

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 63A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 63A

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday
5 April 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi
5 avril 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 avril 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ECONOMY
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
POUR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Mr. Gill moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations / Projet de loi 91, Loi visant à édicter deux lois, à modifier diverses lois et à abroger divers règlements.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Red Tape Reduction care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Parm Gill: Thank you, Mister Speaker, for the opportunity to lead off the debate today on our spring 2023 red tape reduction package, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023.

I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the great member from Niagara West. I want to thank him for all of his assistance and his hard work in helping develop this great piece of legislation and leading some of the consultation work around the province and hearing from Ontarians and businesses. He has done a tremendous job.

Mr. Speaker, it was just two weeks ago when we were right here in this place, debating our fall red tape reduction bill, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, at third reading. Members may recall that I spoke about how red tape causes frustration, expenses and needless delays and complications for everyone: individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector. We talked about how regulatory burdens are a barrier to our productivity, innovation, economic competitiveness and development. We talked about the cost of failing to act, because red tape has huge cost implications. Last year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimated that red tape costs small businesses in Canada approximately \$11 billion each year. That's \$11 billion, Mr. Speaker, and that's just small businesses in our country.

The number one thing I hear from Ontarians when I meet with them, whether they are small-business owners, a volunteer or charitable organization, or even other elected

officials outside of our province—you know what they hear, Mr. Speaker? The first thing that they say to me when I speak to them is, “We are so happy that there is a full Ministry of Red Tape Reduction here in the province of Ontario.”

And you know how and why we have this ministry, Mr. Speaker. It's because, under the leadership of our Premier, Premier Ford, we are taking a critical look at how government impacts both people and business. We know that to build a stronger economy, improve services and save Ontarians time, we need to continue to look for ways to reduce the red tape that people and businesses face in their everyday lives.

Speaker, I am pleased to report that, since 2018, our government has reduced Ontario's total regulatory burden by 6.5%. The changes that we've put in place have saved businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector nearly \$700 million in annual regulatory compliance costs. This is of course a substantial increase over the \$576 million in savings that we last reported in the fall Burden Reduction Report and serves as proof of our government's ongoing commitment to reduce burden and continue to find savings.

We have achieved these savings by making practical changes that save Ontarians time and money, including the nine high-impact pieces of red tape reduction legislation that this Legislature has passed since 2018 and the more than 450 individual burden-reducing actions we've implemented so far, Madam Speaker. These actions, of course, have led to many businesses around the world taking notice of Ontario. They have come to meet with me and some of my colleagues, and they have invested right here in our great province of Ontario, and some of them in a big way.

Let me just say, Speaker, that unlike the 15 years of the Liberal and NDP coalition, it is now far easier to start and expand a business right here in Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. Parm Gill: Thank you.

The results of course speak for themselves. Under the previous Liberal-NDP coalition, the automotive manufacturing sector was fleeing our province. Good-paying jobs were obviously drying up and, in some cases, leaving our province, from Oshawa to Windsor and everywhere in between.

Since taking office in 2018, our province has seen these jobs coming back to Ontario in record amounts. By lowering the cost of doing business and removing unnecessary red tape in Ontario, we have seen \$17 billion invested in the auto sector alone. That's \$17 billion, Madam Speaker. The changes made are obviously what's contributing to all

of these investments coming in, and obviously the changes being made are obviously to protect and continue to create jobs in the province. The ability for someone in, say, St. Thomas to now work close to home, with a bigger pay-cheque—and soon we're going to see a Volkswagen EV manufacturing plant—is only possible because of the work our government has done and continues to do.

That's why our new bill, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, continues to build on the success. It is focused on paving the way for better services, helping Ontario businesses grow and saving people time and money.

0910

But make no mistake, reducing red tape is not just about counting the number of regulations and trying to reduce them; it's about the impact those changes are having on real people and businesses across our great province. I can say with confidence that this bill we are debating today proposes substantial changes that will have those real impacts for people—changes like accelerating timelines for municipal approvals for broadband projects in support of our goal of bringing high-speed Internet to every community across our great province by 2025. This is essential to live and work in the 21st century.

This package is the product of continued collaboration across government with our ministry partners and extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders and people across the province to develop an unparalleled inventory of red tape reduction ideas.

I'm proud to say the legislation we are debating today, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, is our 10th and our largest burden-reduction bill so far. It's an important part of our larger spring 2023 red tape reduction package, which contains additional regulatory amendments and policy changes that contribute to a common goal of reducing red tape. This bill, if passed, would streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government and multiple sectors of our province's economy.

A wide-reaching red tape reduction bill like this one simply isn't possible without the assistance of our partner ministries across government.

But let me be clear, Speaker: Our government acknowledges the importance of having robust rules and regulations in place. They help protect public health, safety and the environment. They keep our children safe when they're at school. They protect workers so they can come home to their families each and every day.

With those principles in mind, I would like to talk a little bit about some of the items within the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act and how they will make life better for people right across our great province. As I mentioned earlier, this is a very large red tape reduction package. This bill we are debating today includes 37 different schedules making up more than 200 pages. Our complete spring 2023 red tape reduction package has 42 individual items, including regulatory and policy changes that complement the legislative changes found in the bill.

Speaker, many of us have rural areas as our ridings, and we all know how important farmers are for our province.

As we began to put this bill together, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was a very important partner. We worked closely to identify some red tape that farmers are facing when going about their day-to-day business. Any minute that a farmer spends dealing with unnecessary government bureaucracy is a minute too long.

In our bill, we have proposed amendments to the legislative framework for financial protection programs. Financial protection programs, or FPPs, help protect farmers from financial risks, like defaulting on payments for farmers' grain or livestock or an elevator operator who doesn't return grain to the farmer upon demand. These can threaten their livelihood.

Let me explain a little further, Speaker, the details surrounding FPPs. They were established in the early 1980s and are currently governed under three separate acts: the Grains Act, the Livestock and Livestock Products Act, and the Farm Products Payments Act.

As you may recall, Speaker, this was a time before the Internet, before modern payment methods, and before anybody even knew what cyber security was. And while the FPPs remain critically important for our farmers, the legislative framework of three separate acts has made it burdensome to administer the programs. That's why our bill proposes a common-sense solution to protect farmers' livelihoods. By streamlining the existing FPPs under one new governing act, we can ensure those FPPs do what they were always meant to do, to help our farmers do what they do best, which is to farm.

These updates to Ontario's farm financial protection program will help to reduce the red tape by streamlining and clarifying the process to obtain and renew grain dealer elevator operator and beef cattle dealer licences. But most importantly, consolidating FPPs under one act will allow our government to better support 28,000 grain and 19,000 beef cattle farms more efficiently and effectively. We want to build on this work in the future, Speaker, and we are hopeful, of course, that we can make it easier to expand financial protection to other sectors in the future as well.

On the topic of farmers, I would also like to highlight a proposed regulatory amendment to the Milk Act, one that has come directly from ongoing conversations with the Ontario Dairy Council. This is an industry with over 4,400 dairy farmers in our province, many in the ridings of the members opposite. As with other industries, Ontario's dairy industry has changed over the last several decades and regulations have not kept pace with new technologies, practices and products.

Yet, some legacy requirements remain in regulation resulting in unnecessary costs for dairy producers and processors. That's why we have an opportunity to modernize certain regulatory requirements while continuing to maintain the highest food safety and quality requirements in three specific areas: the frequency of cleaning and sanitation in a dairy plant; milk grader certification for on-farm processors; and administrative burden related to expiration of milk grader certificates.

By modernizing the regulations under the Milk Act, we will help reduce burden and costs for dairy processors,

while maintaining the high food safety standards that people have come to expect from Ontario's agri-food sector. Speaker, this vital sector produces over 2.5 billion litres of milk annually and we will always be here to support them.

Speaker, we are also supporting families who are navigating the province's support orders system. There are over 8,500 families right here in Ontario who have to spend time and money trying to access support orders. If passed, we would streamline the system to provide Ontarians with access to faster, more efficient and easier processes to establish, change and enforce support orders internationally. What that means is that families will see payments flow more quickly and reliably.

Some important context to this, Speaker: This change comes out of the 2007 Hague convention, and if we pass this schedule, Ontario would be one of the first provinces to implement this, proof that, with the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction working across government, our province now moves quickly to implement supports like this.

Next, I'd like to share three modernization measures coming from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, who are doing exceptional work preparing students for the jobs of the future.

First, this legislation is proposing new measures to collect outstanding debts by bad actors. Under the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005, administrative monetary penalties are levied against career colleges and other institutions that contravene the legislation. These rules help to address bad actors who prey on students, protect compliant institutions and uphold the integrity of the private career colleges sector.

0920

However, the available collection tools have proven to be inadequate, resulting in unpaid monetary penalties by those not adhering to the legislation. This is simply unacceptable. That's why the Ministry of Colleges and Universities is working with the Ministry of Finance on legislative amendments to strengthen collection of outstanding administrative monetary penalties from non-compliant career colleges by leveraging enhanced collection tools, such as liens on assets or property. By enhancing our tools for collecting outstanding monetary penalties, we can ensure the accountability of training providers, protect students, and promote a healthy and vibrant private training sector.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act is also proposing to require legislative reviews of the Private Career Colleges Act every five years. When originally passed back in the day, the act included requirements for a review seven years after coming into force. This requirement was completed, of course, in 2013, and now there is no requirement in the legislation for any further review. By introducing regular reviews of the act, Ontario is supporting career colleges in staying responsive to the needs of the economy and employers in preparing students for great careers. Finally, we're also proposing to update the name of the Ontario Career Colleges Act. This change signals the importance of career colleges in preparing students for high-demand professions.

Speaker, we have seen over 660,000 manufacturing jobs flood back across the border to Ontario. Not all of these jobs require a university degree. Training, upskilling and retraining is vital in some of these industries. Our government is focused on ensuring that people, young and old, have access to the skills they need to keep Ontario thriving and to keep Ontario the economic engine of our country.

I'd like to focus on a change from the Ministry of Infrastructure which is playing a leading role in our government's plan to build Ontario, with transit, highways, hospitals, universities, and, yes, broadband. As a government, we have committed to connecting every community across the province to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025, because high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. And, Speaker, this is a goal we're getting closer and closer to meeting day by day.

As an example, just two weeks ago in my great riding of Milton, we announced a joint investment with the federal government to expand broadband to underserved rural areas in parts of my riding. I know many of my colleagues have made similar announcements in their home communities. Yet despite this positive momentum, some Internet providers are still facing unnecessary delays in receiving necessary municipal permits and approvals when they go to build broadband infrastructure. Simply put, it's taking too long to get Ontarians connected online. That's why our bill is proposing amendments to the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021, that would work to prevent delays in the permitting process between municipalities and these Internet service providers. This will ensure that Internet service providers can plan, design and, of course, build high-speed Internet projects as quickly as possible, connecting more communities across Ontario to high-speed Internet faster.

But it's not just the broadband that our government is building. As I mentioned before, in the last two and a half years, Ontario has attracted more than \$17 billion worth of investments by global automakers and suppliers of batteries for electric vehicles, investments from top-tier companies like Volkswagen, Ford, Honda, General Motors, Stellantis, LG Energy Solution, Magna and Umicore.

This is huge news for our economy. Ontario is truly the place to build the electric vehicles of the future.

But these projects are going to require access to many critical minerals, and we have a responsibility to ensure the miners who do the difficult work of supplying those critical minerals and other raw materials our province needs are kept as safe as possible.

That's why, working with our colleagues at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, we are proposing to amend various provisions in the mines and mining plant regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to reflect current practice and technologies, keep the regulations up to date and increase flexibility and reduce regulatory burden while maintaining, and in many cases enhancing, worker health and safety protections. It will see new technologies, like drones, being used to ensure these stronger health and safety requirements

are met. It's a fantastic example of how red tape reduction can enhance safety protections for workers while providing employers with more flexibility to meet these requirements.

Just yesterday, I had an opportunity to meet with one of the foremost leaders in lithium extraction and refinement, and he told me that companies around the world are finally eager to invest in Ontario, not just because we have the raw materials required for the next generation, but because Ontario is truly open for business. As I mentioned before, one of the first things he said when we sat down was, "I wish every jurisdiction had a Ministry of Red Tape Reduction."

In working with my colleagues at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, we are building on progress made and proposing amendments to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act to accommodate innovation in new technologies. Businesses in Ontario have been eager to innovate their ways to capture and store carbon. With this new regulatory framework, we now have the ability to establish protective checks and balances for testing and demonstration projects on private lands. We are talking about piloting technology that has the potential to store 30 years' worth of carbon emissions.

This is something that will develop into a self-sustaining sector in our province. These changes will help evolve our energy system, create good-paying, local jobs and attract investment while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It's a win-win for Ontario.

Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to touch on some items from the Ministry of Transportation, which is helping move people and goods safely and efficiently across Ontario. I think it's fair to say that people who clear our roads in stormy Ontario winters don't quite get the recognition they deserve. But they are the ones who keep our roads safe and our province moving.

Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in motorists making dangerous or unsafe manoeuvres just to get around the plows that are keeping our roads safe and driveable in winter conditions. That's why the Ministry of Transportation is proposing an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act that would add clauses to prohibit impatient drivers from overtaking snowplows working in a staggered formation across highway lanes. The proposed amendments intend to reduce motor vehicle collisions with snowplows on high-speed, multi-lane highways. This will make the public safer and reduce the burden on emergency responders, health care services, the insurance sector and the legal system, Madam Speaker.

0930

The ministry is also proposing to remove duplicative requirements for the towing and vehicle storage sector. To improve safety for people needing a tow and those working in the towing industry, the province is taking steps to implement a certification program that will require tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators to meet certain requirements to operate in Ontario. But as we roll out this province-wide program, the ministry is also proposing amendments to the Municipal Act

and the City of Toronto Act that would ensure operators and drivers in the towing and vehicle storage industry are not required to pay multiple licensing or certificate fees, or adhere to different municipal requirements when the provincial certification program is in effect.

We are also proposing additional measures in our red tape reduction package to encourage and reinforce the need for pre-consultation with the Ministry of Transportation for any Planning Act submissions, such as official plans, development proposals or housing proposals that include work adjacent to provincial highways. Pre-consultation with MTO will help streamline and ensure timely comments, approvals and permits by ensuring proponents and municipalities are aware of MTO requirements before starting a significant project. This could translate into a tangible cost savings of thousands of dollars by avoiding project implementation delays and reduce the potential for frustration or dissatisfaction for proponents and municipalities.

Speaker, it is an honour to speak about some of these items included in the proposed Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, and how they will benefit people and businesses right across our great province.

I am now going to turn it over to my parliamentary assistant, the great member from Niagara West, to speak to some additional items in this important piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm pleased to be able to rise in the chamber today and speak to the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. I wish to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for his participation this morning and for the words that he shared with regard to this package and to his commitment and the entire commitment of the team at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction to unleashing opportunity for the people of this province and ensuring that our government is one that follows through on its commitments, including the commitment to make it easier to access services, to cut the amount of time that people have to spend in terms of dealing with onerous regulations or duplicative processes, and to also maintain protections for workers, for health and for the environment. They're very important measures, as well, that I believe speak to the potential of Ontario and the intentionality that our government has shown in turning around the vast ship of state that I spoke about in the last leadoff to third reading of Bill 46, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act.

Speaker, I'm going to speak a little bit about some of the pieces that are contained in this package. I know the minister spoke quite eloquently about a number of the measures that are also in this package, and I know that there are a variety of approaches in both the regulatory and the legislative aspects of our spring red tape reduction package.

I think it is important to perhaps just share a little bit of the impetus—why we believe it's so important to reduce onerous red tape, why we believe it's important to unleash opportunities for the people of this province and ensure

that we are being responsive and nimble in modernizing our systems as we always look to improve, as we always look to make it easier to raise a family, easier to start a business, and easier to live, work and play here in the province of Ontario.

Perhaps to go back to someone I've quoted and back to, I believe, this quote I've brought forward here in the chamber before—it's something that speaks to our impetus and my passion for this area. It's a quote from Alexis de Tocqueville. Of course, I am sure we all know Alexis de Tocqueville and his treatise *Democracy in America*, where he visited the then fledgling United States of America and was amazed by their commitment to democracy, was amazed by the political processes that they had in place, and was amazed at the awareness of the citizens about what their governments were doing and the determination to ensure that a free, prosperous and democratic society succeeded. I believe that here in Ontario and in Canada we share a similar enthusiasm. We share, obviously, many similar, albeit more loyalist, historic appreciations for these values.

I think his quote is very relevant because it speaks to the potential danger in letting red tape grow unfettered. It speaks to the need for all of us to realize that a little change here and a little change there might not seem like that big of a deal in and of itself, but rules upon rules upon rules can stifle out ingenuity, stifle out creativity, stifle out innovation and, in fact, create a static economy, one that isn't nimble and growing.

He spoke about what he believed to be a despotism that could come to America. He didn't feel that this despotism would be perhaps the grand or the more dictatorial despotism that had been experienced in some of the European nations, but he felt it would be relatively mild, retaining some of the external forms of liberty, but that the people would behave like timid animals and the government would act like their shepherd.

This is how Alexis de Tocqueville in his analysis of this spoke about what this could look like. He said:

“After having thus taken each individual one by one into its powerful hands, and having molded him as it pleases, the sovereign power”—the state—“extends its arms over the entire society; it covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated, minute, and uniform rules, which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot break through to go beyond the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them and directs them; it rarely forces action, but it constantly opposes your acting; it does not destroy, it prevents birth; it does not tyrannize, it hinders, it represses, it enervates, it extinguishes, it stupefies, and finally it reduces each nation to being nothing more than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.”

Again, still quoting Alexis de Tocqueville, he said, “I have always believed that this sort of servitude, regulated, mild and peaceful, of which I have just done the portrait, could be combined better than we imagine with some of the external forms of liberty, and that it would not be impossible for it to be established in the very shadow of the sovereignty of the people.”

We see in his analysis of the small, minute, complicated and uniform rules, which do not break wills, but soften them, bend them and direct them, the danger of onerous red tape. We saw under the former Liberal government for many years an inexorable, continual growth in the small, minute wills that enervate and hinder the wills of the people, those rules that were, frankly, onerous and burdensome and often had little to no practical rationale for their existence.

Our government took that vast state of regulations here in the province of Ontario, where we had seen regulation growth year after year after year, constant growth in the number of regulations and the amount of time, energy and money that was spent in trying to deal with these regulations, and we actually were able to turn that ship around. Perhaps not all at once, but we were able to turn that ship of state around, and now we have seen a 6.7% reduction in overall regulations and in red tape here in the province of Ontario—

Interjections.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Absolutely.

I think it's one thing to say, “That's a reduction,” but to stop that momentum—momentum is a very powerful thing. I'm sure we've all heard about momentum, especially in campaigns. You can feel it, right? When the momentum stalls, it's a very tangible feeling where you're not sure where you're going, you're not sure what you're doing. But when you have the momentum and you're heading in the right direction, that momentum can carry you through and just accelerate.

But also negative momentum, where things are on a downward spiral, you can feel that as well. When you're spiralling down and when we're seeing things get worse and worse, it almost can accelerate. I think that that's what we saw under the Liberal government: acceleration in the number of new regulations. At a certain point it was almost like they threw their hands up in the air and they said, “You know what? Forget it. We already have hundreds and hundreds of thousands of regulations. At this point, why would we even bother trying to reduce red tape? We might as well embrace our role.” So the Liberals, supported by the NDP, continued their campaign to ensure that it was next to impossible to be a successful small business owner here in the province of Ontario just because of the sheer amount of red tape that they created.

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For us to be able to not just stop that continual increase of red tape but to begin that reduction—I believe we have momentum, and that's a momentum we're going to continue to work through. Today's bill is an important piece of that story. This story hasn't been written in the past—eight red tape bills alone—and it's not going to be written in this one. It's a continual story, one that we're all participating in, one that we're all adding to by our contributions, by your citizens' contributions to the red tape reduction portal, by the consultations that the minister spoke about that he participated in, reaching out to people in our community, by the active team that we have at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, and by each and every one of you, as

caucus colleagues, bringing forward ideas and saying, “How can we make it easier for people to be able to thrive and succeed? How can we unleash their potential and ensure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong here in the province of Ontario, as it has been for so long prior to the dark days of the Liberal government?”

I want to pick up where the minister left off, having laid out that context as to why we believe it’s so important to take the actions that we’re taking here in this red tape reduction package. I want to speak a little bit about a few more items in this red tape reduction bill and how they’re going to make a real impact on the lives of people across government.

When we formed government in 2018, we saw that under the leadership of the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, Ontario was the most heavily regulated province in the country. We knew that that had to change, so when we came to office, we set out on our mission to remove the unnecessary and outdated regulations holding this province back, and we did.

Our government has made a commitment to increase jobs and investment in Ontario by making it less expensive, faster and easier to do business and to set out one of the best regulatory service standards in North America. We’re following through on that commitment today. Our government has taken more than 450 actions to reduce burdens while continuing to look for ways to improve.

We pledged to introduce two high-impact red tape reduction bills each year, one in the spring and one in the fall, and we’ve followed through with that commitment.

The government has also passed nine high-impact pieces of red tape reduction legislation in the past five years and today we’re here debating the 10th. We made a commitment to save Ontario businesses, including not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector, at least \$400 million in annual compliance costs by March 2022. I’m pleased to state, for the record, that not only have we met this goal, but we have far exceeded it.

Our red tape reduction measures so far have saved businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, school boards, colleges, universities and hospitals, not to mention many individuals in this province, nearly \$700 million in annual compliance costs. That’s \$700 million each year that Ontario businesses and organizations and public serving-groups can put to better use as a result of our changes. It is part of our newest red tape reduction act, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, that will save Ontario businesses even more, once fully implemented.

Speaker, we’ve come a long way. We’re proud of the work that we’ve been able to accomplish and we’re grateful for the ideas that we have received from so many stakeholders, from so many hard-working entrepreneurs, from so many honest and hard-working workers, from so many seniors and from so many citizens in our ridings who have provided their ideas of on-the-ground solutions. These people from across the province haven’t just fed that to us in the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction; we’ve had fantastic partnerships with our partner ministries. The legislation that is in front of us today had 17 different

ministries that have been involved. I want to acknowledge those ministries for their work as well, for their participation in this process, for continually feeding back their ideas.

I’m going off on a little tangent here, but one of the things that people don’t always, I think, realize about the legislative calendar is that there’s actually only a limited amount of time to be able to pass bills. There are often areas in different ministries—I know this having worked in different ministries—that might have particular solutions to issues that are coming up in their bailiwick, if you will, in their ministry, and yet they might not have a legislative option to bring forward a bill on that particular item. So what often we’re able to do if they are relevant to the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction in terms of reducing unnecessary regulations or onerous processes is take those great ideas from the ministries, whether that’s the Ministry of Colleges and Universities or the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Health, or any of these other organizations, these incredibly hard-working ministries who have great ideas about what should be done to streamline processes while maintaining health, safety and the environment. We can sit down with them, go through those ideas and see if they work within our packages. It’s a way also of ensuring that we’re able to move rapidly on those issues.

Otherwise, what can happen, with the greatest respect to the government House leader’s team and the incredible work that they do, is there might not always be the opportunity for a legislative package for people to move those items through. Sometimes it can just be because there are only a few items that they want to move through, and it might not be able to justify a stand-alone piece of legislation in terms of just the constraints that we have on the hours of debate that are available in the Legislature.

We’re able to work with those ministries and those partners, and the minister is always ensuring that at that cabinet table—I’m sure he’s speaking about the ability that we have to work with them to bring forward good ideas and to be a conduit of sorts, as well as through our own outreach and our continual conversations with people in every corner of the province. I think it’s an important thing to remember, because it’s not just our ministry; there’s obviously—

Interjections.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you for the support of the tangent. I won’t do it too often, I promise.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You make red tape exciting.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you.

Speaker, we’ve come a long way, and we’re proud of the work we’ve accomplished so far. We’re also grateful for the ideas that we’ve received from so many across this province which have allowed us to continue delivering on our commitment to support economic competitiveness and create high-quality jobs and an attractive investment climate.

I want to tell you a little bit more about the work that we do. People always ask, “Okay, so, what does it actually mean to reduce red tape? Walk me through what that

process looks like.” I’m going to walk through a little bit of this partly by talking about the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. This is an important piece of legislation, something that we follow in the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction to ensure that every new regulation that comes forward isn’t onerous or burdensome for the people of Ontario. Every time we consider a new idea that crosses our path, we draw on the seven guiding principles contained in this act.

The first principle is that we should recognize national and international standards whenever possible. What this means is—this is a little bit of a challenging one, because everyone likes to think they’re “made in.” Everyone wants to have a made-in-Ontario solution, and I understand that. We need flexibility. We need to have a responsibility to interact with the local needs here in Ontario, and I respect that. I have lots of family in Alberta, and they’re always very like, “Made in Alberta: We’re going to do a made-in-Alberta strategy,” and I’m like, “Well, we have a really great idea here. You could pick it up and use it.” They’re like, “No, it needs to be made in Alberta,” so they remake the wheel every time. We’ve seen that with some other provinces as well. I won’t name any names—Quebec.

But I also think that it’s important to recognize best international standards and national standards. If there are ways that we can work with those existing standards and they protect the people of Ontario, they’re able to provide flexibility within that standard to allow our local organizations here in Ontario to be responsive to our needs but yet not create a whole new list of standards that then have to be duplicated and done again at the national or international level—the very first principle we have in the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction is to recognize national and international standards which should be adopted when possible. That’s our first principle: to make sure that we have accessibility for the broadest possible part of the economy and that people in our province or others who come to our province to invest are able to also recognize those standards and have options across this province. So we recognize that harmonizing requirements across jurisdictions reduces costs and makes it easier to do business across borders.

Our second pillar is that small businesses should have less onerous compliance requirements compared to larger businesses. I think this instinctively makes sense to people, recognizing that small businesses don’t have some of the same resources or expertise as their larger counterparts to focus on compliance.

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I think there’s a recognition that if you’re in a small mom-and-pop shop, you probably shouldn’t be having to deal with some of the same regulatory requirements as if you’re a massive industrial setting. I would imagine that if you’re a small machine shop in my riding, in Beamsville, you shouldn’t have some of the same requirements that Dofasco does down the road, obviously, where they’re literally boiling enormous vats of liquid steel. They need to have slightly different requirements than a machinist working out of a small shop in Beamsville. There’s an

understanding that we have to be flexible within our regulatory system and recognize that larger organizations have some of the resources and the expertise to deal with particular issues that perhaps a smaller organization doesn’t, so our second principle is that they should have less onerous compliance compared to larger businesses.

Our third principle is that any entity subject to regulations should be provided accessible digital services whenever possible, because in 2023, we shouldn’t be asking people or businesses to fill out long paper forms anymore. If any of you don’t have the YouTube Premium subscription—I don’t—

Interjection.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Oh, wow. This guy over here has YouTube Premium.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: No, no. I can’t afford it.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Oh, you don’t. Okay, phew. I was going to say—man, I couldn’t afford it either. It’s way too much.

But either way, if you don’t have it, you get this ad. It says, “There’s no place like Chrome.” You’ve seen this ad where it talks about how your tabs go where you go, and it’s a very nice little ad that’s on a lot of these YouTube videos. The whole premise, of course, is that if you use Google—which not everyone does; I get that. But I do. I happen to love my Google Docs and my Google Sheets. They make life much easier. Wherever I go, I can open it up, and—boom—everything is filled in, so you don’t have to fill in your shipping address every single time. You don’t have to fill in your information every single time. I know some people aren’t comfortable with that, and then they don’t use that service. That’s fine. I respect that. For me, I love it that I can sign on to any computer, log into my Google Chrome, and when I log into my Google Chrome, it’s instantly available. I don’t have to spend all my time filling out all the information for whatever form I’m going through—a table to be filled out very rapidly.

And so, it’s the same thing in terms of government services. We have to recognize that we’re living in a digital age. There might be some people who don’t want to do everything online, and I respect that. I understand making the option—having a physical option available is important. But to the vast majority of us, we do so many things online already, and if we’re able to have a digital process that is simpler than having to physically bring over papers and physically fill out papers, and perhaps miswrite something or have a letter that’s backwards or whatever it might be—when we have this in so many other aspects of our lives, governments have to respond to that as well, and so we are recognizing that. Our third principle is that any entities should be able to have accessible digital services wherever possible.

The fourth principle is that regulated entities like businesses, services and broader public sector organizations which demonstrate excellent compliance should be recognized. We recognize that we shouldn’t be punishing those who have done excellent jobs, have a healthy track record and have a very strong history of maintaining a regulatory environment and maintaining a compliance level that

demonstrates their commitment to good corporate citizenship. They shouldn't be under the exact same pressures as someone who perhaps hasn't demonstrated such good faith and has not met the requirements that are in place to protect health, safety and the environment. We should be making sure that regulations which are in place are recognizing the different backgrounds and the different histories of individual organizations.

The fifth principle, one that I know my father would agree with, is that unnecessary reporting should be reduced and steps should be taken to avoid requiring regulated entities to provide the same information to government repeatedly. This is one of those ones that I've had so many conversations with people about. Actually, this is one of the questions I and my team also regularly ask. When we're dealing with, let's say, a renewal requirement, there are all sorts of requirements for different organizations, for different licensing and for different pieces where people have to provide a renewal every year, a renewal every six months or a renewal every two years. Often the question we'll ask is, "Why is that the time frame? Why do we have to renew that every year? Can it be done every three years? Can it be done every five years? Is there a way to make sure that we don't have to have people repeatedly submitting information again and again and again when it's the exact same information year after year?"

Now, again, there are caveats to that. We recognize, of course, that there are changes in life. Look at, for example, your driver's licence. Once you have your G, you don't have to go back every year and redo it all over again and submit all your information. We understand that you have your G licence, but we also recognize that when you turn 80, there is potential for some challenges, health challenges, and that there needs to also be some conversation and a testing period. But generally speaking, we don't force people to renew everything all the time, and we shouldn't be taking that approach with regulations as well. We want to prevent people from having to unnecessarily resubmit information to the government again and again and again.

The sixth pillar is that instruments should prioritize the user by using clear communication, setting reasonable response times and establishing a centralized point of contact. It's very straightforward, this pillar: People and businesses should be able to understand the requirements imposed upon them by the government. Yet I actually think this pillar is one of the most difficult to implement, and it's also one of the most important pillars. Saying that we should have clear communication, a reasonable response time and a centralized point of contact I believe is, unfortunately, aspirational. It should be very basic, but the reality is, if you've spoken with anyone who's had to interact with governments and had to interact with different bureaucracies, they probably don't have one centralized point of contact that they can call with all their questions. They probably don't necessarily even have a clear expectation of what a reasonable response time is. In some ministries or in some organizations, it can be within 24 hours. In some, it's 90 days. In some, it's 30 days. In some, it's 10 business days. So we want to make sure that

that changes, that there's a reasonable response time expectation and a centralized point of contact for anyone who has to deal with regulations to make sure that they're able to have a one-stop shop that they go to, to be able to know "This is who we have to deal with in order to get things done."

The seventh principle is that an instrument should specify the desired result that regulated entities must meet, rather than the specific methods used to attain the result. Good outcomes are what we're concerned about, and we recognize that there are many different ways to get to the same outcome. If the outcome is intended to protect health or the outcome is intended to protect workers or the outcome is intended to protect the environment, we need to recognize when people are acting in good faith towards those outcomes and not simply checking boxes. You could have people who check the boxes who do a process that's technically accurate, but that doesn't mean that the result is where we're trying to go. So we have to be results-oriented, we have to be responsive and we have to recognize some flexibility around people's ability to attain those results and not just focus on the process to get there.

The minister mentioned in his remarks earlier this morning that this year's spring red tape reduction package focuses on three key themes, and in the time left I'm going to walk through a few of those themes: paving the way for better services, helping Ontario businesses grow and saving Ontarians time. I know he already walked through many of the measures in this legislation, but I'm going to spend a few minutes speaking to some of the other initiatives in the package which will help us realize these commitments.

I'd like to highlight an initiative that's coming from the Ministry of Transportation when it comes to paving the way for better services. This Ministry of Transportation is looking to modernize agency governance at the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. This is an agency which has an important role to play in our government's plan to build a stronger Ontario. We've committed to restoring passenger rail service from Toronto to northern Ontario, a service that was cancelled by the former Liberal government in 2012, and we're well on our way to delivering on that promise with planning under way and three new state-of-the-art trainsets on order from Siemens Mobility.

With this work, our government is going to be proceeding with developing a new and clearly defined transportation-focused mandate for Ontario Northland, which will be brought forward in this House in the future as part of modernized legislation. Speaker, this is necessary because the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission Act is a legacy piece of legislation from 1902 which has seen limited changes and does not align with modern agency legislation. To put that in context, Speaker, 1902 is six years before the Ford Motor Company invented the Model T.

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Clarifying the agency's mandate with regard to transportation, when a lot has changed in the last 120 years, will help result in increased agency alignment with our

strategic vision for being responsive to the needs of the people in the province and will empower the agency to deliver on key priority projects such as the Northlander.

Another way that we are paving the road to better services is by proposing amendments to the Ontario Energy Board to protect ratepayers. Speaker, you might be surprised to learn that, currently, utilities can pass on costs they've incurred because of failing to comply with their statutory obligations to ratepayers through increases to rates. What that means is, they break the rules, and you pay the price. At the end of the day, when they fail to meet their legislative obligations or their regulatory obligations, which results in greater costs, they don't take those costs and eat them. They actually pass those costs along to the ratepayers and say, "Sorry. We made this mistake, whatever it costs—millions of dollars. It sucks to be us. But guess what? It's okay, because we don't have to pay for it; the ratepayers do." No longer. We're making changes under this legislation to make sure that when they break the rules, the ratepayers aren't the ones who are paying for it. We're putting an end to that practice. It would protect energy ratepayers from paying for costs incurred because of non-compliance and help keep rates predictable.

Speaking of the Ministry of Energy, there's another way that this red tape reduction package is helping businesses grow. We know that Ontario's clean energy grid can be a real competitive advantage when we're looking at attracting businesses and investments to the province. But we can do much more. That's why we're proposing amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act which will allow the Ontario Energy Board to remove certain regulatory barriers to innovative pilot and demonstration projects. There are a lot of projects in the province that, unfortunately, we're not able to proceed with, under the restrictive regulations of the Ontario Energy Board. This will expand the Ontario Energy Board's authority to facilitate pilot and demonstration projects, such as exploring the idea of peer-to-peer energy trading. There's vast potential for energy innovation that could revolutionize the way we produce, distribute and consume energy. Eliminating the red tape associated with these pilot projects will have the potential to reveal real value for the sector and for customers. Innovative projects that could come forward through these changes will benefit electricity ratepayers through lower rates and a more reliable and resilient system—as well as having a positive impact on Ontarians.

Speaker, I know that we're running close to time, but I do want to focus on an initiative from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development that is intended to save time for the people of this province. We're seeking to clarify the concept of "survivor" in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act in relation to terms such as "surviving spouse" and "cohabiting," as well as other related issues. Modernizing the approach that the WSIB takes in relation to survivors will improve operational consistency in decision-making, reduce administrative burden, and also provide the WSIB with the ability to process claims faster and save Ontarians time.

There are other ways that we're working to save Ontarians time. We are proposing amendments to electronic forms delivery under the Pension Benefits Act, which will eliminate the need to send retiring plan members unneeded reminder notices, reducing costs and duplication.

We will have permanent changes made to several business law statutes in the Condominium Act to allow for corporations, including not-for-profits, to hold virtual meetings. Some businesses aren't able to hold virtual meetings. We're making changes to allow them to continue to hold those virtual meetings to save everyone time and money. This has been a very popular and successful measure.

Speaker, I wish I had more time to speak about all the other actions that are in this legislation. Unfortunately, due to my tangents, we are not able to continue, but I appreciate the—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from Niagara West for your presentation.

I noticed in this bill, Bill 91, that the government has opened up the condo act, which I find quite interesting, because there are a lot of improvements that we can make to strengthen protections for the 1.3 million people who live in a condo in Ontario.

To the member from Niagara West: What measures would you like to see to strengthen board governance and consumer protections for condo residents in Ontario? Since you're opening up the act, this is a real opportunity to move forward with that kind of stuff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite. I appreciate her bringing this forward. I'm happy to hear her ideas around potential future pieces of legislation and obviously more than willing to hear about what particular changes she recommends.

I lived in a condo for some time when my wife and I were first married. We were in a condo in Smithville in my riding and so I understand of course that there are always different things. One of the pieces that I understand is so important in this legislation is to allow for that option for virtual meetings. I know for myself, as someone who spends a lot of time on the road doing consultations, community outreach and stakeholder outreach, and for my wife as well who's very business with our son and with a lot of different community events, to virtually be able to call into these meetings, to ensure that we save time and be flexible—sometimes you just can't be there in person. I think we've all had that experience where there's just an unavoidable conflict. So to be able to call in quietly on a Zoom and still listen to what's going on and not hear about it second-hand, I think is a great way of saving people time and money.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciated very much the conversation from both the minister and the parliamentary assistant on this new red tape bill. It amazes me how we have no problems coming up with these large omnibus

bills twice a year on the incredible work that we're doing, and this is just another one of these. I think one of the biggest ones—and we just heard about that at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—was the incredible changes to the court system through electronic filing and everything else.

I was looking through the bill and I see even more on that again now through updating the Creditors' Relief Act to include electronic formats. I was wondering if either the minister or the member from Niagara West could speak of the changes we're making to make court systems work more efficiently and use a whole lot less paper.

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague for that important question. I can assure him that one of the things we do at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction is work across government. So we have an opportunity to work with every single one of our colleagues and every single one of our cabinet ministers to look at ways—and I know the Attorney General has been doing a tremendous job over the last number of years modernizing our justice system—and it's across government, and we all help one another. We all work closely with one another, and all of us, I would say, do a really good job listening to our constituents and listening to our stakeholders. A lot of these ideas—where do they come from—that we're able to put in our piece of legislation? They come from Ontarians through the consultation process, through the relaunch of our online portal where we get amazing feedback from just regular Ontarians, businesses that are impacted, that are frustrated, that are spending countless hours filling out unnecessary papers.

We recognize we have a lot more work to do and we'll continue to do the hard work.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: A question for my friend from Niagara West: Schedule 30, Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act—I'm curious as to if and how that will benefit any of the farmers in our region of Niagara.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Listen, I'm someone whose family was born and raised on a farm. I lived for the first couple of decades of my life on a farm, and so to ensure that farmers are being protected from non-payment, I think that's important. But, at the same time, the changes in this legislation as well—my understanding—have to do with also some of the changes we've made under the approach to modernizing the payment plans that are in place where there's a lot of different protection plans that people have to pay independently, and then there's duplication of the board structures and governance around those. So to be able to streamline that and have shared commodity groups be able to have a similar approach to dealing with these issues is one that reduces some of the burdens for people and also allows them to be more flexible, but also allows them to be predictable in terms of the payment they receive.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: With all due respect to the minister, I have a question for the parliamentary assistant,

due to his age—and this is a good thing, Madam Speaker—because as the parliamentary assistant mentioned in his speech, one of the things that we are doing with this red tape reduction package is modernizing the way we deliver government services electronically. This is really, really important for younger generations who are so connected with the online world and the Internet. So, by doing this, we are actually empowering younger generations to become more connected with government and with services and all of that. So I wanted to know if the parliamentary assistant could speak a little bit more about what he has heard from other people in his generation or younger about how this bill is actually helping younger generations.

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Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Well, to be very candid, because the bill only just got tabled this week, I haven't heard that much yet, but I'm sure I'll be hearing a great deal in the days to come. But I have heard a lot from—well, I guess my generation, our generation—young people in general and not just young people but all Ontarians about the need to ensure that there's flexibility in digital access.

The MPP for Carleton will know well, as I know well, that even though there's more and more ease with which to access things nowadays, using online social networks and, of course, the Internet as a means of being able to participate, this also creates a huge amount of pressure to be at everything then, and physically we can't be. You've had this experience, I'm sure, every Remembrance Day service; you've had this experience, I'm sure, on the weekend in your riding, where you have events that are 45 minutes apart, but you have 15 minutes to get from one to the other, so you're either going to be late to every single one—well, one of the ways that we can obviously address that is calling in virtually. I think the same thing applies to a lot of these, whether it's condo board meetings or other meetings in our communities. Where they're able to use an online avenue, that's very helpful.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça me fait plaisir de parler du projet de loi 91 pour réduire le « red tape », comme on dit. J'en ai parlé souvent en Chambre—j'ai parlé souvent de la communauté d'Attawapiskat qui demande depuis 30 ans d'avoir une extension à leur réserve. Je demanderais au ministre qui a parlé de leur fameux projet de loi, mais j'ai regardé dans le projet de loi puis je ne vois aucune mention. Mon collègue de Kiiwetinoong, il en a parlé amplement des « issues » qu'on a dans les Premières Nations, puis encore d'Attawapiskat, qui est dans un processus encore de 30 ans de faire l'expansion de leur réserve. On voit que c'est tout le temps radio-silence.

Il me semble que si on veut réduire du « red tape », comme ils utilisent—le ruban rouge, si je peux utiliser le terme en français—ne serait-ce pas une bonne réduction de ruban rouge de réduire le « red tape » pour les Premières Nations et adresser le problème d'expansion de réserves comme dans la communauté d'Attawapiskat?

Hon. Parm Gill: I can assure the member opposite, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, one of the things we do

is we listen to every single Ontarian out there. I also want to remind the member opposite: Whereas the previous Liberal government, obviously, in some parts where it was supported by the NDP, spent decades drowning our province in red tape—but for the first time, we now have a ministry that is fully dedicated to eliminating red tape for all Ontarians.

How do we do this? Obviously we do this in consultation; we do this making sure that all of our partner stakeholder community-members—businesses, non-profits, charitable organizations, you name it—are part of those discussions, including First Nations, to make sure that, hey, we're not doing something that's going to benefit the downtown elites of the province or the city of Toronto, but we're addressing the issues and concerns that impact real people out there. How can we help them succeed? How can we make their lives easier? How can we reduce the cost of doing business?

I am proud of the fact that this is our 10th piece of legislation that we've introduced as a government, and through the previous nine packages, we've helped eliminate nearly \$700 million annually from the backs of Ontarians. And we recognize we have a lot more to do. Assuming this piece of legislation makes it through the Legislature and goes on to become law, this will be another—hopefully—over \$100 million, and we have far more work to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PASSOVER AND EASTER

Mrs. Robin Martin: Today, Jewish residents and communities in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence and around the world will mark the start of Passover, usually an eight-day festival. Also known as Pesach, this holiday commemorates the miracle in which God passed over the houses of the Israelites during the 10th plague—also 400 years of slavery endured by the Jewish people in ancient Egypt and their 40-year journey to the promised land. Throughout the entire period, Jewish law forbids eating any hametz—or foods with leaven.

Centred on family and communal celebrations, Passover is one of the most beloved of all Jewish holidays. The main ritual is the Passover Seder, a festive meal during which families and friends will gather to read and discuss the story of Passover, recite prayers and consume symbolic foods like matzah or unleavened bread. To everyone marking Passover, Chag Pesach Sameach.

Later this week, Western Christian denominations will also celebrate Easter. Following the 40-day period of fasting and prayer known as Lent, Christians will gather to celebrate the holiest time in the Christian calendar.

This week is Holy Week. The Easter Triduum includes Maundy Thursday, which commemorates the washing of

the feet and the Last Supper of Christ with the apostles; Good Friday, marking the crucifixion and death of Jesus; and of course Easter Sunday, marking the resurrection of Christ.

Religion, which literally derives from the Latin word “religare,” which means “to tie one to their community,” and the common participation in ritual it includes, helps to give meaning and purpose to life and comfort in times of hardship—all things that I believe we could use more of in modern times.

To all my constituents, a joyous and meaningful Easter and Chag Pesach Sameach.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a letter that I would like to share from a very concerned and upset mother. She wants me to know, “My son ... is struggling in school. He is ADHD and has autism. He is seven years old ... and desperately needs an EA or some kind of support. Our teacher is absolutely wonderful, for the first time in many years. She specializes in special education but the thing is like a lot she is running out of resources. He is very high needs and desperately needs 1:1 support in class. Unfortunately all requests come back as ‘no budget’ or no more staff available.

“I’m so upset as my son gets very hands” on “sometimes and can’t self-regulate. Last week he had an incident and now is told he has to sit in the office with admin staff to realize his actions (he has no idea what is going on). So this morning I pulled him to get some testing done. I was told because he missed part of the day he would be making up the hours tomorrow ... he would spend the full day again in the office with no outside recess, which he barely gets to experience.

“I’m so upset for my son. He is so bright and is being held back because of apparent resources not available and then making him spend all this time in the office. I’m ready to pull him.... He is being secluded from his peers” and “he is very liked in school.

“Can you help me in any way? I have no idea.”

My question to this government is: Why won’t they fund schools so that students like this child can participate and learn with the resources that they so desperately need?

CAROLYN KARLE

Mr. Kevin Holland: This morning, I would like to show much-deserved recognition to a member from my riding. I was introduced to Carolyn Karle during my campaign, and I am proud to now call her a friend. Carolyn founded the DEK Foundation, named after her daughter, Dayna Elizabeth Karle, who she unfortunately lost to a devastating drug overdose. Dayna was only 31 years old when she succumbed to her disease. Dayna is described by friends and loved ones as an energetic, vibrant and beautiful soul. When Dayna started to face mental health challenges, it became unmanageable, and she was unable to get access to the resources she needed to fight it.

Carolyn and I both agree that drug addiction can happen to anyone. There is no discrimination when it comes to issues with mental health and addiction, and it truly affects all walks of life. Carolyn was able to turn this devastating loss into strength, and she works tirelessly in the foundation she started to help those struggling with addiction. Carolyn was recently recognized by her community and received Thunder Bay's 2023 respect. Award.

The DEK foundation provides necessities to those struggling from mental health and addictions, giving them the needed love and support they deserve. I'd like to thank Carolyn for her relentless work, and I look forward to working closely with her to end the stigma and to build a secure foundation of support systems for the constituents of Thunder Bay and region. Thank you, Carolyn.

WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I stand before you today to urge this government to access and evaluate funding for women's health across the board. That is research, it is education and it is services.

I stand today inspired by the dedication of local friends and health advocates April Hamm and Jessica Plenzick, who collaborated to arrange a significant event at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines. To a packed house, on the last day of endometriosis month—legislation that actually was passed by my colleague here in this chamber, the member from Davenport—they showcased a film, *Below the Belt*, and proceeded to have a powerful panel discussion by the inspiring health professionals. There was a question asked, and it was a simple one: Why? Why are we not talking about endometriosis anymore—a common condition that impacts one in 10 women, a condition that suffers from bias and prejudice?

1020

Women's health has been underfunded and under-researched for many years. Women's health is put into reproductive categories. It is a systemic issue. We need to change it. This needs to be changed.

I want to recognize the passion of these advocates. However, I cannot do this without recognizing how much more still needs to be done.

I urge this government to prioritize women's health by increasing funding for research, education and services that address the unique health needs of women. Let us work together to ensure that every woman in Ontario receives the care and support she deserves.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: April marks the beginning of Sikh Heritage Month.

My great riding of Brampton West is home to a large, vibrant and prospering Sikh community. Sikhs have a long and proud history that spans over 500 years. We are known for our commitment to equality, social justice and service to humanity. These values are deeply rooted in our faith

and have guided us through some of the most challenging times in history.

We believe that there are three duties a Sikh must carry out: *naam japna*, which is keeping God in mind at all times; *kirat karō*, which means earning an honest living; and *vand chakkō*, which means sharing one's earnings with others. In English, this can be summed up by praying, working and giving.

Mr. Speaker, the Sikh community has made immeasurable contributions to building our province and this proud country, from the days when those early Sikh pioneers arrived in Canada to the present day, when this nation stands tall as a leader for equality, diversity and compassion. The history of Sikhs in Canada is a story of compassion, hard work, persistence and progress.

Therefore, I invite the entire House to join in the annual Khalsa Day Parade on April 30 in Toronto with friends and families and enjoy this open, public celebration of Sikh heritage.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John Vanthof: As we sit here in the House once again, Highway 11, the Trans-Canada Highway, has just been closed north of North Bay—I was trying to look it up; I think it's the 14th time since January 1. This is the Trans-Canada Highway, the link that connects our country—the cross-country traffic. There are two ways to go across Canada through Ontario: Highway 17 or 11. Believe it or not, in the wintertime, Highway 11 is the safest route, and it has been closed numerous times. Not only is the commerce stopped, but as we speak, there will be people stranded along that highway, because that highway is our main street.

The link is once again broken. I'm not blaming anyone. I'm not blaming the contractors. I think they're doing their best. I'm not even blaming the government; the government is trying to do a few things. But we have to realize that something is drastically changing and we need to address it. I've lived there my whole life, and it has never been like this—that every time there's a snow, the country is paralyzed. We need to work together right now. The government in power needs to look at what we do to change that so we are not the bottleneck in this country.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: The region of Durham's public health unit is receiving \$1,645,000 from our government to help deliver a variety of initiatives and support critical public health programs and services over the next two years. The announcement made recently by region of Durham government MPPs is part of an investment of nearly \$84 million by the province to support public health units across Ontario. Consequently, Durham region public health can look forward to enhanced health care services as our government reaffirms its commitment to investing in the well-being of the communities that comprise the region.

Ontarians can rest assured that we're determined to alleviate health care costs while ensuring exceptional care for all residents of Durham. By prioritizing initiatives that promote health and prevent illness, we can build a stronger, more resilient region of Durham and create a brighter future for all hard-working families in that region.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Adil Shamji: Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight a major concern in my riding of Don Valley East. For so many of my constituents, increased violence in schools, places of worship and public transit has become a reality of daily life, and people are worried about their personal and family safety.

When people fall through the cracks, one of the stops is often public transit. We need to create a safety net that catches them before they get there.

This is about getting vulnerable people the supports that they need. We know that anyone can turn to violence and that anyone can commit a crime, but we also know that building a stronger network of support systems will reduce the risk for everyone.

During the pandemic, as an emergency physician, I saw how rates of child abuse and domestic violence increased because people were stressed to their limits by cost of living, by isolation, by fear, by other things. Worsening access to health care has also meant that people can't get the mental health and addictions supports that they need.

Mr. Speaker, this government can't keep pushing public safety onto the municipalities. While there may be some superficial promises in the budget to address social well-being, we all know what a promise from this government is worth. It's time for this government to stop talking and start delivering.

This means getting serious about tackling hatred in our communities, defending against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and racism in all its forms. And it means tackling gun violence by getting weapons off the street and especially out of the hands of youth.

This government—this province—has an obligation to keep the people of Ontario safe, and we must hold them to it.

CARPENTERS AND JOINERS UNION LOCAL 494

Mr. Andrew Dowie: A week ago Saturday, I visited the Carpenters and Joiners Union Local 494 training facility in Tecumseh, alongside MPP Leardi and Essex MP Chris Lewis. What a great day it was. We had the incredible opportunity to see the union's apprenticeship competition and seeing which among the children's playhouses in competition destined for Hiatus House would win top marks. What a fantastic cause.

Under the leadership of Shawn Ramey, Brandon Fitch and Tomi Hulkkonen, the competition is just one of countless examples of Local 494 giving back to our community.

Local 494 represents general carpenters, acoustic technicians, resilient floor layers and pile drivers and

welders in Essex and Kent counties and have truly built a cutting-edge, 21,000-square-foot training facility.

Our government is providing \$224 million in the current budget for a new capital stream of the Skills Development Fund to leverage private sector expertise and expand training centres, including union training halls such as the Local 494 site, to provide more accessible, flexible training opportunities for workers.

With nearly 300,000 jobs going unfilled in Ontario, many of which are in the construction industry, local trade unions are doing their part to ensure that their members are well prepared today as we continue to build a better Windsor–Tecumseh and a better Ontario for future generations.

CIRCLE OF CARE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise today to recognize the important work of Circle of Care, part of Sinai Health, a non-profit organization that delivers nutritionally balanced meals to seniors and those with complex health needs.

With the help of over 200 compassionate volunteers and staff, they deliver more than 280,000 meals annually to our elderly community members.

Last month, the March for Meals month, I joined them in delivering meals to a seniors-only apartment in Richmond Hill called Rose Town, where we visited our elderly Ukrainian and Russian neighbours.

1030

Speaker, from the smiling faces, I can tell the meal delivery service has gone above and beyond in providing vital support to our vulnerable population. The service has also alleviated the worries of many family members who may not be able to visit their loved ones. I am so happy that those who deliver the meals for them also make great friends with them and check in on them on a daily basis.

Again, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the entire Circle of Care team. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I am pleased to welcome the following representatives from the University of Guelph here today: Dr. Charlotte Yates, Dr. Gwen Chapman, Dr. Malcolm Campbell, Mellissa McDonald, Shannon Weber, Amy Aitchison and Megan Alberts. Please join us this evening in the dining from 5 until 7:30 for the reception. Thank you.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am pleased to have two groups to introduce today. The first is folks from the Ontario Autism Coalition who are joining us this morning: Kate Dudley-Logue, Amy Moledzki, Bruce McIntosh, Karen Rene Bojti, Michele MacAdam, and of course everyone knows Michau Van Speyk.

Also from Ottawa this morning joining us are Dr. June Webber and Gerry Barr. Welcome, everyone.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I am delighted to welcome Skyler Chui, a grade 8 student from St. Charles Garnier Catholic Elementary School, representing Richmond Hill as a page. Today, Skyler is our page captain. He is excited to learn about our legislative process. Seeing his member in action will be a good experience and a highlight of his learning.

I would also like to welcome Skyler's parents, Ocean Chui and Joyce Chan, and his sister Shelby Chui. Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to welcome to this House members of the Amalgamated Transit Union, including John Di Nino, president of ATU Canada; Marvin Alfred, president of ATU Local 113; Crystal Cadeau, Frank Malta, Renee Coutinho, Eric Tuck, Chuck Fitzpatrick, Hariqbal Bal, Jacques Racine, Jay Khawaja, Jack Jackson, Jamie Larkin, Andrew Salabie and Amandeep Gill. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: From a multi-generational family of community leaders—especially today, on the eve of Passover—I welcome Stacey Granovsky and her son Boaz Granovsky. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome Jan Westcott and the crew from Spirits Canada here today and invite them to the reception this evening. We will all have fun there.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today two strong constituents from the riding of Niagara West, Ken and Bev Byberg. Welcome to Ontario's Legislature.

Hon. David Piccini: I'd like to extend a warm welcome to my friends Jim Corcoran and David Navia. Many of you may know them; with the stress of the Legislature, you may have been to Ste. Anne's Spa in beautiful Grafton, Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature, Jim and David.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome my friend and one of my team, Mr. Michael Lo Giudice, as he is coming back from Italy after five years; he graduated post-grad. Congratulations. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Though they couldn't be here today, we want to wish the women's Team Canada all the best in the world championships. The IIHF World Championships start April 5. They'd love to be here, but they're going to be a little busy. All the best to the ladies.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to my friends at the Ontario Autism Coalition who are joining us in the chamber this morning.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a special guest from the Hammer, Eric Tuck, who is the president of ATU Local 107. Welcome to Queen's Park, Eric.

QUESTION PERIOD

HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. Yesterday, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing came

clean, yes, because yesterday he finally admitted that this government's housing plan is not working. He admitted that new housing starts are going down, not up, and in fact they're expected to drop by 20% over the next three years. Ontarians are struggling to find affordable places to live, and this government is letting them down.

Speaker, to the Premier: Will he join the minister and admit the Conservatives' plan is failing?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I guess I don't have to point out the irony that the Leader of the Opposition now wants to build more houses, has somehow joined us in recognizing that there is a housing crisis in the province of Ontario—a crisis that was built up after 15 years of inaction by both the Liberals and the NDP systematically making it impossible for people to actually build homes and for people to actually afford homes, Mr. Speaker.

What the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is doing is taking out all of the obstacles that make it harder to build homes in the province of Ontario. That has been the absolute goal of everything that we have been doing since day one in this place.

I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for finally understanding that we have obstacles in the way of building homes for the people of the province of Ontario who so desperately want to have that first home, whether it's to own the first home, their first rental. So I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for finally recognizing we're in a housing crisis and hope she'll vote with us to actually deal with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Perhaps they didn't hear their own minister, Speaker; the plan is not working. The plan is not working.

Yet again, this government is focused more on themselves and their friends than on real Ontarians, because if they would listen to real Ontarians, they would realize that they have to do a whole lot better than this. People can't afford places to live, Speaker. And what is this government telling them? They won't fix their failing housing plan; they would rather build luxury homes on the greenbelt; and that their insider friends are more important.

Speaker, back to the Premier: Will you at least bring back real rent control to get Ontarians some relief?

Hon. Paul Calandra: So, Mr. Speaker, what we're doing is we're building homes in all parts of the province where we have a housing supply crisis. Now, again, we started this in 2018, when we started bringing in transit-oriented communities, for instance. What we said is, along our transit corridors, the exciting new investments that are happening in the Toronto Transit Commission, the subways, but also in GO trains—in my riding, that means in the GO train stations, whether it's in Markham, and I know the minister has been busy expanding it all the way out to Niagara—we're going to build up housing. It's going to be all types of housing, Mr. Speaker: affordable

housing, rentals. That's the type of housing that we want to build.

At the same time, we know that there is a housing crisis in other parts of this province, and the reality is that we have to move out of the way red tape and the obstacles that have been causing this crisis, obstacles that the Leader of the Opposition and her party, in co-operation with the Liberals, put in the way of the people of the province of Ontario for over a decade and a half.

I appreciate that she agrees with us there is a housing crisis. I hope that she will join with us as we eliminate the red tape to get more homes built.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this government wants to talk about rent, so let's talk about rent, because this government green-lit the largest rent hike in 10 years. They're more focused on themselves and their friends than on real Ontarians. If this government listened to regular people, they'd realize they have to do a whole lot better than this. Again, Speaker, people cannot afford places to live in this province.

1040

Back to the Premier: How is this going to help somebody who can't afford their rent this month?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, it almost seems like there has been a conversion with the NDP. They now believe that we're in a housing crisis and that we have to do something about it, despite the fact that for over 15 years they supported the Liberal Party, which put obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in the way of building those new homes. Now we're hearing from the NDP that it's getting more costly to live in different parts of the province of Ontario.

We started, again, back in 2018, reducing costs for people, cutting taxes for the people of the province of Ontario. They voted against every single one of those initiatives. We put real regulations in place to protect tenants across the province of Ontario. We have rent controls and we have more purpose-built rental housing being built in the province of Ontario than at any time over the last decade and a half.

What they can do, Mr. Speaker, if they want to go that extra mile for the people of the province of Ontario, they can call Jagmeet Singh in Ottawa and put on the table that the federal Liberals will do the right thing and pause a 14% increase in the carbon tax, which took place on—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, back to the Premier: Managing public funds and ensuring that every single dollar is invested in the services and programs that people need is a core responsibility of any government. But this week we finally saw the end of the saga of a senior bureaucrat who was siphoning off millions of dollars in public funds, including funds marked for pandemic

support. To the Premier: How did this government fail to notice \$47.4 million going out the door?

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank Leader of the Opposition for the question. The former employee in question pleaded guilty to breach of trust, fraud and money laundering, which are all Criminal Code offences. The OPP will continue to investigate and enforce any acts which violate the Criminal Code. We expect everyone who works for the government of Ontario to uphold the highest standard of professional ethics. Mr. Speaker, we will accept nothing less.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The individual responsible for this was also the Ministry of Education's information technology leader on the Support for Families program, a program that was plagued by problems and delays in getting the money out to parents. All the while, this individual was able to siphon millions of dollars out of public coffers with no one on that side noticing. It's very concerning, to say the least.

In reviewing what went wrong in this case, were these hastily created funds identified as a risk of fraud?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the best of my knowledge, the majority of the funds have been recovered. The fact that the individual was identified by the police and has pled guilty, it seems to be quite obvious that we did find out who it was and what they were doing. Justice moved swiftly to ensure that the people of the province of Ontario were protected. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, of course this was a program that the NDP voted against, if I'm not mistaken, in the first place.

Look, nobody believes the NDP's now recent conversion, believing that we have to do better with the taxpayers' money. Nobody believes that. Nobody believes the NDP when they say that they're going to do more on public safety, because they always vote against it. Nobody believes the NDP all of a sudden has had a conversion that there's a housing crisis and we have to do more to build homes across the province of Ontario. Nobody believes that, Mr. Speaker—unless they vote in favour of the budget; unless they vote in favour of Bill 60, which the Minister of Health has brought forward; unless they vote in favour of the red tape bill that we brought forward. Then, maybe, the people of the province of Ontario will start to believe what the—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, I'll tell you what we believe in on this side of the House: We believe in accountability. We believe in accountability.

The judge in this case called what happened a "fraud perpetrated ... on everyone ... who lives in this province." While the perpetrator is headed to prison, there are very important questions that remain unanswered here.

We know the government has increased the amount that they stash away in contingency funds by fivefold since they took office. They're shuffling billions away from public scrutiny. What assurances do Ontarians have that we won't end up seeing more lost public funds as a result of this?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has highlighted this: We have reduced red tape and the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario by some \$8 billion, which has resulted in an increase in revenues to the province of Ontario of over \$50 billion. What does that mean? That means thousands of jobs which are coming back to the province of Ontario.

We keep hearing this from the opposition: "During COVID, they had a fund." Well, of course we had a fund, because unless the opposition had Nostradamus working on their side, none of us knew what COVID-19 was going to throw at us. We had to be able to respond quickly, and we did, despite the fact that they voted against increased funding for our hospital sector, despite the fact that they voted against tenants, despite the fact that they voted against a multitude of initiatives that helped us get through the pandemic better than any other jurisdiction in North America and, in fact, the world. They voted against it. We got it done, and now we're moving—

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

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: On Sunday, residents rallied in Waterloo and their message was clear: Approve the region of Waterloo's official plan which they participated in, protect the countryside line and crucial wetlands, and stop the needless carve-out of the greenbelt. Citizens know that there is no need to pave over farmland for sprawl.

In fact, a recent report from the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario says that Waterloo region already has the capacity to build nearly 230,000 new housing units within the current boundary.

To that end, will this government reverse the cuts to municipalities by repealing Bill 23 and work with democratically elected municipalities instead of fighting them?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, in the first question from the Leader of the Opposition, they want to build more houses, and then the follow-up question from the finance critic is about putting more obstacles in the way of building those houses. So I'll say this to the finance critic: We need those homes, we need those 200,000—and we need more. That is why community after community has supported us in what we are doing to build more homes. I think it's, what, 28 municipalities—28 of 29 municipalities that we have called on to build more homes have said, "Yes, we have to do that, and we are coming on board with what the government is doing."

We need more homes. Do you know why we need more homes? Because we've got thousands of people coming to the province of Ontario. Do you know why? Because we've taken the obstacles out of creating jobs and building wealth in the province of Ontario. Thousands of jobs are coming back to the province of Ontario, and billions of dollars of investment that left are now coming back, so we need those 200,000, and we need more.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question: the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier.

Premier, we have found that this government has forced municipalities to redraw their urban boundaries and rezone over 35,000 hectares of farmland and greenbelt land to permit sprawl—35,000 hectares in Peel, in Ottawa, in Hamilton, in Halton, in Durham, in York, and possibly Waterloo. They are all being forced to permit expensive, low-density sprawl on farmland, even though your government's own Housing Affordability Task Force said very clearly that access to land is not the barrier that's stopping this government and Ontario from meeting its housing target of 1.5 million homes.

Instead of recklessly paving over farmland and the greenbelt, can this government commit to a housing plan to increase density and build the homes we need in areas already zoned for development?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are doing just that. We are taking out all of the obstacles that are in the way of people having their first home, and we aren't going to be sidetracked by an opposition that says one thing when the cameras are on and votes in a different way. It's always about "not in their backyard." They want more homes, just not in the province of Ontario. They want more transit, just not in the province of Ontario. They want life more affordable, just not for the people of the province of Ontario. She calls on us to do more on farmland—and we have.

I would say this to the opposition: Just a couple of days ago, supported by the NDP in Ottawa, the federal Liberals have decided to plant 400,000 trees on farmland across the GTA. I wonder if the member opposite would help us do the right thing and call Jagmeet Singh and say, "Don't support the 400,000 trees that they want to build on farmland across the GTA." It's the wrong thing to do. It's wrong for the people of the province of Ontario. We need more housing, and will you stand up for more—

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

1050

MANUFACTURING JOBS

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Markham is home to many of the province's most advanced and innovative businesses. That includes over 650 corporate

head offices and over 1,500 tech and life sciences companies.

And now, with the support of this government, advanced manufacturers are joining those ranks, making record investments to create jobs and stay globally competitive. Speaker, will the minister please explain how our government is supporting advanced manufacturers in my riding to invest and remain on the cutting edge of their respective industries?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: By reducing the cost of business by \$8 billion annually, we're proving that Ontario is open for business. This has led to record investments, with over \$17 billion in the auto sector, over \$3 billion in life sciences and many more billions in tech.

And we're bringing new life to manufacturing. In Markham, NOVO Plastics recently announced a more than \$10-million investment, creating 30 new jobs, with \$1.5 million in support from our government. Speaker, they are an Ontario-made manufacturer of engineered plastic components for the auto sector. With this project, NOVO Plastics will modernize their production process with automation and bring in robotics. This is how we're ensuring that Markham stays on the cutting edge of advanced manufacturing.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for his answer. Our government is reversing course on the Liberals' plan to make manufacturing a thing of the past in Ontario. We are supporting our businesses while bringing thousands of jobs back to the province. This House needs no reminder that the Liberals sent 300,000 manufacturing jobs running from Ontario; nor does this House need a reminder of the Liberals' work to make small business ownership a pipe dream.

Speaker, will the minister tell us about how our government is fostering the entrepreneurial spirit that continues to make Markham one of the best places in the province to live, work and grow?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Lower taxes, lower hydro rates and less red tape means more money to invest and grow. It's a formula that the Liberals just did not understand, but it is a formula that our government is delivering on, by reducing the cost of doing business by \$8 billion every year.

With our Small Business Enterprise Centres, entrepreneurs have all the tools they need to succeed. Markham's centre is receiving \$420,000 to help their small businesses and \$92,000 for Starter Company Plus and Summer Company. Now students and young adults are encouraged to start their own businesses. Speaker, Markham and all of Ontario's entrepreneurs will always have our government in their corner.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

As Gabriel Magalhaes was dying in the Keele Street subway 11 days ago, many people in his community were

there to hold his hand. Among them was a transit worker who people don't know because that transit worker didn't want media attention. But transit workers take their jobs very seriously and among us in the gallery, as our leader said, we have many here today, from all over Ontario. Thank you for coming. They are the eyes and ears of our system, but their positions right now are being cut because we are not putting enough money into operational funding for the transit system. Speaker, my question to the Premier: Why aren't we doing that?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member for the question. The violence that we are seeing on the TTC is unacceptable. Transit riders and transit workers deserve the right to feel safe as they're working and riding on the TTC.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have been there for the TTC. For the last few years we've provided over a billion and a half dollars' worth of funding. In the last year alone, through the Safe Restart phase 4 program, we provided almost \$350 million to the TTC, and through our gas tax funding, over \$180 million. These are dollars that go directly to the TTC to spend in any way they need to, whether it is on operational issues or on safety issues.

What the people of Ontario need to know and what the TTC riders and TTC workers need to know is that when our government put forward the funding to support the TTC throughout the pandemic and beyond, the members of the opposition voted against it.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to the minister: What I want the minister to know is transit workers know very well that the ask for the budget this year was \$500 million to continue to stabilize this critical sector, but this government spent \$80 million.

What's happening here in the city of Toronto—for subway cars, there normally were two positions. There was a conductor and there was a guard. The guard looked to ensure the safety of the platform. The TTC is cutting that guard position. It was a guard who saved a four-year-old girl at Coxwell subway station not long ago when they wandered onto the tracks. It was the guard who made sure that the conductor knew the subway train had to be stopped. Under this government's cuts for this year in operational transit, people are less safe.

My question to the minister: Why did you not deliver on the \$500 million that transit workers need, and can we not just call them heroes; can we make sure that their workplaces are safe so everybody gets to work or home safely?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'll repeat: We have provided over a \$1.5 billion worth of funding directly to the TTC for it to spend in the way that it feels it is most needed.

I'm glad to hear that the member opposite understands that this is also a public safety issue. There's a mental health component and a public policing and public safety

issue. When the cameras are on, the members opposite get up and do a great job of grandstanding, but when it comes time for voting for the measures that will actually help, like Safe Restart funding, like gas tax funding and like funding our police services, the members opposite consistently vote against it.

The member from Ottawa Centre—not the TTC, but to support funding in his own city—supported a motion at Ottawa city council to defund the police. The member from Toronto Centre moved a motion when she was city councillor—

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

The next question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs. In my riding of Sault Ste. Marie and in communities across the north, people are eager to take advantage of opportunities that will help to create jobs and support their economic growth and prosperity. Under the previous Liberal government, rural, remote and northern communities were overlooked. The strengths, the assets and the abilities found in so many of our communities were ignored. As a result, their full potential was never realized.

Our government respects the people of northern Ontario and we respect that we must remain committed to investing in programs and projects that will keep northern Ontario competitive and current. Can the minister please explain how our government is supporting prosperity and opportunities in the north?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I want to thank my colleague from the great riding of Sault Ste. Marie for that question. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government prioritized revamping the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. programs to help increase economic development and promote job creation in the north. I've seen just how beneficial these programs have been for the workers and business owners in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and it is even more encouraging to see the types of investments that the NOHFC is leveraging. We continue to take every opportunity to engage with northern municipal leaders, Indigenous partners, non-profits and businesses to seek feedback on how we can modernize our NOHFC programs and better respond to the unique needs of the north.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. now has a renewed and refocused set of programs that will help contribute to build strong, resilient communities and create an environment where businesses can thrive, grow and create good jobs. I look forward to what the NOHFC and our government accomplishes in the future.

1100

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you so much to the parliamentary assistant and to the great representative of the people of Thunder Bay–Atikokan for that response. It is encouraging that our government is supporting common-sense measures that are going to continue to build prosperity across northern Ontario.

We know that the foundation of Ontario's strength is in our people, and we also know that the north is not immune to the labour shortages that are being felt across this entire province. In order to meet workforce demands, our government must remove barriers to job participation, particularly in the north, so that young people can access the on-the-job opportunities that exist within their communities. The skills, the knowledge and the expertise that they can acquire will go a long way in helping young people into solid careers and economic independence.

Speaker, can the government please elaborate about how our investments in the north are creating further opportunities for future generations?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thanks to the multiple streams available under the revamped NOHFC, we are creating new career pathways for people in the north.

This is the time of year when university students start looking for summer jobs. Many hope that there will be opportunities for them back in their hometowns, and we are investing in internship opportunities to help people stay connected locally. These internships have high success rates of job retention in the future and help people create new connections and opportunities locally.

Since the beginning of the new year, we announced nearly \$1.5 million of investments in internships in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Thanks to the NOHFC, the film industry in Thunder Bay is seeing the creation of four internship programs: Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre to hire four research assistant interns and a human resources intern; Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute to hire three research assistant interns; Atikokan General Hospital to hire a rehabilitation aide; and the Museum of Atikokan to hire a curatorial and archivist assistant intern—

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

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the Minister of Health. In the entire area from the Manitoba border to White River all the way up to Hudson's Bay, anyone needing dialysis treatment must move to Thunder Bay, because we have the only hospital that currently has dialysis capacity. After nine months of living in Thunder Bay to receive treatment, Carol Davis has already spent \$17,000 in expenses. It's not only incredibly costly; it is also cruel that people who are sick have to move away from their homes, friends and families.

Minister, when will you be adding capacity to the three hospitals that already have dialysis units, and when will you be opening more dialysis units throughout the region?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, there's no doubt that life-saving dialysis treatment is something we want to be able to expand and ensure that people can get as close to home as possible. In fact, in the north, Ontario Health has identified capital initiatives to expand dialysis stations in Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Dryden Regional Health Centre, Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora and WAHA to improve dialysis in the province of Ontario. We know that people need these life-saving interventions as close to home as possible, and that is exactly what we're doing with Ontario Health.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The Northern Health Travel Grant does not come close to covering the costs of patients forced to move to Thunder Bay for treatments. Patients like Carol need to be reimbursed by Ontario Health for their extraordinary expenses, and they also need strong networks of support to recover, not isolation. So I'm glad to hear that these projects are happening, but will the minister tell us today—so CBC asked the health minister a month ago for comment. There has been no response. What I would like to know is exactly when those expansions will be taking place so that patients and their families can get treatment when and where they need it.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, because of the extraordinary efforts that we are doing with Infrastructure Ontario, we, of course, have 50-plus hospital expansions or new builds happening in the province of Ontario, including in WAHA in northern Ontario. Those expansions ensure that additional services can be provided in community, and I hope that the member opposite thinks seriously about that when she gets the opportunity to vote on the expansions that are included in our health budget.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Rick Byers: My question is for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Whether you're a business owner looking to grow your operations or an individual trying to access government programs and services, the last thing anyone needs is to navigate a complex web of burdensome processes and never-ending paperwork. Needless red tape makes life more difficult for all of us. Fixing outdated, complicated processes will save time and money for all Ontarians. That's why our government has focused on finding meaningful solutions to make life easier for people and businesses across many sectors.

But there are always more opportunities to make further improvements. Can the minister please explain how the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act will help Ontarians?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for that important question and for his continued work on helping us reduce red tape right across this province.

No matter which small business or industry association I meet with, the first thing they say to me when we sit down is, “We wish every jurisdiction had a ministry dedicated to reducing red tape.” This is because the

previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, spent decades creating red tape, killing businesses and driving jobs out of our province.

The measures in the spring 2023 red tape reduction package, if passed, will deliver real results for people and businesses right across our province, measures like helping to connect every community across our province to high-speed Internet by 2025.

After 15 years of red tape and excuses under the previous Liberal government, our government is cutting through it all and getting it done.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to the minister for that excellent response. I know my constituents and the people across our province are very excited about the work our government is doing to pave the way for better services, for example, expanding broadband infrastructure across Ontario. It is evident that the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, introduced by this minister, will add to our strong track record of improving access to government services and making life easier for businesses to invest and grow in our province.

But our government must always be focused on doing more to deliver on our commitment to making government services more convenient for the people. Can the minister please elaborate on how our government's red tape reduction packages are making life easier for Ontarians?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague for that important question once again.

In the fall 2022 report we reported \$576 million in annual savings for businesses, not-for-profits and the broader public sector. I'm proud to stand here today and announce we have now reached nearly \$700 million in annual savings.

This, of course, has paved the way for massive investments in our great province in critical minerals, in tech start-ups and in the electric vehicle sector totalling over \$17 billion. There are over 660,000 new manufacturing jobs since we took office in 2018. Our latest introduction of the red tape reduction package will help us do even more.

I would encourage all the members on the opposite side, NDP and Liberals, to please get outside, support initiatives that we are introducing, so we can continue to make our province competitive.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: AMO, representing 444 municipalities across Ontario, has calculated there is a \$5-billion infrastructure revenue shortfall resulting from Bill 23. We've asked the minister repeatedly if he'll keep his promise to “make municipalities whole” so that these municipalities do not have to raise taxes or cut services. Will the minister commit today to restore the \$5 billion in lost revenue that AMO has identified and amend the budget accordingly? Yes or no?

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

1110

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I remind the honourable gentleman that the initiatives that have been brought in by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing have resulted in 28 of 29 municipalities coming on board, because they understand how important it is that we continue to build homes across the province of Ontario. Now, in order to do that, it has meant that we've needed to utilize some of our natural heritage in order to do that, while protecting even more of it.

What does that mean for a community like Stouffville? Let's talk about Stouffville. What this means in a community like Stouffville is that new homes will be built in Stouffville, in a community that has two new GO train stations, with a vibrant downtown that is looking for people to work in all of the small businesses that are thriving because of the policies that we have made; a community that has new school; a community that has state-of-the-art community centres; a community where, if you are a senior, you have to leave our community to go live somewhere else because there is nowhere for you to live. That's what we are in part solving in a community like Stouffville, and that's—

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

The supplementary question: the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

It is clear that this housing plan is not working. And just like in communities all across Ontario, housing is critical in my city of Hamilton. But it can't exist without infrastructure, and right now, Hamilton is facing an infrastructure deficit of \$3.5 billion. The cuts to municipalities in your Bill 23 have left Hamilton with the difficult choice of raising taxes or cutting services that people rely on, services like waste collection and road repairs.

So my question, on behalf of all of the taxpayers in this province and all these municipalities: Will the minister commit to making Hamilton whole for this lost revenue?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the NDP for asking that question. If they did their numbers, they would realize that we have \$190 billion of infrastructure going in across the province, building new schools, building new hospitals, building highways and bridges and roads right across this province. It's unprecedented—the most money ever spent in infrastructure in the history not just of Ontario, in the history of Canada. No matter if we're doing the largest transit project in North America, making sure that we build a subway to get people out of the cars, we're going to continue supporting the municipalities, all 44 municipalities.

And I've just got to talk about the housing. We got Stats Canada figures: 445,000 people arrived in Ontario. Where are we going to house them? We're going to make sure we

build the homes. We're going to make sure that we build the 1.5 million homes and have affordable housing, attainable housing and non-profit housing for the community.

HEALTH CARE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

We know that there is a troubling shortage of doctors in Ontario, including in my riding of Brampton West and in the communities across Peel region. Unfortunately, critical investments into the health care needs of our province were sadly not a priority for the previous Liberal government. Despite repeated warnings from the medical profession about physician shortages, the Liberals ignored the situation and even cut medical residency positions in Ontario. That is why it is critical that our government prioritize investments that will support our health care system and follow through on the commitment to attract and retain new doctors.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is addressing the doctor shortage in Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Brampton West for raising this important issue and for your advocacy on the new TMU medical school.

I am proud to say that, in 2022, we added 160 undergraduate spaces and 295 postgrad spaces over the next five years to train doctors, which is more than Ontario has seen in over a decade. In budget 2023, we were able to build on our government's unprecedented medical seat expansion by adding an additional 100 undergraduate and 154 postgraduate seats. That is 709 new medical seats announced in just one year.

Unlike the previous Liberal government and the official opposition, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford and the Minister of Health, have rolled up our sleeves and got it done. We didn't just talk about needing more doctors; we are ensuring that we will have more doctors. Our government is building Ontario's health care system to be stronger, more resilient and better than before.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the minister for the response. It is welcome news that our government is expanding enrolment in medical schools. This is a positive step towards improving access for patients who need medical care.

However, the reality is that the shortage of doctors affects regions and communities across Ontario differently, depending on their needs and circumstances. For example, with the rapidly growing population in my riding of Brampton West and across Peel region, there is an increased demand for family doctors. Our government must recognize the unique needs across our province and implement realistic solutions. Can the minister please elaborate on how our government is investing in medical

schools to meet the needs of communities throughout Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for their interest in the well-being of health care in regions across the province.

We have taken a pragmatic approach to ensure that every medical seat expansion increases medical seats in all regions of Ontario. By training more students in key communities, we will keep up with providing quality health care to the growing population and improving distribution and retention of physicians across the province.

To the member from Brampton, I share your excitement about the new Toronto Metropolitan University medical school in Brampton, and I cannot wait for the first cohort to be welcomed. Speaker, it's worth repeating that Brampton isn't the only medical school announced by this government. Because of the work done by Premier Ford, we were able to transform the northern Ontario medical school to a stand-alone institution and create the Scarborough Academy of Medicine under the University of Toronto.

We aren't just training doctors for humans. We're also training more vets, thanks to the collaboration between Guelph and Lakehead University.

Speaker, our government continues to make record investments to build up our health care infrastructure. We're ensuring that we have the trained professionals needed to care for all Ontarians, including the furry and feathered ones.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This week, children from the legacy autism program are beginning the transition to our schools with no plan from the government, no communication with school boards and no funding to schools to support them.

Michele MacAdam, who is here with us today, is one of thousands of parents across the province who are concerned by this government's failure to put in place a plan. Michele's daughters are 10 and 12. They are not toilet-trained. They are non-verbal, so this transition can't even be explained to them, and their safety will be at risk without support. They are flight risks. They need to be watched at all times to make sure they don't put things in their mouth and choke. They need supports in school to stay safe and thrive, and this government is giving them nothing. Why is the Premier setting these kids up to fail?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: For children with special education needs, we believe so strongly that they need support to succeed in our school system, given the exceptional challenges they face. This school year, and every year, we've increased funding for special education overall by \$92 million. That is highest level of investment in the history of Ontario. It's at \$3.25 billion today, and we recognize there's more to do.

Specifically for children with autism, we doubled the behaviour expertise amount from \$15 million to \$30 million; \$25 million more for staffing. Today, when compared to the former Liberals, there are 3,200 additional EAs hired and working with those very children who need support. We have fully subsidized professional development AOs for educators to lift their standards for better communications with those children, and as well, we've expanded the After School Skills Development Program to every school board in Toronto. We know there's more to do, and I look forward to working with members opposite to improve the lives of those kids.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary: the member for Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: The government boasts about increasing funding for education to the highest level ever, but they don't take into account inflation. There's an inflationary cut of \$40 million to school boards across the province. Toronto Catholic schools are facing at least a \$35-million shortfall. That's going to cause at least 120 staff cuts, and it may impact Amy Moledzki, who's one of the parents in the House today. Her daughter has autism. Her daughter is non-verbal, is a flight risk and needs assistance with toileting. She's in a special education class in a Toronto Catholic school. She's worried that the cuts, because of the funding shortfall that your government is handing to TCDSB and other boards across this province—she's afraid that they may lose some of the staff who support her daughter and that she won't get the supports she needs to stay in school.

Why won't the government put the safety of children first and provide adequate funding for special education?

1120

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, even with a flat enrolment in the province of Ontario, we've increased base funding when compared to the former Liberals by 27%. That is a significant step forward for those kids.

To the member opposite: We accept there's more to do. It's why in this budget, in every budget, we've increased special education funding. We accept that there's more to do. It's why we invested an additional \$92 million this year alone. It's why we hired 3,200 additional EAs. It's why we hired 7,000 more education workers.

But I think the fundamental question parents are also asking is, why are the members opposite opposed to the very measures that improve the lives of these kids? You have a track record of systematically opposing investments that help those children, and I would hope that in the budget you will vote for measures that incrementally improve the lives of every child, most especially kids with special education needs in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

The next question.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Individuals, families, farms and businesses all

across our province struggle to pay their electricity bills. However, our government respects the people of Ontario, and our focus is on keeping costs down. Families, workers and businesses are looking to our government to help them get through these challenging times, particularly reducing their energy costs and helping them to make life more affordable.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is helping hard-working Ontario families save money on their energy bills?

Hon. Todd Smith: I want to thank the member from Whitby for that great question this morning. We have cleaned up the Liberal hydro mess, but we're still doing more under the leadership of Premier Ford.

I'm pleased to inform the House this morning that as of today, we're raising the income eligibility threshold for Ontario's Energy Affordability Program by almost \$12,000 for a family of four, \$8,000 per couple. That's going to mean thousands of additional families in Ontario can receive free home efficiency upgrades like insulation, like smart thermostats, energy-efficient refrigerators and air conditioners. These free upgrades can help eligible families save up to \$750 a year on their energy bills, while also conserving energy and maintaining overall reliability of Ontario's electricity grid.

The Energy Affordability Program has already provided free upgrades to about 47,000 families across Ontario, and with today's announcement we're going to help a whole lot more.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for that response. For many individuals and families, it's welcome news that our government is taking action to make energy more affordable, especially for those who need it most. The Energy Affordability Program is just one of many supports available through the Ministry of Energy.

Our government must continue to build on what has already been accomplished to bring down costs and provide help to Ontarians after the Liberals squandered our province's clean-energy advantage for many years. Can the minister please elaborate on what programs are available for those who need help the most?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Whitby. Speaker, on top of this change to the Energy Affordability Program today, we're providing support to families when they need it through programs like the Ontario Electricity Support Program, the OESP. This program provides a credit of up to \$75 per month for low-income households. Additionally, the LEAP program, the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, which provides up to \$600 a year in emergency assistance for families facing disconnection, and other even more targeted supports like the First Nations Delivery Credit program for on-reserve customers, are important programs.

At the same time, we're saving the average residential family \$168 per year in the Ontario Electricity Rebate—lots of programs, Mr. Speaker. While families had to choose between heating and eating when the Liberal government was in charge in Ontario, we have stabilized

rates. We stabilized our electricity system, and we're providing targeted supports to families that really need the help.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, media in New Brunswick reported that OPG was in negotiations with New Brunswick Power to potentially buy the ailing Point Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station. We've gone through this kind of acquisition effort before when the six-million-dollar man ran Hydro One. We need to focus on Ontario and its needs, not on problem plants in other provinces.

Why is OPG focused on New Brunswick when we need it to focus on providing affordable and sustainable power in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: When the six-million-dollar man was in the news here in Ontario, the Liberal government was in charge. There's a brand-new team in charge right now, Mr. Speaker. And while we're waiting to see the details on any kind of potential co-operation between NB Power and Ontario Power Generation, what I will assure the people of Ontario this morning is that any deal will be in the best interests of Ontario ratepayers. You can take that to the bank.

The folks at OPG are world leaders when it comes to providing clean, reliable, affordable nuclear power to our province, from the large-scale Candu reactors that we have in Ontario to, now, the development of the new small modular reactor that's going to be developed at Darlington. Our government has continued to watch what's happening down at Point Lepreau with OPG and we will inform the House all the way along. But again, I just want to confirm to the member opposite, we're not going to sign bad deals like these guys that you supported did. We're going to—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It appears to me, Speaker, that the government didn't learn from the \$6-million man and the Liberal mistakes. So far, no details have been released about these negotiations, and New Brunswick Power says that all options are on the table, including the purchase of a plant that is losing money. The Point Lepreau plant has performed badly since being refurbished about a decade ago. Last year, its failures added over \$300 million to New Brunswick Power's \$5-billion debt.

Why should Ontario ratepayers take on a project that could stick them with huge debts?

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, again, we're going to wait and see what happens between talks between OPG and NB Power. But again, what I'm going to assure the member opposite is, unlike what he supported when they were signing contracts for 80 cents a kilowatt hour for power that was being provided by our nuclear fleet at seven, eight cents a kilowatt hour—we won't be going back to those days, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, we signed a massive, massive deal in Port Hope—the member's home riding—at Cameco, a \$2.8-billion deal to extend the Candu fuel contract with Bruce Power, one of the largest nuclear facilities in the entire world right here in Ontario, a facility that has been providing clean, reliable, affordable nuclear power. I have to ask the member opposite, why would he oppose a technology that is providing clean, reliable electricity—60% of Ontario's power every day? Why do the NDP not support our nuclear fleet?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I thank you for the opportunity to present my question on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood. This will likely be one of my last questions in this chamber. After four elections and 10 years serving as the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, I will be resigning my seat in the coming weeks in order to seek a different forum to serve the people of Scarborough and everyone in Toronto.

So, Speaker, my final question in this House is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, I have been a champion for the Scarborough subway. Of course, you have been a champion for the Scarborough subway too, as well as your late brother Rob when he was mayor. As you know, tunnelling for the Scarborough subway began in January, and it is slated to open in 2030.

Premier, I know that we are in agreement that the people of Scarborough and everyone in Toronto deserve the best public transportation possible when they travel for work, school or pleasure. Knowing that, how can we provide, from the province, the best support to the TTC?
1130

Hon. Doug Ford: I'm going to take the high road here. I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for serving and running—

Applause.

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

Restart the clock.

Hon. Doug Ford: But the facts are that the Scarborough–Guildwood MPP did absolutely nothing when Rob, my brother, was mayor and trying to get the subway. They were 15 years in power. They had no interest in supporting the people of Scarborough. They did absolutely nothing. It took this government to actually get the Scarborough line going, to make sure we get Yonge extension going, the Eglinton West line and the Ontario Line. They had 15 years, they did absolutely nothing to build transit in the province. Absolutely nothing.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary question?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: You know, Speaker, one of my mentors says, "Always go higher." So back to the Premier.

Premier, it is often the case that we disagree in the House, and in fact it's actually part of the job here for all of us. But what we all agree on is that we must always do

our part to provide the best service possible to the people that we represent. Whether it is building the subway to Scarborough—whoever started it, whoever's finishing it—or improving hospitals and health care for the people in Scarborough, things that I have championed since I was elected, and our previous government did the same. However we get there, we agree that people who send us to these chairs, they want us to serve at our best.

Premier, with mutual respect and building consensus and working together, the city government, the provincial government and the federal government all want the same thing: a stronger city, province and country. My question is what can we all do together to ensure that we are all working together for a better future for the people of this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood once again. The reason we're building the largest subway expansion in North America—we were the first government to work with the municipality. I want to thank former mayor John Tory for working with us—the province and the federal government. Everyone pitched in.

Just a message to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood: You did not start it, you did not finish it; we started it and we're finishing the line.

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

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Nolan Quinn: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Identifying, preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities helps to create an Ontario that is accessible and inclusive for everyone. While Ontario has a robust framework to advance accessibility, there is still much more work to be done.

We look to reviews previously undertaken by leading advocates regarding Ontario's progress in implementing measures to make Ontario more accessible. Review findings reveal that there are areas that need urgent action in order for our province to be a leader in accessibility and inclusion. Our government should ensure that programs and policies reflect the values of respect and inclusion as we move forward.

Can the minister please explain how our government will continue to advance accessibility across our province?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the important question. Making Ontario accessible is an ongoing journey. Thanks to the leadership of the Minister of Finance, we are proposing over \$6 million over the next three years to support students with disabilities. This marvellous investment will provide for skills development and education opportunities.

Together with the Ministry of Labour, our government is also promoting employment programs for people with disabilities. We are working for you to build a better Ontario together.

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

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thanks to the great minister for that response. In Ontario, everyone has the right to equal opportunity. That is why our government must continue to support accessibility improvements in all areas of service delivery.

Municipalities across our province must be committed to providing services and facilities that are accessible to all persons with disabilities. Each community is best positioned to identify specific programs that will benefit their residents.

Local governments are making commendable efforts to meet the needs of their communities to continue to improve accessibility and to comply with the requirements under the legislation.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how our government is supporting municipalities to deliver on their accessibility goals?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for another good question. Project by project, community by community, we are advancing accessibility. A great example of this is the Abilities Centre in Whitby. We are investing an additional \$3.5 million over three years to support the Abilities Centre to provide skills development and employment for people with disabilities. We are making sure that people with disabilities have the right programs and services to find meaningful jobs and training. This can only be possible under the leadership of this Premier.

DEFERRED VOTES

BAIL REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address regarding bail reform.

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

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

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

On April 3, 2023, Mr. Kerzner moved government order 35.

On April 3, 2023, MPP Wong-Tam moved an amendment to the motion.

On April 3, 2023, Mr. Calandra moved an amendment to the amendment to the motion.

On April 4, 2023, Ms. Skelly moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Ms. Skelly's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak
Andrew, Jill

Gill, Parm
Glover, Chris

Quinn, Nolan
Rakocevic, Tom

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Barnes, Patrice	Harden, Joel	Romano, Ross
Begum, Doly	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Blais, Stephen	Hunter, Mitzie	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Jama, Sarah	Saunderson, Brian
Bourgouin, Guy	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Bowman, Stephanie	Jones, Trevor	Shamji, Adil
Burch, Jeff	Jordan, John	Shaw, Sandy
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Skelly, Donna
Calandra, Paul	Karpoche, Bhutla	Smith, David
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Graydon
Cho, Stan	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Laura
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Todd
Collard, Lucille	Lumsden, Neil	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Crawford, Stephen	MacLeod, Lisa	Stiles, Marit
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Jill	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fife, Catherine	Mulroney, Caroline	Vanthof, John
Ford, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vaugeois, Lise
Ford, Michael D.	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
French, Jennifer K.	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Piccini, David	
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to Ms. Skelly's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 88; the nays are 0.

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

With the passage of that motion, we now move to the vote on the main motion. Mr. Kerzner has moved government order 35, as follows:

That an address be presented to the Speakers of the federal Parliament in the following words:

"This House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities."

And that the said address be engrossed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour the motion will please "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On April 3, 2023, Mr. Kerzner has moved government order number 35, as follows:

That an address be presented to the Speakers of the federal Parliament in the following words:

"This House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities."

And that the said address be engrossed.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Pierre, Natalie
Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Quinn, Nolan
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rakocevic, Tom
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Barnes, Patrice	Harden, Joel	Riddell, Brian
Begum, Doly	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Blais, Stephen	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Hunter, Mitzie	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bourgouin, Guy	Jama, Sarah	Saunderson, Brian
Bowman, Stephanie	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Burch, Jeff	Jones, Trevor	Shamji, Adil
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Shaw, Sandy
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Karpoche, Bhutla	Smith, David
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Laura
Collard, Lucille	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Cuzzetto, Rudy	MacLeod, Lisa	Stiles, Marit
Dowie, Andrew	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Dunlop, Jill	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Vanthof, John
Ford, Michael D.	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gélinas, France	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And all those opposed to Mr. Kerzner's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 89; the nays are 0.

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

Motion agreed to.

ENHANCING PUBLIC TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DE L'ACCESSIBILITÉ DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

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

Bill 82, An Act respecting accessible public transit /
Projet de loi 82, Loi concernant des transports en commun
accessibles.

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

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On April 5, 2021,
Ms. Begum moved second reading Bill 82, An Act re-
specting accessible public transit.

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

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil
Begum, Doly	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hunter, Mitzie	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Jama, Sarah	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Vanthof, John
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Pierre, Natalie
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Byers, Rick	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Graydon
Dunlop, Jill	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Fedeli, Victor	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Todd
Ford, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Surma, Kinga
Ford, Michael D.	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Piccini, David	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The
ayes are 27; the nays are 62.

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

Second reading negated.

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

The House recessed from 1154 until 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

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

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

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

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

Report adopted.

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

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Mr. Riddell replaces Ms. Ghamari; and

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Ghamari replaces Mr. Riddell and Ms. Dixon replaces Mr. Ke.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Mr. Riddell replaces Ms. Ghamari; and

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Ghamari replaces Mr. Riddell and Ms. Dixon replaces Mr. Ke.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I want to thank Sally Palmer for sending me these petitions, which read:

“To Raise Social Assistance Rates

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I couldn’t agree more. I will affix my signature to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Jill Andrew: This represents several petitions signed by schools in Toronto—St. Paul’s in ward 8, schools including Deer Park—I saw Oriole Park, I saw Glenview—a lot of them. It is titled: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto to Stop the Cuts and Invest in the Schools our Students Deserve.

“Whereas the Ford government cut funding to our schools by \$800 per student during the pandemic period, and plans to cut an additional \$6 billion to our schools over the next six years;

“Whereas these massive cuts have resulted in larger class sizes, reduced special education and mental health supports and resources for our students, and neglected and unsafe buildings;

“Whereas the Financial Accountability Office reported a \$2.1-billion surplus in 2021-22, and surpluses growing to \$8.5 billion in 2027-28, demonstrating there is more than enough money to fund a robust public education system;

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

“—immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;

“—fix the inadequate education funding formula;

“—provide schools the funding to ensure the supports necessary to address the impacts of the pandemic on our students;

“—make the needed investments to provide smaller class sizes, increased levels of staffing to support our students’ special education, mental health, English language learner and wraparound supports needs, and safe and healthy buildings and classrooms.”

Interjections.

MPP Jill Andrew: I could not support this more, even though I was being heckled by the government. It’s an excellent petition in support of our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Heckling is out of order, even during petitions. But at the same time I would ask members not to make political commentary with respect to the presentation of the petition.

AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je remercie Martine Albert de Kapuskasing pour cette pétition, intitulée « Protégeons la ceinture de verdure et abrogeons les projets de loi 23 et 39.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que les projets de loi 23 et 39 sont les plus récentes tentatives du gouvernement Ford de retirer des terres protégées de la ceinture de verdure, permettant ainsi aux promoteurs de détruire et d’asphalter plus de 7 000 acres de terres agricoles;

« Alors que l'espace vert et les terres agricoles sont ce sur quoi nous comptons pour produire nos aliments, soutenir les habitats naturels et prévenir les inondations;

« Alors que les mesures répétées de Ford pour paver les terres agricoles et détruire ou bulldozer des zones humides n'ont jamais été une question de créer plus de logements mais bien plutôt d'enrichir les riches;

« Alors que le groupe de travail sur l'abordabilité du logement du gouvernement a découvert qu'il existe de nombreux endroits pour construire des maisons sans détruire la ceinture de verdure;

« Alors que le gouvernement retire aux autorités chargées de la conservation le pouvoir de protéger l'environnement et d'atténuer des effets des futures catastrophes climatiques;

« Par conséquent, nous, les soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'abroger immédiatement les projets de loi 23 et 39, d'arrêter tous les plans visant à retirer davantage les terres protégées de la ceinture de verdure et de protéger les terres agricoles existantes dans la province en adoptant la Loi sur la protection des terres agricoles du NPD. »

Ça me fait plaisir de signer cette pétition, et je vais la donner à Morgan pour qu'elle l'emmène à la table des greffiers.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled "Ontario Needs a Vulnerable Persons Alert" and it reads:

"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" persons "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 to support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023."

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

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm reading this petition on behalf of the MPP for Hamilton Mountain, MPP Taylor. It's entitled "Vulnerable Persons Alert.

1310

"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 wholly support this petition and will add my name to those of the Hamiltonians that signed this and give it to Jonas to take to the table. Thank you, page Jonas.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, this petition is entitled, "Reducing Red Tape in Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government introduced the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, which, if passed, would pave the way for better services, help Ontario businesses grow and save people time; and

"Whereas red tape is a key part of building a stronger economy and improving services for Ontarians, which is why our government is continuing to bring forward burden reduction packages that are saving businesses nearly \$700 million each year in compliance costs; and

"Whereas Ontario's spring 2023 red tape reduction package includes 42 new initiatives that, when fully implemented, are estimated to save businesses, not-for-profits and the broader public sector \$119 million in net annual regulatory compliance costs; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction continues its work to develop further packages, people and businesses are encouraged the red tape portal at ontario.ca/redtape;

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

"To immediately pass Bill 91, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023."

I proudly affix my signature and will give it to page Keya.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition was submitted by the Jean Lumb Public School in Spadina–Fort York.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto to Stop the Cuts and Invest in the Schools our Students Deserve.

“Whereas the Ford government cut funding to our schools by \$800 per student during the pandemic period, and plans to cut an additional \$6 billion to our schools over the next six years;

“Whereas these massive cuts have resulted in larger class sizes, reduced special education and mental health supports and resources for our students, and neglected and unsafe buildings;

“Whereas the Financial Accountability Office reported a \$2.1-billion surplus in 2021-22, and surpluses growing to \$8.5 billion in 2027-28, demonstrating there is more than enough money to fund a robust public education system;

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

“—immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;

“—fix the inadequate education funding formula;

“—provide schools the funding to ensure the supports necessary to address the impacts of the pandemic on our students;

“—make the needed investments to provide smaller class sizes, increased levels of staffing to support our students’ special education, mental health, English language learner and wraparound supports needs, and safe and healthy buildings and classrooms.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and pass it to page Ryan to take to the table.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: This petition pertains to growing the health care workforce for years to come.

“Whereas to address the current staffing shortages in the health care sector, the Ontario government has proposed an investment of \$200 million in 2023-24 to address immediate staffing shortages; and

“Whereas to grow the workforce for years to come, this includes:

“—offering up to 6,000 health care students training opportunities to work in hospitals providing care and gaining practical experience as they continue their education through the Enhanced Extern Program. This program has offered these opportunities to over 5,000 health care students; and

“—supporting up to 3,150 internationally educated nurses to become accredited nurses in Ontario through the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program; and

“Whereas more than 2,000 internationally educated nurses have enrolled in this program and over 1,300 of them are already fully registered and practising in Ontario; and

“Whereas Ontario is continuing to hire more health care workers to ensure everyone can see a trained professional when they need to; and

“Whereas key new investments in 2023-24 to build the health care workforce include:

“—\$22 million to hire up to 200 hospital preceptors to provide mentorship;

“—\$15 million to keep 100 mid-to-late career nurses in the workforce; and

“—\$4.3 million to help at least 50 internationally trained physicians get licensed in Ontario;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the passage of the Ontario budget bill, Bill 85, Building a Stronger Ontario.”

Speaker, I’ll put my name to this petition and provide it to Felicity.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Invest in Ontario’s Arts and Culture Sector.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 at Ontario’s 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;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sustain the Ontario Arts Council budget of \$65 million in the 2023 provincial budget 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.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES POUR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations / *Projet de loi 91, Loi visant à édicter deux lois, à modifier diverses lois et à abroger divers règlements.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and debate legislation put forward by the government, today Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations. That's—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, they're not trying to sell this on the title. But if you look on the short form—let's look up the short form here. What is it? I'll have to get my glasses: the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023.

I have to start by saying, regretfully I won't be sharing my time with anyone because the person I had lined up to share the time with for this hour lead is unfortunately under the weather. I will make him pay for it later.

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: But having said that, it's our job as the official opposition to critique government legislation. And let's make no mistake; there are some pieces of government legislation which we vehemently oppose: Bill 124, Bill 23, the bill that was the “man from black” bill, the “notwithstanding” clause that suddenly disappeared after a week. There are pieces of legislation that we believe this government has put forward that hurt Ontarians.

1320

But we need to take every piece of legislation and look at it on its merits and on its faults, if it has faults. And when the government continually says, “Well, you voted against this, and you voted against”—I'd just like to make it clear to those people listening and watching that if and when we vote against a budget because we disagree with the direction that the government is taking on certain huge issues, there might be a few things in that budget which are not just acceptable, which are good, but we take the overall bill and we look at the pros and cons of the bill, and that's how we make our decision. And that's how we will make our decision on Bill 91 as well.

Having said that, Bill 91 is a substantial bill. And I'm not complaining that it's a big bill, but it was first introduced in the House and the first time the official opposition saw any of it was April 3. The first time I was able to get a paper copy—because there's a lot in this bill about changing to electronic, and I'm not opposed to that. We're not opposed to that. But some of us are still paper types who actually like to make notes. Believe it or not, I do make the occasional note. But that paper copy wasn't available until this morning, and when I got it, it was hot off the press. It was still hot. I'm not kidding.

So please don't fault us for saying it's hard to make a credible critique of important legislation when you've actually only had access for—in my case, I've only had access to this since 9 o'clock this morning. So the government is, whether by choice or by whatever the reason, putting a serious disadvantage to critique of their legislation. So it's going to be very important with this

piece of legislation that we have the time so that the critics—because I think there are 30 schedules in here, 30 different acts covering many different critic portfolios—that we listen to their presentations because they—mine is going to be very, very broad and basic, even more basic than usual because we simply haven't had the time.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Uncle Ernie says we have enough time.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm being heckled, Speaker, by Uncle Ernie and his companion, and I'm okay with that.

But before I start talking about the bill, I'm going to start talking about red tape: what red tape is, what it isn't and how we react to it. No one in Ontario wants what we all think of as red tape. It's unnecessary regulation. No one wants that, regardless of your political stripe. But we do need safe, workable legislation that keeps people safe. That's what our society is built on. And there's a balance to that.

The first time I really had to think about that as an MPP—I can't even remember what year it was, but I do remember it was really cold. It was like a northern Ontario morning, 30 or 35 below, when the tires freeze and the first 10 kilometres you're going bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce—one of those mornings. I was scheduled to speak at Professional Engineers Ontario, I believe their regional meeting in North Bay, myself and the member from Nipissing. He was at that time the finance minister. We both spoke there. He spoke first—he's very eloquent, Speaker—and I spoke second. How do I describe this? When you follow someone, especially like the Minister of Finance, you have to do something to catch people's attention. That's part of our job. As people who represent the public, we have to find ways to get the public's attention so they'll hear us.

I can remember parts of my speech and I'm going to repeat part of it because it has something to do with this bill. Mr. Fedeli finished and it was my turn. Remember, it was 30 or 35 below that morning. I got up and I said, “I'm a farmer by trade. There are three types of people that farmers naturally dislike: (1) politicians; (2) lawyers”—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Hey.

Mr. John Vanthof: —let me finish—“and (3) engineers.” The member from Nipissing said, “John, do you know where you are?” I said, “Yes, I do. Let me finish.”

I said the reason that farmers don't like politicians is because when they watch them on TV all they hear them do is criticize each other. But now that I am a politician, I realize that, although we have different political stripes, we often work together and we get along together. We have to. But it's not just that we have to; we want to. I pointed to the member from Nipissing and I said it's “because we work together on issues that benefit our people.”

The politicians were covered. Lawyers: Nobody likes lawyers—I have to back up because my daughter is a lawyer now—but everybody laughed at that.

I said, “Why farmers don't like engineers is, on a morning like this, when it's 35 below and I push a button on something that's supposed to work—that day it was a

silo loader, and because it sat cold the metal brakes got stressed and that silo loader, which was designed to operate for 10 years but I've been using it for 15, snaps and I'm stuck fixing it at 30 below. I blame the engineer." They laughed. I said, "But you play a crucial role." Because engineers design equipment—they design all kinds of things but they specifically design equipment—to be strong enough and usable enough but light enough and affordable enough to actually work for the period that it's designed for. It's critical.

Then I continued and I said, "We've just heard the Minister of Finance say that the goal of the government is to eliminate one quarter of all the regulations in Ontario." That's what he said.

There is red tape in Ontario and we agree that it needs to be limited, where possible. But if some of those regulations that are being eliminated by the government are starting to impact people's safety, it will be the job of engineers and all professionals to not only warn the government but to let the opposition know that some of these changes aren't right. I think that still holds true. Are there things that can be modernized, made better? Of course. The government is looking for ways and we look for ways, and where we can we work with the government to make that happen. Where we get a bit nervous is when we get big bills with no time ahead, because then you always have to look to see if somewhere hidden in here is something very egregious—that at some point, the government is going to say, "And you voted for this." So I'm hoping that's not in here. Quite frankly, we haven't been able to go through it all the way yet. We've had a whole day and a half. There's quite a bit of agriculture stuff in this bill, and when I contacted some of the agricultural organizations—some of the consultations for this were held four years ago—they didn't really know this was coming right now either, so they're in the same position.

1330

On the matter of regulations, how we end up with red tape—because despite what some people think—and I'm not from Toronto. I'm not from the city. I've lived my whole life on a little country road. I have yet to find the office building full of bureaucrats whose whole life is dedicated to making red tape. That's not how it works. How it works is, a regulation usually comes into being to fix a problem, and because it comes into being to fix that problem, sometimes that problem goes away, or sometimes that regulation impacts something else that it wasn't intended to do, and sometimes another patch is put on top of that patch, and sometimes you get three or four patches and it doesn't work anymore. That is how red tape develops. To have an initiative to remove that red tape—we're not opposed to that.

An example of how a regulation could be developed that eventually would cause red tape: When an issue develops that the government of the day has never had to deal with before and they are trying to deal with it—I'll give you an example. In my riding, right now, we have got unorganized territory. For the people who don't have

unorganized territory in their ridings or have never heard of unorganized territory, it's places where there is no municipal government; the province is actually the municipal government. Sometimes they have a type of council to maintain roads, but there's actually no municipal government; the government is the province. And there are huge swaths of that that are uninhabited. But in Timiskaming—Cochrane, specifically in Timiskaming, there is a lot of unorganized territory around towns and—we don't really have cities; we have one town that's called a city, but it's a town. People like to move to unorganized territories because the taxes are cheaper. If you're close enough to a municipality, the services are still close enough to access. There are many people who have lived in unorganized territory for a long time.

In unorganized territories, you need a permit from the public health unit for a septic system, and you should have a building permit to build, but there's no building inspector. So it is the tendency of people, when you don't have an inspector, often—not everyone. But often, things are done on unorganized territory that maybe shouldn't be done—because there's a reason you have building inspectors: to keep things safe.

So now there are unofficial subdivisions popping up in unorganized territory. One company specifically—it's called Boreal Forest Medieval Villages—is unofficially subdividing in unorganized territory. The people buying these lots are leasing or they're investing, but the fact is, they could be moving into these half-acre lots with no real municipal oversight.

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs' credit—I give credit where credit is due—he and his ministry have been looking at how to deal with this, how to keep people safe, how to keep development sustainable, but it's a tough issue to deal with. I can't speak for what he's doing—that's his job—but he's been doing what he can to come up with a way to deal with this. It might end up with regulation. It might—I can't say; I don't know, but it very well could end up with a regulation. And that regulation might impact someone else unknowingly. The government wouldn't be doing this on purpose; I know that. I disagree with this government vehemently on many issues, but I don't think they would do that—

Mr. Kevin Holland: No, I don't believe this.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan seems to be surprised that I would disagree with the government.

Mr. Kevin Holland: You're so agreeable.

Mr. John Vanthof: Again to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan: I'm a very agreeable person. The fact that I disagree with the government shows how terrible your policies are sometimes.

So if regulations are created to make sure that the people surrounding the Boreal Forest Medieval Villages developments, the people within those developments—that everything is done safely and sustainably—if those regulations are created, they might solve the problem. I don't know. But those regulations, once they're on the books, could impact future development, right? And the

government is aware of that. As parts of northern Ontario become more developed, perhaps those regulations will have to be changed once again. So those regulations could be seen, in the future, as red tape, but they're not red tape when they're created. They're trying to solve a problem or resolve a situation.

There are schedules in Bill 91 that certainly are not reducing red tape; they're actually strengthening regulations. They're actually creating red tape, but it's not red tape. In some cases, it's useful regulation. To make the line between red tape and regulation, it's really important that we understand on which side of that line it is. Like I told the engineers, it's easy when you're looking for ways to cut red tape—that sometimes good regulations that you don't really understand why they were created get thrown out with the bad.

Sometimes government simply makes a mistake or situations change. There is a schedule in here about broadband. The government introduced a couple of acts about broadband, and they've said many times—and the Minister of Infrastructure, I have a good relationship with her as well—that they're going to spend, I believe, \$4 billion and everyone's going to have usable broadband by 2025. I'm not sure that's going to happen because the money doesn't seem to be going out and the time is getting shorter. But they've also, in this act, changed some of the regulations in an act that was just proclaimed. Sometimes, believe it or not, although they don't like to admit it, even the government doesn't get it right the first or second time, and sometimes they don't get it right at all.

I need to make clear that it's not getting rid of regulation—cleaning up red tape is the goal we're all looking to do, but we have to make sure that the cleaning up of the red tape isn't taking out needed regulation, because once you take out needed regulation, at one point, someone is going to suffer. That's a line that we are all trying to find—this is a long-winded; I have an hour to talk; that's why I'm being so long-winded. That's why part of our job is to go through all these regulations—our critics and our researchers—to try and make sure that we catch what needs to be caught and to reach out to the stakeholders. I'm hopeful that the government has also reached out to all these stakeholders to make sure that their concerns are caught.

1340

Sometimes it gets a bit confusing. I listened very intently to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction this morning. This is a big bill. I'm reading through the schedules, and the minister this morning mentioned something about the Milk Act. I'm pretty partial to the Milk Act. I'm a retired dairy farmer, but I used to be on the board of Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I spent a fair bit of time thinking about the Milk Act. When he mentioned something about the Milk Act, I was leafing through the schedules; I couldn't find it.

So, somehow, the minister's speech—and I'm not criticizing the minister, not at all. I can't find the schedule that says, "the Milk Act." So which schedule is it? The Grains Act—but the Milk Act? I don't see it. If you can find the Milk Act for me, I'm happy—

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's important farming stuff.

Mr. John Vanthof: I 100% agree. Farming stuff is important. I couldn't see the change to the Milk Act.

But I just want to emphasize that with omnibus bills—omnibus sounds ominous, and sometimes they are—but basically this is a catch-all bill to changes that don't warrant their own change to legislation. I would say that the agricultural parts of this bill should have warranted their own legislation, because it might not be a change that impacts farmers every day, but it's a major change.

I'm not criticizing the change. When we talk to agriculture organizations, they are more concerned about what's coming after with the regulations. They're more concerned about that. But that change is big enough. When you're repealing three acts and replacing it with one, that's a fairly big change. That's just not tinkering around the edges. I'm going to talk about that in a minute.

As I was leafing through here, one schedule—schedule 15, I believe—the Highway Traffic Act is going to make it illegal to overtake a snowplow unless there is an open lane. I'm very in favour of this. I have met with the contractors in my area. I think we all have in northern Ontario. Let me make it clear: The official opposition has not agreed for a long time with the way the contracts were put out, but we have no qualms with the contractors who are doing the work. They bid on contracts that the government puts out. Don't fault them for that. They do the best they can with what they have.

But operating snow cleaning equipment, or any type of highway maintenance equipment, is an incredibly dangerous job. If you want to see how dangerous, you drive in my part of the world. I have seen people pass snowplows in ways that you would think, "What are you thinking? What are you thinking?" Tragically, it's not irregular for people who are driving snow-cleaning equipment to be seriously hurt or, even more tragically, to lose their lives, so anything that the government can do to make that job safer, we are in favour of. This is a small step. There's always more to do; it's a small step, but it is a step in the right direction.

Again, there are all kinds of things that I would like to see the government do to make our highways safer. As I said this morning—because I'm talking, I can't check my social media, but Highway 11 was closed again this morning. Was it weather-related? Definitely, but Highway 11 has been closed multiple, multiple times.

I'm not putting anyone at fault for making the decision to close the highway, but I don't think we can repeat this enough: When you're on Highway 11 in the winter and you pass that sign in North Bay, and the sign says the highway is closed, if you're somewhere there, you're on your own. We've said it enough times; the government knows that the highway is going to be closed on a regular basis. There are no detours there, either, so for big sections of the Trans-Canada, you're stuck there. And there's no official plan, if they're stuck there for a long time, on how to make sure these people are safe. There's nothing like that. That would be a worthy strategy. There are local

volunteer groups who want to do this, who are doing this on their own, with no real help from the government.

And there are first responders. Don't get me wrong: First responders do everything they can to help people. But this isn't a once-in-100-years emergency; this has happened, I believe—don't quote me, but the last time I spoke about this, it was 12 times, and just by my memory, Highway 11 has been closed at least twice since. Highway 11 is the Trans-Canada Highway.

Mr. Guy Bourgooin: For 48 hours.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. The member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay—Highway 11 was closed for 48 hours in Kapuskasing, the Trans-Canada Highway. We will keep bringing this up, and this isn't a partisan issue. Changing the Highway Traffic Act to make it a bit more safe for snowplows, for sanders and for anyone else who works on the highway: We are 100% in support of that—100%.

A big part of this bill is schedule 33, Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act. Now, that's not my critic portfolio, and I don't claim to have any knowledge of this, but when I hear this, when I read this, I'm sure our critics are going to look very, very closely at what changes are being made here, because they were given a reminder this morning when the government voted against a very simple bill to promote more access to public transit for people who have disabilities. It was very obvious. Again, that's something that we will be looking at.

The Science North Act, the Royal Ontario Museum Act, the St. Lawrence Parks Commission Act, the Substitute Decisions Act, the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, the Trustee Act: There are changes being made to each of these and many others.

1350

Again, change isn't bad, regardless of political stripe, as long as it's made for the right reasons. A lot of the changes here are being made for—because of COVID, our society changed a lot. We had to do a lot more remote meetings. There are a lot of changes in a lot of acts here to allow more remote work. We support that in principle. But as I was reading through—and I'm going to be upfront: I haven't read the whole bill. I've read the explanatory notes and I've read the agricultural part. I haven't read the whole bill.

But when I read that there are many changes being made because of COVID and because our society has changed because of COVID, it got me to thinking that there are other parts of our society that, to me, have radically changed because of COVID too, that have gotten markedly worse. They weren't good before but they are markedly worse. Homelessness has gotten worse. Affordability has gotten worse. Access to health care has gotten worse. Yet, with those issues the government seems to be going back to pre-COVID "Everything is fine, nothing to see here."

So we're going to have to make sure in this bill that this is not a case of this. Because it seems to be here, in this omnibus bill, that they are acknowledging that the world

has changed with COVID, but it seems in some other parts of their strategy—I don't know if that's the right word—that they don't want to admit that that has happened. Changes have been made for uninsured people. There are uninsured people under our OHIP plan. The government says they're going back to the way things were before COVID, but you know what? Things aren't the way they were before COVID.

I've got a half-hour and I'm going to concentrate, hopefully, on agriculture. Although the minister mentioned the Milk Act, I still haven't seen it, but I take people at their word that it's in there, and I'm going to talk about the Milk Act for a little while—just about milk.

When I was a dairy farmer what frustrated me most about dairy regulation, because nobody likes—let's make it clear: Very few people like regulation. Even committed NDP people don't really like regulation, no. And dairy is very regulated. What I got most frustrated at is that the dairy sector doesn't do a very good job—and if anybody ever clips this they might get angry at me—of actually telling people how those regulations work. Not on a quota system; I'm not talking about a quota system—there was a lot of bad PR about the quota system a little while ago and I could talk about that—but about safety.

When I was a dairy farmer the regulations changed and every dairy farm had to have a time/temperature recorder. I had it, and we all hated it, but in the end it's a great thing. But we never advertised it, so I'm going to advertise it my little way, the time/temperature recorder—and stores and processing plants have them too.

The temperature of the milk is monitored as soon as it comes in the bulk tank. The temperature of the wash water, when you wash your equipment, is monitored—everything. And if all those specs didn't meet the standard when the milk truck driver came to pick up your milk, there would be a light flashing, and he could use his reader and see exactly what went wrong. If one rinse cycle was a little bit too cool, okay, but if the milk had not—the milk is always supposed be at 2 or 3 degrees Celsius. If the milk had hit too hot—he wouldn't pick it up. It's incredible. It's stressful to keep that always running perfectly, but it was an example of really good regulation. It was a big step forward. We never really advertised that. That frustrated me. We went to all that extra work—not extra work; we did that already. There's no one in agriculture—I don't think it's just agriculture. Anyone who produces something, even people who produce legislation—the vast majority of people don't want to produce bad things. Specifically, farmers do not want to produce a bad product. It's in their DNA. They produce food. They want good food to leave their farms. So it wasn't that it was extra work, but it was another eye watching, and no one really likes that either.

I haven't been a dairy farmer for a decade, and since I've left, they have made many other changes. It's much more regulated now on the health of the animals. And if there's one thing that I think the dairy industry should do more of—and other industries, as well—they should tell people about the good things that they are doing. Sometimes it costs more money to do it right.

Let's make this clear: One of the things with road maintenance in the province—sometimes it costs more money to do it right, and sometimes it's worth that extra money.

Anyway, the part in schedule 30—it's the biggest schedule that has been changed in Bill 91. It's going to repeal the Farm Products Payments Act, the Grains Act and the Livestock and Livestock Products Act and replace those acts with the Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act. Basically—and I might get some of the details wrong here because I have, fortunately, been a farmer my whole life and have never had to deal with these acts, because the only time these ones really kick in is if something goes really wrong.

When you're a farmer and you grow grain—you grow wheat, barley, soybeans, corn. Some farmers have on-farm storage—not all. When you're doing your harvest in the fall, if you have an elevator that's handy and efficient, you can store your grain in a commercial elevator. You can get them to dry your grain, as well. But that grain is no longer in your possession. So you get a ticket that you have so many tons of corn, so many of such a quality, but you don't get your own corn back. All you've got is that ticket. So it's very important that the elevator is licensed and that it stays solvent, so that when you decide to sell that grain or when you need that grain back to feed your livestock—but more likely, to sell it—that grain is actually there. So the Grains Act is very important to make sure that where you're storing and who you're selling to is solvent, because all of a sudden you could do everything right and if the grain company isn't solvent, that ticket is worthless, and that's where the Grains Act kicks in.

1400

It's the same with livestock. Talking to the agriculture organizations, putting three into one, as long as it's done right, is not inherently bad, but livestock is the same thing. If you have a cow-calf operation—basically, before you see a steak, there's three types of farms that have beef. Cow-calf is the farmer that has the mothers that have the babies and the babies stay with the mother for six months, seven months, till they're 500 pounds, 600 pounds, maybe bigger if the farmer's really good, if he has really good cattle, and then they go to a background operation which brings them up a little bigger, makes their frames a bit bigger, and the last step is the feedlot and the feedlot has different types of feed to put the flesh, the meat on them.

But at each of those steps, the cattle change hands; transactions change hands. Cattle trailers—we call them “pots.” If you ever see a cattle trailer, there can be a lot of money in that pot, and if someone in the chain isn't solvent—again, you can do everything right, but if who you're selling to isn't solvent, you could lose your farm, and that's why these acts are very important.

The farmer pays into them. There are boards to administer them, to make sure that if there's a legitimate claim, there's actually action taken. They have the power that, if someone buys the grain or the cattle or whatever—because under the new act, I believe the minister has the power to designate more products to be protected—they have the powers to put a lien on the property of the person

who bought the cattle or bought the grain and didn't pay. This act has significant power—the replacement act does and so did the former ones—and they need it. They need this power. So it's very important that they're there.

It does happen. I was just reading—this case that I'm just going to talk about won't be covered by this act because it's not happening in this province, but there is a case right now in Saskatchewan where—so crop prices were really high a few months ago because of what's happening in Ukraine, and basically because of—I don't know how you put it—COVID, Ukraine and world grain markets are a bit of a roller coaster, like the stock market. I don't know how else to explain it. They peaked and they peaked, and farmers have to be very good marketers, and the smarter—not the smarter ones, but the ones who hit at the right time brought forward delivery contracts at the peak. So you can say, “Okay, I can forward-sell my grain to deliver a year from now at X,” and some people forward-sold their grain really high, really smart or really lucky. It's a combination of both.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. Amazing, eh, and I only have nine and a half fingers to count, too.

Interjection: We do decimals.

Mr. John Vanthof: But it's happening, I believe, in Saskatchewan right now that a lot of farmers sign contracts to deliver oats for next fall. Oats are a hot commodity because they're gluten-free. Gluten is a big issue; oats are gluten-free. But the company who did the forward-contracting just sent them all letters that they can't honour those contracts. Now, that would likely not be covered under this legislation, and it's happening in Saskatchewan. Farming is very financially risky. It's not just fighting the weather, but it's a very financially risky business. There's a lot of capital involved—a lot. So anything that the government can do, that we can do or the opposition can help with, or someday when we're the government, is a step in the right direction.

We're not opposed to folding three into one, but we need to be assured that we don't miss anything and that we ensure that people are protected, because you don't want to be the farmer who finds out that, oh, while we were folding these three acts into one, we missed this. You don't want to be that person. Maybe that's never going to happen. Quite frankly, I haven't had time to research it enough. Quite frankly, I'm probably not qualified to do the full research on these three acts. It's going to take a lot of legal expertise to make sure this is all right. Hopefully the government has the horsepower and they have done this. Maybe this act, schedule 30, is perhaps an improvement over the three other acts. I hope so.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Of course it is.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan is assuredly nodding and kind of saying, “Trust us.” Well, you know what? We've been down that road before—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: We are often the conscience of the province. No one has ever accused the Tories of being the conscience of the province.

Speaker, I apologize; I should be talking to you. I should be, and then I wouldn't be heckled by the government. But I don't mind the government's heckling.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm surprising myself that I'm—

Mr. Mike Harris: Tell us about the stuff you don't like.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I haven't had time to find the stuff that I really don't like.

Mr. Mike Harris: Because there isn't anything you don't like, colleagues.

Mr. John Vanthof: I wouldn't say that. But I would say—the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has reminded me of something: The benefit of a good heckle. He said that I should tell the House of the things that I don't like. I can say a few things I don't like that are missing—that are missing—not just in this bill but several other bills.

If you really want to help farmers—and you talk a lot about farmers in this bill. I just finished talking about the risks in farming, how prices go up and prices go down, and sometimes the prices are below what the cost of production is. That's very bad, because as the members well know, agriculture is one of the biggest job producers in this province, and the foundation of agriculture is the production that comes from the farm.

We disagree on one thing a lot lately: We think that we have to maximize our available farmland, the government doesn't seem to want to talk about farmland, but regardless, the production is important. The fact that farmers need to be able to make a profit from that production to stay afloat and to keep producing—there's nothing that a farmer wants to do more than grow things, but they have to be able to make money doing it.

1410

The one thing that this government could have done and has chosen not to do is lift the cap on the Risk Management Program. That's actually what the commodity groups have been asking for and repeatedly asking for. I don't know one commodity group who has actually specifically asked for schedule 30.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, they did.

Mr. John Vanthof: Perhaps four years ago—my uncle Ernie would know that. They haven't asked for it within the last few years, but they have asked for risk management repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly.

But, right now, the markets are so volatile that an increase in the Risk Management Program would be an incredible benefit not just to farmers but to the province.

I will quote someone who I have a lot of respect for. He was the former Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Mike Harris: Which one?

Mr. John Vanthof: A former one, who I have some family ties to. I really like this. He said, "What risk management has to be is"—the one word I remember very specifically—"it has to be bankable." You have to be able to take it—and for me to remember someone else's speech, it's pretty, pretty important, and I remember his. But it has to be bankable. When I was a farmer—and I still farm a bit—you have to be able to go to the bank, to your

financier, because farming is big business. Anyone who can afford to farm without loans, they are—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Well off.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, very well off. But you have to be able to go to the bank and say, "I can grow this. I can sell it for this. That's how I can assure you that I will pay the loan back." When global markets are doing this—I checked the price of canola; right now, it's \$767 a ton this morning I believe. But within this year, it has gone from \$1,100 to \$767. It went down a lot. I don't know exactly the number it costs to grow it, but fertilizer has gone up as well.

The one thing with risk management is if you have a risk management program that isn't capped, that isn't prorated, you can go to the bank and say, "I have insured my crop—not just the insurance to grow the crop, but I have insured my crop that I will get a minimum of"—whatever the number is—"and that will cover the loan." That's the way it was done originally. When the agricultural groups and the government actually worked out the program, that's how it worked.

It wasn't the current government that capped it. It was the previous Liberal government. The previous Liberal government created it as well, and they capped it. So I'm not criticizing this government for capping it; it was the Liberals before. And just to be clear—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: It's sort of both their fault.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, just to be clear, when I first got elected, it was a minority. There were a couple of years there—

Interjection: 2011.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. But the last two Liberal governments were majorities. I do believe that the Conservative official opposition propped them up almost as much as we did.

Hon. Todd Smith: No, John. No.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. Oh, yes.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. They're being very unruly.

Interjection: The member should correct his record.

Mr. John Vanthof: I am going by memory here, but I think that—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: It was going so well, Speaker. It was going so well.

I do believe that the Conservative official opposition voted for the Liberal majority governments at least 50% of the time.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: More than that.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm pretty sure I said "at least"—at least. And, sadly, someday in the next election campaign, we will be accused of propping up the Conservative majority—propping them up.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's what we keep telling you. The last two Liberal governments were majorities. We weren't propping them up. We have the quote from the

member for Kitchener–Conestoga: “It is hard to prop up a majority.” I’d like to put that on the record. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga said, “It’s hard to prop up a majority.” The last two Liberal governments were majorities, were supported by the Conservatives almost as much, maybe more than the NDP.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Okay. Order. We’ll get back to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Order. Order in the House.

Mr. John Vanthof: Two majorities. Sorry, two majorities. I can count up to nine and a half. It was two majorities.

But getting back to the bill, Speaker—they’re trying to get me off topic, here. There are a lot of schedules in the bill. Again, we will go through them. We will look at each of them and vote on the bill depending on its strengths and weaknesses. That’s how the official opposition should look at every piece of legislation. That’s why often—and the government hasn’t done it as of late, but we’re worried they might do it again—sometimes they put a piece of legislation within a piece of legislation basically called a “poison pill.” And it’s not unique to this government, but this government’s got some great examples.

One of their broadband bills, which we fully supported, had a piece of legislation in the middle about an MZO for, I believe, a protected wetland in Ajax—was it Ajax?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Duffins Creek.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. And when I asked the minister at the time, he said, “Well, if you’d like that one, just pretend it’s not there,” and he ripped it out of the bill. And then the government can criticize us for voting against it. It makes a nice sound bite. I don’t think that many people actually believe it at the end of the day, but that could be. That’s a political strategy. Actually they might not have voted for—actually they did vote. I’m standing here, so—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: So that’s what we’re looking for in this bill. There are a lot of things that are basically clean-ups, and we truly are hoping that we don’t find a poison pill. We want legislation that makes Ontario better. If this legislation does, then we would support it.

I have 32 seconds left. I thank you very much, Speaker, for your indulgence, and I will wait for questions.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite, and I always appreciate hearing from the member, who obviously has a wide variety of experiences in different sectors. My family’s background is in dairy, and yours is as well.

I did want to let you know that we had the opportunity to do a bit more research into your questions around the Milk Act and specifically some of the portions around regulation 761, which has a number of the changes. It’s a

regulatory change under that, and I’m happy to send over the information so that you have a little bit more on that.

Interjection.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It’s not; it’s a regulatory change under the package as well. I respect that but wanted to make sure that you’re aware of some of the changes, which will still obviously improve outcomes and reduce burdensome requirements for our milk producers.

But I wonder if the member opposite could speak a little bit about the changes for allowing virtual or hybrid meetings for condominium acts, because I understand there’s long distances that people in your riding would have to travel in order to be able to attend some meetings, and I’m wondering if opening up more virtual meetings would be a good thing for your constituents.

1420

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much to the member from Niagara West. I thank you very much for the clarification. We were both kind of right. It’s not in the act. It’s in the regulations. We’ve only had a day and a half to read the act. I haven’t gotten to the regulations yet. So thank you for that clarification.

I’m not opposed to more hybrid meetings, more accessibility. Hopefully, we will have true accessibility throughout the province. Often, hybrid meetings, virtual meetings—the people they’re meant to benefit most right now don’t have access to actually usable virtual links. So if we all do, at one point, have full access to usable and affordable broadband, I think it is a step in the right direction.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: First of all, thank you for the master class today, in an hour lead.

I just have to say that the government—it’s a remarkable achievement, because they put forward a bill that’s six times longer than the budget. It’s hard to see if people are being helped by this. In fact, I would also like to comment that we haven’t had appropriate time, as the loyal opposition, to go through this, so I’m glad you pointed that out. What I do have to say—when it comes to what’s important to people, I’m not sure this is it.

Hamilton has recently declared three separate states of emergency: for our homeless people, our mental health and opioid addiction.

Niagara region council declared a state of emergency, also, for homelessness, mental health and opioid addiction on February 23.

So my question to you is, given the urgent situation we’re seeing across all of our communities when it comes to homelessness, mental health and addiction, do you think the time we’re spending here could be better spent with a sense of urgency about what’s really affecting people’s lives right now?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thanks to my colleague for the question. It’s a very tough question, actually.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sorry.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I appreciate it. I think I alluded to it slightly in the speech, and it gives me time to—in this

bill, the government does recognize that things have changed because of COVID. You can see it in this bill—like with the more hybrid meetings.

But to your points, we haven't really seen that the government has actually recognized what's happening to people on the ground. There are announcements made, but when I walk out of this place and I walk past people in misery—and that used to be just a Toronto thing. I'm from the country. But now I go home, and I see the same things—I see more. This government has been in power—they keep blaming things on the past government, but they have been in power for five years—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I respectfully thank the member opposite for his contribution. I found it very entertaining, and I enjoyed it.

I was going to ask a question that relates to the Hague Convention. In my past life, I would commonly deal with family law files—and for reference, the ratification of the Hague Convention would be an important step forward for the Family Responsibility Office. The Hague Convention would enforce orders. It would allow people to transcend Ontario or Canada to meet those orders. We expect everybody to meet their court obligations for child and spousal support, but we're focusing on making things easier for families because they can make ends meet. Empowering the province to implement the 2007 Hague Convention in Ontario would give the province reciprocity to collect support payments with 34 more jurisdictions.

So my question to the member opposite—because I think this is a learning experience for some. It would also reduce the pressure on Ontario courts, saving a lot of people time and money, and reduce stress, which is such an important issue when you're dealing with family law. It would help those relying upon support, most importantly. Will the member help our government ensure that families get the spousal and child support they need by supporting this?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member for the question—for the thoughtfulness of the question; for the seriousness of the question. I don't pretend to be an expert on the Hague Convention in any way, shape or form, but since I've been elected, Family Responsibility Office issues—we've all taken a crash course in how that works and sometimes doesn't work. If this is going to make this better, so people can access from former partners who are trying to avoid by leaving the jurisdiction, we are in favour. My response is, are we sure that this actually makes the province part of the Hague Convention? I think that's the question that we need to know.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thanks to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, as always, for his extemporaneous abilities. That was great.

I have a question, though, about schedule 27 here, and it comes from a previous job I used to have as a pension trustee. What I learned from pension funds is that they really don't like members getting paper notices. They really don't like it, and they're trying to push folks online—which is fair, to encourage them. But as I read this schedule, what it says is that it changes the provision that would require the administrator of a pension plan to tell people that they have the right to request non-electronic notices of their pension plan. That concerns me, because I know for a fact that there are a lot of people who read those pension statements who don't have Internet access at their homes, who are elderly folks.

Why would this government choose to discriminate against their right to know that they have a right to get those paper copies? I'm interested in your reaction. I think people should be able to get information about their pension plans that they worked hard to receive in retirement by whatever means they choose.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much to the member for that question. It's a very good question. Again, that is something where the critic in the area is going to have to make sure that what is proposed here is actually going to help people, because, again, there is a difference between reducing red tape or eliminating regulation that actually keeps people safe. Making sure that they understand how their pensions, which they have worked hard for, are administered and how they work is part of keeping them financially safe. So, again, this is a good question: whether it's red tape or useful regulation is something that needs to be further discussed.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It was great to listen to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for the last hour. He's always very thoughtful in the way he frames his arguments and his thoughts.

I wanted to just touch a little bit—there are some changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act in regard to mining that are contained within this that will actually allow drones to be used to verify underground hazards, which will alleviate a lot of diesel emissions and different emissions underground. Obviously the member from Nickel Belt was speaking about this just the other day. I don't know if you've had a chance to have a look at those yet. I know we're running out of time, but maybe some comments on it.

Mr. John Vanthof: Good idea.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill 91, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. If passed, this bill will pave the way for better services, help Ontario grow and save people time and money.

First of all, I would like to congratulate our Minister of Red Tape Reduction, the Honourable Parm Gill, and parliamentary assistant Sam Oosterhoff on their great work in compiling this legislation. I would also like to

thank the hard-working staff at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction for their efforts.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure you've heard through your consultations with stakeholders, just as I have heard when speaking to people in my riding of Carleton, how important it is to reduce red tape in order to build a stronger economy and improve services for Ontarians.

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In 2017, under the previous Liberal government, Ontario had the highest costs of compliance in Canada, totalling \$33,000 per business, \$4,000 more than any other province. Thankfully, since 2018, our government has taken historic action to reduce red tape, leading to almost \$700 million in annual savings for Ontario businesses. We are building stronger supply chains, helping businesses grow and saving people more time and money. When it comes to eliminating unnecessary red tape, only our government will get it done.

Madam Speaker, we've had a number of supportive people and industries reach out to tell us how much they appreciate what we are doing in this bill, Bill 91. For example, Michelle Noble, the executive director of the Ontario Environment Industry Association, has said that Ontario's environment and clean tech industry welcomes the government's ongoing efforts to reduce red tape and we look forward to continuing to work with the government to identify ways to reduce red tape in our sector.

This is why our government knows that reducing red tape is a key part of building a stronger economy and improving services for Ontarians. As such, we will continue to bring forward burden-reduction packages that will save businesses more than half a billion dollars each year in compliance costs.

To begin my remarks on this important legislation, I would like to briefly summarize what this important bill will do for Ontario.

Bill 91 includes 42 new initiatives that will save businesses, not-for-profits and people more than \$120 million in net annual regulatory compliance costs. Among other things, this legislation will accelerate timelines for municipal approvals to build broadband faster for 700,000 homes and businesses. It will also strengthen occupational health and safety in the mining sector by changing regulations to reflect modern technology and better protect workers. This legislation will enable the next phases of carbon storage innovation by piloting technology that has the potential to store 30 years' worth of carbon emissions.

Madam Speaker, this legislation will also implement the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support, reducing frustration for more than 8,500 families involved in the province's child and spousal support order system by enabling enforcement of support orders in 34 additional countries across four continents. Finally, this bill will improve safety on Ontario's roads by updating the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit drivers from overtaking a working snowplow, unless a full lane is available. As you can see, Madam Speaker, this legislation is comprehensive and robust.

Now, I would like to talk about some of the specific instances of red tape that this legislation will reduce. More

specifically, I would like to speak on what this will mean for my riding of Carleton and the great people of Carleton that I have been blessed to represent and serve in the Ontario Legislature since 2018.

Carleton is home to several farms, including Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm, Rideau Pines Farm, Foster Family Farm, Abby Hill Farms, Schouten Dairy Farms, Millers Farm and Market, the Log Cabin Orchard, Mike's Garden Harvest and Carleton Mushroom, just to name a few, and also home to numerous farm families, some of whom have been here for generations, including the Velthuis, the Acres, the Pattersons, the Shouldices and so many more.

Carleton's farmers are key producers of fruit, vegetables, honey, lamb, beef, chicken, eggs, dairy, maple syrup, honey cash crop and so much more. That's why our government is making it easier for Carleton and Ontario farmers through this legislation.

Madam Speaker, we are introducing in schedule 30—and I want to talk about schedule 30. I've been reading about it since we introduced this legislation and I want to focus most of my time on schedule 30 of this bill, because it's actually very, very important for my riding of Carleton. Schedule 30 introduces legislation called Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act (Regulating Agricultural Product Dealers and Storage Operators). The purpose of this bill is to provide efficient and effective business risk management tools to farmers to help address the business risks that slow payment and no payment may create, as well as the risks that arise when a storage operator fails to return a designated agricultural product to its owner upon demand. The proposed schedule seeks to protect the financial interests of farmers, like those in my riding of Carleton, so that they can confidently invest and grow their businesses in Ontario. The proposed bill would, if passed, combine the Farm Products Payments Act, the Grains Act and the Livestock and Livestock Products Act into one act, and it would also update the legislative framework governing the financial protection programs for Ontario's agricultural sector.

The proposed changes to the legislative framework governing the financial protection programs fall within six general themes. It includes flexible administration of the act. The proposed changes would allow for greater flexibility in terms of how the act is administered. This could, for example, include allowing industry to administer all or part of an act via a delegated authority. It would allow for the expansion of financial protection models and greater flexibility for other industries. It would allow easy expansion of protection to other industries. It would allow greater flexibility in financial protection models for other industries. It would update board governance and powers. It would modernize the licensing process. It would enhance compliance tools. And most importantly, it would streamline the appeals process.

Enforcement of this proposed bill would be undertaken by provincial officers. Offences would be processed in accordance with the Provincial Offences Act and prosecuted by provincial prosecutors. If this proposed bill is passed, it would come into force and effect upon proclamation.

Madam Speaker, our government is also proposing amending regulation 761, milk and milk products, under the Milk Act—that’s so many “milks” in one sentence. Sorry, I’m going to repeat that. Our government is also proposing amending regulation 761, milk and milk products, under the Milk Act, which would reduce burden on the dairy processing industry while improving food safety. There is a thriving dairy industry in Carleton, so I’m very pleased that our bill introduces and includes this regulatory change.

Finally, our government is proposing updates to nutrient management tables 1 and 2, which will ensure proper sizing of barns and manure storage to reduce the risk of negative environmental impacts from undersized storages. The updated tables will also provide more accurate estimates of the nutrient content so the land application of manure and other nutrients can occur at optimum rates for both crop growth and to protect the environment. Madam Speaker, this legislation will get it done for farmers in my riding, and I am so excited for these important updates and changes to burdensome red tape.

As I have already alluded to, my riding of Carleton is predominantly rural, and much of the riding lacks reliable access to high-speed Internet. This legislation will make changes in the right direction to ensure that we will have reliable access to high-speed Internet throughout the riding. Ontario is proposing legislative amendments under the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021, that would ensure Internet service providers can plan, design and build high-speed Internet projects as quickly as possible. This includes enabling more efficient collection of utility infrastructure data to optimize routing for projects, to plan networks and to prevent delays in the permitting process between municipalities and ISPs.

Our government is also updating the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021 guideline to provide greater clarity and improved guidance to high-speed Internet stakeholders on processes and timelines. A major component of the update is a new process to help resolve disputes between parties and to work with sectors to ensure that they comply with the laws and regulations that are helping to build broadband across the province faster. The updated guideline will also provide more clarity on the Ministry of Transportation’s efforts to speed up their permit process for provincially funded broadband projects and will provide additional guidance on cost-sharing for using electric infrastructure to build these projects. Our government is committed to reliable high-speed Internet access for rural Ontario, and this legislation will help to bring just that.

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Moreover, in my riding of Carleton, the predominant means of transportation is by automobile. There simply is no Ottawa public transportation that goes out that far to Carleton. Everyone has to rely on an automobile if they want to get somewhere, and that’s why this important legislation will help improve road safety in my riding of Carleton. Ontario is proposing to amend the Highway Traffic Act by adding clauses that will prohibit drivers

from overtaking snowplows working in a staggered formation across highway lanes. The proposed amendments intend to reduce motor vehicle collisions with snowplows on higher-speed, multi-lane highways. This will make the public safer and reduce burden on emergency responders, health care services, the insurance sector and the legal system. Most of all, they will keep our roads safer in my riding of Carleton and across the province of Ontario.

Moreover, to improve safety for people needing a tow and those working in the towing industry, Ontario is taking steps to implement a certification program that will require tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators meet certain requirements to operate in Ontario.

Help is also on the way for commercial drivers in Carleton and across Ontario. Our government is proposing a change to legislation to ensure commercial vehicle operators who purchased equipment between 2020 and 2023 will not have to undergo a costly retrofit. In emergency driving situations, mainly on icy or wet roads, truck drivers can lift a piece of equipment called a lift axle to make driving safer. Since 2018-19, the law required lift axels to work in a specific way that the Ontario-based company making lift axels for 70% of the market was simply not able to manufacture. The company told the government they were able to provide another solution that meets the needs of trucking companies and the intent of the law. This proposed change would provide more flexibility to companies that manufacture the equipment the steerable lift axle controls, while continuing to support road safety, and saving trucking businesses time and money.

In summary, our government is getting it done for road users across this province.

Now, as Premier Ford and our team have shown time and time again, our government is committed to the success of small business owners, because we know that they are the lifeblood of Ontario’s economy. Small businesses are all across my riding of Carleton, and they are opening up every day. Every day, I am seeing more and more businesses.

In fact, just the other day there was—I’m going to pull this up, because it’s on my Facebook. One thing my office does is we like to keep track of all the businesses and all the companies that are opening up across my riding of Carleton. My riding is very big, there are a lot of communities. My team and I work really hard to keep track of all of this. One thing that we do is, when we see a new business open up, we like to present them with a certificate just to let them know, “Welcome to the neighbourhood, welcome to the community.” Oftentimes when the businesses receive one of these certificates from me and my office, they will usually post about it on social media, and literally five hours ago a company called Bright Hearing and Tinnitus Centre, which just opened up in Richmond and serves folks in Richmond, Stittsville, Kanata and Ottawa West, posted a certificate that I had provided them on their social media account thanking me for welcoming them to the community. Bright Hearing and Tinnitus Centre is just one example of the numerous

businesses and small businesses across the riding of Carleton that are opening up, and it's our responsibility to support them, because they are the lifeblood of Ontario's economy.

That's why I'm pleased that our legislation will implement the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative. This is expected to reduce barriers and provide companies in Ontario with greater access to public procurement opportunities, helping them to sell more goods and services and create jobs in their local communities. The implementation of the initiative will help Ontario's economic growth and build businesses and communities across the province while ensuring greater security of the province's supply chain.

I also want to speak about the important changes that this legislation is going to be making to child support legislation in this province. Children deserve to be supported in the best way that their families can, and that is why our government is taking action to implement the 2007 Hague Convention. The 2007 Hague Convention is an international treaty that applies to obtaining, changing and enforcing spousal and child support orders when parents or spouses live in different countries.

As a former international trade lawyer, Madam Speaker, I can appreciate and understand how important this legislation really is, because one of the most frustrating things for parents or families is when they have a court order for something here in Ontario, but they're not able to enforce it in another jurisdiction. This change will provide families relief. So I'm very, very pleased about this.

If this legislation is passed to implement the convention in the province of Ontario and the government of Canada ratifies the convention, then current procedures would be streamlined and more cost efficient. That's important because, again as an international trade lawyer, one of the things that I worked on was international law, and while we are happy to implement the convention in this province, the convention will not be actual law until the government of Canada ratifies the convention and makes it law. So one thing that I think we need to do, not just as a government but as a province—and I'm asking all MPPs on all sides of the House here—is to put pressure on our federal government to make sure that they ratify this convention, that they ratify this and bring it into Canadian law so that Ontario families can rely on this convention to get the support they need.

Speaking of young people, we are also making important strides for the post-secondary education sector. These partners are crucial in ensuring that young people are trained for the jobs of the future. Career colleges play an important role in Ontario's post-secondary landscape, providing learners with the knowledge and skills they need to get a job in today's workplace. Moreover, our government is enhancing collection tools for training institutions under the Private Career Colleges Act.

Madam Speaker, I see that my time is running short. There really is so much that I want to speak about. Every single initiative in this piece of legislation—and here's the

bill. I don't know if I'm allowed to use props or not, but I'm holding the bill in my hand.

Hon. Todd Smith: Oh, that's okay.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Is that okay?

Hon. Todd Smith: Yep, you're good.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: All right. Here we go. I think half of it is in French, but this is still a pretty significant piece of legislation. I've had time to look through it all, and every single initiative in here means something. Every single initiative that's part of our red tape reduction package is something that was brought forward by the people of Ontario through our red tape portal, which is online on the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction's website.

In my final 30 seconds, I just want to say that I'm so pleased that we actually have a Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, and I'm so pleased that we are listening to the people of Ontario and that we are creating laws and legislation based on what they are saying. I hope that everyone in the House supports this very important piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I've been continually surprised in my nine months in this institution how frequently the government introduces legislation without consulting with stakeholders, or rushes legislation through without giving stakeholders time to see it. I can't help but wonder, as I'm taking a look at this doorstep that was just given to us this morning, if one of the reasons might be because the government is hoping to slide some things by Ontarians, like changing the name of "private career colleges" to just "career colleges," which seems to be a move just to take information away from Ontarians so that they don't actually know whether they're attending a public institution or a private institution.

I would like to ask the member from Carleton, wouldn't it be better, if these were actually great changes for Ontarians, to give Ontarians the time to actually see, understand and debate the changes in this legislation?

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Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm not sure why the member is calling this a doorstep. I think that's an insult to the people of Ontario. This is not a doorstep, Madam Speaker; this is feedback that we have received from Ontarians. I think the fact that the member referred to this as a doorstep is a clear indication of why we have 83 seats and they lost seats in the previous election. If they had done a better job, maybe I would be sitting on that side of the House. So maybe instead of calling this a doorstep, she should actually take the time to read through it, because I've had no issues reading through this and doing my job. Maybe she should do hers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I very much enjoyed the comments from the member for Carleton, especially on schedule 30, and I really enjoyed the comments this morning from the minister on the same schedule, and also the comments from the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane

on that. I come from a farming background, even though I'm currently a city slicker, living in Toronto for many years. He explained a lot. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said that farmers don't like politicians and lawyers—which I've been both of—and engineers, and that's what my father was. Also, I think he mentioned that he only has nine and a half fingers, which is a common farming injury, which I share in our family. I have my 10 fingers, but my cousin is missing a half.

Anyway, I know that farming is a financially very risky business, and the member was talking about schedule 30. Could she tell us how it will improve, if passed, farming in her community and how it will help the farmers?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you very much to the member for the question. As a politician and also a lawyer, I appreciate the comments that the member made.

One thing I can say is that I have a really good relationship with all the farmers in my riding of Carleton. I really do appreciate them and I take time to listen to them. Just a few weeks ago, I actually had my farmer appreciation breakfast, and over 200 farmers came and attended, and it was just such a fantastic thing. In Carleton, and I'm sure across all the province—at least, I know, on this side of the House—we have a fantastic working relationship with our farmers.

Madam Speaker, to answer the member's question, the way that these changes will benefit farmers is that updates to the financial protection programs will help to strengthen protection for Ontario farmers, level the playing field for grain and livestock dealers and elevators, and support the current and future risk management needs of the agricultural sector. In fact, we have the largest grain elevator in eastern Ontario in my riding of Carleton.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member for Carleton. I want to refer specifically to schedule 7. In 2020, the Auditor General released a scathing investigation report into this sector. She concluded that the sector is “poorly regulated and there is inadequate ... oversight over developers ... managers and condo boards,” and “condo residents have little recourse if they encounter” any “problems.”

We brought forward a private member's bill that you voted down. You voted no to providing governance and oversight to the 1.3 million condo owners in the province of Ontario.

So specifically, schedule 7, subsection 4: If you were going to open the act, why did you not open the act and provide the kind of protection that condo owners have been asking for? This is what you say you're here to do, help people. This act is open, and you've done nothing to help people with the complaints that they have about living in condos in Ontario.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I think the member should probably go back and review the legislation and also look at some of the quotes and comments that we have received from stakeholders.

Ultimately, what this legislation does is it's streamlining processes. One of the things that I know the parliamentary assistant was speaking about earlier today is how we need to allow people to use technology to become more involved in their community and to become more engaged in the civic process. So by allowing the use of technology to engage in, let's say, condo meetings or board meetings, this is allowing for civic engagement. I hope the member will support this important piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, through you to the member from Carleton, that was an excellent presentation that she just made.

Section 22, Speaker, talks about the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, and you'll know from the hard work you do in your own riding that not-for-profit corporations play a significant role in our communities and lifting up certain aspects of our communities. I'd like the member from Carleton—through you, Speaker—to speak about the importance she sees of this particular section in her own riding, because I know she has a very diverse riding.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for the excellent question. You know, I'm actually a board member on a not-for-profit. It's the Somali Hope Foundation. I did get permission from the ethics and Integrity Commissioner before I joined it; I do have his permission and approval in writing.

That not-for-profit—what we do is we raise money for a school that was built in rural Somalia to provide education to young children, usually orphans or from very poor families. I joined that board back in 2019, and one of the challenges we faced during the pandemic was not being able to conduct as many meetings as we wanted to, because the way that the bylaws or amendments or whatever were written out, it just wasn't really conducive to electronic meetings. I think that's something a lot of not-for-profits faced during the pandemic.

And so, Madam Speaker, what the amendments here to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act do in schedule 22 is they would “provide that meetings of directors may be held entirely by one or more telephonic or electronic means” or in any hybrid format. I think this is a fantastic way to support Ontario's not-for-profit corporations, like the Somali Hope Foundation.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm just going to follow up with the member for Carleton a question I raised earlier in debate. It concerns schedule 23, which—just having a closer look at it now—does indeed take away the obligation of a pension administrator to inform a pension plan member that they have the right to receive written copies and no compulsion to receive electronic copies. I'm just wondering, because I'm sure the member's riding has pensioners in it, if you think those pensioners do indeed have the right to continue to receive their pension notices in paper form. And should they be compelled to take the electronic form?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Sorry; did the member say schedule 23? Because schedule 23—

Mr. Joel Harden: Schedule 27.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Oh, 27. My apologies.

I'd like to thank the member for his question. I'll find it here. There we go—no. I can't even find it; I don't know where it went. You'll have to give me a moment. I have all my notes here. See, this is the problem, Madam Speaker, when you over-prepare and you're a lawyer and just have a huge binder with notes everywhere. All I would say is that—oh, there we go; I found my notes.

With respect to the Pension Benefits Act, it's removing the requirement for the administrator of a pension plan to send notices to members upon retirement reminding them that they may request non-electronic written communications. It says "may," Madam Speaker, not "shall," so I'm not quite sure why the member is so opposed to electronic communication, especially since the member seems to think that he is a huge advocate for the environment, and yet for some reason he wants everything to be on paper.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Carleton for speaking today, and I really want to thank the member from Timiskaming. It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Timiskaming. I've got to say, he's one of the most entertaining speakers in the house, and he brings a northern perspective and a farmer's perspective to this House. I think those are two perspectives that we need to hear more often.

One thing he said, though, was that we don't have unorganized territories in southern Ontario. So far as I know, we may have some, but we do have—even in downtown Toronto here—unclaimed roads. There's an unclaimed lane behind my office that is not maintained. The city doesn't own it and no private owner owns it; it's just a laneway behind my office, and it's not maintained. The potholes kept getting bigger and bigger, and you needed a four-by-four to get into the parking lot of my office. We actually had to organize a few people to pay for a load of gravel. So we don't have unorganized territories, but we do, strangely enough, have unclaimed lanes right in downtown Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm sorry; I couldn't hear that comment.

But anyway, I'm going to talk today about this Legislature, about some lessons that have been learned in this House.

I'm going to talk about two former Conservative members of this House over the last 100 years who really were groundbreaking in the policies that they advocated for: Adam Beck and Bill Davis. I know it may sound odd for an NDPer to be praising the work of former Conservative members of this House—but I think it speaks to how far the ideological shift has happened in this province. The policies that were pursued by Adam Beck to create public hydro 100 years ago and the policies of Bill Davis to create our public colleges and universities are now

considered on the left end of the spectrum. The spectrum has moved so far to the right that—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Really?

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Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, absolutely, and your government is a big part of it. This is part of what the member from—Glanbrook?

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: Anyway, she's asking, "Really?" Yes.

One of the things that really bothers me and that I think makes the bad policies—one of the major ideological shifts that this government is pursuing is the privatization of our public services and the sell-off of our public assets, and we're seeing that again and again. We've seen it over the years.

I'll start with two sections of this bill. I mentioned Adam Beck. I'm going to start with broadband rollout.

Broadband is the 21st-century electricity. Everybody needs broadband. I think everybody in this House agrees that every community, every resident in this province needs access to broadband, because if you don't have it, you're cut off from all kinds of educational and work opportunities.

This government is rolling out broadband. They're spending \$4 billion. The initial standard that they set when we met in committee last year was 50/10—so 50 megabits a second upload and 10 megabits a second download—and at the time, at the committee, I told the minister, "That's simply not adequate. That's an old standard. It will mean that the communities that you're providing this to are already behind the curve. If you're going to roll out broadband and you're going to be rolling out fibre—the cost is not in the cost of the fibre cable. The cost is in the poles and the tunnels and the conduit—everything that you need to actually roll out the broadband. So you might as well roll out 1 gigabit symmetrical."

I can give you an example of why that's so important. A friend of mine, Charles Taylor, is a VFX artist. He's a composer. He has worked on some big movies that many of you will know: *Shazam!*, *The Shape of Water*. He lives in downtown Toronto, in my riding of Spadina–Fort York. He's from Haliburton. The company he works for is in Montreal. He actually wouldn't mind living in Haliburton, where he has a lot of relatives. But he lives in downtown Toronto because he needs 1 gigabit symmetrical broadband in order to do the work that he does. If the government is rolling out broadband that isn't 1 gigabit symmetrical, with this \$4 billion that you're spending, then you're cutting off people like him from the opportunity to work in Haliburton. You're cutting off other communities.

I've got a committee that I work with—I'm the tech and innovation critic, so I've got a committee. I asked them, "Give me a list of the careers and the jobs that you need 1 gigabit symmetrical for," and the list I got was computer animation, cloud services, artificial intelligence, machine learning, agri-tech.

Agri-tech now is really fast-developing, and it relies on image capture and processing online for decision-making

around processing and sorting. In addition, the latest machinery is embedded with real-time error and fault management. So the modern farms that we have across this province need 1 gigabit symmetrical just to operate the equipment in the most efficient way possible.

People think of farms being a southern Ontario thing, and I used to think that, too, until I moved up to Geraldton, Ontario, a number of years ago. When you drive north of Toronto on the 400 or Highway 11, you get up to Orillia, and there are very few farms—you get into the Canadian Shield; you see all forests. And then you get north of North Bay, and you get to the Clay Belt, and all of a sudden, the land opens up again. There's this huge area of farming in northern Ontario. That's actually where the member from Timiskaming is from, and that's where he farmed.

The farmers up there need—if you're going to be rolling out broadband to the community, and we absolutely should, then you should be rolling out 1 gigabit symmetrical broadband to those communities so the farmers will be able to use the most modern equipment and operate in the most efficient way possible.

The other areas: Virtual reality—you also need 1 gigabit symmetrical, and supply chain inventory and fleet management. The latest supply chain technologies use blockchain for identification and security, and blockchains require heavy storage and processing powers to pack and unpack. And poor infrastructure will directly impact the rollout of the latest supply chain technology. So I'm asking the government to change the standard of these contracts for the last mile of broadband so that they're 1 gigabit symmetrical. That's what you should be rolling out. If you're not, people will be happy because you're replacing a horse and buggy, but you're replacing it with a Model T, and really what they need is a modern vehicle.

The reason I mention Adam Beck in this is, 120 years ago, at the turn of the 20th century electricity was a new thing. They were just starting to put power generation stations on Niagara Falls, and they created, in 1906—Adam Beck, who was a member of this House, created Ontario Hydro to roll out hydro, and they actually ended up nationalizing our hydroelectric system. It ended up costing four cents a kilowatt hour from the 1920s until 1995. That's how much we were paying for electricity. Our electricity rate, because it was delivered at cost through a public utility, was one of our biggest competitive advantages.

And then the Conservatives, in 1995, started to break up Ontario Hydro and sell it off, and then the Liberals finished off—

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: They did. The Conservatives sold off the Bruce nuclear plant. They broke it up into Hydro One and—anyway, I won't go into too much detail. And then the Liberals got into power and they finished it off: They sold off the majority stake in Ontario Hydro. And now we pay between eight and 16 cents a kilowatt hour, and our electricity rates are one of our biggest competitive disadvantages.

So when you look at the lesson from Adam Beck, if we had learned the lesson in 1995 and the early 2000s, we

would have created a public broadband network or given it to Ontario Hydro to roll out broadband, and then every community—the advantage of Ontario Hydro was that they rolled out electricity to everyone in the province, because they recognized that everybody needed access to electricity. So that's one of the lessons.

The other lesson—and this is from this bill as well. This bill is 37 schedules, 150-odd pages. We just got it recently, but the other thing that really piqued my interest in this is, they're changing the name of private career colleges to career colleges. They're taking away the term “private.” This means that people, when they're registering or when they're applying, won't know whether they're applying to a public college or a private college. The distinction is really important, although it's a distinction that this government and the last Liberal government have been blurring for decades.

We used to have—and I mentioned Bill Davis. In the 1960s, Bill Davis created our CAAT colleges, our community arts and applied technology colleges, and they were delivered at cost. He also expanded our public university system. He created many public universities and expanded the universities that we had, so that Ontario became one of the best-educated jurisdictions in the world. It's one of our biggest competitive advantages.

The other big competitive advantage of our public colleges and universities: Every one of them has an innovation centre, and those innovation centres partner with local businesses and researchers. Those businesses benefit from the research that's being done in those colleges and universities, and the students get hands-on experience developing and doing that kind of research with real-world applications. So Ontario is the fastest-growing tech ecosystem in North America. We're growing faster than Silicon Valley. We're not as big as Silicon Valley yet, but we could possibly overtake Silicon Valley one day if the trajectory continues.

1510

But this government is privatizing our public colleges and universities. You're undermining one of our biggest competitive advantages. This is a real concern and it's being done just like the Liberal government.

I've got a bit of time here, so I'll just backtrack a little bit. Until 1995, our university tuition fees were about \$2,500 per student per year. That was for all programs. That was undergrads, that was med school, that was grad school, that was engineering, that was dentistry, that was veterinary. Whatever program you wanted at university, it was about \$2,500 a year, and college was about \$1,200 a year.

The Conservatives—and those were created, the colleges and universities, as I mentioned, by Bill Davis, who in the 1960s was the Minister of Education. Then he became the Premier through the 1970s until 1984. He was incredibly proud of the work that those public colleges and universities were doing and he was proud of the contribution they were making to the economic development of this province.

But since then, in 1995, the then Conservative government got into power and they began privatizing our public

colleges and universities. They doubled tuition for undergrads from \$2,500. By the time they left, in 2003, it was over \$5,000 for undergrad tuition.

They delisted professional program tuition fees, so they went from \$2,500 in 1995, for law school and med school at the University of Toronto in 2003, to \$12,000. The Liberals got in and they doubled tuition fees again. By the time they left—their last election was in 2018—our undergrad tuition fees were about \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year. Law school and medical school at the University of Toronto were \$28,000 a year. An MBA at the University of Toronto, when the NDP was in power, was \$2,500 per person per year. Under the Conservative-Liberal regime, working hand in hand—the Liberals and the Conservatives always supporting each other—it's now \$54,000 per year. It's a two-year program, so it's \$108,000 to get an MBA in Ontario.

That's part of the privatization. What it means is that in our public colleges and universities, 85% of the funding used to come from our taxes. The tuition that people were paying until 1995 was about 15% of the operating costs of the colleges and universities. Now the students are paying, through their tuition fees, more than 50% of the operating costs of those colleges and universities.

One of the things that has been created with this privatization of our public colleges and universities is that we've got a student debt industry. It's difficult to get a clear estimate, but there is at least \$25 billion in student debt in Canada. That is mostly held by private banks and the banks are now charging prime plus 2%, so somewhere around 6.5%, in interest on that \$25 billion. This is a major revenue generator for those banks.

If you look at the big picture of it, what this privatization and the increase in tuition fees mean is that the Conservative government—this Conservative government and the last Conservative government—and the Liberal government have actually created a system that transfers wealth from the lowest-income students in the province to the investors in the banks, some of the wealthiest people in the province. It's robbing from the poor and giving to the rich.

What this government is doing now with this bill is, they're taking away the distinction between public colleges and private colleges. What used to be called private career colleges are just going to be called career colleges, so that people won't even know the distinction between the one and the other.

Part of the reason for this is, it's part of a bigger trend. The public colleges have been so grossly underfunded by this government and the last government—in the post-secondary sector, the funding from the government has been frozen for at least a decade, which means at least a \$1-billion inflationary cut. The colleges and universities have to make up for that somehow. One way that this government has conveniently created is this government has created a policy to create partnerships between our public colleges and private colleges, so private colleges can use the curriculum that's developed by the public colleges and they can give degrees and diplomas in the

name of the public college. So they're blurring the distinction. This step in this bill of removing the term “private” from career colleges is a further blurring of that distinction between our public colleges and private colleges.

The reason this matters is that the privatization of our public services ultimately means that we pay far more and we get far less, that students will be paying far more in these privatized colleges and universities—they already are. They have to take on more debt in order to get their degree or diploma, and they're also facing, because of the funding cuts, larger class sizes and less support than they would have had 10, 20, 30 years ago.

And this is just one schedule of 37 in this bill, but this schedule is a really important indication of the ideological bent of this government. This government does not believe in public services. They are trying to privatize public services as fast as they possibly can. It's like the last Conservative government. They privatized long-term care, they privatized home care—

Interjection: The 407.

Mr. Chris Glover: The 407. Oh, my God, the 407. The Conservatives keep boasting about how they won 84 seats, and, I've got to say, I don't know how you won it, because you won most of the seats in the 905, and the 407 goes right across the 905.

When the NDP started building the 407, it was going to be a toll highway, but it was publicly controlled, and after 20 years, the tolls would come off because it would have been paid for. The Conservatives sold it to a private Spanish conglomerate for \$3 billion and gave them a 100-year lease. So people in the whole 905, who for some reason are electing Conservative MPPs, are paying these outrageous fees. If the NDP had stayed in power, there would be no tolls anymore on the 407 because the drivers already paid for it. The drivers already paid for it. But, because of the Conservatives, they're going to be paying for it for another 70 years.

The Conservative government of the day sold the 407 for \$3 billion, and the Premier at the time, Premier Harris, said, “Oh, well, we can regulate how much they're going to charge.” Then it went to court and it turns out we can't regulate how much they're going to charge. And so, the 407, which was initially supposed to be a public highway and eventually, after 20 years, was going to be free, became this privatized highway that people are going to be paying for for 100 years.

The value to the investors—and this is what it's really about—is that highway is now worth \$45 billion. The Conservatives sold it for \$3 billion, it's now worth \$45 billion, and somehow, you get elected in the 905 by all those poor people who have to pay those outrageous fees on the 407. I don't know how you do it.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: That has to be one of the most ideological speeches I have ever heard in this place, and I have been here for 12 years. No wonder the member opposite doesn't understand how their caucus was cut in

half in the last election and ours grew, because people don't want a socialist government in this province, and that's what they would get if that member was successful in winning the election last time. Thank God for the future of Ontario they didn't win.

Madam Speaker, why does the member believe that we have attracted \$17 billion in new EV platforms in Ontario? Why does the member believe that's happening, and does the member opposite support—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Come to order, please. Stop the clock.

For the House, I don't mind a little bit of activity, but we need to be able to hear each other, please.

1520

Continue. Start the clock.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll tell you one of the reasons you've been able to attract that kind of activity: because in spite of privatizing Ontario Hydro and now having some of the highest hydro rates or electricity rates in North America, you are subsidizing—it's \$6.9 billion in taxpayer subsidy to what used to be Ontario Hydro. It's now a private, for-profit corporation. So you are handing over \$6.9 billion of our tax dollars to attract industry, whereas if you just kept Ontario Hydro public, then it would be a competitive advantage and we wouldn't have to provide that \$6.9 billion in subsidy.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Spadina–Fort York for his comments. He talked about privatized universities. I've met with Brock University and Niagara College in my area. They're very concerned about the opening of a private university in Niagara Falls on our side of the border. What are some of the ways that a private university in close proximity to a public one can undermine the public university?

Mr. Chris Glover: What's happened over the last 25 years is there's been a gross defunding of our public colleges and universities, and in spite of that, they're still doing an incredible job. But when you allow private colleges and universities to open up right next door or when you force them into partnerships with these private colleges and universities that they're acting in competition with, those private colleges and universities are not kept to the same standard and not held to the same standard. We see, if you look at the media and you look at private colleges that have gone bankrupt and left students stranded, it undermines the reputation.

And it's not just me who says this; there was a report on the public-private partnerships of the colleges in this province. It was from the former Liberal government in 2018. The independent report said there's a real risk to the reputation of our post-secondary sector in Ontario if the government continues to privatize it.

Hon. Todd Smith: Madam Speaker, I am just so intrigued by this member's analysis of our energy sector I have to dig a little bit deeper.

I was here in 2011, and a few members were here in 2011. The NDP were in lockstep with the Liberal government of the day when it came to the Green Energy Act: FIT contracts, feed-in tariff contracts, that were paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour for solar, and much more for wind as well. These projects were being spread out all across the province. The Financial Accountability Officer indicated that \$38 billion is the cost of overmarket contracts that were signed as a result of the Green Energy Act, therefore the subsidy that the member opposite talked about.

So I just want to know: Do the member opposite and his party still support the Green Energy Act, and do they support the fact that it has resulted in \$38 billion? That doesn't even cost the electricity that people are using; this is just the overmarket cost of those 20-year contracts, many of them 80 cents a kilowatt hour, when you're getting nuclear for seven or eight cents a kilowatt hour.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's a good question, and I will say that if we kept our hydro as a public utility, then the costs would not be where they are today. We would not be providing \$6.9 billion in taxpayer-funded supports.

I know this about the subsidies because I used to teach about the Ring of Fire at York University. I started teaching there in 2009 about the Ring of Fire. I was waiting for the Ring of Fire to get developed, and I was wondering why it wasn't. One of the agreements that was made between the Ontario government—the Liberal government at the time—and one of the mining conglomerates that was going to be operating was to smelt the ores in Sudbury. In order to get that agreement, the government was going to be subsidizing our hydro rates by \$350 million a year. So if we kept Ontario Hydro as a public utility, as Adam Beck—and the member accused me of being socialist. Was Adam Beck socialist in fighting for public hydro? Was Bill Davis socialist in fighting for our public colleges and universities? I would say those are the things we're fighting for on this side of the House—

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

Further questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you, I would like to address a question to my colleague from Spadina–Fort York about schedule 29. We have all seen hardships of private colleges that sell students on the promise of a job, but then the actual degree lacks that accreditation and leaves students with mountains and mountains of debt. Why is it critical to not only address the accountability but also tackle the cost of tuition for students in Ontario who are struggling to pay their bills and go to school at the same time?

Mr. Chris Glover: Part of the reason I'm here is because I really believe in fairness for students—fairness for elementary, secondary and post-secondary students—and this government is not treating our post-secondary students with fairness, particularly international students. I know this government believes in cutting red tape, but they are not properly regulating the private colleges and universities and students are being sold—and students coming from India, from China, often the extended family will pool their resources to send one child here, then that

child gets here and they aren't given what they were promised. The private college or university isn't delivering what they were supposed to deliver.

The other thing this government has done—I was talking to an international student at a public university here in Ontario who came last year and their tuition fees were \$40,000 a year. This year they were \$50,000 a year. Next year, they're going to \$60,000 a year. That's how this government treats international students in this province, and the fear is that you're going to undermine the reputation of Ontario as fair brokers for international students.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Earlier in his remarks, I heard the member opposite talk about expanding broadband services. For 15 years, I never heard anything from the NDP talking about expanding broadband services. Our government is stepping up. We're removing red tape around streamlining processes related to infrastructure to help expedite the delivery of broadband projects across Ontario. We're reducing delays, paving the way for faster access to high-speed Internet for homes and businesses, helping them grow.

Connected communities attract significant and lasting investments, boosting the local and provincial economies. Can the member opposite tell me what he has done to expand broadband and high-speed Internet to all Ontarians?

Mr. Chris Glover: I was part of the committee that reviewed the broadband bill. At the committee we kept making amendments to the bill. We asked for one gigabyte symmetrical rather than 50/10, which was what the government was proposing, because 50/10 was going to leave rural remote communities behind. You're rolling out a model T rather than modern fibre, modern Internet access.

We've also been pushing for—if you read Hansard, every time a member on this side of the House stood up and talked about broadband, we've said we are strongly in favour of rolling out broadband, getting it to everybody in this province. The challenge here is that the government is doing—what they're rolling out is not up to snuff. The concern that I have on this side of the House is that the rollout means that the rural communities that are finally getting broadband aren't getting the latest up-to-speed broadband—

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for allowing me to jump the queue here and move ahead of her as we have a very important meeting this afternoon.

I want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, Minister Gill, for his hard work on this file, and I want to thank MPP Oosterhoff as well for his hard work on making sure that we're continuing to reduce red tape. I want to thank him for his dedication to this cause.

1530

Speaker, I'm really excited to speak on behalf of this bill, another red tape reduction bill that our government

has put forward. I've been trying very hard over the last 12 years that I've been here to reduce red tape in this province. I arrived, along with a number of individuals on my side and the other side, in the election of 2011, and when I was elected in 2011, our leader at the time made me the small business critic and the critic for red tape. I was a busy, busy guy, because there was a lot of red tape in this province at that time—overregulation that was holding businesses back from expanding. My goal as a critic was to hold the previous government, the Liberal government, to account for all the red tape that they were foisting and imposing on Ontarians.

I've got to tell you, my parents in New Brunswick are actually moving out of my childhood home. They were going through a lot of their stuff that you accumulate over 75 years. Some of the things that they were going through were old pictures. When they sent me a picture the other day, I had a full head of hair, and that's not the case anymore. Now, that's not because I've been pulling it out trying to have red tape reduced in the province, because we've been making great progress on that since I came here. But I saw first-hand just how unnecessary a lot of the regulation or overregulation was in the province, and how it was affecting businesses in my riding of Bay of Quinte and right across Ontario, and I made sure to let the Liberal government know my thoughts on that matter.

When we formed government in 2018, I was the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, which was also the minister responsible for red tape reduction at that time. Now we have a full-fledged ministry for red tape reduction, which I think speaks to just how important this is for our government, to make sure that the province truly is open for business, open for jobs and open to see our economy moving.

While I was in that portfolio of economic development, job creation, trade and red tape reduction, we brought forward a couple of bills, as we do, every year. One of them was Bill 66; it was called the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. After seeing all of the red tape that was created by the previous Liberal government and the damage it was doing to job creators and consumers alike in our province, I wanted to make sure that Ontario was competitive again.

The first bill that was brought forward to reduce red tape was Bill 47, and that was the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, a reducing-burdens-while-protecting-workers act. I've got to say thanks, and probably our public servants don't hear thanks enough: The deputy minister who I had on that file was a gentleman—and I mean gentleman—by the name of Giles Gherson. Giles was so passionate. He was responsible for reducing red tape, and do you know why he was so good at reducing the red tape? It was because he was a public servant when the Liberals were in power, so he knew exactly where all the red tape was adding up and he knew exactly where to go back and peel it off. So I just want to say thanks to Giles Gherson. He has since retired from the public service, but he made a real impression on me in my time in that ministry.

Bill 47 and Bill 66 removed dozens of pieces of overregulation in most of the ministries that we had at that time, and it really did make a difference. As I say, we're not stopping there; we now have a full-fledged minister on this file.

I recall the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as they do every year, hand out an award to the various provincial governments across the province when it comes to their efforts in reducing red tape. I remember in 2019, the CFIB came into my office—I was the House leader, too, at the time. It might still be hanging on the wall in the House leader's office; I'm not sure. But we got an A-, which was the highest mark in the country for reducing red tape from the CFIB.

Interjections.

Hon. Todd Smith: It was really Giles's fault, not mine.

Anyway, I'm really pleased to be able to stand here and talk about Bill 91, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. This bill is just another step in the right direction and is going to continue to build on our government's strong track record of reducing red tape across Ontario.

As stated by my colleagues here this afternoon and earlier this morning by the minister himself, Bill 91 is going to pave the way for better services and help Ontario businesses grow and save people time and money.

Before we came into power—and I think this speaks to the grade we did get from the CFIB in 2019—Ontario was the most highly overregulated province in Canada. Many of these regulations were unnecessary, they were outdated—they were red tape. That's one of the reasons why Ontario's economy was plummeting at the time.

Madam Speaker, this will hit it home to you: I was the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade when we got that call in early November of 2018 that after over a hundred years of building cars in Oshawa, General Motors was closing its plant. The folks at General Motors said to me, "Minister, it's not anything that you and the Premier have done; it's just become so oppressive and costly to do business here in Ontario that we're having to close that plant"—after a hundred years in Oshawa.

I remember having an emergency meeting in Oshawa that night with Mayor Dan Carter and my colleagues from the Legislature, going out there, saying we were going to support Oshawa, we were going to support the Durham region and we were going to make sure that we became a competitive jurisdiction again—one that reduced red tape, one that got electricity prices under control and back to being competitive—and that General Motors plant was going to be back. I'm proud to say that four years later, there are multi-billion dollar EV mandates going in not just at GM Oshawa but at OEMs right across this province, and a supply chain that's going to support it. It's an incredible accomplishment, and it's been a whole-team-of-government effort to ensure that we're back and competitive in this market.

I go into small businesses regularly in my home riding of Bay of Quinte. These local establishments are staples in their communities, and they have been for decades and really hold our riding's economy together. I know they do

so in other ridings right across Ontario. We've seen first-hand during COVID-19 just how we needed to support these small businesses, and we did that, Madam Speaker. We can't stop supporting our small business. That's why we're coming forward with bills like Bill 91.

People think that red tape only affects businesses. It doesn't. It affects all of us in our daily lives. This is why we set out on a mission to reduce red tape by the amount that we have. I'm honoured to be a part of a government that's reduced Ontario's total regulatory burden by 6.5%. That 6.5% is equivalent to \$700 million in annual compliance costs for not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, school boards, colleges and universities and hospitals. Our government has eliminated that.

I recall, when I became the minister, our goal was to reduce red tape by 25% across the province and save businesses \$400 million. Well, we just hit the \$700-million mark, which is amazing and a credit to all of us for the work that we're doing.

Let me touch on a couple of the pieces in the bill that affect my current portfolio. By reducing red tape within the energy sector, it's honouring our commitment to ensure that there's a reliable, affordable and clean electricity system to power the province, to continue to drive electrification and support our strong economic growth that we're now seeing in Ontario. Within the energy sector, there still is some red tape that's holding us back, and we're looking to eliminate that here in Bill 91. If passed, it would mean that our government is reducing burdens on stakeholders and making life easier.

There are two measures that I'm really excited about as the Minister of Energy. First, we're expanding the OEB's, the Ontario Energy Board's, authority to enable innovation. Innovation isn't just a buzzword; it is happening in the energy sector at a rapid pace, Madam Speaker. This will exempt proponents of innovative projects which have future potential from certain licensing requirements.

With Ontario's population and economy growing, expanding the OEB's authority to grant temporary licensing exemptions to specific legislative requirements would better empower the OEB to facilitate innovation in the energy sector. By allowing the OEB to expand its innovation sandbox—and I've been out with the OEB at a number of these sandbox announcements over the years; the IESO also has a Grid Innovation Fund doing similar things, allowing for innovators in the province to showcase what they've been working on through pilot projects—participants are going to be able to continue to undertake innovative pilot projects such as exploring peer-to-peer energy trading, and that could result in benefits for the energy sector and economic development here in Ontario.

1540

Our government has been working with the OEB since we took office, and we know that Ontario's energy advantage is made possible by our many partners that we have in the sector.

The OEB is an independent regulatory body. Its core mandate is to protect the interests of families and businesses accessing energy with respect to the price,

reliability and the quality of the electricity services that they are receiving.

Again, we've been working hard with the OEB to modernize their governance structure and make room for innovation.

So we took this action as we know that increased transparency, reduced regulatory burdens and greater efficiencies in the OEB are going to build trust and are going to benefit all electricity customers in Ontario. It also helps to ensure that our electricity system continues to be one of the cleanest and most reliable in the world, and that is what's allowing us to see the type of multi-billion dollar investments that we have been seeing over the last number of months.

The next measure that is going to positively help the energy sector is the "keeping administrative monetary penalties off rates" measure. The proposal is part of our plan to keep energy affordable for all Ontarians. The government is proposing to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act to ensure that ratepayers aren't subjected to additional costs as a result of administrative monetary penalties—those AMPs that, when they're charged to energy utilities, won't be passed on to electricity ratepayers and recovered through energy rates. It's one more way that we're helping to keep our rates predictable and low and not spiking at the double-digit percentage rates that we were seeing back in 2015, 2016 and 2017. We've brought those types of massive, massive spikes in our electricity bills under control.

Another part of our plan is to work with Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator to procure about 4,000 new megawatts of generation through competitive processes—not sole-sourced deals, not feed-in tariff programs that are driving up the cost of electricity massively. We're doing this in a competitive, business-type approach that has already resulted in massive savings to electricity customers through the processes that we've undertaken so far through the IESO procurements, with competitive procurements through the RFPs that we have had out in the field and that we continue to have out in the field right now.

So more can still be done for ratepayers—and reducing the red tape in the sector is obviously going to do that.

On a more local note, as the MPP for Bay of Quinte, there are a number of measures in this bill, as well, that I fully endorse and am excited about. The first measure is going to be helping many constituents in my riding get broadband Internet service. The first measure that will help is the proposed amendment to the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021. We're proposing legislative amendments under that act that will ensure Internet service providers can plan, design and build high-speed Internet projects as quickly as possible. I've been working with my seatmate here, the Minister of Infrastructure, on this file for the last year and a half, just ensuring that when we are building broadband, we're doing everything that we can to remove red tape, to make it quick and easy for Internet service providers, those ISPs, working with LDCs, the local distribution companies, to get cable in the ground, to

get access to the poles that we need and to reduce the cost of getting access to those poles, so that the folks who are working on this can get broadband out there as fast as possible.

We remain committed to bringing high-speed Internet access to every community in Ontario, including Bay of Quinte, by the end of 2025. It was a major, major frustration for people in my riding since I was elected in 2011 that there were huge pockets in our area that, first of all, didn't have cell service and didn't have broadband Internet access. It was very frustrating. I would say over and over again, "We continue to push the government of the day, we continue to push the government of the day." I'm happy to say the government of the day, the Doug Ford government, is actually the first to put \$4 billion on the table to ensure that we're getting high-speed broadband Internet to every corner of the province.

I'm excited about broadband Internet making its way into Bay of Quinte because a lot of people have moved out of the GTA over the last couple of years thanks to the pandemic. They're living on Sheba's Island or they're living on West Lake or they're living up in Hastings county on a lake up there, and they want to work from there. We're ensuring that they're going to have the Internet that they need.

I know my good friend who sits behind me here, Minister Thompson, the Minister of Agriculture, is excited about a couple of things impacting the agriculture, agri-food and farming communities. We have a big farming community in Bay of Quinte. So the amendments to the Milk Act are going to be warmly received, not that we drink our milk warm in Quinte; we like our milk cold. But these are welcome changes to the Milk Act. Then there's also streamlining the farm financial protection programs, which are great. We have a very, very active agricultural community. This is going to impact all sectors in the ag community, from dairy, obviously, to the grain farmers. We've got some great grain farmers in my region as well and the beef farmers, which I love. We get out to some great twilights in the summer.

For those city folk, they probably don't know what a twilight is, but it's where you go out to one of the local farms. The entire community is invited out there, and it's just a whole lot of fun. You get a chance to see the animals and see the great work that they're doing on the farm. I'm looking forward to twilight season coming up a little bit later on this summer.

In conclusion, here this afternoon, I'd like to thank the Legislature for providing me with the time to speak to the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, which, if passed, would allow ratepayers across the country, the people of Ontario, to save money on bills, which follows our government's commitment to ensuring a reliable and affordable and clean electricity system to power Ontario. Personally, I am really excited about the Building Broadband Faster Act amendments. I know full well just how badly that type of work is needed.

This is going to positively impact the people of Bay of Quinte. It's going to positively impact the people of Ontario.

I just want to close by saying this: There's a lot of work that goes into these red tape bills. I'll go back to where I started with commending Minister Gill and also PA Oosterhoff and their team at this new ministry, the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, for the work that they're doing, because it's a bit like herding cats. All of these great ideas come into your office on how you can reduce red tape. And it sounds really easy, but it's not, because when those ideas come in, you then have to go to every single line minister and make sure the due diligence is done to ensure that the red tape that you are cutting is in fact red tape, that it's overregulation, that it is having an impact on businesses or impacting the people or not-for-profits in our province. It is a heck of a lot of work.

The commitment that we have as a government not just to do this every now and then but to do it twice a year is a major undertaking. It's a thick document. It's going to make a huge difference in our open-for-business policies here in Ontario.

I look forward to seeing more multi-billion dollar investments in Ontario because of Minister Gill's Bill 91.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question of the Minister of Energy. I'm glad to hear his enthusiasm for broadband. I wish that we saw that the government was actually investing in that enthusiasm at more than the rate of 2% of what they've budgeted.

Specifically, I wanted to raise something that's sticking in my craw from the other day. The member from Nickel Belt thoughtfully raised a concern from her neck of the woods about the lack of broadband investment and hope—the lack of hope, I think, because in northern and rural communities like the riding of Nickel Belt, businesses are not going to put in broadband; there's no money in it for them. She asked if the government would take responsibility, a public solution, and she was mercilessly mocked for suggesting such a thing.

1550

I would ask the Minister of Energy, who's excited about broadband going across the province, how is this government going to ensure that when companies will not put it in because there's no money for them—how are they going to get that broadband? Or are they just up a creek?

Hon. Todd Smith: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It's very important, first of all, and our job here in the province is to ensure that we get the infrastructure to the doorstep of the individuals across the province so that they can access high-speed Internet service for their businesses, so their kids can do their homework, all of those important things so they can do their business from home. We put \$4 billion out there, and the Minister of Infrastructure has been working extremely hard to ensure that happens by 2025. The reverse-auction that she has run has been successful in ensuring that we have the ISPs, those Internet service providers, that are going to do the work to get it to the door.

I'm not exactly sure what the question is that the member is asking, because it's still going to be up to individuals to sign up with that ISP to get the Internet

service so that they can run their business, and it will be up to them to make that decision, but the Internet service will be available to each and every home and business across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for his presentation—very dynamic. I appreciate your comments regarding the OEB's authority and how this bill will allow innovation. I also loved your comment about the cleanest technology in the world. I think that's so important, and we should be really marketing that, so to speak.

My question to you, Minister: Can you provide an example of how giving the OEB the authority to waive licensing requirements for pilot projects could encourage greater customer participation in the energy sector?

Hon. Todd Smith: A very important question. There are so many companies out there that are innovating in this space, but they are limited as to what they can do because of red tape at the OEB. Making sure the sandbox which the OEB runs has the ability to invite more people to participate when it comes to innovating in the energy sector is what we're aiming to do here.

For an example, there are companies and manufacturers in our province that are operating battery storage facilities. They would be able to share, peer to peer, the energy that they're producing and storing in their facilities, and potentially making that electricity available to their local distribution companies. So if it's in Ajax, they would be sharing the electricity they're producing, with a fee, to Elexicon, which is the local distribution company, which will then make our grid even that much more stable.

These are some of the ideas that we're looking at, and there's lots of innovation opportunities in the sector.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you to the member for Bay of Quinte: At a time when life is unaffordable, we have a series of technical measures for remote meetings. These priorities are way out of touch.

My question: Yesterday the housing minister said that meeting Ontario's housing targets was out of his control. What is in the government's control is prioritizing purpose-built housing and grants to make houses more affordable. Why, instead, are we prioritizing technical legislation?

Hon. Todd Smith: I think it's indefensible to allege that this government has done nothing when it comes to housing. We have brought forward nine pieces of legislation to speed up the process to build all types of housing and we have seen record numbers when it comes to new rental housing and housing starts in our province over the last number of years. We continue to bring forward new housing measures to build houses of all types faster, and in the budget, there was over \$200 million for purpose-built housing, working with not-for-profits in our communities to build housing which is badly needed in all communities.

Every time we bring forward a piece of legislation, you know what you're going to get out of the New Democratic Party: You're always going to get a no. But I think it's pretty rich to allege that this government hasn't done anything on housing. We've done more on housing than any government in our province's history.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Me?

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay, sorry. The applause was so loud for the Minister of Energy, I just couldn't hear my riding.

I'd like to congratulate—actually you, Speaker; it's nice to see you in the chair. Congratulations. It's always good to see a strong woman in the chair.

I also want to congratulate my colleague the Minister of Energy. He and I have been working on this type of file for the past number of years—me, 17; him, I believe it's now 11, 12 or something like that. I do take his point about all of the red tape that was incurred during the last Liberal government. It does take time in order to responsibly, ethically and morally reduce red tape while taking your time, but, at the same time, understanding the sense of urgency.

A week ago, I held a round table in the constituency on Ottawa investment. One of the things I heard that makes Ottawa a unique place to invest is our stability and pay-cheques because of the federal government. We have a good strong base of high-tech. We're bilingual; we're diverse; we have lots of land and we have low costs.

That said, what is still a problem is inflation. We still have labour shortages like everywhere else. The supply chain has impacted us, but today and every day the business owners of Nepean and the rest of Ottawa tell me red tape is the number one concern and it's costing business.

I ask the minister—he did refer to \$700 million worth of cutting red tape. Could he elaborate on that?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the great work she does representing the entire city of Ottawa as our member there.

Red tape is suffocating businesses in this province, but not as bad as it was five years ago because of all of the legislation we've brought forward to reduce red tape. The red tape bills that we have brought forward have had an impact on just about every sector.

One of the blessings, I guess, of being a new member back in 2011 and given this portfolio was going out and seeing just where red tape was impacting people across the province, and it wasn't just small businesses. Certainly it was impacting small businesses, but it was impacting our delivery of health care. It was impacting our delivery of education. It was impacting our delivery of social services. It was impacting all of the ministries that deliver very, very important services to the province.

So we set out on a mission to reduce that red tape and we have surpassed our goals, but we're not stopping there.

Minister Gill is still charging forward like a bull at a red flag in front of him to remove red tape.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the Minister of Energy. I would just suggest that what's suffocating people in this province is not red tape but their inability to pay basic bills, like their rent and their hydro bills. You came to power saying you're going to clean up the hydro mess; you've made it messier, in my opinion. You have said in fact that you were going to reduce hydro bills—I don't know; for residents, was it 14%—a moving target. You haven't done any of it. In addition, taxpayers are still on the hook for \$7 billion of taxpayer money to subsidize the mess you said you would clean up.

So what in this bill helps people pay their electrical bills?

Hon. Todd Smith: I only have 25 seconds to talk about all the things we're doing, but today in question period, I addressed one of the issues that the member opposite raised. The Energy Affordability Program is being expanded so that more people across the province could get energy-efficient air conditioners and energy-efficient refrigerators; can reduce their electricity bills; get new insulation. The member should take a look at the website and she can inform her constituents exactly what's available.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's such a pleasure to join this debate on G91 this afternoon. I did catch the one-hour lead by our critic on this bill, and I think the way he started the conversation on the nature of red tape and the importance of having regulations for health and safety really resonated with me.

1600

I've heard some members saying that the number one issue they hear in their riding is reducing red tape. The number one issue that I hear in Waterloo, and I'm sure our other members in the official opposition too, is housing. It's cost of living; it's affordability; it's climate change; it's health care—accessing health care, accessing mental health services. So I just want to preface that, because I'm going to present some examples of streamlining and reducing regulatory burdens, which would be beneficial for the people of this province. Also, I'm really hopeful that the door is still open, and I'm glad that the minister did his opening speech this morning on Bill 91. We have some specific examples where regulatory burdens couldn't be reduced which actually benefit the people that we are elected to serve, and that's sort of the focus that we are coming to in this debate on this piece of legislation.

It is worth noting, as our critic mentioned, that we only got a hard copy of the bill this morning. It's a fast-moving bill, and so we're still peeling back the layers on it, and of course, doing some stakeholder consultation, which I think is our duty to do and also an important part of holding the government to account.

Now, it will surprise some of the members over there, but we have already heard from some folks that are very concerned with where you are choosing to place regulatory burdens and then where you're sort of ignoring or setting aside red tape and regulations. My friend and colleague from Oshawa, she just happened to share an economic and development services department planning services report that's going to Oshawa city council, and as you can expect, municipalities are reeling from Bill 23. The government is actively changing the rules of engagement, and honestly, the relationship that the provincial government has with municipalities in Ontario, and you've done it in such a way that it is only breeding discontent and genuine concerns. And I just want to say, 444 municipalities are not wrong on Bill 23.

Specifically, around regulations, this is in 5.3 of the staff report: "The province is proposing that municipalities report planning-approval information quarterly. Staff do not support reporting on a quarterly basis as it is onerous, time-consuming and may overlap with the subsequent quarter's data collection. This may also prove onerous for the province to disseminate the data on a quarterly basis.... As a result, there is typically a delay recurring on an annual basis when activity that would otherwise would have occurred during the third quarter can only be dealt with in the fourth quarter."

These are the people who are actually doing the real work in the community to facilitate housing, right? So what is this government doing? They're providing more hoops for them to jump through, Madam Speaker. The "implementation of the regulation" that is contained in Bill 23 "will take already constrained staff resources away from actually processing planning applications." If you want to fast-track housing, why would you put another roadblock for staff to facilitate and streamline that process? They say, "This will cause delays in planning approvals and may require the hiring of additional staff to help offset the need for staff to spend more time recording data." Is that what you want? You want municipal staff to spend more time recording data than approving housing development?

And this also, they point out, would result "in further costs to the city in an already cost-constrained environment." We are already seeing tax hikes across the province due to Bill 23. Bill 23 is having a cooling effect on housing. It is already happening in Waterloo with the delay of 800 homes because they don't have the money to plan the community infrastructure that subdivision requires. This report from Oshawa goes on to say, "It is requested that the province provide information on the consequences of not having the data available to provide to the province in the manner proposed."

And then, finally, "The pace of planning applications is often in the hands of developers"—I just want you to sit with that for a little bit. "The pace of planning applications is often in the hands of developers and their consultants. If a developer decides to not advance their application or decides to alter it substantially it will cause delay."

This is actually happening in Waterloo region, and I know that my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga knows

this. Applications have been approved. All the i's are dotted, the t's are crossed, but the developer is not moving ahead. They're waiting for the cost of the homes to increase, they're waiting for the profit margins to increase, and this, then, is outside of the purview of those municipalities.

"The province should develop a reciprocal regulation for the development industry"—this is coming from the planners in Oshawa, which is a very fast-growing community which actually needs housing. This is the feedback on the regulatory burden that the government is placing on municipalities, all the while going through the motions of reducing red tape.

I just want to say, the regulations that are contained within Bill 23, it goes on to say, "do not appear to require information concerning approvals of housing units related to community planning permit systems. Without such information, it is not clear how the province can reliably compare planning approval processes across all municipalities."

When the minister talked this morning, he was saying that there was a lot of collaboration and communication between ministries. I would urge the minister responsible for red tape to sit down with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and say, "Listen, housing is in a crisis. Bill 23 will slow down that planning process." We do not need more red tape around housing, Madam Speaker. What we do need is direct investment.

This sort of leads me to this conversation around what is driving the red tape priorities. I was watching the news earlier today, and I'm sure people have heard about a senior couple who were scammed by cryptocurrency. Cryptocurrency and Bitcoin are a huge issue in the province of Ontario. I did write to the Minister of Finance back on September 8 of last year—it does feel like a very long time ago, I just want to say for the record; we haven't even finished one year of this term. But the fact that this couple was able to be scammed out of \$400,000—and just so the House knows, fraud reports in the province of Ontario have skyrocketed over the last decade. Crypto is problematic in that there are not enough regulatory protections around this new sector. In fact, the Ontario Securities Commission is chasing the sector, I would say.

I did meet with a group called the Canadian Web3 Council. I sat down with them. They are a group of folks who are asking the government to establish responsible public policy around crypto, and they're actually asking for a trust framework to unlock the development—because there's lots of potential. I'm not going to pretend that I understand everything about it; I don't think anybody in this House understands everything about Bitcoin, but it is here. It is here in Ontario.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, maybe you do know everything, but then surely you must have some concerns around people being scammed of \$400,000.

When I wrote the minister, I said specifically, "CW3 voiced their desire for the government to launch a public consultation to create a new framework specific to crypto

assets. The last round of government consultation happened three years ago,” according to this letter, but now we’re at four years. With a sector like crypto, which is changing fast-paced—changing daily, some would say—why would the government not be bringing forward some regulatory guidelines around this specific issue?

I have to also say, “Ontario is falling behind other jurisdictions and this format lacks transparency and results in unclear regulatory expectations”—hold on. Ahem. I have a cough.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s just a cough right now.

1610

Interjection: Do you want a cough drop?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I do want a cough drop. I mean, what does a girl have to do around here to get a cough drop?

So the answer we got back from the finance minister is that we should reach out to the Ontario Securities Commission. Of course, we are going to do that, but I do think it’s worth noting that the council—this is not something that should be driven by the sector, Madam Speaker. Cryptocurrency is here. There are concerns about it. There’s no consumer protection plan around it. Why is this government not doing something around regulating this sector with consumers and citizens in mind?

Going back to my theme of where the energy is going around red tape, it should be also noted that some changes have happened around ODSP and the reporting around ODSP. If I have to say—and I did write the former minister about this as well: “As of February 4, 2023, recipients of ODSP are now required to log into their MyBenefits app to declare that they have not been out of Ontario for 30 consecutive days.”

When this issue first came to my attention, as many issues do come through our constituency—there was a lady who said, “Listen, why do I have to prove that I haven’t left Ontario? Why do I have to do this on a monthly basis? I can’t even get down to the grocery store.” So there is a disconnect here around the overregulation in certain sectors and then the under-regulation in emerging issues like crypto.

In the letter, I said, “We are hearing from constituents who feel they are being over-monitored by the government when they are already exhausted by having to prove they are disabled enough to receive support.” This is a direct quote from a constituent: “Enough of our lives are controlled by reporting into the program.” Our offices have reached out to the MPP liaison to clarify the full impact of this change. To date, we did not receive any response.

Now, considering that ODSP payments are barely enough to survive on—okay? So you’re leaving, like, the Wild West of crypto and Bitcoin just to figure things out and not protecting consumers, but for folks who are on ODSP, they have to prove that they are disabled year after year after year. Now they have to also go into the MyBenefits app and prove that they haven’t gone anywhere. How could they go anywhere, Madam Speaker?

And why is this government implementing further administrative and financial hoops for recipients to jump through? We’re concerned about the cost of this added oversight with the addition of red tape that that creates.

It is ironic that the government can bring forward a very hefty red tape bill but then, on the other hand, create more red tape for the most vulnerable people who don’t have that support system in their lives. ODSP is already punitive even without this change. We ask you, are the benefits of this change worth further demoralizing and marginalizing ODSP recipients?

I raise that issue again because Bill 91, which is a huge bill, delves into some of these areas where you’ve decided—you’re picking and choosing certain areas and prioritizing them. There honestly doesn’t seem to be any rhyme or reason as to why you’ve decided that.

There are some red flags for us, though, with this bill. I just had this really great meeting with the University of Guelph, an amazing institution, and I really learned a lot about how expansive their program is, how they’ve modernized as a university. But they are going to be running a \$33-million deficit this year, like many of our public institutions that have gone through a hard time, and these things ebb and flow. One of the areas, though, that they struggle with is around international students, and the fact that private colleges are making promises to those students and providing—I have to be careful about my language, but some of those international students are fast-tracked over to those private colleges.

And then, of course, we see in Bill 91 who you actually are listening to. Schedule 29 of the bill changes the name of the act to the Ontario Career Colleges Act; it removes “private,” which is ironic because they are still businesses, and one could say that calling something a career college has a different connotation, I think, quite honestly. And then, also, the fact that this change in the definition and the request to change the name has actually come from the sector because “operators have raised concerns that the word ‘private’ has a negative connotation and unfairly stigmatizes them and their students”—this was reported in the Trillium. So here you have a piece of legislation and a government that clearly has the ear of some people, and then you have a whole segment, like workers, where safety in the province of Ontario—we’ve never seen so many injuries and accidents on our sites. This is a huge concern for me, especially around the use of accredited tradespeople, because my son is a tradesperson. He’s an electrician. If you have one unqualified person on that work site, that then becomes, in my opinion—not just as a mother, but as someone who follows workplace health and safety regulations—a very unsafe workplace.

So we have some concerns about schedule 29, and I think that the former comments by our critic on schedule 29 warrant some consideration by the minister.

Finally, I want to say that we did hear some really good examples—and I do want to thank the minister who is responsible for red tape for appearing before budget committee when we were up in Kenora. The story goes like this: We heard from some forestry leaders, not

surprisingly, up north. They commented that they are really struggling with finding drivers, and perhaps you'll remember this. Erik Holmstrom and Tom Ratz were really trying to hire a Ukrainian driver. A driver and his family came to the north, came to the Kenora area. This Ukrainian driver had 20 years of experience. He did apply at Resolute, but it took nine months for a licence, so instead, he got a job in Manitoba.

So when you can streamline some red tape and fast-track some licensing requirements for qualified people, you can actually have a competitive edge as an economy. I think that warrants some attention. As I said at the beginning of my comments, which have been cough-ridden, this is something that we should consider doing, especially if we want to capitalize as a province on the talent that is coming into the province.

While we're at it, let's reduce the regulatory burden on municipalities so that when those new immigrants come in, when those skilled workers come into the province of Ontario, they actually have a place to live—because I just want to be really clear with this government: They're not going to be living in the greenbelt. That's not the destination for new immigrants who are coming to Ontario. And the great irony that I want to point out is that we are actually making the case for intensification of housing within urban boundaries, where the infrastructure is—where the parks are, the hospitals, the educational resources. That's what we want. We want people to come into our communities, be welcomed in those communities—and then not further add burden to the current tax base by having to increase the taxes to facilitate sprawl. So that's what the people of Waterloo region want me to really try to get through to this government—that we are arguing for intensification, not sprawl, especially when your own affordable housing task force recommended that you have enough land within the urban boundary to accommodate those immigrants.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?
1620

Mr. Mike Harris: I caught about the last maybe seven or eight minutes of the member from Waterloo's debate. I didn't really hear her talk much about what was in the bill. I heard her talk about a lot of things that she wishes she maybe saw in the bill, but I'm just curious if there's anything in here that she can actually stand up and support.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, it's really interesting to get a question like that from my colleague, because if you heard my original comments, the entire theme is about what you prioritize over what you don't prioritize, and that inconsistency in policy application is problematic for us—and also making the case that we support streamlining some regulations, but not when they compromise the health and safety of workers in Ontario.

We would like to see a stronger application of addressing those who are vulnerable in Ontario, like the ODSP example that I gave you. When people are on ODSP, they shouldn't have to prove every single month or every single year that they still are an amputee. That's ridiculous. So for us, we are looking at this legislation through a different lens.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the comments from the member. I was particularly interested in your thoughts about housing and things that are missing and priorities that aren't there, because we've had a lot of talk about housing. As people here know, since I was elected, I have been advocating for two shovel-ready projects of affordable housing, including rent-geared-to-income housing. And yet here we are nine months later and I'm still unable to find any kind of provincial support for this housing, so I'm wondering if the member has any thoughts on what's here and what's not here.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I do think that the comments that I made with regard to the planners from the city of Oshawa should resonate with this government. These are planners who have said, "These are schedules within the legislation that are going to make building housing more difficult. You're putting up barriers to building housing." I like to think that in this House none of us want that, Madam Speaker.

As I said at the beginning, we really just got this bill in this morning in hard copy. We're still doing that stakeholder consultation, and as we peel back the layers, we hope that the government will be amenable to some changes. Certainly on the housing front, we should be doing everything that we can to support municipalities in true partnership, including making them whole, as the minister promised to.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member for her presentation. In this Bill 91, we actually talked about updating the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

You just mentioned in your response to my colleague that you want to be focused on people and ODSP. So my question to you is, in reforming this plan, it will make Ontario's developmental services system more responsive and directly linked to people's needs. I would have to think the member would want to support that. Can we count on your vote?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is also really interesting. I think you're talking about schedule 33, and this adds the new subsection 7(3) that increases the powers of the director of the program over funding entities around allocation of resources to persons with developmental disabilities, as well as performance standards and measures of services regulated by the act. It also states that the director has the power to determine "the method of prioritizing persons for whom a funding entity has developed a service and support profile under section 18."

This is exactly one of the examples that I was giving, that in order for us to really see how this plays itself out in the community with the underfunded sector, how this will improve the lives of those who have developmental disabilities—and the entire section for me is actually highlighted, so I think that it warrants further attention.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question of our critic for finance after her thoughtful speech as we are again talking about red tape reduction. I appreciate that she raised the issues shared by the folks who do the planning, the staff at the city of Oshawa who were raising issues with this government about a proposed minister's regulation under the Planning Act. While that may be separate and apart from this particular bill, this is a bill that is undertaking to reduce red tape, and yet here's a brand new regulation the government is proposing and asking for feedback on, and the folks in Oshawa have said it is onerous and will require additional temporary staffing or overtime. They are seeking clarification on even some of the terms in the regulation because it's not intuitive. They're asking for the government to approach this differently or to re-approach it and answer their comments. Should they have any hope that that will happen?

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's an interesting question, because hope is a very subjective thing, I guess. We have consistently raised the issues of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario with this minister and with this Premier. We have relayed and amplified those concerns. I would say that the relationship right now with AMO is fairly broken, especially given the lack of consultation, which I think this commentary from the planners at the city of Oshawa reflects.

When you don't do proper consultation, I've often said, then you have a flawed product, and that's what Bill 23 is. Bill 23 is not working, will not work, in fact, will undermine the goals the government has said they want to see happen, which is more housing. We challenged the government on the assertion that that housing must happen on the greenbelt. That, in fact, is very problematic for the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: We all remember 15 years of this previous Liberal government's legacy: crippling deficits, crushing debt, systemic dismantling of our manufacturing sector, 300,000 jobs leaving the province, unaffordable electricity costs for families and businesses alike. Now the changes we are proposing would ultimately ensure that ratepayers are not subject to additional costs

that are not directly related to their usage of electricity and not directly related to their use of gas.

I realize it wasn't an NDP government, but for three of those 15 years the NDP was propping them up. Can you make up for that, I ask the member, by supporting this bill and its proposed amendments on correcting record-high energy costs—make up for the failures of that three-year period of support?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is a narrative that the government raises on a regular basis. I just want to say that I completely agree with the former comment by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga when he said it's really hard to prop up a majority government. That's like saying we're propping up you, which we are not doing.

I also would like to say to the member, respectfully, that the Conservative Party of Ontario, under several leaders, was the official opposition during those years. You had the opportunity to hold that government to account, just as we did. When it was a minority government, we were able to secure the Financial Accountability Office to increase financial transparency for Ontarians, which I think was time well spent and was worth our energy to fight for.

But we are very focused on solutions to the issues on energy, and \$6.5 billion in subsidies is not a sustainable amount of money that this province can afford to address energy costs.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: To my friend from Waterloo: I'm always amazed to hear the government talk about cutting red tape when we see—I don't think there's any government in the history of Ontario that spent as much money fighting in the courts to justify their own bad legislation. I'm wondering if the member can tell me: Isn't that a form of red tape? If you look at Bill 124, creating artificial legislation to suppress workers' wages, and then when you're told that it's not legal, to go to court and fight that, isn't that a form of red tape in itself?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. Yes, it is. It is, and in fact, you're going to be going back to court on the Ring of Fire because you didn't do your due diligence and consultation with First Nations.

Report continues in volume B.

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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	
Leccese, 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)	Kiwiwinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	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	