table, build partnerships, friendships, relationships that reflect the need to build out our northern infrastructure and resource projects around consensus.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, that type of response means that they do not care about First Nation rights.

The government says that it respects First Nations, but people here tell me that this government has granted thousands of mining claims in their backyards without prior notice, let alone consent. How does that show respect for the people who have always lived there and cared for their lands?

Will this government commit today to end the antiquated and offensive free-entry staking system?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Again, what we're focused on is building relationships under the leadership of this Premier. We meet very regularly with Indigenous leaders from across this province—in fact, regularly with the Chiefs of Ontario, their grand chiefs etc. Those meetings are focused on building consensus. They're about ensuring that resources extracted from northern Ontario are distributed fairly and, most importantly, under the resource revenue-sharing agreements to ensure that Indigenous communities are involved in the benefits of those kinds of resource activities. It isn't just for the financial benefits of the resource projects; in many instances—in fact, all of our resource revenue-sharing agreements reflect participation

from Indigenous leadership in the responsible management of those resources. We want to continue down that course. We think this provides a balanced, fair way for Indigenous communities to derive benefits from those resource activities, to have their say in how and why they're developed.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: We are not communities; we are actually nations.

This government says that it wants prosperity for all Ontarians. But let me be clear, these five First Nations who travelled thousands of kilometres to be here are the ones who have to live with the mess that is left behind after mining. Their children and their grandchildren will have to drink the water downstream from these mines. Will this government promise today to gain their agreement rather than bulldozing over their lands and waters? Better yet, will the Premier meet with these leaders today?

Hon. Greg Rickford: What our government will continue to put a priority on is the shared and common interest about transforming northern Ontario to a place where not only people benefit from the economic opportunities—the largest sub-sovereign state environmental policy, I think, that could be advanced anywhere is through mining critical minerals—but the legacy infrastructure that's required to support it.

Many, if not most, of the communities that are represented here today, I've had a special opportunity to live in or work in and/or work for, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that they all want better infrastructure. They all, for the most part, want road access to improve the health, social and economic opportunities for their communities.

That's what a provincial government does. We create the platforms for these kinds of resource activities to advance responsibly and safely, at the same time creating new opportunities, real opportunities, for isolated communities, that their members are asking me for every single day—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier—
Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask our guests who are in the gallery to refrain from this outburst, or you'll be asked to leave.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We are pleased to have guests visiting us in the Legislature, but there can be no outbursts from the galleries, or we wouldn't be able to comport ourselves in the way that we need to to do our business.

The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier.

This week, Global News revealed that the government is withholding information about the Ontario Line transit

project, a public-private partnership which has skyrocketed past the government's original cost estimates—from \$10.9 billion to \$19 billion.

Yesterday, the Premier said, "We aren't hiding anything." But his officials have redacted documents, so financial disclosure on the Ontario Line is impossible for people from Global News.

I have a simple question: Why won't this government disclose the financial costs of the Ontario Line?

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: In the early days of our first mandate, the Premier laid out our government's plan to build badly needed transit in the greater Toronto area, and that includes the signature new Ontario Line.

1050

Since those early days, we've taken our responsibility to taxpayers very seriously. That's why our government passed, with no help from that member or the members of the opposition, the Building Transit Faster Act—because we know that time is money.

In addition to being able to deliver value for taxpayers, we also need to have a competitive procurement process, which is why our government decided to break up the procurement for the Ontario Line into three separate packages. As we refined estimates for those packages, they were commercially sensitive, but as soon as those contracts were awarded and have been awarded, they have been publicly posted online with their values. The South Civil has been valued at \$6 billion, and a contract for the rolling stock, systems, and operations and maintenance has been valued at \$9 billion.

The member opposite wants to talk about—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I would tell the Premier and the minister, if she will respond to the second question I have here, that you can't have financial disclosure in the dark.

This is what we know: We know the southern portion of the Ontario Line, as the government has currently proposed, is going to cost nearly a billion dollars per kilometre—nearly a billion dollars. But the Spadina subway extension that was completed in 2017 cost \$384 million per kilometre. So what has happened? We can't simply blame the pandemic, because an April 2020 report reported that subway costs had doubled under this government.

What I see, sadly, at Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are a lot of public-private partnership consultants—former staff members of this government who seem to be enriching themselves at the expense of the Ontario public.

So I ask the Premier, are you going to rein in these private consultants, these P3 financiers, and get our subway costs under control?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, we've been clear. As soon as contracts are awarded, the values of those contracts are posted. They're publicly available for anyone—for taxpayers and Global News—to examine as they wish.

What I know is, that member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition will do anything to make sure that we don't build transit in the greater Toronto area. We've put out the largest transit expansion plan anywhere in North America, and that party voted against it. We brought forward measures to accelerate the delivery of transit, because we knew we had to address the transit deficit that was left by the previous Liberal government, who could not get transit built in the city of Toronto. We brought that forward. And what did they do? They all voted against it. It's clear that this is why they are in opposition—because not only are they against transit; they're against building it faster. It's clear that they don't even know how to get it—

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

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

My riding of Carleton is home to a number of manufacturers that continue to make investments in cutting-edge technology to stay ahead of the global competition—manufacturers like LTR Industries, which I visited with the minister; Fortran Steel; and Marathon Underground, which is Canada's leading specialty underground contractor, located in the great community of Greely. These manufacturers are the lifeblood of communities not just in Carleton but across the province. But these investments are both expensive and risky, and we know that business owners know that success is not always guaranteed.

Through you: Will the minister please explain how our government continues creating the conditions for manufacturing businesses in Carleton and across the province to grow and succeed?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It wasn't that long ago that companies were fleeing Ontario. Speaker, 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, and our economic future was teetering.

Thankfully, the government of Premier Ford was elected and declared Ontario open for business. Taxes were lowered, energy rates were lowered, and the burden of red tape was reduced. This brought companies pouring back to Ontario.

Now, with budget 2023, there is even more great news for Ontario manufacturers: the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. If passed, it will provide companies with a 10% tax credit, up to \$2 million a year, on investments in buildings, equipment and machinery.

Those companies will innovate, become competitive, and create even more great jobs for our families.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

The minister noted that the government's plan is working. Ontario has more jobs than ever, and the string of landmark investments is reverberating around the

world. That's right; the world is taking notice. We cannot let this momentum slow down, as investors look to safe and reliable jurisdictions like Ontario to set up shop and expand their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Will the minister elaborate on the plan to build Ontario's economy and how this is benefiting the province's manufacturers?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Ontario is, again, known as the worldwide best place for manufacturers to invest, grow and create jobs. By reducing the cost of doing business by \$8 billion annually through lowering hydro costs, cutting taxes and reducing red tape, we've seen businesses create 600,000 new jobs since we were elected. And with the new Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, which will provide \$780 million in support over the next three years, we know there will be more investment, more innovation and more jobs. Thousands of manufacturing jobs have been reshored back to Ontario, and this additional tax credit is the next big move in ensuring Ontario has everything a company needs to succeed.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier.

We have seen a scary trend in Hamilton of not-for-profit service providers closing their doors due to budget constraints.

The Hamilton branch of the Elizabeth Fry Society is the latest organization to announce their closure. One volunteer said, "This is very distressing and sad news. The services provided by EFry are so amazing and it is sad to think of all of these women who now have no support as they go through court systems and try to get back on their feet."

What's happening in Hamilton is a clear example of the direct consequences of this budget, and it's obvious who is getting left behind.

Can the Premier explain, where are the supports in this budget for programs like Elizabeth Fry in Hamilton?

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member for the question.

Let me be clear: There have been no changes to the funding for our community safety order programs. We continue to support women who are at risk of reoffending.

The John Howard Society is delivering those services in Hamilton, Niagara and the Brantford region.

Our ministry continues to work closely with community service providers across the province in the delivery of community service support and programs.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be clear again: We support the women who are at risk of reoffending. This is a priority.

The services will be conducted in this region by the John Howard Society.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question. The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Things are bad in our jails and have gotten much worse at Vanier Centre for Women

and Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre. Because the Solicitor General is not honouring the original contracts with the Elizabeth Fry Society, it has had devastating consequences. Instead of having program support when dealing with sexual assault or human trafficking, women and gender-diverse inmates are handed crossword puzzles to deal with their trauma because there's nothing else—not even pencil crayons anymore. Women used to have support while incarcerated that followed them into the community, and now they get a crossword.

My question is, will you negotiate a contract with Elizabeth Fry, and will you stop your ugly attack on women and recommit programs' funding?

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

Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member opposite.

I said it in my first reply: There have been no changes to the funding for our community safety order programs.

The Elizabeth Fry Society was not the successful applicant to deliver the community services there; it was the John Howard Society.

And I want to say it again: We will continue to support women who are at risk of reoffending.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is to the Solicitor General.

The state of violence in our streets and communities is increasing daily. People are concerned, and with more and more stories of random attacks, they have good reason to be. The day-to-day lives of individuals and families are being impacted by criminal activity targeting them and their loved ones.

Everyone in this Legislature needs to take this matter seriously, and we need to work together to support those on the front lines who are responding to these violent attacks.

It's wrong for the Leader of the Opposition to say that advocating for more front-line police officers is considered out of touch.

1100

What is our government doing to support our front-line officers and people encountering these attacks?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank our great member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for the great work he is doing in his community.

Mr. Speaker, no words are adequate to console the family who recently lost their son Gabriel to senseless violence, and we mourn his passing.

Everyone in this House should agree that violence on transit or anywhere is unacceptable. The level of impunity is sickening. The behaviour lacks basic civility.

That's why, on this side of the House, we continue to support our men and women in uniform. Due to the work they do, and because of the work they do, they need our

support, and not contempt for their profession that we see from ranks in the opposition.

All our provincial colleagues agree that the federal government must introduce bail reform now to reinstate law and order in this country, and we urge Minister Mendicino and Minister Lametti to do it now so we have—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

As a former front-line uniformed police officer, I'm so proud of the accomplishments achieved by my fellow officers in the line of duty.

Interjections.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you. We put our lives on the line every day in service to our communities and to our province.

Sadly, we've lost good women and men while responding to horrific incidents, while serving to protect individuals and families.

It's disheartening to hear members from the official opposition call for defunding and abolishing police services.

In light of this growing concern about violence in our communities, we need to support the work undertaken by our officers and provide them with the resources they need.

Can the Solicitor General please reiterate his and our government's support to our dedicated front-line police officers and the work they do?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thanks again to the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

For this government, nothing is more important than our public safety, and we understand that our police services across our province are the front line that keep Ontario safe. We're fed up with calls from the opposition that we should abolish and defund the police. This is not the policy of our government. What we saw yesterday were more excuses from the opposition in their call to defund and abolish the police.

On this side of the House, we have one message: We have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe, today and every day, and we will do everything we need to do to help keep Ontario safe.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The government's so-called plan to address the doctor shortage is not working.

My constituent Thu Le has been on the wait-list with Health Care Connect for over a year to get a family doctor. Her son has a disability and, without completed forms from a doctor, they cannot access the disability tax credit program.

The government has announced 8,000 new doctors. How many of these new doctors are operating in the London region?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Since 2018, we've actually had 1,800 new physicians practising in the province of Ontario. It's not enough, and we need to do more. And we are doing more. In the short term, we've already directed the College of Physicians and Surgeons to expedite, review and, ultimately, approve and license internationally educated physicians who want to practise in the province of Ontario.

Of course, with Bill 60—if the member opposite supports Bill 60, she will see that there is an as-of-right that allows physicians who are practising in other Canadian jurisdictions to be able to begin practising in Ontario immediately while their licence is transferred to the CPSO.

We're doing so many things, and I'm very happy to share some of the longer-term plans that we have in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Another constituent of mine has been on the Health Care Connect waiting list for years. He recently suffered a cardiac episode. The hospital was able to prescribe medicine. He says that has helped greatly, but without a family doctor he could not get the renewal of this medicine. His mental and physical health have made it hard to maintain steady employment, and without a primary care provider, he feels that there is little hope for the future.

Referring people to Health Care Connect is not a solution. Referring them to another long wait-list is not a solution.

When will this government take real action to ensure that there are effective and timely referrals to family doctors and not get put on the health care—I'm going to call it—disconnect?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I hope the member opposite is also highlighting some of the other pathways to assist her constituent, including community health centres that operate in 75 locations across Ontario.

We've had the largest expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate education in over 10 years, and that is before we opened two new medical facilities in Scarborough and in Brampton.

We are absolutely seized with understanding and actioning what we see. We see an increased and aging population in the province of Ontario.

You have a government that is making the plans and implementing the plans to expand all health care practitioners, not just physicians.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Ontario's clean electricity system is a

major selling point when companies are looking to invest and grow their businesses.

Thanks to the hard work and leadership of the Premier and many ministers in our government, Ontario is attracting tens of billions of dollars in new investments from companies like Volkswagen, Stellantis, Umicore and others.

Our government's commitment to the economy and the jobs needed for the future is grounded in the values of sustainability, responsibility and co-operation.

Under the previous Liberal government, reckless policies, excessive red tape and mismanagement drove manufacturing jobs out of our province.

I understand the Minister of Energy is developing more strategies to encourage jobs and growth in Ontario.

Can the minister please describe the measures that will increase Ontario's competitive advantage?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Ontario's clean energy capital, the Durham region, for the question this morning.

I was pleased to join another member from that Durham caucus at Toronto Metropolitan University this morning to announce that Ontario is leveraging our world-class electricity grid by launching a voluntary clean energy credit registry. This registry is going to help boost competitiveness and attract jobs to Ontario, helping businesses meet their environmental and sustainability goals.

We know that global businesses are looking to expand in jurisdictions like Ontario with clean and reliable electricity.

Along with our well-trained workforce, which we have thanks to Toronto Metropolitan University, and competitive tax credits, which we have thanks to the Minister of Finance, and an exemplary R&D ecosystem, and clean energy in the province, the credit registry announced this morning is just one more reason for those big companies that the member mentioned to continue investing in Ontario.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the minister for his answer.

It is great news, indeed, that our government is taking action and utilizing Ontario's clean energy advantage to help us attract even more major investments. I am aware that competing jurisdictions in the United States, including New York and Texas, currently offer clean energy credits for sale. It is a positive step that our province has levelled the playing field and is demonstrating optimism about new opportunities for the future that will help build a strong Ontario.

Can the minister please describe how clean energy credits will benefit Ontario's electricity grid, Ontario's economy, and Ontario's environment?

1110

Hon. Todd Smith: As a matter of fact, I can. Thanks again to the member.

All types of businesses, including those in the automotive sector, are placing a greater emphasis on corporate

environmental goals to use 100% clean or renewable energy. This registry announced this morning means those businesses are going to have one more tool to meet those commitments and demonstrate that their electricity has been sourced from clean resources.

We had the folks from Bruce Power here earlier this morning, as well. They've got a great medical isotope announcement that James Scongack is making later today.

As well, proceeds from this credit registry, these sales, are going to go into the newly established future clean energy electricity fund. That means we're going to be reinvesting that money in Ontario for new clean energy projects that are only going to make our grid greener, make our grid more reliable, and drive down electricity costs for the people of Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

MPP Lise Vaugeois: In my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North, parents of children with autism face years of uncertainty because they can't access a diagnosis. Then they wait many more years because they can't access treatment dollars—and that's if they can find a service provider remotely close to where they live.

With not even a mention of the word “autism” in the budget, Minister, what will your government do to make diagnostic and clinical services available to parents in northwestern Ontario now, so that their children are not missing out on crucial early years of support?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thanks to my honourable colleague for the very important question.

Mr. Speaker, youth may be a percentage of our population, but they're 100% of our future.

That's why, when it comes to the program that the member is referring to—if you just go back to 2018, when we formed government, out of the 31,500 children and youth who were registered, only 8,500 were actually receiving service. Fast-forward to today: Not only have we doubled the funding of the Ontario Autism Program, but 40,000 are now receiving funding.

The new programs that the families have access to have an expanded set of core services that include applied behavioural analysis, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and, for the first time, mental health services—not just one service, like they had.

But there's still more work to do. That's why the Premier entrusted me with this position, and I will do everything I can to make sure—

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I've heard from parents that that 40,000 number refers to one-off grants and really does not address the key problems that parents are facing.

When providers are not available locally, therapy dollars go to travel, leaving less money for treatment.

Adrianna had to quit her job in Manitouwadge and live with her son in Thunder Bay for months so that he could access essential therapy. Once completed, and Adrianna and her son moved back home, they had to travel back and

forth, four hours each way, to continue receiving therapy in Thunder Bay.

Will the government provide incentives to bring practitioners to our region and, whenever distance is a factor, provide travel grants so that all autistic children can access timely diagnoses and treatments?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Whether it's Adrianna or every single member who requires service—as I mentioned yesterday, when you live in the best province in the greatest country in the world, it's the people who make us so great. That's why we can't leave anyone behind. That's exactly why we're continuously looking at ways to make sure that we support every single person who needs it—especially including our most vulnerable, including those in need of support, which is why I say that I'm proud of the record of this government that doubled the funding of the Ontario Autism Program. More than two thirds of the youth and children who were waiting on the wait-list had absolutely no chance at service—as I said, 8,500 before—and now more than 40,000 are receiving support.

Mr. Speaker, once again, as I promised the member and every single family in this province, we're continuously looking at ways to make sure that every child, every youth, every family is supported and we don't leave anyone behind.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Education. Following the most difficult three years in recent memory, last Thursday's budget was an opportunity to address a wide range of issues that our students, teachers and parents have been facing for years. Instead, this government introduced record \$204.7-billion budget spending and somehow managed to come up well short when it comes to supporting our students. Now that the FAO is predicting a \$6-billion shortfall in education over the next few years, and with our schools facing a \$16.8-billion repair backlog, education has been left out in the cold. Ontario students are dealing with the impacts of the pandemic made worse by the underfunding and under-spending.

Why is this government shortchanging education again, at a time when student needs are at an all-time high?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to confirm that since the former Liberals were in power, our government has increased investment in public education by 27%—a massive increase of investment. The member opposite has systematically opposed every single increase of investment. They voted consecutively to oppose an increase of staff by 7,000 education workers. They opposed the hiring of 800 more teachers. They opposed the hiring of 200 more principals.

We just added \$16 billion to renew and rebuild schools, after they crumbled after the cuts of the former Liberal government—the closure of 600 schools, which families today continue to pay the price of.

We have a plan focused on getting kids back on track through modern schools, a modern curriculum, an increase

of investment. You can count on our Premier to continue to deliver that to the kids of this province.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the minister: We're very grateful that the federal government provided supports to our schools during the pandemic, and we know that those supports are well needed. We still are facing the effects of COVID-19 on young people, and we know the reports of students suffering from mental health issues and anxiety. They require this support. Boards are now facing the need to go back to pre-pandemic staffing levels, at a time when the need is still there.

Let's focus on our students with autism, students with exceptionalities, and students with special needs. We need to ensure that our school boards have enough resources so that these students who require additional supports have it when they need it.

Mr. Speaker, we know that strengthening Ontario's public education system is a key driver of success in Ontario—and it must be available to all students.

Why is this government shortchanging school boards at a time when they need it?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, if only the member opposite brought the same energy when she was Minister of Education—as opposed to her mayoralty campaign—maybe kids wouldn't be so behind in this province.

We are committed to getting kids back on track. We just unveiled in the budget a \$2.3-billion increase overall—\$1.3 million in a baseline funding increase to help the very children in Scarborough and in communities across this province; a plan to strengthen literacy of \$25 million, the only jurisdiction to screen every child from senior kindergarten to grade 2 in the nation; doubling math coaches by an additional \$30 million, so we improve numeracy skills; and, in the Minister of Finance's budget, a specific increased commitment to strengthen financial literacy in the classroom. This is going to leave a legacy and help kids get back on track.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Andrew Dowie: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Across the province and particularly in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh, it is evident that our government is working hard to build Ontario for the next generation. Many construction projects are under way across the region, both residentially and as business ventures. The pile-driving we're hearing across the riding says it all. Local investments are driving a number of initiatives. With the investments made by our government for employers and for infrastructure projects, there's a lot of activity taking place that will help our neighbourhoods of Windsor–Tecumseh succeed. However, in order to see these projects through to completion, we need to make sure we have the people to do the work.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to attract more workers to the construction sector?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for being such a strong voice for the people of Windsor here at Queen's Park.

1120

Speaker, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has an ambitious plan to build the projects that families need, including in Windsor.

Our construction workers are true heroes for making our province stronger every day, and we need more of them. In the Windsor region alone, there were more than 11,000 jobs open at the end of 2022. That's why our government is rolling out new employment services to help more people find good jobs, like those in construction—jobs with defined pensions and benefits that people can raise a family around.

We've also increased funding to our pre-apprenticeship programs to help interested job seekers try the construction trades and see which one is the best fit for them.

We're doing so much more—and I look forward to the follow-up question.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the minister for that response.

As you know, I love Windsor and Tecumseh. It is encouraging that, under the leadership of the Premier and this minister, our province has a robust plan to tackle the urgent shortage of workers in the construction trades.

The communities of southwestern Ontario are counting on our government to implement measures that will increase the number of skilled trades workers so that that important construction projects can get started and completed. Ontario needs workers. Even more so, workers are needed now. We need to reverse long-held notions about the trades and the construction industry to encourage more people to pursue them as full-time careers.

Can the minister please explain what investments our government is making to provide support for individuals who are looking for work in the construction industry?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I can't think of a member from the Windsor region who has delivered so much for the city of Windsor in the history of this Legislature. We think of a brand new hospital that's going to be built, the Windsor Regional Hospital. We think of the brand new Stellantis plant that's being built in Windsor. Congratulations to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his leadership.

Speaker, we're making targeted investments in projects that are building a stronger Ontario for all of us.

Over the past three years, we've invested more than \$660 million in our Skills Development Fund to get more people into the skilled trades.

Through our pre-apprenticeship program, we've invested \$660,000 for Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor to train women for well-paying and in-demand work in the electrical trades. Tuition is free, and the program also includes paid placements, child care and transit passes.

These are life-changing opportunities to build stronger families and stronger communities for all of us.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

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

Today, the NDP is reintroducing, for the 16th time, anti-scab labour legislation. Anti-scab labour legislation makes strikes and lockouts shorter, and it protects vulnerable workers.

The government keeps saying that they're working for workers. Well, they have a labour bill in front of this House right now. They can take real action to protect vulnerable workers, to protect workers' rights.

Will the minister tell the hard-working workers in the gallery right now if he will bring anti-scab labour law to Ontario now?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our government's work, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to support workers in every community across the province. That's why we've introduced three pieces of legislation—Working for Workers 1, Working for Workers 2, and now we have a third piece of legislation in front of us.

I have to ask the party opposite: When did you get lost? When did you abandon workers in this province?

For example, we hired more than 100 new health and safety inspectors in the province. Do you know who said no? It was the NDP who voted to not strengthen health and safety in this province.

We'll continue working every single day for all the workers in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The minister really did a good job of avoiding actually answering the question.

Windsor Salt workers are here today, members of Unifor Locals 240 and 1959. They've been on strike for 40 days, fighting the outsourcing of their jobs by US-based holding company Stone Canyon Industries. These workers and every other worker in Ontario deserve to have their rights and jobs protected.

The Conservatives had many opportunities—since the legislation has been tabled 16 times—to support anti-scab labour legislation, and they didn't.

You can't honestly say you're working for workers and vote against anti-scab legislation. It just doesn't jibe.

Speaker, Windsor Salt workers and workers across Ontario want to know: Will the Premier stand up for collective bargaining rights, stand up for workers, and finally pass anti-scab legislation? No more rhetoric. Look right at those workers and tell them yes or no.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I can tell those workers at Windsor Salt that they are true

heroes in their communities. I know they're building a stronger Windsor for the community there.

I can tell you that our government has sent a clear message to Windsor Salt. We've been in many discussions with Unifor over the past number of weeks. We want a deal at the table. Mr. Speaker, 98% of all deals in the province of Ontario are done at the table. We want a good deal, a fair deal for those Windsor Salt workers. We know they're at the table, and we want them to get a deal as quickly as possible.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the minister on his new portfolio.

Children and youth in the child welfare system face barriers throughout their lives.

We recognize that youth leaving foster care often struggle with educational achievement, unemployment, homelessness and early parenthood, and may get caught up in the criminal justice system. It is important that our government supports youth leaving care so they can have the same opportunities as their peers.

The current system needs to change so that youth get the skills they need to build a brighter future for themselves.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to strengthen supports for young people transitioning out of the child welfare system?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank the wonderful and hard-working member from Oakville North–Burlington for the great question and the great work that she does for her riding.

Our government's new Youth Leaving Care policy and program, Ready, Set, Go, is the most bold and innovative approach ever taken by any government to support youth leaving care. It is an evidence-informed investment in bright futures for youth. As heard on budget day, our government is investing \$68 million with continuing funding. This investment will provide greater financial support so youth can find safe housing; a longer runway for youth until the age of 23; incentives for youth to participate in post-secondary, with an additional bursary of \$500 a month; and future economic stability through employment savings of up to 40 hours per week without clawbacks.

Many of these youths have traumatic personal histories and disrupted family lives. That's why they deserve a fair chance at adult life. And we'll help them get there.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the minister for that response. It is encouraging that this government is addressing the needs of vulnerable youth through investments and a new framework.

The Ready, Set, Go program is an important step forward and is another example of how our government

has taken action to ensure that youth have the opportunities to realize their full potential in life.

However, it is a precarious time for young people, when they transition from being a youth in care to becoming an independent adult. It is essential that young people have the right supports that will minimize risks and set them up for success in their careers and in life.

Can the minister please elaborate on how the Ready, Set, Go program will support children and youth?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Every child in this province deserves a bright future; this includes kids in care.

Through the Ready, Set, Go program, as early as age 13, we will prepare children by developing life skills, their unique cultures and identities, and relationships with peers and adults. By age 15, youth will be offered a conferencing option, including a mediator, if they choose, to plan for their futures. By 18, social workers will be accountable for ensuring youth have the basics, like identification, banking needs, professional supports, and communications technology. For example, ages 18 to 23, youth will be supported with pathways to post-secondary training, trades and employment. Now, to really ensure this program delivers on its promise to support these youth in building the lives they want and they deserve, we are also measuring its impact through its implementation. You can only change what you can measure.

1130

Once again, we will not let these youth down.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier.

The Toronto District School Board was forced to tap into their reserves during the pandemic. This was to fulfill actions identified by the province for the health and safety of school communities and the academic success of students.

In a letter to the minister last week, the chair and director of the TDSB wrote, “We have depleted any working reserves and used reserves put away for other purposes.”

The Financial Accountability Office reported that this Conservative government did not spend \$432 million of allocated funding for education in this fiscal year. At the same time, the TDSB was being forced to tap into their reserves.

Will the Premier repay the pandemic costs, as requested by the TDSB?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we will increase funding for school boards this coming school year by \$1.3 billion, as confirmed in the budget—an increase in our baseline funding this year, as we have done every year.

In TDSB, they have 16,000 fewer students enrolled in their schools. And even though, as you know, the funding for school boards is on a per pupil basis—even with fewer kids, their funding is still up, compared to the Liberals, by

\$38 million. There’s a 5% increase in EAs. There’s a 4% increase of custodians.

In Toronto Catholic, they have 6% more education workers, 9% more custodians, 4% more principals and vice-principals.

This doesn’t happen by chance. It happens because our government is investing in a responsible budget that lifts performance in reading, writing and math—gets back to the basics.

We’re going to continue to make the case that children will be able to get back on track if they stay in school right to June, without disruption.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The minister knows very well that as per the Education Act, the TDSB has to pass a balanced budget before June 30. Boards are not allowed to run deficits. There is no more reserve funding. The minister is essentially forcing the TDSB to cut programs and lay off staff.

We cannot afford to lose staff when violence in schools is up.

We cannot afford to lose programs when student needs are high.

Why is the government leaving our students and schools without the supports they need?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, here in the Legislature we have New Democrats asking the government to renew a fund that they just opposed. I’m sorry, Mr. Speaker; there’s inconsistency in the position of the NDP. They voted systematically against the increases in staffing, against the increases in funding, and yet here they are today urging us to renew the very funds they have absolutely opposed each and every year.

We’re going to continue to stand up for children, ensure they stay in school, ensure they have the resources and staffing in place.

There are 7,000 more education workers, 800 more teachers, 200 principals. That happened because of, not in spite of, provincial investment, and that will continue under our Premier’s leadership.

HOUSING

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mississauga is Ontario’s third-largest city, but over the last 10 years, the city has only built 2,100 new homes—far below what is needed. That is why it is concerning to see that the city of Mississauga rejected applications for two residential towers that would be built next to the Port Credit GO station and the Hazel McCallion LRT station under construction. Rather than working to get more homes built near transit, it appears that the city of Mississauga is opposing solutions that would make life easier and more affordable for individuals and families.

It is absolutely critical that Mississauga builds more homes to support our growing population, especially in the areas where growth is needed.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to ensure more homes will be built in close proximity to transit networks?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore for being a champion for housing in his riding.

Our province is facing a historic housing supply crisis. We need more homes of all kinds, including homes for young Ontarians, newcomers and seniors, that are near transit.

That's why last November I approved the new official plan for the region of Peel, which removes the discretion of lower-tier municipalities to set maximum heights within major transit station areas. The intent of the plan is to ensure that transit-supportive outcomes are achieved and that adequate housing supply is brought forward faster. For the residents of the member's riding, this will mean great things. It will mean that if they work in Mississauga or Toronto, they will have a fast, car-free commute, something that our government believes ought to be encouraged.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the minister for that answer and for clarifying that lower-tier municipalities can't set maximum heights in major transit station areas. Several councillors have thanked me on this, recognizing, as the minister said, that Ontario is facing a historic housing supply crisis.

Under the leadership of our Premier and this minister, bold and decisive actions are under way to build more housing, as it is clear that the status quo is not working.

With the population of Peel region projected to grow by almost two million over the next three decades, forward-thinking approaches are necessary to build more housing. Mayor Crombie herself has spoken of the critical need for Mississauga to build up and increase density, especially near transit.

Our government needs to act now to help incentivize more infill development and come up with solutions to address this serious issue.

Can the minister please elaborate on how our government plans to increase housing opportunities in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: I can assure the member that my ministry is actively working with the region and the city to ensure that implementation of major transit station area policies conform with the Peel region official plan.

Let me be clear: Provisions that would set maximum height limits in major transit station areas are contrary to the approved Peel region official plan.

We want to continue to put forward pro-housing policies that will help municipalities grow, with a mix of ownership, with a mix of rental housing times, to meet the needs of all Ontarians—from single-family homes to townhomes and mid-rise apartments.

We remain committed to working with all of our municipal partners and the federal government towards our common goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

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

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

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING ONTARIANS BY ENHANCING GAS STATION SAFETY TO PREVENT GAS AND DASH ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À PROTÉGER LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE EN AUGMENTANT LA SÉCURITÉ AUX STATIONS-SERVICE POUR ÉVITER LE VOL D'ESSENCE

Mr. Anand moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to provide safety measures in respect of workers at gas stations / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail pour prévoir des mesures de sécurité à l'égard des travailleurs des stations-service.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member from Mississauga–Malton to briefly explain his bill.

Mr. Deepak Anand: The Protecting Ontarians by Enhancing Gas Station Safety to Prevent Gas and Dash Act, 2023, amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to add a new section to require customers to prepay for gasoline before pumping it from a gasoline pump that has prepayment technology.

The section applies to gas stations in the GTA. It also applies in any municipality that passes a resolution requesting the application of the section.

The new section also requires the employer at the station to affix a notice to any pumps with prepayment technology informing customers about the prepayment requirements under the section. The owner of the gas station must ensure that any new or replacement gas pumps that are installed have prepayment technology.

The application of the new section is phased: with a six-month window before any requirements begin to apply, and for the first year after that, the requirement that employers ensure that customers prepay for gasoline applies only to gasoline sold between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

J2M COLLINGWOOD HOLDINGS INC. ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr17, An Act to revive J2M Collingwood Holdings Inc.

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

ANTI-SCAB LABOUR ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023 SUR LES BRISEURS
DE GRÈVE

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to replacement workers / Projet de loi 89, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne les travailleurs suppléants.

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

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. The anti-scab labour law is co-sponsored by Ms. French from Oshawa, Mr. Gates from Niagara Falls, Mrs. Gretzky from Windsor West and MPP West from Sudbury.

The bill is quite simple, Speaker. The provisions being restored prevent an employer from replacing a striking or locked-out employee with a replacement worker except in specific emergency situations.

The bill restores the provisions that were incorporated into the Labour Relations Act by the labour relations and employment statute act of 1992 that were repealed in 1995.

414087 ONTARIO LIMITED
ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr20, An Act to revive 414087 Ontario Limited.

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

PETITIONS

MISSING PERSONS

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to present this petition:

"Vulnerable Persons Alert.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a gap in our current emergency alert system that needs to be addressed;

"Whereas a vulnerable persons alert would help ensure the safety of our loved ones in a situation where time is critical;

"Whereas several municipal councils, including, Brighton, Midland, Bonfield township, Cobourg and

Mississauga and several others, have passed resolutions calling for a new emergency alert to protect our loved ones;

"Whereas over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a 'Draven Alert' and over 6,000 people have signed an online petition calling for 'Love's Law', for vulnerable people who go missing;

"Whereas this new alert would be an additional tool in the tool box for police forces to use to locate missing, vulnerable people locally and regionally;

"Whereas this bill is a common-sense proposal and non-partisan in nature, to help missing vulnerable persons find their way safely home;

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

"Support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act."

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my name to it and give it to page Jing to bring to the Clerks.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Lucille Poirier from Hanmer, in my riding, for this petition, "Invest in Ontario's Arts and Culture Sector."

"Whereas the arts and culture sector contributes \$28.7 billion to Ontario's GDP and creates over 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas the Ontario Arts Council budget has not been increased" in Ontario at the "rate of inflation, exacerbating the income precarity of artists and cultural workers, some of whom are earning less than \$25,000 per year, and still less for those from equity-deserving groups;

"Whereas the income precarity was worsened during the pandemic through issues of regulatory unfairness in the arts and culture sector, disproportionately impacting the performing arts sector and OAC-determined priority groups, including BIPOC, Indigenous, women, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA2S+ artists and cultural workers;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: "to sustain the Ontario Arts Council budget" at \$65 million a year for 2023 "and adequately invest in the arts and culture sector, including supports for equity-deserving groups, small, medium and grassroots collectives in our communities, and individual artists to ensure their personal and economic survival."

1510

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

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to present to the Legislature called "Vulnerable Persons Alert.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a gap in our current emergency alert system that needs to be addressed;

“Whereas a vulnerable persons alert would help ensure the safety of our loved ones in a situation where time is critical;

“Whereas several municipal councils, including, Brighton, Midland, Bonfield township, Cobourg and Mississauga and several others, have passed resolutions calling for a new emergency alert to protect our loved ones;

“Whereas over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a ‘Draven Alert’ and over 6,000 people have signed an online petition calling for ‘Love’s Law’, for vulnerable people who go missing;

“Whereas this new alert would be an additional tool in the tool box for police forces to use to locate missing, vulnerable people locally and regionally;

“Whereas this bill is a common-sense proposal and non-partisan in nature, to help missing vulnerable persons find their way safely home;

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

“Support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023.”

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

MISSING PERSONS

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled, “Vulnerable Persons Alert.” I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing forward the bill that relates to this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a gap in our current emergency alert system that needs to be addressed;

“Whereas a vulnerable persons alert would help ensure the safety of our loved ones in a situation where time is critical;

“Whereas several municipal councils, including, Brighton, Midland, Bonfield township, Cobourg and Mississauga and several others, have passed resolutions calling for a new emergency alert to protect our loved ones;

“Whereas over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a ‘Draven Alert’ and over 6,000 people have signed an online petition calling for ‘Love’s Law’, for vulnerable people who go missing;

“Whereas this new alert would be an additional tool in the tool box for police forces to use to locate missing, vulnerable people locally and regionally;

“Whereas this bill is a common-sense proposal and non-partisan in nature, to help missing vulnerable persons find their way safely home;

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

“Support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023.”

I understand this has gone to committee right now, and I urge the government to bring it back and get it passed. Several members of my community have really pushed for

this to take care of their loved ones. I support the petition. I’ll sign it and provide it to page Morgan to bring to the table.

MISSING PERSONS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled, “Vulnerable Persons Alert,” and I would also like to thank the MPP for Hamilton Mountain for bringing forward a very important bill about this issue.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a gap in our current emergency alert system that needs to be addressed;

“Whereas a vulnerable persons alert would help ensure the safety of our loved ones in a situation where time is critical;

“Whereas several municipal councils, including, Brighton, Midland, Bonfield township, Cobourg and Mississauga and several others, have passed resolutions calling for a new emergency alert to protect our loved ones;

“Whereas over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a ‘Draven Alert’ and over 6,000 people have signed an online petition calling for ‘Love’s Law’, for vulnerable people who go missing;

“Whereas this new alert would be an additional tool in the tool box for police forces to use to locate missing, vulnerable people locally and regionally;

“Whereas this bill is a common-sense proposal and non-partisan in nature, to help missing vulnerable persons find their way safely home;

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

“Support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023.”

I wholeheartedly support this. I will affix my signature thereto and give it to page Jing.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Rejeanne Fredette, from Chelmsford in my riding, for these petitions.

“Health Care: Not for Sale...”

“Whereas Ontarians get health care based on their needs, not their ability to pay;

“Whereas the Ford government wants to privatize our health care system;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals and will download costs to patients;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to privatize Ontario’s health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124 to help recruit, retain, return and respect health care workers with better pay and better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already” living “in Ontario;

“—incentivizing health care professionals to choose to live and work in northern Ontario.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with my good page Paul.

OPP DETACHMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Willy Schneider from Alban in my riding for these petitions.

“Keep the Noëlville OPP Detachment Open....”

“Whereas insufficient communications and consultations have taken place with communities and relevant stakeholders concerning the OPP Noëlville detachment’s continuing operations; and

“Whereas the residents and visitors in the municipalities of French River, Markstay-Warren, St.-Charles, Killarney and Britt-Byng Inlet as well as the First Nations of Dokis and Henvey Inlet deserve equitable access to a reliable, timely and efficient police response...;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

That the assembly “direct the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ontario Provincial Police to continue having Ontario Provincial Police officers reporting to an operational detachment location in Noëlville.”

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

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Émile Prud’homme from Val Therese in my riding for these petitions.

“Let’s Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant....”

“Whereas people in the north are not getting the same access to health care because of the high cost of travel and accommodations;

“Whereas by refusing to raise the Northern Health Travel Grant (NHTG) rates, the Ford government is putting a massive burden on northern Ontarians who are sick;

“Whereas gas prices cost” way “more in northern Ontario”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To establish a committee with a mandate to fix and improve the NHTG;

“This NHTG advisory committee would bring together health care providers in the north, as well as recipients of the NHTG to make recommendations to the Minister of Health that would improve access to health care in northern Ontario through adequate reimbursement of travel costs.”

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

SCLÉROSE EN PLAQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Madame Nicole Sabourin from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions.

« Clinique spécialisée en sclérose en plaques à Sudbury.... »

« Alors que le nord-est de l’Ontario affiche l’un des plus hauts taux de sclérose en plaques ... de l’Ontario; et

« Alors que des cliniques spécialisées dans la sclérose en plaques fournissent des services de soins de santé essentiels aux personnes atteintes de sclérose en plaques » et « à leur fournisseur de soins et à leur famille; et

« Alors que la ville du Grand Sudbury est reconnue comme un centre des soins de santé dans le nord-est de l’Ontario; »

Ils et elles pétitionnent « l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de :

« Mettre en place immédiatement une clinique spécialisée dans la sclérose en plaques dans la région de Sudbury, composée d’un(e) neurologue spécialisé(e) dans le traitement de la sclérose en plaques, d’un(e) physiothérapeute et d’un(e) travailleur(-euse) social(e) au minimum. »

J’appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer, et je demande à Paul de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Will Morin from Sudbury for these petitions.

“Repeal Bill 124....”

“Whereas Bill 124 removes the right of public employees to negotiate fair contracts;

“Whereas Bill 124 limits the wage increase in the broader public sector to a maximum of 1% per year at a time of unprecedented inflation;

1520

“Whereas Ontario’s public servants have dealt with” three “years of unheralded difficulties in performing their duties” in the province of Ontario;

“Whereas those affected by Bill 124 are the people who teach us, care for us, make our hospitals and health care system work and protect the most vulnerable among us;

“Whereas the current provincial government is showing disrespect to public servants to keep taxes low for some of our country’s most profitable corporations;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:”

To immediately stop the court appeal of “Bill 124 and show respect for the public sector workers.”

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

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Pierrette Baril from Val Caron in my riding for this petition.

“Gas Prices....

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to regulate the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Paul, who has been really, really patient.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Heather Jessup-Falcioni in my riding for this petition.

“Make PSW a Career....

“Whereas there has been a shortage of personal support workers (PSWs) in long-term care and home care in Ontario for many years;

“Whereas Ontario’s personal support workers are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated, leading to many of them leaving the profession;

“Whereas the lack of PSWs has created a crisis in LTC, a broken home care system, and poor-quality care for LTC home residents and home care clients;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Tell Premier Ford to act now to make PSW jobs a career, with full-time employment, good wages, paid sick days, benefits, a pension plan and a manageable workload in order to respect the important work of PSWs and improve patient care.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Paul to bring it to the Clerk.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, that is our time for petitions.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, point of order?

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I just want to take a moment and thank Mathias Sauerbrey, Esma Boztas, Saurabh Kapoor and the wonderful people at the centre table for helping me in my PMB, Bill 88. Thank you so much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR UN ONTARIO FORT (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 29, 2023, on the motion for second 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 Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I was saying earlier, we have committed more than \$200 million to connect children and youth to care at hospitals and close to home in their communities, including new funding for surgical and diagnostic wait times, pediatric hospitals and rehabilitation programs, as well as mental health and other community-based supports.

Home and community care is especially important for people to be able to age in place in the comfort of their own community. I am happy to say that we are increasing funding for the 2023-24 fiscal year of up to \$569 million. This includes nearly \$300 million to support contract rate increases to stabilize the home 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.

Speaker, the budget touches on so many critical areas, from helping our vulnerable residents to creating an environment where our Ontario-made manufacturing businesses can further thrive.

Thank you to the Minister of Finance for his work on this budget and how he has taken so much of our community members’ feedback into consideration, all the while being respectful of the taxpayer’s dollar.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I’d like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her presentation.

School violence impacts every single person in a classroom. When a child is afraid, learning practically comes to a halt. But violence also leaves further impacts after the event. It changes the classroom culture, where trust and respect are fundamental. Budget 2023 does not address school violence, and the minister has avoided discussing it. My question to the member: What is the government doing to address the rising tide of violence in schools to make sure students are safe?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member for the question.

Ontario is preparing our students for the jobs of the future. This is critical because we believe in better connecting learning in the classroom with meaningful

careers. This is why the government is creating more hands-on learning opportunities, which will allow our students to earn college credits and take apprenticeship training, all while still in high school. This is important because it's going to build our pipeline of job-ready graduates.

Building on the success of the micro-credentials challenge fund round 1, Ontario is investing \$5 million in 2023-24 to launch a second round of the program. This will increase micro-credential learning opportunities between post-secondary institutions and industry.

Speaker, we are providing an additional \$3.3 million over the next three years, beginning 2023-24, and this will expand access—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. Good to see you in the chair.

I think one of the greatest parts about seeing so many new members on our side of the House in here is to get to know them, to hear their stories. That's one of the reasons why I so appreciate the member from Newmarket—Aurora, because I know her passion for her community and for the most vulnerable in her community. I think that's one of the most gratifying things, to see the work that we've done with the most vulnerable in our communities.

With that, last year our government announced that it would increase the ODSP rate by 5%, which is the first increase of that to happen in as long as I can remember. I was wondering if the member could further speak about the work that we're doing in the budget for the most vulnerable.

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Brantford for his question.

Our government knows this economic time has been extremely challenging for so many people in our communities across this great province and right in my community of Newmarket—Aurora as well.

What I would like to note is that we have adjusted core allowances under the ODSP to inflation annually and increased the monthly earnings exemption for persons with disabilities. I'd also like to highlight the additional investment of \$202 million each year in the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous supportive housing. This has great impact in my community. On average, service managers are going to be seeing over a 40% increase in this supportive housing—

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Thank you to the member for talking about Bill 85. Yesterday, I was just down the street; I was at this conference, National Gathering on Unmarked Burials: Upholding Indigenous Law. I know we are all lawmakers here, but, before settlers came, we had our own laws—ways of doing things.

1530

This budget talks about \$25.1 million to find our children that never came home. I don't think that is enough. What is the cost of finding—I ask the member, is

that enough to find children? The member keeps telling me that it's in addition. I know that. But that's not enough. I heard stories that it's not enough.

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member for that question.

We know Ontario is committed to reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples and communities by focusing on the initiatives that promote economic prosperity and create a better future for everyone across this province.

Yes, the government has provided an additional \$25.1 million for 2023-24 to support the identification, investigation, protection and commemoration of residential school burial sites across this province, as well to provide mental health supports for our First Nations communities.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member from Newmarket—Aurora for her remarks.

Last week, the Minister of Finance told this House that the 2023 budget strikes the right balance in terms of the government's spending plan in this period of economic uncertainty.

Why is it important to invest in our health care and education systems?

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Burlington for that great question.

We know that you cannot have a healthy economy without healthy people. That's why our government is improving public services to make it more convenient and faster for people to connect to our health care system.

When it comes to health care in Ontario, our government is working to reduce wait times. This is something I was speaking to in my speech: health care here in Ontario. We are looking for better outcomes and care by adding more family doctors. This is why our government has introduced a plan that will connect you to more convenient care through your OHIP card and not your credit card.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to question the member from the government on the budget bill and to talk about housing, as it affects all of our communities. Hamilton has said that they need approximately \$60 million to be able to address the homeless issue in our city. We just had a report that said in the last six months of last year, 22 men died who were homeless—average age of 43. Some 53% of the homeless population in Hamilton are women. We're watching overdoses, we're watching violence. The government put in a measly \$202 million to help 444 municipalities. CMHA asked for 8% of a budget increase; the government gave them a 5% increase.

How do you think that this budget is actually going to help the people in our communities?

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain for the question.

Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, does take bold action. We know we are in a housing crisis. That is why we have a plan to build 1.5 million homes, and it's

not just one type of home, it's different types of homes for all different types of Ontarians. This is why we are focused on ensuring that municipalities—our partners—are working with us.

There will also be, as I mentioned, the \$202 million. That represents, on average, a 40% increase to our service managers, including Hamilton, that could help them with their homelessness program.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I know the member from Newmarket–Aurora—I thank her for her presentation—focused a lot on health care. She is parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health. I wanted to ask her: Bill 60 is improving access to care with proposing community surgical and diagnostic clinics, so if passed, that will improve access. But I wanted to ask about the funding in the budget for community surgical clinics and if the member could comment on the importance of that.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for that question. Yes, our government is taking very seriously the wait times, especially when it comes to cataracts. That type of surgery right there is the number one needed surgery and has the biggest surgical backlog in this province. That's why we're doing what we're doing to ensure that all patients have the quality of life. I've had constituents call my office—

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

Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to have a quick 10 minutes to put many, many things on the docket about the budget.

The first thing I want to mention is that although there are billions of dollars going into road construction, Highway 69, which links Sudbury to Toronto, has been needing a four-lane highway forever. It was a promise that was made in the 1990s, in the 2000s, in 2014. It's not even mentioned in the budget. There are 69 kilometres of two-lane highway between Toronto and Sudbury on Highway 69. Those 69 kilometres of two-lane highway are shut down at least once a month because of a fatal injury.

How many more northerners will have to die on Highway 69 before we see it in the budget? When I talk to the people at MTO, they are doing the work, but there's no money to improve this highway in northern Ontario.

There's another one: the corner of Regional Road 55 and Highway 17. Regional Road 55 is a low road that comes out of Walden and, bang, you come on to a four-lane highway. Most people who drive that road for the first time have no idea that they're about to come on to a four-lane highway because there's a big turn and—you guessed it—many people die because you suddenly cross a four-lane highway with people going 120 kilometres an hour, most of them big trucks.

The studies have been done. MTO has had community consultation. They have shown us the map: "Here's how we're going to make this safe." All we need is money to do it and there is no money in the budget.

How many more people from Nickel Belt will have to die at the corner of Regional Road 55 and Highway 17 before something is done? We're not talking billions of dollars, Speaker. We're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars that will save the lives of northerners, but it's not in the budget. It's not being done, although the plans are ready, everybody agrees. All we're missing is the money, but it's not in the budget.

I could go on. There are many others, but I only have 10 minutes.

The Critical Minerals Strategy: It's great to see it in the budget, but do you know what? When you say you will extract the critical minerals from northern Ontario and send them down south to make batteries, you are actually disrespectful to the people of the north. We know how to build batteries in northern Ontario. We've had battery plants in northern Ontario before. How about we extract the minerals in northern Ontario, use the hydro power that is green, renewable and cheap, and build the batteries right there in northern Ontario? We don't need to send them to the south—no offence to the south. They do lots of things really good, but when you put it in the budget that you won't even look at putting those in the north, you are not really respecting the people of the north.

Another thing about northern Ontario—I thank you for bringing PTSD care for first responders, but you have to realize that by putting only one such care in Toronto you're making it next to impossible. If you live with PTSD because you are a first responder—thank you to all of our first responders; I know many of you whose life is completely turned upside down because of PTSD—I know you are not able to drive to downtown Toronto where care will be available. It will be good for this type of care, which is top-notch.

1540

I thank you for funding this, but there are first responders outside of Toronto. If you live in Nickel Belt and if you live in northern Ontario, having to come to Toronto is stressful. When you're dealing with PTSD, you do not need more stress to gain access to care. You need to make those services available to all Ontarians. I'm looking forward to seeing that in the budget.

I also thank you for the expansion into medical schools. There are medical schools in northern Ontario. Medical schools will be able to get 100 students rather than the 64 we have now, but why wait until 2025? The dean tells us that we have thousands of applicants. We can easily select 100 students for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University right here this fall. Why do we have to wait? We need as many health care professionals and physicians in northern Ontario. The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is really, really successful at bringing us physicians to the north.

You make the announcement, but then the announcement won't come till 2025. We all know that it takes seven to eight years to get a family physician. From the start of study to actually taking on patients—why delay one more year? Let the Northern Ontario School of Medicine go up to 100 students this fall. Don't wait any longer.

Then, again I thank you. There is a 5% increase to mental health and addiction community providers in this bill. They need 8%, but 5% is better than nothing. But, then, it is the restrictions that you put on. It is only for the mental health and addiction providers funded by the Ministry of Health. We know full well that many community-based mental health and addiction providers are not funded by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services funds at least 300, or 200, children's mental health. We have everybody that deals with the women facing abuse. We have many, many ministries who fund community-based mental health. Only the ones funded by the Ministry of Health will get 5%, rather than 8%. It's a tiny step in the right direction, but the mental health crisis is also for children. The mental health crisis is also for women facing violence. But none of that is in your budget.

Then, we see contract rate increases for the home and community care sector. Everybody knows that even if you give Bayshore 56 bucks an hour rather than \$52 to provide PSWs, they are still going to pay their PSWs minimum wage. You have to make the link between the two. It is not by increasing the amount of money in the contract that you will make a PSW job a career. They need permanent, full-time jobs with a minimum of \$8 over minimum wage. They need benefits. They need a pension plan. They need 10 paid sick days, and they need a workload that a human being can handle. None of that is in the bill. The bill tells us that we will give Bayshore, the care partners and all of the for-profit home care providers more money. That does not guarantee that the hard-working PSWs will see a single penny of that money.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, 10 minutes goes by very fast.

We have lots of Learn and Stay for nurses. All of the colleges in the north got the Learn and Stay except the French college, except Collège Boréal. Do you really think that French people in northern Ontario do not need access to more nurses? Why is it that every single—North Bay, Timmins, Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie all got the Learn and Stay nursing program, but the one French college that we have that supplies all of the French nurses we have in northern Ontario didn't get it. I don't like that, Speaker. Lots of my constituents feel way better receiving health care services in French. If there are no French nurses being trained, how is the service ever going to be provided in French? You have to change this. You have to include them. Oh, my. I could go on and on.

There's a mention of the Northlander. I was really not happy when the Liberal government cancelled the Northlander. It is coming back in 10 years. Really? Why does it take 10 years to put a train on a set of rails that already exists? I don't get this. Every year, you get us all excited about how the Northlander is coming back to the north, and I can't wait for people in the north to be able to get on a train to come to Toronto for their hospital appointments, rather than in a bus or in a car—a train is way more comfortable—but this won't happen for 10 years. That 10

years, Speaker, is a long time. Do you know how many people will die on Highway 69 in the next 10 years because we don't have a train? I don't want to know that number, but I know that it will be way too high.

I could go on, but I only have 10 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Time for questions.

Mr. Will Bouma: I always appreciate the member from Nickel Belt. She brings such heart and passion not just for her community in Nickel Belt, but indeed for everything in the north and, indeed, everything across the province of Ontario.

I was very thrilled to hear that her only complaint about the budget is that it's not enough, and so she's supportive of every measure that we're making in the budget, just not enough: more roads, more care, more budget for mental health, more education, all those pieces. In many ways, I can agree, but this is what we are doing now. I heard no negatives from her about what we are doing with the budget measures.

While I appreciate her advocating for more, I was wondering if the member from Nickel Belt will be supporting the budget, because she agrees with everything that we're doing with it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I could go on way longer than the 10 minutes that I had, but let me tell you that I don't see anywhere in the budget where we're going to turn the lights back on in all the operating rooms that sit empty in our hospitals. I don't see anywhere in the budget where we're going to get rid of Bill 124, so that we treat health care workers with respect, so we can recruit, retain and respect the nurses back into our hospitals. I don't see anything in the budget where people in my riding will be able to get homes that they can afford. I don't see anything in the budget that makes life more affordable for the average Ontarian, who is facing cost-of-living increases of 6% and 8%. In northern Ontario, gas is still very expensive. None of that is in the budget.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch to the member from Nickel Belt. I know that in northern Ontario and north-western Ontario, in the riding of Kiiwetinoong, physician services are very important. I know that if you're a fly-in First Nation that has less than 1,000 people, you're entitled to five days of physician services per month. That's 60 days of physician services. Out of those five days are two travel days, so you've actually got three physician days.

There's a group called Sioux Lookout Regional Physicians' Services Inc. They provide physician services in the whole north, including the hospital. I know you spoke about the medical school seats that haven't opened up, and I see at the same level how a few years ago, they were funded to have 54 FTEs for physicians. At that time, they only had 18 full-time. How can we better the physician services in northwestern Ontario?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Health care should be equitably available to everybody, and that means to every First Nations person who lives in Ontario. There are many First

Nations communities that have thousands of people, and yet they do not have equitable access.

We know one of the strategies to change this is to increase the number of seats at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University. They have two campuses, one in Sudbury and one in Thunder Bay. I can tell you that 95% of the graduates of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University that do their internship in northern Ontario stay and work in northern Ontario. They stay and provide care to First Nations in remote communities in part of the Sioux Lookout group. But we won't see an increase for another two years. We could make things way better, way faster.

1550

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member for Nickel Belt for her comments. I was so pleased to hear, as the member from Brantford—Brant has already pointed out, how many things the member from Nickel Belt agrees with that are in the budget, especially a lot of the health care things that we're doing. I know that she wants things to be done faster. We'd all like things to be done faster. But the northern Ontario medical school, for example, was something that the Conservative government came up with when Tony Clement was Minister of Health, based on the Australian model, and I'm pleased that she's delighted with that. We've certainly added physician positions.

It does take time to make a new physician. What I'd like to ask the member is, if she cares about having more physician positions and is in a hurry, why did her government eliminate positions for training physicians when they were in power?

Mme France Gélinas: Well, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine saw the light of day in 2007. In 2007, when they took their first students, it was a Liberal government that was in power, and since then, since 2018, we've had a Conservative government. I would very much like to be able to tell you I'm proud that we got elected a New Democratic government in 2007, but we didn't.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is very important. It's something that the people of the north had been advocating for for a long time. It is a success. It's something that we are proud of, but it is something that is ready to expand. They could do way more than what they are doing now to help keep people in northern Ontario healthy, to give them equitable access to health care services. What they need is financial commitment from this government to do so, not just nice talk. But the money won't start to flow for way too long.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her excellent comments. She's always been a strong advocate for nurse practitioner-led clinics.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs heard across the province that there needs to be additional roles for nurse practitioners within communities and what a great value they provide to our health system.

But, also, in this budget, there's only been the allocation of 150 nurse practitioner seats, and those won't graduate until 2028.

I wonder if the member could talk about the quality of care, the innovative model that NPLCs provide, and also why this government is stopping allowing them to practise within Ontario.

Mme France Gélinas: The nurse practitioner-led clinic is a wonderful addition to our primary care. It was first started in Sudbury—really proud. And we now have 25, but we've had 25 for almost 20 years and we don't see any augmentation in those. We have underemployed nurse practitioners in northern Ontario that are ready to take on the tens of thousands of northerners who do not have access to primary care. All we need is a government who's ready to give a little bit of money. We're not talking millions here. Give a little bit—thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars—to the existing nurse practitioner-led clinics and you would give people access to primary care. None of that is happening.

The model is excellent. Many other communities would like to have a nurse practitioner-led clinic. Coniston, in my riding, would like one. Capreol would like an extra nurse. Southwestern Ontario needs an extra nurse because there are physicians retiring and they're ready to help them. None of that is in the—

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: I thank the member for her comments today. Boy, there was a lot to unpack there. I have to start with—now we're going to start dictating to international companies where they're going to establish their facilities here in the province of Ontario. That's a surefire way to make sure that new plants are built in Virginia or Georgia or Tennessee and not in Ontario.

But I do want to ask the member—because she talked about cost-of-living issues, and she talked about new homes in her riding and hoping people can afford them. Well, one of the biggest drivers of inflation and increases in costs in construction and everything else these days is the carbon tax. Your party was in favour of the largest increase in carbon tax ever in history.

I'm asking you, will you join us today in asking the federal government to not proceed with an increase in federal carbon tax on April 1?

Mme France Gélinas: The member is absolutely right that the cost of living is causing real hardship for people in northern Ontario. The number one issue that I hear, no matter where I go in Nickel Belt, is the price of gas. When you go to the pump and you still pay \$1.81, \$1.71 for a litre of gas, you know that you are being gouged. Why are you being gouged? They're telling us, "Because the people in northern Ontario have to travel long distances to work in the different mines that are far away. Those people make good wages. Therefore, they will pay whatever price we set."

We are being gouged. The government could stop this right now by making sure that we regulate the price of gas,

like they do in many other provinces. This will make sure that the people who I represent—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The time for questions and answers has ended.

It is now time for further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's my pleasure to rise today to participate in this debate on the 2023 Ontario budget. I have to say, Speaker, I was really struck by the editorial in the Toronto Star that described this as "An Ontario Budget Without Vision." The Toronto Star editorial writers said, "If this budget were a Christmas present, it would be a three-pack of white socks. Not entirely useless. But an exercise in going through the motions."

Speaker, the leader of the official opposition has very clearly described this budget as a document that fails to meet the moment. It fails to acknowledge the reality of the hardships that people in Ontario are facing. For me, as the representative for London West, it certainly fails to address the homelessness crisis that we are seeing in our community, the lack of access to affordable housing, the crisis in access to health care services.

I want to focus my remarks on housing and homelessness.

A couple of weeks ago, we had a proud moment in our city. Indwell, a non-profit supportive housing provider, opened up a new 72-unit supportive housing building in London. That came at a cost of just over \$21 million for 72 units of supportive housing. Of that \$21 million, the province contributed the absolute bare minimum that was necessary for Indwell to be able to access federal dollars.

It's encouraging, finally, after years of avoiding any involvement in providing supportive housing, to see this budget make an allocation for supportive housing. But \$202 million across the province is going to do nothing to address the breadth of the need that communities are experiencing. The 72 supportive housing units in London came at a cost of \$21 million. This government is allocating \$202 million for supportive housing for 444 municipalities across Ontario.

In London, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people who are homeless on our streets. We currently have more than 2,000 people who we know are experiencing homelessness on a daily basis. That doesn't take into account the number of people who are precariously housed, who are couch-surfing, who are not counted in the by-name list. We have more than 6,000 applications for social housing in our community. That represents 11,000 parents and their children who are trying to get access to housing they can afford.

1600

Our community came together and acknowledged the health and homelessness crisis as a major priority—as the number one priority—for the city of London to move forward on in a collaborative. So 60 social service providers and 200 individuals came together with funding from a very generous anonymous donor family who provided a gift of \$25 million to jump-start an innovative, never-seen-before plan to develop a whole-of-community response to deal with health and homelessness in the city of London.

That plan alone calls for 600 net new supportive housing units that will be necessary just in London alone, and that is just what's needed in the next three years. So you can see, Speaker, how the \$202 million that's allocated to meet homelessness needs across the province is nowhere near enough to address the concerns of other municipalities outside London.

Now the city of London's pre-budget submission had actually called on the province for a significant investment of \$15 million in capital funding to support the construction of these net new supportive housing buildings, as well as an additional \$4 million in annual operating funding for the supportive housing programming. So that is the mention of London that we would have expected to see in this budget. We saw one reference to London—one reference to a school that's being built. We need new schools, there's no doubt about it, but this was an announcement that had already been made by this government, and that's the only reference to the city of London in the entire budget.

London is looking at a \$97-million deficit caused by the measures that this government brought forward in Bill 23 that were supposed to tackle the housing crisis that we see in Ontario. Instead, this budget actually confirms that not only did the measures that the government set out in Bill 23 fail to move Ontario forward to meet that 1.5 million homes goal, but we're actually falling further behind. The numbers that are reported in this budget show that Ontario is lagging in the pace that it will need to meet if we are going to achieve that 1.5 million home target.

When I talk about Bill 23, there's the financial impact on municipalities with the revenue hole that it's going to create in municipal budgets, but there is also, associated with Bill 23, the attack on the greenbelt. This budget would have been an opportunity to actually take some serious measures, some bold and strong measures, to deal with climate change mitigation and resilience. We saw none of that in this budget, and that has people in my community very concerned.

The other thing that is of huge concern to people in London is the money that this government is allocating to expand for-profit private health care facilities. Instead of investing in excellent stand-alone facilities like the Nazem Kadri ambulatory surgical care centre that is run under the oversight of a hospital, this government decided not to invest in those kinds of services and hospitals but instead to funnel yet more money to investor-led private for-profit health care facilities. They've increased the budget from \$18 million last year to \$72 million this year, and that has a lot of people concerned.

We've heard not just from the Auditor General but from patients of private health care facilities who talk about the aggressive upselling that they have experienced at these facilities. As much as the government would like to say, "Oh, no, you won't pay at a private health care facility," the experience of patients in this province has been very different. They have had to pay. They've been told they need surgeries that, when they've gotten a second opinion, they find out that that surgery was unnecessary. They've

been told they have to pay for the ability to stay longer than they would otherwise have been asked to stay. So there are huge concerns about funnelling public dollars into private health care facilities.

But, Speaker, just to get back to what I said initially, this is a budget that falls flat. It really ignores the pressures that Ontario families are facing, the affordability pressures that Ontario families are facing, as daily, we get calls from people who tells us about the huge spike in their Enbridge gas bills. The price of food in grocery stores, the price of Internet services, the price of insurance—everything is increasing, and this budget includes no measures to help people deal with those realities.

In particular, for those who are the most vulnerable, the most disadvantaged, those living on social assistance, this government provided a measly 5% increase when we know what's needed is a doubling of social assistance rates.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for her comments. I listened intently.

I'd like to read a quote and I'll obviously lead into my question. From the mayor of London, who tweeted this on budget day:

"Lots of positive news for #LdnOnt in today's Ontario budget, especially significant investments in mental health and addictions, supportive housing and homelessness prevention.

"This is exactly what's needed in #LdnOnt, especially as we build out our whole of community Health and Homelessness system....

"I thank them, along with Health Minister @Sylvia-JonesMPP, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions @MichaelTibollo," the labour minister and "MPP @RobFlackPC, for not only listening but prioritizing these types of investments."

Question to the member from London West: Does she support her mayor?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I don't think the member actually listened intently to my remarks. I gave the example of a 72-unit supportive housing building that had been constructed in London with a significant investment from the city of London, at a cost of \$21 million. For one 72-unit supportive housing building—how on earth is the \$202 million that's allocated in this budget to meet the needs for supportive housing across the province going to address the serious crisis that we are seeing in communities across Ontario in homelessness? London deserves a piece of that \$202 million, but so do so many other communities in this province.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. I know you spoke about the cost of living and how the cost of living has increased so much. Sometimes different areas of Ontario will talk about the cost of fuel, cost of gas, but I do remember this: I think everybody would complain if you were paying \$3.50 per litre for gas. There's no way Toronto would accept that and there's no way that Toronto

would accept paying \$20 to \$30 for four litres of milk. A flight from Big Trout Lake to Thunder Bay one way is \$1,000. Is that acceptable? Is that the cost of living and what do you say to people that are investing in the north?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank my colleague for his question and also his advocacy on something that absolutely would not be acceptable to the people of Toronto, would not be acceptable anywhere else in this province, but somehow residents on First Nations reserves are expected to live with long-term boil-water advisories. That's not just in remote areas of northern Ontario, that's just outside London, Speaker. Oneida Nation has had a long-term boil-water advisory in place for three years. It's unacceptable that people on First Nations reserves should not have access to clean, safe drinking water. It's unacceptable that they should be forced to pay huge, huge prices for basic necessities like milk, like food, like utilities.

1610

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for her address today. The NDP, I think they really wanted us to write their budget, but the only way that happens is if there's an election and they get elected. But you know what? We're building on last year's budget in this year's budget, and we took that budget to the people and the people gave it a resounding yes. The people gave it a resounding yes. I shudder to think what the cost, and when we might ever balance a budget, if the NDP actually got their way.

What I'm saying to the NDP: We did it last year, just about 10 months ago. I know that people on this side of the House and our colleagues on the other side would be more than willing to take this budget to the people right now if it was necessitated.

I ask the member of the NDP: Can you tell us what your budget proposals would cost and would you actually be willing to take that to the people?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think here in the province of Ontario we're very fortunate to have a Financial Accountability Officer as an independent watchdog officer of this Legislature who does the analysis of budgets, like the ones that we have seen brought forward by this government time and again. We know from the Financial Accountability Officer that so much of the budgeting that comes out of this government is smoke and mirrors. It's a shell game. There are huge contingency funds—money socked away in contingency funds. There are revenues that are underestimated to come up with the numbers they want. There are billions of dollars of funding that is underspent year after year.

Thank goodness for the Financial Accountability Officer for telling us the truth about the budget.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I've heard from the government side an apparent interest in looking after human trafficking, about doing something about human trafficking. I

was very shocked this morning to hear that the Elizabeth Fry Society of Hamilton lost its funding.

I'm going to create some context: When women are released from prison, they're taken to a bus stop and they're given a bus ticket, and that's it. They're immediately targets for human trafficking. The Elizabeth Fry Society provides programming to help women become ready to resume civilian life, and also to make sure that they get home safely and that they have safe places to live.

To see that cut is really horrifying to me. My question to the member from London West is, do you have concerns about how vulnerable women are being treated in this budget?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have huge concerns about the way vulnerable women are being treated in this budget and by the way vulnerable people across this province are treated in this budget. Many of the women who rely on the services from E. Fry are likely on social assistance. What we have seen from this government is a deliberate policy of legislated poverty to keep people who are on social assistance well below the poverty line and unable to make ends meet—not just those who are facing barriers, like the women who use E. Fry's services, but anyone who is struggling just to put a roof over their heads, to put food on the table, to keep their kids healthy and safe. It is impossible on the current social assistance rates that we have in this province.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: The member opposite stated—and I just want to remind you that we're all facing uncertain economic times here and that Ontario is already growing because for the past two years we've all been working so hard. You hear about all the investors coming in, which is why we continue building Ontario, making it stronger. However, we have not left the vulnerable aside, especially seniors. Do you agree and support us when we do special support for seniors with GAINS and 100,000 more seniors will receive more support with this budget that we have proposed? Will you support that?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Many of the people I hear from in London West who are concerned about some of the issues I spoke to in my remarks are seniors. Seniors are the ones who are contacting my office, who are on fixed incomes. They are on fixed pensions and are not able to absorb the doubling of their gas bill every month and the extra money they have to pay on their weekly grocery bills. They are the ones who are struggling.

We need to see a permanent increase in financial support for seniors, but we also need to see some real action taken to address the affordability challenges that people and seniors are facing with housing, with groceries, with utilities.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm pleased to rise today and talk about the budget. Maybe I'm getting old and maudlin, but I can remember looking back at what drove me to make the decision to run for office in this House. It was in 2017

where people approached me and said, "We need someone like you in Toronto." I think that was true for so many of us in the class of 2018. You'll remember the same thing, Speaker, that drove you to run here. Our class especially—I think so many of us left very good positions and took a step back in order to serve the people of Ontario in this place, because we knew what 15 years of waste and mismanagement, to use that old quote, had done to the province of Ontario.

I still think about that a lot. It seemed like it was just yesterday, and yet it seems like such a lifetime ago. I've been thinking about that especially during budget time because of the changes we have made, and I think sometimes of how different it would have been if the government had turned out differently than it did.

I can remember that 350,000 jobs were chased out of the province of Ontario, and I think, listening sometimes to the Liberal members, that if they could pack a few more people into their van, they would still be driving those jobs out of Ontario right now, if they had the opportunity. But we're in a position now where we have a deficit of workers in the province of Ontario of, I think, 350,000. That makes me wonder how much change we have done in just four short years for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

When I think of a budget that has the largest spending in every single sector that's ever happened before, I think it's \$200 billion or something like that—I'm not that kind of a numbers guy; I think more in the terms of prescriptions and eyeglasses than in those kinds of numbers—what a difference. We haven't sacrificed anything to the most vulnerable in the province of Ontario, and yet we are on a path to balance, and that's after having been through a global pandemic—it's now endemic—that screwed up the lives of so many, that cost us 50,000 lives in the province of Ontario, and yet we can say with confidence that we are on a path to balance in this province.

I think of that conversation that I had that seems like a lifetime ago, conversations that many of us have had with people who said, "You know what? We need someone like you to stand for the people of Ontario, not just for the riding, but for the sake of the people of Ontario, so that we can turn things around."

Because if there's one thing that I've learned in the last four years, and especially in working with the Indigenous people in my riding, the nations that I represent here, it's that we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, but we are all connected with those who have gone before and with those who will come after. One of the tag lines that I've adopted through my work here is that we have to leave things better than we found them. It's so incredible to be part of a government that is committed to leaving things better than we found them.

1620

Again, when I contemplate the fact that we're looking at a budget that, if passed, will spend more than ever before—I apologize for those fiscal hawks who may be watching, but we are investing more into infrastructure, into roads, into bridges, into making good things happen for Ontario than ever before.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Building Ontario.

Mr. Will Bouma: We are building Ontario. We are indeed building Ontario, because we have a duty to our children. I think of the member from Kitchener–Conestoga: five children who are younger than mine. We have a duty to those youth to leave things better than we found them, and that's why it gives me great pleasure to speak about the budget today.

We have five simple pillars. We need to build Ontario's economy for today and for tomorrow. We have to build our highways. We have to build transit. We have to build infrastructure.

The first lesson that I learned on county council was that there's good debt and there's bad debt. When you're spending money on operations, when you're loaning money for operations, you're in trouble. You're in trouble in your household; you're in trouble as a province of Ontario. But when you're spending money for the future, for subways, for highways, for hospitals, for courthouses, you're building for the future. That investment will always come back to you, and that's good debt. That's why I'm proud that we're doing that.

We are working for workers. We're working for workers so hard that we have over 300,000 unfilled jobs in the province of Ontario right now. Our call-out to the world: If you want to make Ontario your home, if you want to work hard, you are welcome here. We want you. We need you. Please come here.

We are keeping costs down. We are doing our bit. We are calling on the federal government to do their bit too, but we are saving people money on gas. I think, if I remember the numbers right, we're saving businesses over a half billion dollars a year in red tape costs to be able to do their work more efficiently. These are all things that we are doing in the budget.

Probably the most exciting piece for me, Madam Speaker, is that I can't hear anything negative from the opposition, other than they say, "Just do a little more." Well, we will, because we're going to have another fall economic statement this fall. We're going to have another budget next year. We will continue to build a strong Ontario.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Bouma has moved that the question be now put. We have had over nine hours of debate with 25 debates on this bill, and I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

All those who are in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 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): I recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to continue the debate on Bill 79, Working for Workers 3 from this government. When I was last speaking to this bill, I was giving some examples of the pervasiveness of wage theft in the province of Ontario, which is something that this government could have taken action on, this bill would have been an opportunity to take action on, but they have not. I use the example of wage theft as a case study of how increasing fines for violations of labour laws will do nothing unless there are those strong, proactive inspections in place, unless there is strong, proactive enforcement in place and unless this government closes the loopholes that we see far too often in our labour legislation that have allowed employers to get away with wage theft for so many years.

One of the tools that this government could have used to deal with the issue of wage theft is, of course, around worker misclassification. That is how so many workers do not get the wages and benefits that are owed to them under the Employment Standards Act, because their employer illegally classifies them as an independent contractor rather than an employee who has full rights and entitlements under the Employment Standards Act. That is particularly the case for the farm workers, the migrant temporary foreign workers that the first schedule of this government's bill is supposed to protect, because those temporary foreign workers are completely exempt from the Employment Standards Act. So it is one thing for this government to say they're cracking down on scumbag employers, but it is quite another thing to actually protect the temporary foreign workers who are at greatest risk of being taken advantage of and being exploited by unethical employers.

We know that the number of inspections that the Ministry of Labour has conducted dropped significantly; there were 3,500 in 2017 and just over 200 in 2022. So while we welcome the increase in fines, we're waiting to see other changes that the ministry has to make in order to actually help protect migrant workers.

It's interesting that since we were last debating this legislation, the government introduced a new measure that is significantly going to harm migrant workers, and that is to remove OHIP coverage for uninsured people. Certainly, we know that migrant workers are among the largest group of uninsured people in this province who do not have access to OHIP, and we have heard the OMA, we have heard doctors in Ontario describe this government

decision to remove that OHIP coverage as inhumane, as despicable, as barbaric—as all kinds of words that have been hurled at this government for the action that it is taking that is going to directly and significantly harm migrant workers.

The other thing that we saw since this bill was last debated in the Legislature was the introduction of the budget that put in black and white, in print form, the government's decision to eliminate paid sick days. That is a benefit that would significantly help temporary foreign workers, migrant workers—workers in this province who need access to paid sick days so that they can stay home if they are sick, which is the number one lesson that we should have learned from this pandemic: how important it is to enable workers to stay home if they are sick so they don't have to go to crowded workplaces while they are ill, compromise their own ability to recover from illness and also risk spreading infection to co-workers and customers.

This government was shamed into finally implementing an inadequate paid sick day scheme. It took some time to get them there. The scheme was flawed, but at least it was something to help workers be able to stay home if they are sick. Some 60% of workers in this province do not have access to paid sick days, and that number goes up to 75%, 80%, 90% in some sectors, for some of the most vulnerable workers in this province: racialized workers in this province; workers who are at greatest risk of contracting illness in the workplace, who work in crowded warehouses or other places where they are at risk of either bringing illness into the workplace and infecting others or getting infected.

1630

We heard during the pandemic—no one will forget that study from Peel Public Health at the very beginning of the pandemic where one in four workers admitted that they went to work sick because they didn't have a choice, not because, of course, they wanted to put their co-workers at risk, but because they didn't want to put their family at risk by not being able to pay the rent at the end of the month, not being able to buy the groceries. So that is the kind of legislation that would show that this government really is working for workers.

The final piece that I want to highlight is around Bill 124. We have heard for months—actually, since that legislation was introduced back in 2019, we have heard calls, strong calls, from health care workers across the province to drop that bill because it is an unconstitutional infringement on the rights of workers to bargain collectively with the government.

At a time when inflation has been as high as 12%, capping wage increases at 1% is nothing but a wage cut, and a significant wage cut, when we need health care workers more than ever. Health care workers are leaving the province in droves because of Bill 124. We know that from the data that's collected on our health human resources workforce. We know that from—in London, when I go to speak to the London Health Sciences Centre or St. Joseph's hospital about the health care worker shortage that they're having, Bill 124 has a direct impact on that.

Dropping the appeal of the court decision that Bill 124 was unconstitutional would go a long way to working for workers in this province. But this government decided not to do that; instead, they have brought forward a package of measures that will make a little bit of a difference, a symbolic difference. The increased fine on employers who withhold passports will make a difference. But if this government really wanted to work for workers, there's a lot more they could be doing.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: The member opposite just made reference to symbolism and symbolic references in the bill and that this doesn't go far enough. I would ask her—there's a very, I think, important schedule of this bill that refers to cancer coverage for firefighters. This is something that other jurisdictions do. It's something that Ontario was lagging behind in. I'm just wondering if she agrees with the Canadian Cancer Society and with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs that this is a very, very good piece of this bill, and if she'll be supporting it.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from the member, and I know he's expecting an answer from me. However, I would like him to show me the schedule in the bill where that measure is set out, because there is no schedule in the bill that talks about presumptive coverage for those cancers for firefighters.

Now, I understand that in the media releases around the bill, when the minister has been speaking to the bill, that is what he says the bill will enable. But this legislation actually makes no reference to presumptive coverage for cancers for firefighters. That is in the regulations. Let's see the regulations, let's talk about the regulations, and then we can discuss further.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for London West for her excellent comments and her analysis of the current plights of working people, whether it's gig workers or temporary foreign workers, and also the importance of equal pay for equal work. In this government's legislation, they talk about "scumbag" employers, and in some ways it's almost as through this government doth protest too much.

I would like to ask the member, is it a scumbag move to block collective bargaining? Is it a scumbag move to waste money in a losing court battle, and is it a scumbag move to engage in a costly appeal and withhold what's fair for nurses?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I did quote the government's reference to "scumbag" employers, who do things like withhold passports from temporary foreign workers. But yes, one does have to question the actions of an employer that decides to impose a 1% wage cap. When they had seen previous charter cases that recognized the imposition of collective agreements as an infringement on the Charter of Rights, the right to bargain collectively, one would question whether that is a reputable, decent employer. I would say that that is not a decent employer, an employer who

would do something like that direct violation of the Charter of Rights.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, one of the things that in my view perhaps unfairly shuts skilled workers out of the workforce in Ontario is the requirement that they have Canadian experience in order to fulfill their workplace qualifications rather than just relevant experience. They might have relevant experience but not Canadian experience, so I think one of the absolutely brilliant things that this bill does, in schedule 3, is it says that a regulated profession may accept Canadian experience in satisfaction of a qualification if it also accepts alternatives to Canadian experience. That means people who got experience in some alternative way may use that experience, whether it's Canadian or otherwise, to fulfill this qualification. Does the member agree with that proposal?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think we've all had experiences in this House of being driven in a taxi with a driver who you enter into a conversation with and you find out he was a cardiac surgeon in India or his country of origin and can't get work, can't get access in Canada to the profession for which he was trained. So certainly, we have to take measures to enable people to enter the professions that they were trained for, to use the skills and experiences that they offer, and nowhere is that more important than in our health care sector, which is why we have been so critical of this government for dragging its feet on really aggressively trying to get more internationally educated physicians, more internationally educated nurses, more internationally educated allied health care professionals certified and working in our health care workforce in Ontario.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: This morning we had workers drive all the way from Windsor, from Oshawa, from Toronto coming to Queen's Park to ask the government to bring forward anti-scab legislation. The reason they're coming to Queen's Park is that they see the detrimental impact on scab workers themselves, who tend to be vulnerable employees, vulnerable Ontarians, who get hired to cross picket lines. But they also see the long-term effect on the people who cross the picket line, on their family, on their community, when at the end of the day, it does not help the employer and it does not help the workers to drag this on. Do you think anti-scab legislation would be working for workers?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague for her ongoing efforts to bring forward private members' legislation to introduce anti-scab provisions in the province of Ontario.

1640

Absolutely, Speaker, anti-scab legislation would be an important step that this government could take to show that they are actually working for workers. We know that when workers band together to withdraw their labour, that

is the only tool that they really have. So scab labour undercuts the ability of workers to obtain their rights, and it undermines the financial security of the workers' families and the viability of the employer's firm itself.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd like to rephrase my question to the member opposite. I would be interested to know whether or not she would support regulation changes that are going to be contained within this bill that will help firefighters—and I think the provision is backdated till 1960, if I'm not mistaken—whether she would support that, whether she would support the Canadian Cancer Society and whether she would support the Ontario chiefs of police in calling for that. Hopefully, maybe this time we'll get an answer.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very proud of the track record of the NDP in fighting for presumptive coverage to those kinds of cancers for firefighters. I know that the former leader of the official opposition, Andrea Horwath, had brought in a private member's bill—I believe it was her first private member's bill, shortly after she was elected to this place—to make that presumptive coverage available to firefighters. A former member for Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, also brought in private member's legislation to ensure that there was WSIB coverage for PTSD for first responders.

So, yes, of course, we would support those measures. We have supported them always in the past. We have pushed the government to bring in those kinds of changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have time for one quick question and answer.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm grateful to the member from London West and for all of the perspectives that she brings to the Legislature, particularly on paid sick days and the importance of having 10 paid sick days. Maybe she wants to just, in the quick 30 seconds, touch a little bit further on the importance of that for people who are still facing COVID?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Without access to 10 paid sick days, we are going to continue to put people into the impossible position of trying to decide whether to stay home if they are ill so that they don't have to give up their paycheque or go into work sick so that they can make the rent at the end of the month. Our health care system will not recover—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we are out of time.

Further debate?

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's my pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 79. Yesterday, as some who are currently in this place will know, I spoke in this House about our government's comprehensive plan to build a strong Ontario for generations to come. Today, I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak on Bill 79—Working for Workers 3—that re-emphasizes some of the pledges we outlined in our budget as well.

Let's talk a little bit about what it means to work for workers, something this Premier and our Progressive

Conservative Party are focused on day in and day out. Unfortunately, for too long under the previous Liberal government, backed by the NDP, the workers of Ontario were forgotten and neglected and left behind. We saw under that government a deliberate policy to deindustrialize our province, sacrificing good, high-paying jobs in every corner of our province.

However, since 2018, because of this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, Ontario has attracted historic investments in the auto manufacturing sector, with a particular emphasis on electric vehicle production. Obviously, earlier this month, we heard the great news that Volkswagen announced that St. Thomas, Ontario, is the new location for their first overseas battery cell plant, demonstrating a massive level of confidence in our province and this government.

It wasn't too long ago that the previous Liberal government drove manufacturing jobs out of Ontario, hurting ridings such as mine. The truth is, Speaker, it was everybody's business—jobs that were driven out of the province—to ensure that we need to build a strong Ontario, to come back from those dark days. That's why, through this bill, our government is taking real action to protect the jobs we've so carefully been able to attract back to our communities in Ontario, to make sure we have a plan to build a reliable and supported skilled trades workforce that's so important to the growth and prosperity of our province.

Speaker, we've brought back jobs. In fact, we have more jobs than we have people who are able to fill them. Ontario employers continue to face historic labour shortages with nearly 300,000 jobs going unfilled in December 2022. Speaker, in my own riding of Perth–Wellington, we have the claim to fame of having one of the lowest unemployment rates—I believe the last numbers from Statistics Canada—second-lowest in the province. I know we're looking for workers and inviting new Canadians to come to our communities to help us fill those available jobs.

In this bill, our government outlines our plan for training and attracting the workers we need in the skilled trades to help us build Ontario. For far too long, under previous governments, this was neglected and there was a negative stigma that surrounded these important careers. We in this government are giving the credits and showing the strength that these careers provide individuals. Our government is investing a historic \$1.5 billion over four years into the skilled trades, supporting people of all ages but especially young people to pursue meaningful careers in the trades.

Our government is also preparing young people for in-demand and well-paying careers by allowing students in grade 11 to transition to a full-time skilled trades apprenticeship program, and upon receiving their certificate of apprenticeship, these young workers can apply for their Ontario secondary school diploma as a mature student.

Speaker, these initiatives, such as the ones I've highlighted so far, are so important in removing the stigma around the skilled trades in a way that truly demonstrates just how financially rewarding and fulfilling these jobs can be, as we look towards building a strong Ontario together.

I can tell you personally, as someone who obviously comes from a rural riding in Ontario, that people in the communities that I represent are looking forward to welcoming new Canadians, new businesses and new jobs that our government is working so hard to bring back to Ontario.

Having said that, Speaker, I hear it day in and day out. When I speak to constituents, stakeholders and industry leaders, communities in rural Ontario are desperate for more workers and to keep the pace of growth as we look to ensure a brighter future for generations to come. That means boosting protections and enhancing work environments. To that end, this bill, if passed, will require basic information to be provided to new employees by their employer, including their work location, salary or wage, and the hours of work. This provision will be an important part of our commitment to eliminating underground hiring practices that some employers and bad actors in our province have taken advantage of.

Also relating to employees, under the proposed changes, employees who work remotely, which has become such a staple in our society, would be eligible for the same enhanced notices as in-office employees. For situations of mass terminations—I actually know individuals who worked at Twitter who have recently gone through that unfortunate experience with Twitter—I know these changes will help Ontario workers who remotely work receive the same eight-week minimum notice of termination, pay in lieu and preventing companies from taking advantage of them.

Our government is taking important steps to attract and train more workers to help fulfill our plan to build a strong Ontario, but at the same time we have also taken the necessary steps to ensure that workers will be well served by the jobs and industries they will work in, free from discrimination, manipulation or any other form of mistreatment.

1650

Speaker, part of the reason a career in the skilled trades can be so fulfilling is the hands-on nature of the job that allows someone to see their work progress from start to finish. Part of the commitment means ensuring a safe and clean and comfortable working environment.

As many of us know in this place and have seen on social media, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Minister McNaughton, recently engaged in a social media campaign, letting a variety of construction workers and other skilled tradespeople raise awareness of their experience with washrooms on work sites. Needless to say, Speaker, we can do better to ensure a safe and comfortable working environment for these workers, and that represents a central focal point of this proposed legislation.

Our government is proposing amendments—again, if passed—to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that would clarify and enhance existing regulations around hygiene on the work site. Speaker, these changes would ensure workers have the convenient and comfortable access to clean washrooms on the work site that meet their needs.

In the coming years, we'll be relying more and more on skilled tradespeople to meet the demands in our communities across Ontario. By 2026, it's estimated that one in five jobs will be in the skilled trades in Ontario. And it's across Canada we are experiencing these demands, so Ontario needs to be prepared to attract these workers. It's important that our government supports these workers in whatever ways possible to ensure that they can work in comfortable and safe environments.

More than just that, Speaker: Currently one in 10 construction workers in Ontario are women, and as our government looks to support getting more women into the skilled trades to well-paying, rewarding careers, we need to make job sites safe and welcoming. To that end, Ontario is proposing to require women's-only washrooms on construction sites that are fully enclosed, well-lit and adequately supplied with hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies. These initiatives directly reflect our government's message that when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

In the next few years, our province will be welcoming hundreds of thousands of new immigrants into our communities who will be going to work for our local employers and will start their own businesses potentially, eventually, in Ontario. We're strengthening the protections for temporary foreign workers by establishing the highest maximum fines in Canada—in Canada, Speaker—for employers and people who are convicted of possessing or retaining a foreign national's passport or work permit. They will grow into the beautiful fabric that makes Ontario as diverse and successful as it is.

But before we get there, we need to take proactive steps, exactly like the ones outlined in this bill, that help ensure we create a supportive working environment for everyone—women, new Ontarians to our province—to make sure that we are ready and prepared to accommodate the next generation of Ontarians in each and every community across the province of Ontario.

Speaker, the Premier often says that when you have a job in the trades, you have a job for life. Working for workers means that we are making that job as rewarding and fulfilling and comfortable as possible. Through this bill, Speaker, we are doing just that, and we will continue to work for workers on this side of the House and in the middle over there.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Earlier today, workers from Windsor, workers from Oshawa, workers from Toronto came to Queen's Park. They came to Queen's Park because they are part of this very small percentage, about 2% of collective agreements, that do not get negotiated but end up in a strike or lockout.

Unfortunately, their employers decided to hire replacement workers, scab workers. Most of those replacement workers don't speak English or French. They are new arrivals to Ontario. They don't know the labour law, but they will pay for the consequences of that work for the rest of their lives.

Does the member think that it would be working for workers to enact anti-replacement workers legislation in Ontario, like they do in British Columbia and Quebec?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague across the way for the question. As the minister mentioned earlier today, our government always favours getting an agreement at the negotiating table. I know those negotiations are ongoing.

Speaker, that includes workers across all sectors, that includes our educational workers, that includes our teachers remaining at the table to get an agreement, which is what our government always is focused on. We'll continue to work with workers to ensure that they have safe working environments and they are supported.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member from Perth–Wellington for his comments on this important piece of legislation. I was also very interested to hear his comments about his riding having some of the lowest unemployment rates across the province.

In follow-up on the comments of our other colleague from Brampton about the low unemployment, high job surplus that we have in Ontario, I'd be interested to hear his comments on how recognizing foreign credentials can benefit those who may wish to come to Ontario, both in the skilled trades and the regulated professions.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Simcoe–Grey for the question.

I've talked to foreign-trained engineers, for example, and manufacturers and small businesses. They're very supportive of these changes—many of those employers are very supportive of them as well—to get new Canadians, new Ontarians, into the workforce, helping meet some of the growing demand that I have in my riding—as well as the member from Brampton—and ensuring that those with the skills can enter the workforce as soon as possible, obviously meeting all the requirements there but working with our regulated professions. I know many are supportive of this as well, because they know we have a growing need. As I mentioned in my remarks, one in five jobs by 2026 will be in the skilled trades, so unless we all start having many children—I would be guilty of that—we will need immigration, obviously, to help meet that demand.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm pleased to see that there will be fines there for people who take away people's passports and so on, but it does worry me, about enforcement. I also worry that perhaps people from the other side haven't actually visited many of these places where foreign workers are employed. The living situations are often very crowded, unsanitary, and we know that COVID broke out in those places and that workers died, and yet OHIP is being denied to those workers. They also pay into WSIB, and they're not eligible to collect.

What I would like to know is, what will be there in terms of health care for these workers from this government?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member across the way for the question.

During COVID, yes, as the member highlighted, there were some bad actors in Ontario, and I know the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour worked together to rectify those issues and support those temporary foreign workers.

I actually have a few temporary foreign workers in my riding as well. I've met with them. Those employers are very supportive of them and welcome even more coming to our riding, working in agriculture, working in manufacturing. So I know that we'll continue to ensure that all occupational health standards, as I alluded to in my speech, are observed and we will continue to ensure there are sanitary work environments and safe working environments for all Ontarians, no matter how long they've been in this province.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: In my riding of Essex, we have a huge demand for skilled labour, a huge demand for people with skills. We have so much demand we can't keep up with it. We're hoping to bring more people in. These people sometimes come to the riding of Essex and they have qualifications, but they're not Canadian qualifications. Under the old rules, if they didn't have Canadian qualifications, they couldn't work in the skill for which they were qualified. Now, under this proposed legislation, we're proposing to change those rules and recognize qualifications that were obtained outside of Canada.

So my question to my colleague is—I know this is going to help enormously in my riding of Essex. Is it going to help him in his riding?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I thank the member from Essex for his question. I'm sure, in his riding as well, they're very supportive of these changes to ensure foreign credentialed workers can get into the workforce sooner and quicker, meeting the demand in both our ridings to continue to build a strong Ontario, working with those professional organizations to ensure that the immigrant from India who may have an engineering degree in India can work in the greenhouses in the member's riding or work in the factories in mine. I know we'll continue to work to streamline those processes moving forward.

1700

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Economist Mike Moffat put out a report just recently showing that typically in Ontario, about 80,000 people move and about 80,000 people move in from other provinces. This past year, under this government, we have seen 50,000 more people leave Ontario than are coming to this province, and many of the people who are leaving are the skilled trades workers that we will need to build the houses that we need here in Ontario. Many of them are the health care workers that we need to shore up our health care workforce. And the reason that they are giving for leaving is because of this government's failure to deal with the affordability crisis.

I would like to hear from this member what the government is doing to try to retain those mainly young adults who are leaving the province in droves, going to Alberta, going to the east coast because this province has simply become too unaffordable.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I am proud to be part of a government under a Premier that is fighting for my generation and the generations to come, and home ownership. The members opposite had an opportunity to address the housing crisis in Bill 23 and they voted against it. They voted against cutting fees on non-profit housing, on affordable housing and making it more affordable. In the GTA, in Mississauga, development charges add \$160,000 on the average house.

On this side of the House and in the middle over there, we will continue to fight for home ownership, for renters and for affordability in this province. Yes, people have left, but we're going to fight to bring them back because I know this government will continue to fight, again, for my generation and the future generations in this province.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Perth–Wellington for his speech. In my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, I had several conversations with the Central York firefighters; in the House here, I had a meeting with our Ontario firefighters association, and they were asking for us to consider expanding the list of presumptive cancers. I would like the member to speak to that, because to me, our government was listening. Can you please speak to what we are doing as far as presumptive cancers are concerned for our firefighters?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for the great question. I know I've heard it with my volunteer fighters. I have many volunteer firefighters in my riding, and they're very appreciative of the changes we're making around that so they get the treatment they need if they develop cancer because of their service to our communities. They're the ones that run into the burning building when everyone else is running out, and so it is a small way this government can support them later in their lives if, unfortunately, they develop some form of a cancer that they have outlined in these regulation changes.

Speaker, through you to the member opposite, I thank her for her advocacy on this and the health care file, and I know we'll continue to work to support our volunteer firefighters and professional firefighters across Ontario.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I see this bill as tinkering around the edges but really leaving workers extremely vulnerable in many, many respects. First of all, Bill 124—we know that it is repressing wages, that it is harming workers, that it has resulted in the crisis in our health care system. I can tell you, for example, about Steve, who works at the Thunder Bay regional hospital. His coordinator received a 6% raise on his \$106,000 pay. Steve, who's an electrician, takes home \$51,000 and, of course, his wage has been capped at 1% for the last five years.

At this point, there are only two electricians left because they've all left for better pay and working conditions outside the public service. When he started work, 15 people in trades were working in the hospital: electrical, painters, building operators and maintenance. These days, at most, there will be five permanent employees and they are vastly outnumbered by private contractors.

There are 18 new beds added to the hospital—great, new beds, but no people to look after the people in the beds—which adds to the workload. Contractor labourers are earning \$20 more an hour than Steve as a permanent skilled trades employee.

Now, it seems to be very clear that the position this government has taken on workers, governed by Bill 124, is a deliberate attempt to break the health care system, to break education, in order to privatize. I see this bill doing nothing to help those workers to remediate those situations.

There are other workers also affected by this. For example, corrections. Well, things are not good for workers in corrections. It's interesting to me, though, because the majority of workers are in female-dominated professions and they're not being well treated and they're not being respected. But there are also male workers who are not being respected, including the electricians like Steve. People in corrections, well, they've been experiencing wage repression for five years—no right to bargain collectively.

And then there are the conservation officers. Conservation officers protect us and they protect our wilderness. It's interesting to me because the conservation officers will be the first people to discover whether glyphosate, for example, is being sprayed illegally in our forests. But the conservation officers have actually been misclassified for many years, so not only are they suffering under Bill 124, they have a lower classification, and the skills and responsibilities that they have are not acknowledged.

Now, I worry a great deal—you know, I find it interesting; I'm excited. I was at the Fleming College display yesterday and I thought, "Wow, I'd love to go back to school. This looks really interesting. Some very interesting things are going on." But I really worry very deeply about young people who may be in grade 10 or 11 being moved quickly into trades when young people on their first jobs are the most likely to experience a serious injury. I know this has happened in my own family. My niece's partner and his father went to their very first job roofing. They were electrocuted; her partner died. They had a young baby. That's changed her life forever.

When people are young, they think that they're invincible. They haven't got a concept of their own mortality, so that worries me. I truly hope that health and safety will be front of mind for everyone training those young workers, but what I also know is that WSIB has changed enormously from when it was first created 100 ago—by the way, it was a Conservative member who created that, William Meredith—and it does not do what it was intended to do.

Let me give you some stories—also young people. Eugene was a young worker: fit, on top of the world. He

had a serious accident in forestry. He's been in pain ever since, so that's another 30 or 40 years that he's been suffering in pain, and he's been fighting the WSIB ever since.

Then there's Janet who had something fall on her at work and then was later assaulted at work. Well, her back is so sore she hasn't been able to engage in anything with her own family for many, many years. WSIB, where are they? She's still fighting for compensation.

Did you know that WSIB shortchanged all workers who are receiving some level of compensation by cutting their cost-of-living allowance in half? Now they have to go to court to fight the WSIB to get what they are legally entitled to. It's not fair. They're not doing what they need to be doing.

Then there's Jim who worked at the Weyerhaeuser mill in Dryden. This was years ago. Many of those workers were poisoned because the owners of the mill made a decision to not install a particular smokestack cleaner thing—I couldn't tell you exactly what it is. But what I do know is many, many of those workers were poisoned, and the outcome has been neurological problems as well as breathing problems.

1710

Now, that was in 2002—between 2002 and 2004. We are now in 2023. The WSIB still refuses to recognize these workplace injuries that have changed their lives utterly. The strategy that I see is that they wait and wait and wait until most of the workers have died off, and then they don't have to pay out so much. That's exactly what happened with the people who used McIntyre Powder. We had a very important memorial acknowledgement and apology to those workers and their families, and it was the same story there: Many, many of those people had already died by the time that apology came.

I fear that it's going to be the same story, because I know there are clusters of industrial disease all over the province that are being denied right now. And while they are denied, workers have no income. What do they do? They apply for ODSP. Well, we know how much ODSP is: 1,200 bucks, what is it, a month? It's around that, yes. We know it's not enough to live on.

Imagine that you've been a full-time skilled worker, you've got good pay, you have a mortgage, you felt secure enough to have a family, and then you're poisoned by your work. You can't work anymore. Okay, there's no money for you. WSIB is going to fight you year after year after year, and you're going to have to apply for ODSP. Okay, now you've got \$1,200 a month or so.

Miss Monique Taylor: You have to start on Ontario Works.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Oh, yes, you have to start on Ontario Works.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's \$733.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for that; it's \$733 a month. Well, there goes your house. How are you going to pay for your house? How are you going to pay for your kids and groceries? How are you going to maintain your

family? Well, I can tell you, families are broken when this happens. It's incredible.

And I can also tell you that if you talk to people who are homeless, find out how many of those homeless people had workplace injuries and were not able to get any support to go on. They're homeless, and that's what we do to people.

MPP Jamie West: That's what we do to workers.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: That's what we do to workers.

So I'm extremely worried about what is going to happen to those young workers who are going to enter the skilled trades with so much enthusiasm and life force and energy, and we know that some of those workers will experience serious injuries—statistically, we know that—and we know that they are going to be thrown under the bus, because that's what happens to all other workers in this province.

There is also another piece that we don't talk about here very much, and that is the fact that there are these incentives for employers to hide the fact that an accident has taken place. They bribe the other employees with fancy leather jackets, or whatever it is, so that they don't report the accident. That means that the injured worker, again, is left on their own, his or her own, with no support and no ability to verify what has actually happened to them. It's become a very dirty business. This government sent employers—what was it?—over \$2 billion returned to employers while denying workers the money that they have paid, that they are legally entitled to. They are entitled to that support, but it was given back to employers, and I can tell you workers are so angry about that, so hurt, and the hurt is real because it affects their—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Matthew Rae): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for her comments. There are a lot of good things in this bill. Some of the things that I thought the member opposite would be supporting include the fact that we're having a provision in here to make sure we have sanitary washrooms on construction sites to promote worker dignity, as well as make sure we have women-only washrooms and increase the standards for bathroom hygiene on construction sites for all workers, and also that we have personal protective equipment which is designed for women and fits them properly. I would just ask the member opposite if you would support those parts of what we're offering here, because it's going to help get more women into the trades.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would love to support each one of those items if it were actually in the bill. It's not in the bill. It has been talked about a lot. I hope it comes to pass. And I hope that there is a means to enforce the things that you're talking about, because that will be the other piece.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: The member from Thunder Bay–Superior North has done such a great job in her debate. I want to thank her for reminding us that Bill 124 isn't just nurses. Because a lot of people, with the pandemic, think of nurses. But she talked about the male workers, the guards, the police, the conservation authority officers. I

remember the police meeting with me and saying, “We cannot attract new people to the police force because of Bill 124.” The police can't attract people. The thing that most kids want to do when they're little kids—they can't attract people.

She talked about Steve the electrician. The Minister of Labour likes to talk about the good trades jobs, how important they are, but he doesn't want to talk about Steve. He doesn't want to talk about public sector electricians, where contractors make \$20 more than they do.

I wonder if the member could explain to us how Bill 124 capping workers' wages, like Steve's, at 1%, is not the Conservative government working for workers, especially when you look at how much Steve's boss makes and that he was able to get a 6% increase, while Bill 124 capped Steve's wages, which were much lower, at 1%.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the question. I think it's very clear that Bill 24 has actually pushed people out of the workforce. It made people feel disrespected. Frankly, they're just not making enough money to make ends meet. That is a very deliberate government policy that this government has chosen to impose, and further, they're now taking people to court and spending public money in order to keep repressing workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was hoping that I'd hear something from the member about the bill, but I only heard this dissertation and this indictment of the WSIB and the worker's compensation plans.

But then I heard from the member from Sudbury talking about recruitment into the police forces. I can tell you, when I talk to people who are considering a career in policing, it isn't the compensation, because they're well compensated. Police are well compensated. But I'll tell you what they're concerned about. They're concerned about getting into a career when people like the NDP continue to go around and call for the defunding of the police and look for every opportunity to attack the brave members of our police forces across this province and across this country.

If you want to attract people to the police forces, stop attacking them every chance you get and end with your ridiculous campaign of defunding the police. That's what you need to do.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I thank the member opposite. He has some very interesting comments, but I don't think they're worthy of addressing, frankly.

I would like to point out again that the Meredith Principles from over a hundred years ago “rest on the historic compromise in which employers fund the compensation system and share the liability”—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Order.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: —“for injured workers. In return, injured workers receive benefits while they recover”—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Order.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm sorry. Is it possible to have order?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, please be quiet.

The member from Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: “In return, injured workers receive benefits while they recover and cannot sue their employers. The historic compromise gave both sides financial security which can be summed up as:

“Employers would be protected from lawsuits by injured workers and be able to calculate payments as a cost of doing business.

“Injured workers would receive prompt benefits for as long as the disability lasted in a non-adversarial system.”

Isn’t that amazing? It’s so far from what is happening now. I implore the government to look seriously at turning WSIB back to what it was intended to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): The member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I’d like to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for her comments that are truly in support of workers. It’s disturbing that the WSIB has taken so long to recognize workplace exposures and is still rather reluctant to recognize multiple exposures, especially where there are clusters of industrial disease.

1720

As an omnibus bill, Working for Workers could have addressed so many other pressing issues which impacted workers. I wonder if the member could talk about the disturbing problem of deeming, or phantom jobs.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Deeming is an incredible thing because you can deem that somebody is able to do a job and you can deem that the job exists, but it doesn’t have to, nor does a worker have to be capable of doing it. I’ve used this example before: You deem that such and such a worker can work as a parking lot attendant in Thunder Bay. Okay? We don’t have parking lot attendants, but if the WSIB deems that you can be a parking lot attendant in Thunder Bay, they will deduct that amount—whatever amount they decided is the amount you would get paid—from your meagre whatever support you are getting.

It’s a fantasy. These are phantom jobs. There are many, many examples of this. It’s part of the dishonesty that has been built into the system.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I would like to review a quote from Jeffery Lang, president and CEO of the WSIB, regarding the announcement of expanding cancer coverage for firefighters: “When anybody is facing a work-related illness, we are here to help. Our team gets to work as quickly as possible to help people and this change will help us get started faster for firefighters and fire investigators with thyroid and pancreatic cancers.”

My question to the member is, will you vote with us on this bill and vote to support our firefighters?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: If only that information about the firefighters was actually written in the bill. Absolutely, I

support that; it’s not in the bill. So I look forward to seeing it. Hopefully it will be in the regulations. Yes, we all support that.

Was there anything else in that question that I missed?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Will you vote for our bill?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Well, as I say, the key elements in the bill—you’ve talked about washrooms for women; you’ve talked about firefighters’ cancer, and yet, it’s nowhere in the bill itself. It’s part of the public relations strategy. Everybody talks about it, but it’s not in the bill. If you can find it, please, please show it.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I very much appreciated the comments from my colleague the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North. I wanted to ask her thoughts as to what it says about a government that basically, at the very same time they bring in this legislation, eliminates paid sick days for workers in this province. After eliminating two paid sick days that workers had back in 2018 when they were first elected and now eliminating the temporary program, does that suggest that this really is a government that is working for workers, that would do something like that, that would take away the ability of workers to access paid sick days so they can stay home if they are sick?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member has 18 seconds.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much. I think I can say it probably in three seconds: This government does not support workers.

If they can’t take a day off, if they can’t take a few days off if they’re sick, then they’re going to work and they’re making other people sick. They’re working under duress—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That is all our time for questions and answers.

Further debate? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Good evening. I’m so happy to have been called upon to offer—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Excuse me. I have to interrupt the member for one moment. We believe the member has already spoken to this bill.

Further debate?

Mr. Ross Romano: The member for Essex does such an outstanding job speaking to all the government legislation that he’s so proud of and fond of because it says such wondrous things for the community of Essex and the rest of the people of Ontario.

I’m happy to be able to stand up and speak to the Working for Workers Act. It is a great piece of legislation, and it’s great for a number of reasons. When you look at the facts, when you look at how much effort our government, under the leadership of our Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Labour Monte McNaughton—the outstanding work that’s been done by our government to put workers first. When we talk about working for workers, it means

something. It means a lot. It means that our job here is to ensure that—

Interjection.

Mr. Ross Romano: And I know that my friend across the way enjoys the work we do just as much as I do, working on behalf of workers in this province. These are people who work hard to ensure that this province is going to be built up, that we can build Ontario and we can build the Ontario we want to build moving forward.

Every element of work that's being done in this particular area has been so important in making sure that we're not leaving anyone behind. Whether we're talking about workers, our soldiers who are deployed in Afghanistan, brave men and women who put their lives on hold to protect our freedoms, these types of changes are going to help address reservists and troop shortages in the Canadian Armed Forces and ease the burden felt by current reservists and members of the Armed Forces. If these are passed, these changes are going to make Ontario the first province in this entire country to allow reservists to take time to recover from an illness or an injury as a result of participating in these activities.

These are just some of the areas of work that we are doing to support our men and women in the Armed Forces, and we're working on introducing new legislation that would guarantee that military reservists can return to civilian jobs after deployment even if they are going to need extra time to be able to recover from any type of physical or mental challenges they would have had as a result of their time in the reserves. It's important to note that they are not being paid when they're on reservist leave; however, the employment is deemed to be continuous. Seniority and length of service credits will continue to accumulate during their leave. They're entitled to be reinstated to the same position, assuming that position still exists at the time they are able to return or to a comparable position if it is not. The employer is not required to continue any benefit plans during an employee's leave.

These are just a few points touching on some of the work that our government is doing, again under the leadership of our Premier, to ensure that reservists are being treated with dignity and with the respect they deserve after putting their lives, in many respects, on hold to support our freedoms.

Interjections.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you. I'll take this opportunity for a drink of water.

I think the work we are doing as a government to make changes to mass termination entitlement and job description benefits for workers in Ontario is outstanding as well. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw such a tremendous shift to remote work—the largest shift to remote work that we've seen in history. In the fourth quarter of 2022, about 2.2 million people in Ontario were working from home with about 1.4 million doing so on an exclusive basis and about 800,000 doing so on a hybrid basis.

1730

Now, just take that into perspective: I think what we learned through COVID was there were some tremendous

positives. We did see that opportunity for people to be able to work from home, which presented an incredibly opportunity for them to upskill themselves as well. Being able to work from home gives a tremendous addition to that work-life balance, but for a lot of people, they were afforded an opportunity to upskill. For a lot of people, it was an opportunity to be able to examine their current position they were in and look at other opportunities that might exist to them.

That is something that we saw change in a tremendous way, and we saw also as a result of that the opportunity to have people move into a lot of our smaller communities across this province. Certainly myself, coming from the city of Sault Ste. Marie, I was always proud to be able to see a growth in my community of people relocating because of the work-life balance you can have in a smaller place. And when you look at just the simple cost of real estate in the downtown Toronto core, and what people saw as an opportunity to be able to move from the downtown core and move into smaller communities across this province but still be able to work in that downtown core, that was a tremendous positive.

There is a changing economy, though, of course, that comes with that. Our government wanted to respond to that increase in remote work and so we have introduced legislation that is putting workers first. Our government is updating how a workplace is defined in Ontario's labour laws to extend the same protections that everybody else is afforded to those people who are working from home. Furthermore, we're also proposing changes that would require employers to provide new hires with basic information in writing about their job, such as pay, work location and hours of work, before their first shift. These are, again, building on changes from our previous iterations of the Working for Workers Act, 2021 and 2022 and are part of our plan to make Ontario and help the province become more competitive.

Now, in terms of the size of business that would be able to meet this proposal for mass terminations, it would apply to medium- or large-sized employers if there are 50 or more employees, now including employees who work exclusively remotely. If those individuals were terminated at an employer's establishment within a four-week period, mass termination provisions under the ESA—the Employment Standards Act—would click in to protect those workers' interests. These mass termination policies are providing workers with greater notice or pay in lieu of notice. Mass terminations can make it more difficult for employees to find alternate employment, and by providing employees with these protections, once again our government is standing up for workers who are being laid off in large numbers at the same time.

When we look at provisions for health and safety, this is an area—I know I only have a few short minutes to speak about this, but realistically, I don't know if we're ever going to be able to do everything that we need to do to make sure that workplace safety is always treated as of the most paramount importance in the workplace. It's one of these areas that, as much as from a policy perspective,

a lawmaker's perspective, we want to do everything we can and we are putting a great deal of effort into doing everything that we can as policy-makers to ensure that workplaces are the safest they can be, but of course, on those work sites—a message that I would like to just say in about a minute or less here: Having been personally impacted in my own family and friends lives with having lost loved ones and very close friends in workplace accidents, I can say that it is imperative that every worker on every job site is always making sure that their safety comes first. That is absolutely imperative.

Our government has been working hard to ensure that we can create that environment where that very sense that individuals possess and ought to possess that they need to be working in safe environments—where all of the deterrents are present for the employers to ensure that they're creating safe environments. Some of the work that we've done in that area is ensuring that we have the highest maximum corporate fines in Canada under workplace health and safety legislation.

For instance, under our new act, the new—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we are out of time for debate.

It is now time for questions and answers.

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his debate. It was excellent. He was talking about the Occupational Health and Safety Act and increasing the maximum fines from \$1.5 million to \$2 million. I don't expect him to have an answer to this, because I wouldn't have an answer either, but I was curious when I saw this: How many fines were sent out at the maximum, in the last five years or 10 years? And how many fines in general were sent out along that line that would give us the information for why we would need to have the fines increased?

I don't expect you to know how many, but I just ask as a commitment, when it goes to committee, if you could find that information, provide it to the committee, so we can make decent recommendations if this actually makes sense to increase the fines. Or maybe the recommendation should be that there should be more fines.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the member from Sudbury. I know how important workplace safety is to him, and it is for every one of us.

I think that looking at this from a committee perspective so that we can have those types of numbers is reasonable. In fact, I'm quite curious about it myself. I think that it really can be a demonstration of the efficacy of a lot of the work that's being done.

But the challenge I find, and it is just the greatest challenge ultimately that I see in work sites, is ensuring that the individuals there appreciate the nature of their rights and appreciate the nature of standing up when they need to. A lot of the work that we are doing is trying to ensure that people understand that, appreciate that, and that employers also recognize that their stakes are quite high if they do not have that type of an environment.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

I'm just wondering if you can build on the additional amendments that are being made and tell us how the government is making amendments related to fines for holding passports and how this goes further to protect vulnerable workers.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the member for the great question and for the excellent advocacy on behalf of the people of her community in Burlington. I'm very pleased to be able to speak further about some of the work our government has been doing and some of the types of fines that are also helping people. When we speak about those individuals out there with challenges as a result of not having a passport, certainly it is something that we want to ensure that we're solving those types of problems.

I'm very pleased to be able to be a part of a government that recognizes that importance. I'm not sure if I've answered; my apologies.

I do want to say—

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

Mr. Ross Romano: I guess I ran out of time. My apologies to the member.

But I do want to say that this is the third Working for Workers Act, and that is how committed our government is to ensuring that we're getting it right for the people of the province—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I enjoyed listening to the member's debate, but I didn't hear him talk about paid sick days. Paid sick days are something that we know is greatly needed across this province. When the government first came into power in 2018, they cut the measly two paid days that were there. And then we were able to work hard enough as New Democrats to convince the government to bring some in throughout COVID, but those paid sick days are expiring March 31. We know that many people across this province are still needing those paid sick days. We still see folks with COVID being forced to take 10 days off.

Does the member not think that a true "working for workers" bill would have included paid sick day measures to ensure that people have the ability to stay home when they're sick and to not spread any illness that we know is airborne currently in our communities?

1740

Mr. Ross Romano: I find it a challenge, Madam Speaker, when I listen to the concerns that get raised by the members opposite. All I seem to notice, or what we seem to see on a repetitive basis, is this consistent approach of, "Well, there isn't this, there isn't this, there isn't this, there isn't that." It's just this "no" mentality. It's this constant negative mentality. I heard a comment earlier today. It's why they will always be opposition, Madam Speaker, because everything is just oppositional all the time.

At some point in time I would hope that the opposition would consider their role as policy-makers, their role as people within our Legislature who are here to make a

difference in people's lives and really just say yes once in a while to some of the good work that's being done for the people of this province.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm going to ask the member a question about schedule 1 to the present proposed bill. When I speak about the riding of Essex, we have some really great employers in the riding of Essex in the greenhouse industry, in the vegetable-growing industry. They're so great that the employees, the international agricultural workers, come and work for the same employers year after year, decade after decade, and even generation after generation. That's how great the greenhouse industry is in the riding of Essex.

But as we all know, in every barrel there's one or two bad apples. In the event that there is a bad apple who tries to take away somebody's passport, what does schedule 1 do to protect those workers?

Mr. Ross Romano: I thank the member for the question and being able to build on the previous question from the great member from Burlington. I appreciate that opportunity.

This is a real challenge for too many people out there. To think of an employer holding a person's passport or work permits, that's fairly deplorable—obviously it is deplorable actions on behalf of those individuals.

Our government has looked at trying to remedy that by, again, increasing the punishments, increasing the fines. If it is a corporation, they would be liable to a fine of not more than \$1 million, and if it is an individual, to an amount of not more than \$500,000 or to a period of imprisonment of not more than 12 months. That punishment, of course, can be both, so you can go to jail for a year and you can be fined half a million dollars. That is a pretty significant punishment. When we in the legal world use terms like "general deterrence," I think that is a very strong general deterrent for employers who behave in that fashion to recognize that they can't, and if they do, the punishment is a severe one.

I think it's a very, very strong reason to look at passing legislation like this so that we can really protect those individuals who are very vulnerable to their employers when they may hold their passport, take their passport, and not return it to them. That is just the type of action that, again, is how we work for workers and we're protecting workers and standing up for the little guy in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It's getting late. Thank you, Speaker.

My question is, what is there in the bill or in the government's plans to protect young workers? We know the WSIB is not there for workers, and so I'm very worried about the lives of young workers. I'm hoping you can tell me how the government will be protecting them.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would say to the member—a good starting point to respond to her question is just to read

the bill. You can see within, looking at it, the various protections that exist: protections, as I spoke of earlier, ensuring that you have safer workplaces; ensuring that employers understand the types of punishments they can receive if they violate provisions of the workplace health and safety act; ensuring that we're creating those types of measures for foreign nationals, as I just spoke to in the previous last couple of questions; ensuring that people can't have their passports held; the hybrid work environment, as I spoke about that earlier, and ensuring that we have more access and more protections afforded to people who do work from home, given what a tremendous transition of people we saw moving to—

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

MPP Jamie West: It's my pleasure to be here to speak about government Bill 79, Working for Workers Act 3, the empire strikes back.

It's interesting, Speaker; I was asked to give an interview about this bill after it was tabled. They asked me what I thought about it, and I said, "Honestly, it's a headline bill." It's a bill that was talked about a lot during the March break while we weren't sitting—there were at least three press conferences that I knew of—and then tabled when we came back, and then sort of, surprise, we're debating the next day.

If you really want to work for workers and help workers, I feel like, share the bill early on. Have the conversation. Let's work together to figure out where the strengths and weakness are and where we can improve these bills. But I don't get the sense from that. What I get the sense of from this bill is we want to do some press conferences and talk about the great stuff that we're doing.

You see it in the questions, Speaker. Through debate today, multiple times the Conservative government has gotten up to ask, "Will you support firefighter cancer coverage?" It's not in this bill. It was in the press conferences, but it's not in this bill. "Will you support clean washrooms? Will you support gender washrooms?" It's not in this bill. It was in the press conferences, it was in the headlines, but it's not in this bill.

What about the young worker apprentices? I don't think that's in this bill either. We had a lot of conversation about it and it was talked about in many headlines, but it's not in this bill. So it leads me to believe that the government, perhaps, is not as interested in working for workers as they are giving the papers the appearance that they're working for workers.

I'll go on a tangent on the clean washrooms. I think it's a great idea to bring in clean washrooms and gender washrooms. I also think we should do a step above that now, because we no longer need to have porta-potties. There are washroom facilities that you can bring on a trailer that are much nicer than a porta-potty, that also include showers. If we want to really work for workers, let's not go for the bare minimum. Let's go above and beyond.

The other thing that stands out to me with the washrooms—which isn't in the bill, and I'll move on, I promise,

Speaker—is that when I drive down from Highway 69, some of the gas stations are closed in the evening, but they have roadside stops for the truckers. Some of those are not super pleasant. My former colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan used to talk about coming down from Superior, and in the winter, they just close the washrooms completely. These are run by the MTO; these are government washrooms. So it makes me wonder, if we can't keep our own washrooms open and clean, then how good are we going to be at enforcing that a third party does it on a work site? It's neither here nor there because it's not in the bill.

Really, this is a bill—and the OFL has called it the lowest of the low-hanging fruit. I have an image in my mind at our camp—cottage for people in southern Ontario; we say camp—big crabapple tree, and every year in the fall when the crabapples fall, the bears come out and just eat them off the ground. It is one of those things—it's not a terrible bill, but it really is just low-hanging fruit. There are better things that we can do and focus on.

We've talked about it in the past. You want to help workers? Paid sick days: I know it sounds like an “us versus them” type thing, but it really would help a lot of workers, and small businesses as well, because when workers are sick and they go to work sick, they get their colleagues sick, including their employer. It would really help people to be able to stay home with their sick kid or stay home when they're sick themselves. These are the things that workers are looking for. It's not that this bill is bad, right? There's supportable stuff in it, for sure. But there's more we could do. There are more things that workers are looking for from us.

We had some conversation about very unscrupulous employers taking advantage of migrant workers and withholding their passports. Throw the book at them; I agree with you guys on that. I think, absolutely, that's important. But there aren't many details about how this is going to work. So the first thing I thought about is, how do we ensure that migrant workers have this information? How do we ensure that they're aware of the laws? Because I don't know the laws in other countries that I go to. How do we ensure that migrant workers are aware of these laws? How do we ensure those migrant workers for whom English isn't their first language, that it is available in their language? How do we ensure there are no reprisals for workers who bring this up? Because it is not uncommon in a workplace that when a worker brings up safety concerns or any kinds of concerns, there's suddenly a lack of work. There's enough work for all of his friends. But for the squeaky wheel, there's no more work. “I'm sorry, lack of work.”

1750

I've seen that. I worked in construction for more than a decade. On construction sites, the person who asks questions—all of a sudden there's not enough work. Construction is booming in the summer, but there's not enough work for the guy who asked some questions. So if you're a migrant worker and your family and you are depending on this work every year as you come into Canada and then go back home, and come into Canada and go back home,

are you going to risk that you might not be able to come back into Canada if you bring up any safety questions?

The other thing too is, why are we raising this? Perhaps I don't know, right? Our critic might have a better handle on it, but one of the things I thought about is, we've precipitated this. We have examples where this was happening multiple times. How do we drill down with the recommendations that we're moving forward? Possibly they are, but I'm not aware of it.

Also, we have Ministry of Labour inspectors who go out. Have they been following up on reported cases happening? Are they visiting worksites unannounced to see what's happening? Do they have the ability, perhaps with a translator, to speak to workers on their own, away from the employer, to really find out what's happening? That's what Ministry of Labour inspectors do in my workplace. But my workplace is established. It's been there for more than 100 years before I came here.

The other part is—and you hear this a lot during debate: Why won't we do this? I talked about paid sick days, but repealing Bill 124 is in no man's land. So every couple of days, in the news you find out that the employees have won back pay, employees have filed a grievance, employees have been able to move forward on negotiations, but Bill 124 still exists and the government is still appealing it. If you read the Superior Court of Justice report on this—if you thought you were going to win the first time, you didn't. You're definitely not going to win this time. That is ironclad, and it's a little embarrassing how ironclad it is. But what you're doing is you're punishing a lot of workers.

I talked about police officers as well. The police services, when they met with me, the first thing they said is Bill 124 is keeping people out of the service and we need people to protect their communities. The Conservative government loves to wrap their arms around the police, and I think they provide an excellent service. I don't have anything bad to say about the GSPS where I live, but if you can't attract people to a profession that every little kid plays when they're little, something has gone wrong, and what's gone wrong is Bill 124.

We could be raising the minimum wage. The Conservative government very often talks about the number of unfilled jobs as if people don't want to go to work. People can't afford to make ends meet while going to work on minimum wage. They can't afford the rent; they can't afford food. What they want are careers. Minimum wage jobs don't provide careers to people and they don't provide substance to people. Why do you think it's acceptable as the government to have workers go to work full time and then take their kids to a food bank to feed them? It's disgraceful; it really is. You inherited it, but you didn't fix it, and it's gotten worse over time. This stopgap with food banks was supposed to be a temporary measure. It is growing now as an industry unto itself.

I would love to go back to my community and tell the food bank, “You're no longer needed. We're putting you out of business.” I'd love to be able to tell them that. The

reality is, though, more than likely they're going to be busier than ever, busier than ever and busier than ever. It's cyclical, because as more and more people go to food banks, less and less people have the ability to donate food or money or time to volunteer to the food bank, and the bottom is going to collapse on that.

There's a section on occupational health and safety, and I asked my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie if he'd be willing to bring it forward and get the data. I don't think anyone knows—I mean, some people may know this in the ministry, obviously. It's about raising the fines from \$1.5 million to \$2 million. I worked in health and safety for 17 years. I like to pay attention to the news and stuff, and I don't remember a lot of record-breaking fines. So raising it is fine, but if no one's being fined, what does that mean?

I do know when it comes to health and safety that the Westray Act, in terms of finding employers liable for workplace deaths, is almost never used—almost never. It's not that I think that every time there's a workplace death the employer or supervisor is liable, but if I were to sit on the side of the road and watch cars go by for 10 years or 20 years, sooner or later, someone is going to speed and break the rules. But for some reason, when it comes to workplace deaths, it's always the worker's fault. It's always the worker. That's what's missing in here: actually protecting workers.

I only have one second, Speaker, so I'll save you the time from standing and cutting me off.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker, and to the member. Families are struggling. The price of food is going up. Gas is going up. Hydro is going up. Rents are going up. Interest rates are going up. In this budget, there's nothing in there that says to the families, "Here's that little bit of help to make your life easier." As a matter of fact, in things like education, the government is making their lives harder. If you have a child with special needs that are not being met at school, guess what? The message is, you're on your own. If your child is struggling with school and can't get the help that they need, here's the message—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I have to ask the member to make his question relevant to the legislation, Bill 79.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm getting there. You guys don't trust me? Just let me finish. The message is, you're on your own. That's what the message is to workers.

Can you explain to me why the Working for Workers Act doesn't actually work for workers?

MPP Jamie West: I appreciate the member's question on Bill 79. He was talking about the price of food and stuff. When we talk about workers and what's missing in the bill—I mentioned this with Bill 124: When people's paycheques are restricted, when you're caught with a maximum 1% increase and inflation is hovering around 6% or

7%, it's a cut in your wages. And I noticed this summer—it's five years now that I've been elected, and this is the first time when people who are more affluent phoned me and said, "I just did groceries. I can cover it, but I don't know how somebody with less money can." It was people phoning me and saying, "I'm worried about my neighbour. My neighbour cannot make ends meet. My neighbour can't pay the bills. My neighbour can't afford bread. I can do it, but I'm worried about them."

That's why you need to address the budget and repeal Bill 124.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I appreciate the member's presentation, but you said that you don't think there are many bad actors out there and that's why the Occupational Health and Safety Act fining them \$1.5 million to \$2 million is not as applicable. But actually there are a lot of bad actors out there.

I would like to also ask you about the holding of the passport for foreign workers. We are giving them a fine of \$500,000 maximum to make sure that they will not hold the passports for these individuals. Do you think that it's doing something to support and protect our workers?

MPP Jamie West: Just to clarify, I didn't say that I didn't think there were a lot of bad actors out there; I was asking about how many times the fine was used.

I'll give you an example of bad actor. I had a workplace before where I was the health and safety rep. I notified the manager that they were going to kill a worker in this location, and a worker died in that location about three months later because of unsafe practices. It was tough on everybody, and the manager and I talked about springtime and how spring isn't the same anymore, how the smell of it reminds us of Paul Rochette, who is no longer with us.

So I do know there are bad actors. I don't think they're all bad actors, but I know that there are people out there who have certain responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act who aren't doing them properly and have to be held accountable.

I'm all in favour of this increase; I just want to know that we're using it effectively.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's all the time we have for questions and answers.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before we go to private members' public business, I would like to acknowledge a former member who is in the House this evening: Chris Ballard, who is the former member for Newmarket–Aurora, representing it in the 41st Parliament of Ontario. Welcome back.

Report continues in volume B.

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 civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
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	
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	
Jama, Sarah (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
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	
Leccia, 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)	Kiwetinoong	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
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
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, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
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	Kanata—Carleton	