

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 78A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 78A

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Tuesday
16 May 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mardi
16 mai 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 16 May 2023 / Mardi 16 mai 2023

House sittings

Hon. Paul Calandra 4311

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy 4311
Mr. Terence Kernaghan 4313
Ms. Laura Smith 4313
Mme France Gélinas 4314
Mr. Billy Pang 4314
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy 4314
Mr. Jeff Burch 4315
Mr. Will Bouma 4317
Mr. Chris Glover 4318
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy 4318
Ms. Peggy Sattler 4318
Mr. Will Bouma 4318
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady 4319
Mr. Will Bouma 4320
Mr. John Vanthof 4320
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy 4320
Third reading debate deemed adjourned 4321

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Long-term care

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto 4321

Cost of living

Miss Monique Taylor 4321

Police services

Mr. Andrew Dowie 4321

Highway safety

Mr. John Vanthof 4321

Premiers intervenants

M. Stéphane Sarrazin 4322

Environmental protection

MPP Jamie West 4322

Veterans

Ms. Andrea Khanjin 4322

Black Watch (RHR) of Canada Pipes and Drums band

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady 4322

Ontario farmers

Mr. Nolan Quinn 4323

Honourable Erin O'Toole

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy 4323

Tabling of sessional papers

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) 4323

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) 4323
Miss Monique Taylor 4324
Hon. Kaled Rasheed 4324
MPP Jamie West 4324
Mr. Graham McGregor 4324
Ms. Chandra Pasma 4324
Hon. Stephen Lecce 4324
Mr. Chris Glover 4324
Ms. Goldie Ghamari 4324
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho 4324
Hon. Charmaine A. Williams 4324
Hon. Michael Parsa 4324
Hon. David Piccini 4324
Mr. Anthony Leardi 4324
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy 4324
Mrs. Daisy Wai 4324
Mr. Logan Kanapathi 4324
Mr. Billy Pang 4324
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) 4324

Wearing of ribbons

Mr. Michael Mantha 4324

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Government accountability

Mr. Sol Mamakwa 4324
Hon. Paul Calandra 4325
Ms. Sandy Shaw 4325
Hon. David Piccini 4325

Public transit

Ms. Bhutilla Karpoche 4325
Hon. Caroline Mulroney 4326

Violence in schools

Ms. Chandra Pasma 4326
Hon. Stephen Lecce 4326

Firefighters

Mr. Will Bouma 4327
Hon. Monte McNaughton 4327

Municipal finances	
Mr. John Vanthof	4328
Hon. Steve Clark	4328
Mining industry	
Mr. Graham McGregor	4328
Hon. George Pirie	4328
Automobile insurance	
Mr. Tom Rakocevic	4329
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	4329
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	4329
Land use planning	
Mr. John Fraser	4329
Hon. Paul Calandra	4330
Indigenous economic development	
Mr. Will Bouma	4330
Hon. Greg Rickford	4330
Tenant protection	
Ms. Jessica Bell	4331
Hon. Steve Clark	4331
Employment standards	
Mr. Michael Mantha	4331
Hon. Graydon Smith	4332
Environmental protection	
Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal	4332
Hon. David Piccini	4332
Mental health and addiction services	
MPP Jamie West	4333
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo	4333
Hon. Paul Calandra	4333
Seniors' services	
Mr. Will Bouma	4334
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho	4334
Employment standards / Small business	
Mr. Chris Glover	4334
Hon. Monte McNaughton	4334
Hon. Steve Clark	4335
Independent members	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	4335
Independent member	
Mr. Michael Mantha	4335
Birthday of member's assistant	
Mr. Ross Romano	4335
Visitors	
Mr. Aris Babikian	4335
Birth of member's great-nephew	
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	4336

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

The Noble House Corporation Act, 2023, Bill Pr19, Ms. Smith	
First reading agreed to	4336

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care workers	
Ms. Sandy Shaw	4336
Domestic violence	
Mr. Deepak Anand	4336
Adoption disclosure	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4336
Social assistance	
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady	4336
School boards	
Mr. Anthony Learidi	4337
Land using planning	
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	4337
School boards	
Mr. Dave Smith	4337
Social assistance	
MPP Lise Vaugeois	4337
School boards	
Mr. Graham McGregor	4338
Ferry service	
MPP Jamie West	4338
School boards	
Mr. Andrew Dowie	4338
Health care workers	
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	4338

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023, Bill 85, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2023 visant à bâtir un Ontario fort (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 85, M. Bethlenfalvy	
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy	4339
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	4340
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4341
Mr. Will Bouma	4341
Mr. Guy Bourgouin	4342
Mr. Graham McGregor	4342
MPP Jamie West	4342
Ms. Sandy Shaw	4343
Ms. Laura Smith	4345
MPP Lise Vaugeois	4346
Ms. Donna Skelly	4346
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4346
Mr. Kevin Holland	4346
Mr. Mike Schreiner	4347
Mr. Mike Harris	4348
Mr. Tom Rakocevic	4348
Mr. Mike Harris	4348
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto	4348
Mr. Mike Harris	4350
MPP Jamie West	4351

Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	4351
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	4352
Ms. Donna Skelly	4352
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	4352
MPP Lise Vaugeois	4352
Ms. Laura Smith	4354
Ms. Sandy Shaw	4354
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	4354
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	4354
Mr. Guy Bourgouin	4355
Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam.....	4355
Mr. Ric Bresee.....	4355
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	4356
Ms. Laura Smith	4357
Ms. Sandy Shaw	4357
Mr. Stephen Crawford	4357
MPP Jamie West.....	4357

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 May 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 mai 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting is cancelled.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to implement Budget measures and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Building a Strong Ontario Act, 2023, a plan that takes a responsible and targeted approach to supporting people and businesses while outlining a path to balance next year, so that future generations can inherit a strong Ontario. This plan is our blueprint for building a strong province during a time of global challenge and change.

Our work to deliver our plan for building a strong province starts now. It starts with a path to a balanced budget. Thanks to robust revenue growth, our prudent plan and our disciplined planning have led us to a path to balance. I am proud to say that starting next year, we will return Ontario to the black with a modest surplus of \$200 million. While uncertainty persists, this puts us in a position of fiscal strength. In fact, Ontario's net debt-to-GDP is now forecast to be 37.8% in 2023-24, down 3.6 percentage points.

Our budget assumptions are based on an in-depth analysis and inputs from leading private sector economists whom we consulted a great deal with. In our budget modelling, our government never assumes that the extremes will necessarily come to pass. Instead, we take out either

the best-case scenario or the worst-case scenario so that we have more of an average. For example, in our economic and fiscal assumptions, we are always prudent. We will always be a little bit more cautious than the average of private sector forecasts.

Recently, I was very pleased to see that Moody's has changed Ontario's credit outlook to "positive" from "stable," something that we have not seen in almost two decades, ladies and gentlemen.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member from Peterborough for that applause.

This reflects our government's commitment to prudent, responsible fiscal management and a strong economy. By taking a disciplined approach, our budget has ample room to react to uncertainties that may lie ahead. To be frank, the world is a much more uncertain place today than it was last year, and, despite the turbulence of the past year, Ontario continues to be resilient. Today, because of the leadership of our government and our targeted and responsible approach, we are in a better position than most. Today there are parts of the world that are showing they have no intention of being reliable or fair trading partners. This means Ontario needs to increase its self-sufficiency and lower its dependence on imports.

Il y a aujourd'hui certaines parties du monde qui ont démontré qu'elles n'avaient pas l'intention d'être des partenaires d'échange fiables ou équitables, madame la Présidente. Le fait est qu'aujourd'hui, l'Ontario doit accroître son autosuffisance et diminuer sa dépendance envers les importations.

This is good news. It's good news that Ontario is well positioned to pivot its approach to this shifting landscape.

Take the Ring of Fire: The Ring of Fire can help reduce Ontario's dependency on unstable or unfriendly foreign regimes by tapping the potential of the north and getting these minerals out of the ground. With the support of the First Nations in northern Ontario, we can decouple economically from these adversarial regimes and thrive in doing so. While Ontario is investing \$1 billion to unlock these critical minerals in our north, we continue to call on the federal government to match our commitment, because what is good for Ontario is good for Canada.

Our government is determined to get the important things right. Getting the important things right is a core concept in the 2023 budget.

Madame la Présidente, le gouvernement provincial est déterminé à faire ce qui doit être fait et à bien le faire. C'est là un concept fondamental du budget de 2023.

These are serious times, and serious times call for a serious budget, like the plan our government has put

forward, which this legislation—of which I am extremely proud.

It is no secret, as I said, that these are uncertain times. Our province is not immune to the impact of global forces, including geopolitical tension provoked by Russian aggression against Ukraine, the reopening of China's economy, the energy transition, and policies such as the United States' Inflation Reduction Act. Families and workers are feeling the squeeze of inflation on their wallets. Our 2023 budget takes a responsible and targeted approach to navigating this uncertainty while supporting people and businesses.

Despite the global challenges around us, there are plenty of reasons for optimism. While much has changed in the past year, economic circumstances have confirmed that the government has the right plan. And it is already showing results.

Ontario is seeing an increase in manufacturing and jobs all around the province. Take Oshawa as an example, a city that is benefiting from part of GM's more than \$2-billion investment that will protect thousands of jobs. Or Richmond Hill, where Tesla is manufacturing equipment to help make the batteries of the future. Or Alliston, where Honda is making a \$1.4-billion investment to make hybrid vehicles. Or take Oakville—please, take Oakville—where Ford is making a \$1.8-billion investment to produce electric vehicles. ArcelorMittal Dofasco in Hamilton is making a \$1.8-billion investment in producing green steel, including for the auto sector—green steel, Minister of Energy. What do you think of that? In Cambridge and Woodstock, two very proud auto towns, Toyota has invested \$1.4 billion to make vehicles, including hybrids. Or Ingersoll, where General Motors is building Canada's first-ever full-scale EV manufacturing plant. Or St. Thomas, the future home of Volkswagen's first-ever overseas battery plant.

0910

Madam Speaker, this province is the heartland of Canada's electric vehicle manufacturing revolution. In two and a half years, Ontario has attracted some \$25 billion in investments from global automakers and electric vehicle batteries and battery material suppliers.

As the Minister of Economic Development says, we weren't even on the map when we took over government. We've gone from zero to second place in the world. When we work together, Ontario and Canada can achieve amazing things.

We're not stopping there. By supporting this bill, the members of this House would be saying yes to the new Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, a tax credit that would provide a 10% refundable corporate income tax credit to help local manufacturers expand and grow, creating new jobs and opportunities right here in Ontario.

This, along with all the other steps our government has taken since 2018, would enable an estimated \$8 billion in cost savings and support in 2023, making Ontario more competitive for both large and small businesses. As much as \$3.6 billion of these savings and supports would be

going to small businesses. These measures include the proposal to expand access to the small business corporate income tax rate by increasing the phase-out range. This change would provide Ontario's small businesses with an additional \$265 million in provincial income tax relief from 2022-23 to 2025-26. Think about that: helping small businesses expand, risk their capital, create jobs, and create prosperity in this great land.

Madam Speaker, we need to build the infrastructure to support these growing communities. That is why we are continuing to deliver on our historic \$185-billion capital plan, the most ambitious in the history of this great province. As part of our historic 10-year infrastructure plan, we are investing almost \$28 billion in highways, like the new Highway 7 from Kitchener all the way to Guelph, and Highway 413, and the much-needed Bradford Bypass. This is very much an investment in more livable and affordable communities that allow safer, more comfortable and more convenient commutes.

We're also continuing to make large new investments in transit, including increasing GO service to Niagara from Union Station and bringing back the Northlander from Timmins to Toronto. We are making progress on the Ontario Line and the Yonge North subway extension.

We are also investing in new schools, new child care spaces, new hospitals and, of course, new and more long-term care. Our plan is to build both new hospitals and expand existing ones. It is a plan to build safe and comfortable long-term-care homes across the province.

This ambitious infrastructure plan needs workers. Through the Skills Development Fund, we are training workers with the skills they need so they have stable careers in the skilled trades and other in-demand jobs. We are working with private sector unions and other partners to upgrade their training facilities so that workers get the best possible training from the experts on the ground. What a concept: experts on the ground with reliable partners like the trade unions.

Our \$224-million investment in the capital stream of the Skills Development Fund will leverage private sector expertise and expand training centres, including, as I said, and very specifically, union training halls, so they can provide more accessible, more flexible training opportunities for all workers in Ontario.

Notre investissement de 224 millions de dollars dans le volet immobilisations du Fonds pour le développement des compétences permettra de mettre à profit l'expertise du secteur privé et d'étendre les centres de formation, y compris les salles de formation syndicales, afin d'offrir aux travailleurs des possibilités de formation plus accessibles et plus souples.

Our government is continuing to support those who need it most, like families whose children are receiving pediatric care.

While we are investing more than \$200 million to connect children and youth to care at hospitals in the communities, we are also supporting Ronald McDonald House Charities in Ottawa. When they need it most, Ronald McDonald House Ottawa provides families whose children are receiving care at the Children's Hospital of

Eastern Ontario with a place to call home. With our government's investment of \$3.1 million to expand Ronald McDonald House, they will be able to double their capacity from 55,000 to 115,000 overnight stays per year. I'll say that again: from 55,000 to 115,000 overnight stays. Think about the impact on families and their children through their most trying time. That's why we are there to help more families and children. By the way, I was in Ottawa a few weeks ago and went to visit the Ronald McDonald House. You can't believe the people who volunteer their time, the board, all the funding, at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. And this \$3 million allows them to go forward with the \$22-million expansion. We're so grateful that we could help them so they can help the families and the children.

During a time of economic challenge and change, our government is also supporting those who have fallen on hard times, such as those who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness. We have increased funding for our homelessness prevention programs by more than 40%. Our government is now investing an additional \$202 million annually in homelessness prevention programs to help those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and to support community organizations delivering supportive housing. This is part of a bold and transformational change we're implementing to tackle the housing supply crisis and get more homes built faster across Ontario, including supportive housing for those who need a hand up.

As the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services often says, we're there for all Ontarians.

This new funding will be provided through the Homelessness Prevention Program and the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program. It builds on the government's investment of nearly \$4.4 billion over the past three years to grow and enhance community and supportive housing. This includes an investment of \$11.5 million each year in the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program to provide Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate long-term housing solutions and support services to Indigenous people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We are using the measures in the 2023 budget and in the spring budget bill to make changes and deliver investments and services that bring more peace of mind and more security to families, to workers, to businesses and to individuals.

Nous nous appuyons sur les mesures énoncées dans le budget de 2023 et dans le projet de loi budgétaire du printemps pour effectuer des changements, réaliser des investissements et fournir des services qui offriront une tranquillité d'esprit et une sécurité accrues aux familles, aux travailleurs, aux entreprises et aux particuliers.

I am as confident about the province's future as I have ever been. While I do see a brighter future ahead for all of us, we know success in life is not automatic nor is it guaranteed. That's why we will continue to work extremely hard for the people of Ontario and to deliver on our plan.

0920

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying that the budget and spring budget bill capture what our

government is doing to build a strong province. We are building Ontario's economy, investing in infrastructure, working for workers, keeping costs down, and providing better government services. For today and tomorrow, we are doing more to support employers, more to support a better deal for workers, and more to support a strong health care system, all the while balancing the budget.

Supporting this bill means supporting better jobs and bigger paycheques for all Ontario workers. It means supporting payments for more low-income seniors. Supporting this bill supports people and businesses today while laying a strong fiscal foundation for future generations.

Madam Speaker, this is the right plan. This plan, led by the right Premier with the right team, is the right plan for all Ontarians.

Colleagues, let's get it done for all the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to questions.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the minister for his presentation.

During the pre-budget consultations, presenters spoke about the explosion of violence in schools and were concerned that the Ontario government has continued to ignore this explosion of violence. In fact, one educator said, "It really does feel like we are being broken on purpose." According to a recent survey, 80% of educational staff reported witnessing violence at levels they've never seen before.

This government and this budget have deliberately ignored school violence. In fact, it isn't even mentioned once in the budget.

When is this government going to get its act together and invest in children, invest in smaller, safer classes, and invest in school-based mental health supports?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, through you: I thank the member opposite for that question.

I categorically reject the statement by the member opposite that we are being deliberate, hurting our children.

I would ask the member opposite to actually read the budget; in fact, read last year's budget—the historic and unprecedented investments in our education system, over \$2.3-billion increase this year. What does that money go for? Of course, that money goes for more funding per pupil, and that's a fact, but that money also goes for more mental health and addictions supports for our youth, right in the classroom.

In fact, the Minister of Education just made mandatory in grade 10 mental health lessons—the first time ever by any government. We're taking action.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the minister for his very thoughtful presentation.

I'm very fortunate to have a great group of team members. The minister engaged me in my own riding of Thornhill, and I was happy and very proud to be able to bring him to my community. We stopped, we got a bagel, we talked about the local economy and we talked about manufacturing. Thornhill has a thriving manufacturing

business that circumferences the entire riding, but we're worried about losing a lot of these businesses to our neighbours down south.

Could the member please explain to the House why the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit is so important to bolster our economy and create more jobs, including those in Thornhill?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you very much for that important question from the member for Thornhill.

I do want to correct the record, Madam Speaker. We also got some butter tarts.

Ms. Laura Smith: We did.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: You can tell I've got a bit of a sweet tooth.

Madam Speaker, it's a very serious question. Government doesn't create jobs; we create the environment for risk takers, both small businesses and large businesses, to risk their own capital, hire people, train people, retain people, train workers. That's why it's so important to support our businesses—in this case, private corporations in the manufacturing space in Ontario. This will allow them to keep more money so that they can reinvest in their equipment, they can reinvest in their workers. What a concept: that they can invest in their workers so that we can grow the economy, have better jobs and bigger paycheques in this province.

What's so critical about what the member from Thornhill said is—you think about the \$25 billion of auto manufacturing and battery in this province. Well, everyone—or everyone who took an economics class—knows there's a massive multiplier effect. Economists say for every job created, nine more jobs, so that's why we need—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. Next question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We all know that there are close to two million Ontarians without access to primary care; in my riding, it's 30,000 people who don't have access.

We also have some underemployed nurse practitioners, right here, right now, who would love to go pick up a thousand people from Capreol, from Coniston, from the South-west Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre, yet there is very little money in the budget to do this. Why is it that after all of them came and presented for the budget, telling us that we need investment in nurse practitioner-led clinics, in Aboriginal health access centres, in community health centres so that they can hire the nurse practitioners who live in Ontario right now and would love to take on a roster of primary care clients, the budget didn't deliver?

What have you got to say to those thousands of Ontarians who know that they could get access to primary care if only your government would be willing to fund nurse practitioner-led clinics and community health centres and Aboriginal health access centres?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, again—through you, Madam Speaker—to the honourable member for that question. It's such an important question.

I want to make sure that the member opposite has read our budget, because if she has—and I believe she has—she would know that the increase in health care funding

over the next three years is over \$15 billion. It's the largest increase in the history of the province. We are providing support for our health care system.

Let's talk about family physicians. Let's talk about nurse practitioners. I visited Kitchener very recently and went to a nurse practitioner-led office—great concept, supporting that. Why don't we talk about the medical schools in Brampton and Scarborough that we've launched to have more doctors in this province? We're taking action. Why don't we talk about my own community of Durham, where Queen's University and Lakeridge Health have launched an innovative program for 20 new medical seats, working in partnership, fully dedicated to streaming family physicians?

We are taking action, we're providing the funds, but we're not accepting the status quo anymore. The status quo is done. It's gone. We're innovating. We're working creatively—and we'd ask the member opposite to work with us to create the conditions for the health care system, not just for today, but also for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Billy Pang: I can still remember the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP. They built a very strong structure, which was structural deficit, resulting in billions in debt for the province.

I want the minister to share with us why it's so important that we need to work hard to rebuild the finances and also balance the budget.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: What a great question. Thank you to the member for Markham–Unionville, who does a great job in his riding representing his constituents.

I think often of, at the beginning of the pandemic, when the Premier came to me and said, “Minister, we have a pandemic. We don't know how long it's going to be, we don't know how hard it's going to be, but we can spare no expense in protecting people's lives.” Think about if I had said to the Premier, “We don't have any money. We're tapped out.”

That's what the previous government left us with—the highest debt-to-GDP in the history of the province, since 1867. What kind of fiscal management is that? You're not preparing the finances of the province for whatever risks are out there.

Working together, we've been able to lower the debt-to-GDP so that we can give to our children a better fiscal house than we inherited.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

0930

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: My question for the Minister of Finance is—he speaks of, I believe, striking the right balance. How is it important to do so by investing in both health care and education with this proposed budget bill in this time of economic uncertainty?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: To my colleague the member for Durham, who is doing a terrific job as well in his riding; I believe you can do both. You can build Ontario; you can support the economy; you can build

infrastructure—almost \$50 billion of infrastructure for hospitals, almost double than when we got in.

We are building the infrastructure not just for today but for tomorrow: subways, highways, public transit, GO rail system, housing, broadband, long-term-care facilities. We have to build. We got almost half a million people into this province last year. Where are they going to live? How are we going to move them around? That's why we're taking action. The member highlights very wisely that you can do both. You can build Ontario by being targeted and responsible and transparent, while at the same time being fiscally responsible for this generation, for the next generation and the next generation after that.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 85, Building a Stronger Ontario Act.

This budget is another missed opportunity by this government to address the main issues that are confronting Ontarians. In Niagara, we're seeing more and more people struggling to find an affordable place to live as the cost of housing continues to rise. We're seeing patients waiting months for medical tests and appointments, off-load delays worsening and hospital services being cut. This budget is a missed opportunity to address many of those issues. We're seeing this government once again break their promise to municipalities after promising to make them whole after Bill 23. And we've been focusing, the last week, on some of those issues.

AMO has calculated that cities will see a \$5-billion revenue shortfall from this government's legislation, Bill 23. Municipalities are cancelling affordable housing projects. The city of Toronto says its entire housing capital plan will need to be scrapped if the minister doesn't cover the shortfall of his failed legislation. We've heard, from Peel and Brampton, of huge property tax hikes that will have to happen—and service cuts—if they are not reimbursed as this government promised. There's no money in the budget to make municipalities whole, and the government is cutting things like the Streamline Development Approval Fund by 25%, as I raised last week in a question, and the Municipal Modernization Program by 70%. These are the programs that fund initiatives to speed up housing development approvals and fund audits. If the minister is holding off on compensating municipalities for Bill 23 because he wants to speed up housing and perform audits, I ask the minister, why is he cutting the very programs that fund these initiatives instead of addressing them in the budget, and why is there no money in the budget to make municipalities whole as was promised? This is causing, obviously, a great deal of a stress and anxiety for municipalities as they struggle to meet targets that this government imposed but is not supporting with their budget.

Budgets are about choices, and it's clear that this government is choosing to help the well-connected and wealthy few, because there's very little in the budget to help out Ontarians with the cost of living or improving access to public services and the other issues that they care so much about.

Speaker, as you know, this is Niagara Week at Queen's Park, and there are many local mayors, councils and representatives here from all different political backgrounds to advocate for Niagara. This year's theme is "Growing Better, Together."

I have to recognize folks who put on a really nice reception last night. I want to congratulate Niagara College, who provided the food and some refreshment, as well as 13th Street Winery. And of course, it was sponsored by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. I want to congratulate folks from Niagara for putting on a great reception.

I also have to recognize the team that came from Niagara, who came with some very focused asks of the government; some very well-researched, factual and strategic priorities. I understand that their meetings are going quite well with government ministers and they've made some headway. We're grateful for that, but of course the budget was an opportunity to address these concerns, which is why municipalities are coming, hat in hand, to the government. I'd like to talk about some of those priorities.

There's nothing in the budget that will attract the health care talent that we need to reverse the health care crisis. We know the health care crisis was created by legislation like Bill 124, which this government could have chosen to reverse and address the funding shortfalls that have resulted in wages that have been suppressed. We know that the health care crisis is a human resources crisis. Nurses and others are leaving the profession. This budget was an opportunity to address those problems.

For Niagara Week, the Niagara region is seeking reimbursement for local property tax dollars that were used to mitigate ambulance off-load delays. Niagara has been asking, for some time, for that issue to be addressed.

Between 2021 and 2022, Niagara experienced a 55% increase in off-load delays. It's a tremendous problem in Niagara. In the latter half of 2022, a total of \$1.7 million of the regional levy was spent to address the record number of EMS calls in Niagara. The region has pointed out that three of Niagara's hospitals consistently rank near the bottom for off-load times. In 2022, EMS incurred 33,908 off-load delay hours. That's equivalent to 24 paramedics working for 365 days. Yesterday, I directly asked the Minister of Health if the government would commit to reimbursing the region the \$1.7 million and ensure that Niagara is funded for an additional health team to help address the underlying causes of our EMS crisis, as requested by municipal leaders. I hope that the government is seriously taking that request. Unfortunately, the answers that we've received from the government so far is to list other investments, as if everything is okay in Niagara. Let me tell you, Speaker, everything is not okay.

Back in April, all the parties in this House supported a motion that I put forward to keep full emergency department services and acute-care services at the Welland hospital. What has happened at the Welland hospital has created a great deal of stress in the community. Without warning, local Niagara Health decided that they would permanently remove after-hours and weekend emergency

surgery. If you know Niagara, there is some distance between hospitals, and many of the hospitals in Niagara have shut down. We have urgent care centres where hospitals used to be. Shutting down those urgent care centres is being discussed in places like Port Colborne and Fort Erie.

Folks in Port Colborne—which is in my riding—have to travel to Welland, to the Welland hospital, if they're seeking emergency services. Well, as of a couple of months ago, if somebody from Port Colborne comes to Welland and they need emergency surgery, for example, for an appendix, where it's recommended within an hour, guess what they have to do? They have to wait for an ambulance to come and take them to another hospital. In a region where off-load delays are a huge problem, that is creating a huge amount of stress and anxiety for people in the community. Many front-line doctors, nurses and medical professionals have made clear to me that losing those services will almost certainly result in avoidable deaths for patients who need to be in an operating room within an hour.

From 2018 to 2020, the Welland hospital ran at over 100% capacity, as did all of the Niagara hospital sites.

We hear from the government constantly that a new hospital is being built in Niagara Falls, and that's true, but it's not supposed to be done until 2028-29, and we're seeing a reduction in all of our hospital services now. Having a hospital being built four, five or eight years down the road is not helping folks who are spending time in ambulances in loading bays and not having their health taken care of. That's something that this government could have chosen to address in this budget.

0940

As a region, Niagara surpassed both national and provincial average growth rates, increasing its overall population by 6.7% from 2016 to 2021.

The city of Thorold, where I live, had an increase of 26.7%. It's the eighth-fastest-growing community in all of Canada, and here we have emergency services being cut, reduced and completely removed from a local hospital.

I've requested to meet with this government and the Ministry of Health multiple times to come up with a plan to save these services at the Welland hospital; each time, this government has refused to even meet. I've asked the government during question period if they're willing to leave the people of south Niagara without timely access to life-saving care; each time, they've avoided directly answering the question. If this government won't listen to me, they should at least listen to the thousands of folks from various political backgrounds who have signed our petition to save the hospital.

In talking to people at the Seaway Mall, where I recently spent some time in Welland—talking with folks as they walked through the mall and having them sign our petition. Folks were absolutely shocked and dismayed with the direction that this government is taking our health care system in. They know that privatization will only allow the wealthy few to jump the line while the rest of us are stuck waiting even longer.

In our community, one of the examples that people are aware of of this government's lack of priority—and we talked about this during the election campaign, actually—is their plans to expand the Garden City Skyway in Niagara, which is a bridge over the canal that goes from St. Catharines to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the hundreds of millions of dollars that the government is planning to spend. I'm not against highways. I'm not against bridges. Fixing them, repairing them, expanding them creates jobs and can be good for the local economy. But what does it say when you're losing life-saving emergency services in a hospital—an issue the government won't address—but they will expand a bridge that is not terribly busy at the present time? That has been talked about on local radio shows, and it really shows that this government is completely out of touch with the priorities of people in Niagara.

Under this government, it has become even harder to find an affordable place to live. There's nothing in the budget to actually build the houses we need. The province's own budget shows that we're moving in the wrong direction on housing. And the dismantling of the greenbelt isn't doing what the government promised. The budget predicts fewer housing starts next year than this year, and they're nowhere near on track to meet their stated goal of 1.5 million homes in 10 years. In 2022, 96,100 homes were started, with even less projected to start in the following years—in 2023, only 80,300 new homes, and another decrease in 2024 is projected. As reported recently by Global News, that means that over four of the 10 years set out in the province's plan, just 23% of its total target of homes will be built. When I asked about the government's ability to meet these targets, the Minister of Housing said that we will do “everything we can” and “there's things out of my control.” Well, it's within the minister's control to make or not make commitments and to admit when a plan is not working.

It's becoming clearer to the people of Ontario that their plan is not working. The government needs to change course if it's to effectively address the housing crisis and meet any of its targets. They can only make excuses for so long.

For Niagara Week, the region's representatives have made clear that they're asking senior levels of government for co-investment in long-term capital funding for Niagara's consolidated housing master plan, which will allow us to grow sustainable housing solutions. These are some of the local investments that could be made through a budget to help municipalities build more homes. This plan lists shovel-ready sites that are awaiting co-investment, and it will guide the development of new community housing units between 2022 and 2045. It includes unique opportunities to leverage investment in non-profit and co-operative housing—something that this government has completed ignored—as well as municipal housing. It identifies existing land assets that will support the development of approximately 11,000 new community units. So here's a program that the government could choose to partner with municipalities on to build more of the kind of affordable units that people need and have asked for.

In addition to the low number of homes started, we know that many of the homes being built are not affordable.

In Niagara, we're seeing people spend upwards of 60% of their take-home income on housing alone. According to the Niagara Association of Realtors, in March 2023, the average home sold was \$699,913. It's becoming more and more unaffordable for folks. And of course, that has a tremendous effect on rental prices.

We all agree that we need to build more homes, and we need to keep pointing out that you can't just look at supply. We've talked about this many times. The government's ideological bent is really just to look at supply. They're not looking at demand—which is a demand for affordable homes.

The Niagara region recently created the attainable housing team to focus on building more of the missing middle, and I hope that the government listens carefully to the proposals that the region makes.

There's no new funding in the budget to help struggling tenants afford skyrocketing rents. There's no real rent control.

The 5% ODSP increase puts people even further from a livable income, following a year of skyrocketing rents and inflation in Niagara and across Ontario.

For Niagara Regional Housing, the wait-list for an affordable unit in Thorold, where I live, is 10 years; in Welland, you're waiting seven to 12 years; in St. Catharines, eight to 19 years. And in Niagara Falls, you could be looking at anywhere from five to 20 years for an affordable housing unit.

This government has ignored the advice of its own experts and its own Housing Affordability Task Force by not ending exclusionary zoning. The minister is failing to enable missing middle housing to make it easier for people of all incomes, ages, family sizes and abilities to access affordable housing options in the neighbourhoods and communities that they live in.

Governments used to play an important role in building new, affordable and non-market housing and stabilizing the housing markets, but starting back in the 1990s, successive Liberal and PC governments abandoned any meaningful public role in the delivery of new non-market housing, and it's being completely abandoned in this budget as well. That's what set the stage for the housing crisis we're facing today.

I want to talk for a few minutes about modernizing municipal services.

For the first time in the Niagara region's 53-year history, we have dedicated resources through a new council-approved office with a mandate to accelerate shared service opportunities across the region. This is an ask that our team from Niagara is making of the government, and the reason that we need to come forward with this request is because nothing was provided in the budget. There was no new funding for municipal transit operations in the budget, and that is creating quite a bit of stress on municipal budgets as well.

The government promised to make municipalities whole, as I've mentioned, and there's nothing to make up

for Bill 23 municipal deficits which will result in service cuts and higher taxes. Municipalities have cancelled affordable housing projects, as I've mentioned. The government is cutting the very programs that municipalities use to try to speed up the construction of more housing.

When I asked the Premier about this in question period, his response was, "When I went down to city hall, I heard the same song and dance. First meeting with the CAO—'We've got to raise taxes 30%.' ... We found a billion dollars, did a 0% tax increase, never went once to the province hat in hand." I was amazed by that answer, because it's like asking a mugging victim why they want their wallet back. The Premier has taken \$5 billion in infrastructure revenue away from municipalities, then promised to reimburse them, and when municipalities asked for that promise to be fulfilled, the Premier accuses them of acting like beggars and going hat in hand to the province. They're the ones who took the revenue away. They're the ones who promised to return it.

0950

This is a situation that is going to become more and more acute as municipalities struggle with their budgets. We've heard of some enormous tax increases and service cuts that are going to happen. That's something that could have been addressed in this budget—treating municipalities like partners rather than creatures of the province or beggars.

My time is just about up, Speaker.

Clearly, we are disappointed with a budget that is full of missed opportunities. We hope the government will take a good look and listen to municipalities and many Ontarians who believe, as we do, that we can do a whole lot better.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions.

Mr. Will Bouma: I always enjoy engaging with the member from Niagara Centre. I think we have a great relationship.

I have to ask him a question about his speech. He spent a good chunk of his speech talking about how we're not doing anything to help build affordable and attainable housing, and then he spent the last part of his speech talking about how bad it is—what we're doing to help support the building of affordable and attainable housing. I have to ask him: Which is it? Does he support what we're doing to make attainable housing by getting rid of the \$160,000 per unit in development charges and fees that builders have to pay, so that they can build those units much cheaper to get those on the market? Or does he not support those decreases in fees so that we can see more attainable housing get on the market? You can't—

Mr. Dave Smith: Suck and blow.

Mr. Will Bouma: Well, I don't want to say that. But you can't be supportive and not supportive of something at the same time. I think that's what we hear from the opposition all the time—"Oh, you have to do this, but we don't like how you are doing that."

The reality is, we're getting more housing starts than ever.

And we're hoping for the opposition's support on the budget.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the honourable member for the question.

The point I was trying to make is that the government, with Bill 23, took away \$5 billion in infrastructure revenue, and then, when municipalities complained how it would actually hurt their ability to build more housing, the government promised to reimburse to make those municipalities whole; and then, when municipalities said, "Well, are you going to keep your promise?", the government turned around and compared them to beggars going hat in hand to the province. That is the kind of doublespeak I was talking about, that I believe the government is guilty of.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Chris Glover: To the member from Niagara Centre: I really appreciated your comments today.

You mentioned Bill 23, the "building fewer homes slower in Ontario act." We have a housing crisis in this province. You mentioned that this government downloaded a taxpayer-funded donation to developers of \$5 billion, and when the Premier was asked about this, about how the municipalities cannot build housing because they can't afford that tax donation to the developers, the Premier basically accused them of being beggars and insulted the municipalities. What is your response to this? When you're having to manage the budget and the government is handing out municipal tax dollars to developers so that they have to pay for the infrastructure, what is your response as a former city councillor?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

I used to be a budget chair of a large municipal organization. You can't run deficits municipally. There are very few choices when you lose a huge chunk of revenue. You're either going to raise taxes, or you have to cut services. That's the situation that municipalities are being put in. So when you hear the government promising to make them whole, that's a huge commitment, and when they go back on that commitment, what happens is, you have municipalities like Brampton that are saying, in order to cover that shortfall, they have to raise property taxes 80%. That's backed up by numbers. They're not making that up. So that revenue has to be replaced somehow or we'll end up with huge tax hikes and cuts to services, which will then hurt the municipality's ability to participate in the kind of partnerships that build more housing in that municipality.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: We know that we are living in uncertain economic times, with higher-than-normal inflation. And so with Bill 85, will the member opposite and his colleagues—given that, in these uncertain economic times, the most vulnerable are the hardest hit, will the opposition support our proposed expansion to the guaranteed annual income support plan starting in July

2024 so that 100,000 more seniors can receive monthly benefits?

Mr. Jeff Burch: We have a budget bill that is completely inadequate, and so we have to look at the bill as a whole.

What I can tell you is that I have very few people in Niagara who are concerned about hospital services, who are concerned about finding affordable housing, who call my office and say, "Do you know what we really need? We really need a luxury spa near Lake Ontario. That's what I need. Don't worry about the emergency services that are being taken out of the hospital. Don't worry about finding an affordable place to live. I would really like for the government to facilitate a luxury spa near Lake Ontario in Toronto." I don't hear that at all.

So I think we need to really look at what our priorities are when we put a budget like this forward—and I doubt that this party will support those kinds of priorities.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for his speech and for his advocacy on behalf of the Niagara region.

Yesterday in this Legislature, there was a reception hosted by a number of elected officials and others from the Niagara region, and I had the opportunity to talk to the chief of the paramedic service in Niagara. He talked about the impact that off-load delays are having on the people in that region, both from the point of view of not being able to access emergency transportation when someone is in a medical crisis and also for those paramedics who are stuck waiting in hospital parking lots.

I wondered if the member wanted to comment on whether this budget provides any hope that the government has a plan to deal with the off-load delay pressures in Niagara.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague for that excellent question.

This is probably the biggest issue in Niagara in terms of stress for folks. We have one of the oldest populations, not only in Ontario, but in Canada, and it's also a growing population. In my riding, it's the part of the region which is growing most rapidly, and yet they're losing hospital services, losing emergency services. When you shut down an emergency department in one city, it puts stress on the entire system.

The government did not provide any kind of money in the budget to facilitate one emergency department closing by making another one in another city bigger. They just had to take on that stress, and so we're seeing ridiculous ambulance delays of eight to 10 hours, of people sitting in an emergency bay when they really need to get into an emergency room. It's a situation that's getting worse, and it's a real shame the government didn't look in their budget—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We'll go to the next question.

1000

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm glad to have one more chance.

It was interesting listening to the member talk about how awful it was that we are taking off \$160,000-a-unit of cost for low-income and attainable housing for the people of Ontario, for purpose-built rentals and low-income development.

I would like to ask the member directly if he fully supports and feels that it's appropriate that there's \$160,000 of cost per unit built into some of the costs for units for the most vulnerable Ontarians that municipalities charge. I need to have that answer from him here in the House. If he feels that's appropriate that we took that away—that he supports that that should be charged by municipalities to the most vulnerable Ontarians, that they have to pay later through rent.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for the question.

What we have a problem with is a government that completely ignores the affordability issue. What's happening here is that they're taking money away from municipalities and giving it to developers. They promised to reimburse municipalities, and they're not doing that.

Money doesn't just fall from the sky. You have \$5 billion of revenue shortfalls created by the government's housing legislation, and that money has to come from somewhere. It's going to result in steep property tax increases and cuts to services that people need. That's the result of the government's decisions and their priorities in this budget.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to further debate.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I appreciate being able to speak to this bill this morning. It's a budget bill that I would describe as mediocre, underwhelming. Overall, I felt there was nothing really dynamic in the bill. I won't use my time to talk about the numbers that have already been thrown around, but rather what I hear from my constituents.

The past three years have been difficult for the people of Ontario, including in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk. I hear it, and I see it.

My predecessor taught me that we have government for a reason. It's government's job to look after the people and make tough decisions. And in the budget, I see neither tough decisions being made—nor little help for families.

Members on the government side, during debate, have said that Bill 85 is this government's plan to build Ontario so we can have a strong economy for the future and the infrastructure needed to support growth across the province. It's allegedly a plan to build the economy, build highways, build infrastructure, work for workers, keep costs down, and serve the public better. It sounds great, but I'm not certain the measures contained will actually help families as they continue to grapple with inflation.

Insurance, for example, is something my constituents are continually calling me about. They simply can't afford it.

Folks who have never used a food bank are now relying on one to feed their family.

And for the first time in Haldimand–Norfolk, homelessness can be seen in most of our small towns.

I had hoped the budget would offer affordability measures for Ontarians struggling with inflation-related costs. Legislation enacted to counter price gouging, for example, would have been welcome.

Bill 85 fails to address some of the major crises we're seeing in Ontario, such as the failures of our education system and the weaknesses in our health care, long-term care and home care systems.

I am the orphaned fiscal conservative, but I think there has to be more targeted and sensible spending on key areas. Oversight is badly needed when we continue to spend more while critical services get worse. The government can boast of delivering the biggest budget ever, but if these monies continue to chase after bad money, it becomes a moot point. I am a fiscal conservative, so I don't really feel that this unprecedented spending is something to be proud of. This isn't a fiscally conservative budget.

Sometimes, money isn't the issue. I sat through the budget finance committee pre-budget consultations across this province, where some presenters were asking for a lot of money, and I called them out on that. Money isn't always the problem. The problem, I believe, can be mismanagement, a lack of accountability. Sometimes the problem is systemic. And I see many issues in this province that can largely be fixed with a better approach or strategy. We simply have to listen.

We know the Ontario government has an ambitious plan to build one and a half million homes in 10 years. Along with the challenge of building those homes, allegedly 72,000 more workers are required. Credit where credit is due—the government continues to invest in skills training, apprenticeship and skilled trades to encourage the trades as a career. For example, the government is enhancing the Skills Development Fund with an additional \$75 million over the next three years. That is good news. My overarching concern regarding the aggressive housing target, however, is that I don't see any oversight to ensure proper housing is being built—and by “proper,” Ontario needs affordable housing and housing that's affordable. I fear without proper oversight, we will see housing few people can afford.

I'm like a broken record on contraband tobacco, which has become one of the most common illegally traded goods in the world, and this province is ground zero. It's ruining the social fabric of our communities. During pre-budget consultations, we heard from folks who recognize the damage illegal tobacco is doing to our communities as well as to the Ontario economy. All of us have heard from legitimate businesses, like corner stores, that suffer financially. The government loses out on \$750 million in taxes annually. That's a lot of money, especially when Quebec has proven that they have the recipe to deal with this disaster. I understand that Quebec model was going to be adopted in the 2019 budget, but it was pulled, and I'm very disheartened that it is missing again in 2023. There are some housekeeping items in schedule 10 of Bill 85 with respect to the Tobacco Tax Act, but they only scratch the surface of contraband tobacco. I've asked in this House

and on finance committee, in the spirit of transparency, who or why the Quebec model and associated policy was pulled and why it is missing again. I still haven't heard an answer.

Schedule 10 should have also corrected the definition of "unregulated tobacco" back to what it was originally—"contraband," "illegal" or "illicit"—in the Tobacco Tax Act. When this government came to power, one of the first things that the Ministry of Finance did was change the wording from "contraband" to "unregulated." Page 184 of the budget makes this reference. Why would the ministry change the definition from "contraband" to "unregulated"? It seems like an ambiguous term, and those enforcing the law tell me it is an ambiguous term and makes it much easier for criminals to work around the law. Once again, it's a change that could have occurred without money being spent.

To address teacher and nurse shortages, we should be focusing on getting potential professionals through their education much faster than they are today. Implementing additional accelerated courses would get students to the front lines faster.

I represent many farmers. The veterinary training that has been of concern the past few years was addressed in the budget, and I hope that it works. It's nice to see this government attempting to address this issue. Expanding high-speed Internet across rural Ontario is vital because not being able to connect puts our farmers at a competitive disadvantage.

In closing, when any legislation is introduced in this House, I take great care in determining how it will affect the people of Haldimand-Norfolk. Do I feel this budget will harm my constituents? No. Do I think it will help them? It will help some, but with the current environment—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That is the time.

We're going to move to questions.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's great to engage with my friend from Haldimand-Norfolk. It's wonderful to see her today.

We've known each other for five or six years now, or even longer, I think, and I know how passionate she is about the agricultural community, especially in her own riding, but indeed across the entire province of Ontario. I didn't hear whether she would be voting in favour of the budget or not, but I'm hoping she would consider supporting the budget, if for no other reason than just to support agriculture, because of the fact that we're getting a new veterinarian school in the province of Ontario and that we are actually supporting veterinarians who will be going into the north or to underserved areas. I'm very, very excited about that for the agricultural community in my riding.

I was wondering if she had comment on her support for the new veterinarian school from the budget.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thank you to the member from Brant.

Yes, I am a huge advocate for my farming community, and I see measures in the budget for our farmers, but I

think we could have taken those measures a little bit further.

I will say that the Minister of Agriculture does a great job of supporting our farmers. I hear it every day. I heard it as recently as yesterday. But I think she has a very tough job in supporting our farmers to the best of her ability within this government.

I was heartened to see that there are some measures—veterinary training, agricultural soil health and conservation, and investments in high-speed Internet—because, as I said, we can't have our farmers competing in a global market if they don't have access and they're not connected. It puts them at a competitive disadvantage.

1010

I won't let you know whether or not I'm voting in favour of the budget. But thanks for the question.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I always enjoy her remarks. She represents her riding very well. Some might be surprised to know that I would also consider myself as a fiscal conservative. One of her remarks touched me. This is the highest-spending budget in Ontario history, yet there are so many people who, quite frankly, aren't impacted. The homelessness crisis is impacting rural Ontario and my riding as well and many other things, and yet this government seems to be missing the mark—that there's almost two Ontarios—and the government is forgetting one side of our province.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thanks for the question.

I'm probably going to take a bit of a different approach than what my friends to my right here are taking. But I'm a fiscal conservative, and I think there's a better approach to be taken.

The minister said earlier this morning that this government is here for every Ontarian. My constituents don't feel that way. This is a government that was elected in 2018 to make life more affordable for Ontarians, and my constituents simply don't see it. They don't see it with respect to auto insurance rates. They don't see it with respect to natural gas.

The Premier was once called the emperor who has no clothes when it comes to cutting taxes. When we talk about cutting taxes, we obviously turn right to cutting services—and that's not always true.

So I think there are missed opportunities, as one of my colleagues said this morning.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): A last question.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, Bill 85 proposes a plan that is responsible and targeted to help people and businesses, while laying a strong fiscal foundation for future generations. It is reflective of a thoughtful, transparent plan with a path to balance. It contains investments that are attracting and protecting jobs—while investing in hospitals, schools, transit, highways and other infrastructure projects.

Why will the member opposite not commit to supporting Bill 85?

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I haven't said whether I am going to support or not. There are many good things in the budget, but there are also many missed opportunities.

I want to talk about the relief needed for rural Ontario. We see tax relief for northern residents who get a break for all the travel that they do, and it's time those in rural Ontario get that same tax break. With respect to natural gas, the federal government's energy prices disproportionately target rural residents and people of my riding. That doesn't make life more affordable for them—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. There's no more time to respond.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Earlier this month, I joined the Minister of Long-Term Care for a tour of the construction site of Wellbrook Place, our new, state-of-the-art long-term-care home on Speakman Drive in Mississauga–Lakeshore. When it is open this fall, it will be the largest long-term-care home in Ontario, giving 632 new residents a modern, safe and comfortable place to call home. It will meet the latest standards for long-term-care design and safety, including private bedrooms and an enhanced HVAC system. Special units will care for people with advanced dementia, and a dialysis program will support residents living with kidney disease. Specialists from Trillium Health Partners will operate these programs, so that residents with complex needs get the care they need right at home, without unnecessary visits to hospitals or emergency rooms.

Future phases of this project will include a new health services building, and the first residential hospice in Mississauga, to be built and operated by Heart House Hospice.

I want to thank Tess Romain and her team at Partners Community Health for all their work on this project.

And I want to thank the minister for our historic investment of \$6.4 billion in the largest long-term-care building program in Canadian history, including 1,100 new and upgraded beds in Mississauga–Lakeshore alone, more than any other riding in the province of Ontario.

COST OF LIVING

Miss Monique Taylor: Today, I rise to share a message that my offices and I hear from constituents in our riding and across the province every day. The impact and effects of the rising cost of living, both short-term and long-term, are harmful and hurtful in so many ways. The struggle to make ends meet, to raise a family, to be safe, warm and fed with a place to call home should not be this tough for so many. Affording and maintaining basic needs should never take over the quality of one's life or health, physically or mentally.

We hear the stories of families, friends, neighbours and community members who have exhausted all options, made every call and find themselves with nowhere to turn. We hear their current situations of unstable living conditions, lack of mental health supports, and long wait-lists due to underfunding. We bear witness to these conditions in our communities, in parks, schools, health care settings, workplaces and homes.

Deplorable government policies and budget constraints that hinder the very programs and people who have the solutions—solutions that can change lives and reverse some outcomes. We feel the effects when we see these programs closed due to funding, wait-lists growing even longer, and social service rates not meeting today's living expenses, including shelter, food and health care.

I call on this government to listen, learn and fund these critical solutions.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Our government knows that a safe Ontario is a strong Ontario.

Last week, in my constituency, I had the tremendous honour of attending my first Windsor Police Service badge ceremony as MPP for Windsor–Tecumseh, on behalf of Solicitor General Michael Kerzner. I was able to congratulate Windsor and Amherstburg's 11 new constables who have selflessly dedicated their lives and careers to keeping our residents safe and our community secure.

Led by Chief Jason Bellaire, the Windsor Police Service embodies all the best of their motto, "Honour in Service," through integrity, innovation, respect and professionalism.

Speaker, I share Chief Bellaire's enthusiasm for our government's recent announcement in support of the brave men and women who serve as Ontario's first and last line of defence. By removing key barriers to entering the profession, local police services across Ontario will better reflect the diversity of our great province at large.

To the 11 newest recruits and those still to come: We thank you, we honour you, and we wish you well as you do us proud in your service to us.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, I'd like to make the House aware of conditions on the Trans-Canada two-lane highway around Englehart. Just a brief recap: In the last month, there was a head-on collision with two transports, a school bus was forced off the highway by a transport, and we have two documented conditions of transports passing each other and forcing other people off the road.

This week, something happened that we'd never heard of before. It's seeding time in Timiskaming. There's lots of farm equipment on the highway. Thank you to our farmers for doing all the work they do. This week, a tractor was on Highway 11, and a transport passed it on the right, on the gravel shoulder. It's amazing that that didn't cause a major accident.

I've spoken with the minister about this. This isn't a partisan issue—not at all. We all care, and we want the highways safer. Something needs to be done to make sure that aggressive drivers of all kinds, but especially transports, respect others on the road.

Finally, I would like to express my condolences to the family of someone who lost their life on Highway 11 this week for another reason, another danger in northern Ontario. A vehicle hit a moose, the highway was closed, and someone tragically lost their life. Our condolences to the family.

Please be careful on the roads.

PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: En cette Semaine nationale de la police, j'aimerais prendre cette opportunité ici en Chambre pour remercier les premiers répondants de ma communauté, mais aussi de toute la province.

1020

Comme vous le savez, nous avons vécu une situation tragique dans notre circonscription la semaine dernière dans le village de Bourget, dans la municipalité de Clarence-Rockland. L'embuscade qui a causé le décès d'un de nos sergents et blessé deux autres agents de police est une situation qui est inexplicable et nous laisse sans mots. Nos pensées sont avec les familles, les amis, les collègues du sergent Mueller et avec toutes les personnes qui ont été affectées par cet événement.

Je tiens à remercier de tout coeur les membres du service de paramédic de Prescott et Russell, tous ces gens qui se sont rendus sur les lieux, ceux qu'on appelle les premiers répondants, qui ont mis leurs vies en danger pour venir au secours de leurs collègues. Nous ne comprendrons jamais comment difficile ça peut être de vivre avec des souvenirs de toutes sortes de situations comme celle de la semaine dernière, parce que la plupart de nous ne seront jamais confrontés à de telles situations.

Lorsque je suis revenu de Toronto jeudi soir dernier, pendant les cinq heures de route, j'ai eu beaucoup de temps à penser—à penser à tous les amis, parents, enfants, à tous ces premiers répondants, policiers, paramédicaux, pompiers et autres intervenants, qui mettent leurs vies en danger chaque jour pour venir en aide à nos citoyens. J'aimerais les remercier. Merci à vous tous pour votre travail incroyable.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

MPP Jamie West: I've talked several times about Sudbury and the urban myth of it being the moonscape where they trained NASA scientists. I'm pleased to find out that this year is actually the 50th year of re-greening our city.

My life seems to have charted the course of the re-greening of Sudbury. The Superstack was finished in 1971, the year that I was born. In 1973, VETAC was formed. That was the Vegetation Enhancement and Technical Advisory Committee, which we now just call the re-

greening advisory committee. In 1978, that's when the real work happened. I was seven years old. I remember watching out the window as helicopters—it was the first time I ever saw a helicopter in real life—were bringing lime to the rocks. I've talked many times in the past about the rocks in Sudbury being scarred black and growing up thinking that rocks naturally just turn black if they're exposed to the air, the same way that a pop can would rust if it was exposed to the air. I didn't know it was because of pollution. I didn't know it was because of acid rain. So I would watch these workers all around MCTV, the new CTV station, spreading lime on the rocks, planting small shrubs. I have photos of my family and me going out to plant little seedlings that are now taller than I am.

It's an interesting experience, when you think that when I was trained at Bell Canada to run drop lines, they told me not to worry about running through trees because in Sudbury trees don't grow fast enough; the line would wear out before the tree grew. But now, 50 years forward, 10 million trees and shrubs have been planted, and we've received over 40 awards.

So the re-greening of Sudbury is near and dear to my heart.

VETERANS

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: This week marks the 78th anniversary of the declaration of victory in Europe. On May 11, 1945, Commonwealth commanders, including Canadians, began their first preparations to begin massive demobilization efforts to return the hundreds of thousands of Canadian warriors and heroes back home following Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower's public statements that no soldier, sailor or air personnel who fought in Europe or North Africa ought to be sent to the Pacific theatre.

Also, earlier this month was the 79th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands. In the weeks following VE day, Canadian commanders worked alongside Dutch civil authorities and communities to lay to final rest all Canadian soldiers who fell in Germany on allied soil. No Canadian was to be buried in Germany.

This week, we pay tribute to the fallen and all veterans of the Allied forces for securing victory against Nazi Germany. Their courage, devotion and sacrifices will never be forgotten by future generations, and least of all, in this assembly.

God save the King.

BLACK WATCH (RHR) OF CANADA PIPES AND DRUMS BAND

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: This is a nice follow-up to the statement from the member from Barrie-Innisfil.

This morning, I rise to thank three men from Norfolk county who have returned from Holland as part of the Black Watch RHR pipes and drums band. For two weeks, Murray McKnight, Kevin McNeilly and Chris Faulkner joined 37 others leading a tour retracing the steps taken by

Canadians in the liberation of the Netherlands. The band, developed solely for this tour, was comprised of current and former Black Watch members, other serving members, police services, and civilians from across Canada. The tour was set to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War but was delayed three years due to the pandemic. For Port Dover resident Murray McKnight, the recent trip was a childhood dream come true. McKnight says the tour surpassed his wildest dreams and is an opportunity he will likely never be afforded again.

While on tour, the band played in ceremonies and parades in small towns, and they visited each and every cemetery where Black Watch soldiers were laid to rest. At Holten cemetery, McKnight, McNeilly and Faulkner were able to pay special tribute to William Stackhouse of St. Williams, George Dayton of Vanessa, William Graham of Port Dover, and Frank Tredly of Woodhouse—all soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

In Wageningen, the men were astounded as people lined the street for 3.5 kilometres at 12 deep. People hung out their windows—a picture McKnight described as surreal. “It’s clear the Dutch people are still very appreciative and that they have not forgotten.”

This memorial band, solely formed for this event, has now been disbanded.

Thank you to these men, to the band, and all those who made this incredible historical journey a reality.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of visiting with agriculture producers in my riding. Farm families are the backbone of Ontario, and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is no exception. I was able to visit a variety of agriculture producers in my riding. The few I was able to visit were Cornerstone Organics, the first organic aquaponics operation in Ontario, helping our local food security with their greenhouse greens—next up, I visited Critesdale Farms and their state-of-the-art dairy facility operated by Calvin and Adam Crites to see how much technology has changed the way we farm. I finished the tour over at the Ferguson family grain merchandising and cash crop farm at Glen Gordon Farms in South Glengarry—with a bit of help understanding the cash crop industry.

This past weekend, I was able to get out and start rototilling my garden, getting ready for planting season at my house.

With the May long weekend around the corner, many people will be heading out to local garden centres like Marlin Orchards or Fines Home Hardware to get their flowers, vegetables and other gardening essentials.

With the recent sunny weather after weeks of rain, our farming community is working day and night to get the crops in the ground. I encourage everyone to be vigilant and give farm equipment the space they need to manoeuvre safely on our local roads.

HONOURABLE ERIN O'TOOLE

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I would like to pay tribute to an honourable member of the Bowmanville community this morning—an individual who has served our nation as a pilot and a military officer, a parliamentarian and a statesman, but most importantly, a man who has proudly served the riding of Durham and someone I am pleased to call a mentor and a friend. Last month, the member of Parliament for Durham, the Honourable Erin O’Toole, announced that he will be leaving the House of Commons at the conclusion of the spring session. Erin O’Toole is the son of one of my legendary predecessors, John O’Toole, who served as our MPP in this Legislature from 1995 to 2014.

Erin grew up in Port Perry and Bowmanville before enrolling in Kingston’s Royal Military College at the age of 18. Upon graduating from the RMC in 1991, Erin O’Toole was commissioned as an officer in the air command in 1995, serving as an air navigator. While serving at 12 Wing in Shearwater, Nova Scotia, Erin was awarded the Sikorsky helicopter Rescue Award for rescuing an injured fisherman at sea, and was then promoted to the rank of captain.

Following his military service in 2000, Erin went on to practise law after earning his law degree in 2003.

He has championed, as a parliamentarian, after being elected in the by-election in 2012, many great causes. He served as a cabinet minister and, most recently, as leader of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition in Parliament.

It is my pleasure to recognize both the Honourable Erin O’Toole and his father, John, today for their lifetime of selfless service to Canada.

Applause.

1030

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

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following documents have been tabled:

—a report entitled *The State of the Environment in Ontario*, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario; and

—a report entitled *Women in Ontario’s Labour Market: Progress, Challenges and Potential Impacts of \$10 a Day Child Care*, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This is a bit redundant, but I’m very pleased to introduce a former member of the Legislature who is here with us today, who was the representative for Durham East in the 36th Parliament and the member for Durham in the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments: John O’Toole.

Welcome back to the Legislature.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gave me great pleasure to look up into the gallery and to see my friend Pat Daly, who is the chair of the Hamilton Catholic school board, here with Friends and Advocates for Catholic Education.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: I would like to welcome a good friend and the president of my riding association, Julian Ciaccia, to Queen's Park.

Julian, welcome.

MPP Jamie West: I notice that Michael Bellmore is here in the gallery from Sudbury. I knew him as the Cambrian College school president. Many in Sudbury know him as the caller for Super Big Money TV Bingo. He's also the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association vice-president.

Welcome to Queen's Park, Mike.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Today we're fortunate to be joined by two good friends of mine. Please join me in welcoming Harout and Emma Matossian.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: On behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition and the whole official opposition caucus, I'd like to welcome Friends and Advocates for Catholic Education, who are joining us here today for their lobby day, along with our good friend Michau Van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I, too, would like to welcome Friends and Advocates for Catholic Education—wonderful partners—along with the representatives from OECTA. Of course, Archbishop Leo is with us, and a variety of other bishops and priests, and our colleagues from OCSTA, led by Patrick Daly.

Thank you all for your amazing work and for the leadership you provide for Catholic students in Ontario.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome members of the Better Way Alliance, a small business group: Aaron Binder, Jessica Carpinone, and Liliana Camacho.

Welcome to the Legislature. We look forward to meeting with you later today.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm pleased to introduce a fantastic constituent of mine. He may represent the riding of Durham, but it's always a pleasure and honour to see Erin O'Toole here in the House, as well as his father, John O'Toole.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I feel honoured to warmly welcome to Parliament my good friend Mr. Alex Yuan, the chair of RHRA.

Welcome.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I would like to welcome the students of Georges Vanier Catholic School, who will be visiting. They're from my riding of Brampton Centre.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park this morning my good friend Mr. Alex Yuan and, from the Toronto Police Service, Constable David Huang.

Constable Huang has entered his 17th year with Toronto police—a strong leader in the local community.

Thanks for everything that you do.

Hon. David Piccini: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today three constituents of mine: Patti Ley, Lynda Kay, and Peter Dounoukos, all of whom are great leaders and dear friends in our community.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to extend sincere appreciation to a mentor of mine: a principled leader, Erin O'Toole.

Thank you for being here, Erin.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Friends and Advocates for Catholic Education and in particular, Anne O'Brien, Brian Beal, and Barbara Dobrowolski.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I also want to welcome the great member for Durham at the federal level and his father: Erin O'Toole and John O'Toole.

Welcome to our House. Thank you, gentlemen.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would also like to welcome my great constituent Alex Yuan from Richmond Hill. Not only is he working very hard along with us in MSA—and I welcome him to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to welcome, working together with us, Erin O'Toole.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'd also like to welcome my good friend and colleague from Richmond Hill, Markham, York region, Alex Yuan, along with Constable David Huang.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Billy Pang: I'd like to welcome our good friend Alex Yuan, who is a community leader visiting our House this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to acknowledge the presence of another former member, who served the riding of St. Catharines from the 31st to the 41st provincial Parliaments: Jim Bradley, in the Speaker's gallery.

Welcome back.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: If you seek it, you'll see that we have unanimous consent to wear lime-coloured ribbons in order to raise awareness, as this is the month of May, for those suffering with Lyme disease.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin is seeking unanimous consent to allow members to wear the green ribbon in recognition of those who are suffering from Lyme disease. Agreed? Agreed.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. My question is to the Premier.

For years, the Premier repeatedly promised that he would not touch the greenbelt, but he broke the promise. And now he says he always thought the greenbelt was a scam. The Premier said one thing in public while planning something different behind closed doors.

As part of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, it's time for some honesty.

Will the Premier rule out more cuts to the greenbelt? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I've talked about this a lot. As we mentioned just yesterday, this isn't really about the greenbelt for the NDP. This is continuing on their ideological opposition to giving the people of the province of Ontario the assistance that they need in moving forward. I said it last week, colleagues. You'll remember when we talked about this. For the NDP—what they want is a whole generation of Ontarians to be dependent solely on the government. That is what makes a socialist party like the NDP happy. They don't care what it takes; as long as the people of the province of Ontario only are dependent on them or the government, then they are happy.

1040

Well, we have a different approach. What we believe and have always believed, as Progressive Conservatives, is that you give the people of the province of Ontario the tools that they need to succeed and they will succeed. That is what generations of Ontarians have done. That's why millions of people have come here. That is why we have prospered. And we will continue to do that each and every day that we're given the honour to serve.

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

The supplementary question? The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Today's Auditor General report on the environment reminds us that this government scrapped wetland targets in 2018 but didn't tell anyone for three years. The Auditor General herself only found out in 2021.

So we want to know: What other attacks on the environment is this government keeping a secret?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate that question, especially as I'm going through estimates for the year ahead, so I'm happy to share with that member what we've got planned.

Speaker, when it comes to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, Ontario leads Canada. We're doing it with the largest public transit investment in Canadian history, taking 28,000 cars off the road alone with the Ontario Line. We're doing it partnering with industry—not driving those jobs out of Canada, but partnering with them to electrify the arc furnace at Dofasco. That's the equivalent of taking two million cars off the road and empowering the next generation with clean, green jobs.

Finally, as you will see in the estimates, we've committed a record investment for green lands protection. Last year alone, we protected almost 400,000 acres so Ontarians can get out and enjoy the great outdoors. We committed \$14 million in this budget. And we're expanding wetlands through the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program.

Speaker, I could go on, and I'll share more in the supplementary if I'm given the opportunity.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Despite what we hear in this House, this government secretly scrapped wetland targets, and the government repeatedly issued ministerial zoning orders, MZOs, to pave over provincially significant wetlands.

This government also passed laws that force conservation authorities, often under duress, to permit development on wetlands and flood plains, exposing people and property to flood risk.

Last week, the Premier claimed he won't let developers build on ponds, wetlands and marshes. But why should anyone believe this government when the Premier has repeatedly let developers build on ponds, wetlands and marshes?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, they can double down any way they like. Question after question, year after year, it's all about the same thing. They sat there in co-operation with the Liberals for well over 15 years. They had the balance of power. They put obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in the way of people, in the way of building homes. As I said last week, this is one of the largest land masses in the world, and we have a housing crisis. So what is happening? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is systematically eliminating all of those obstacles. And what are we seeing? We're seeing more homes being built than at any other time over the last decade and a half—and it's not just single-family homes; it is also purpose-built rentals. They're against all of that. It is completely inappropriate that somebody should have to wait 20, 21, 22, 25 offers before even being in the game. That's something they might be happy about.

We're going to continue to reduce obstacles, eliminate them, and give people hope for the first time.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Today, Metrolinx issued a statement that Crosslinx Transit Solutions intends to litigate and stop working with the TTC, delaying the delivery of the Eglinton Crosstown indefinitely. The minister assured the public that they were working on a solution. Instead, this is now the third lawsuit to delay the public-private partnership. Ontarians have already paid CTS half a billion dollars to settle two previous lawsuits.

Given the announcement today, my question is simple: Is this minister in control of the P3 project or not?

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

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

I've always been clear: Our government is committed to getting this transit system built, but we want to make sure that it is safe for transit riders when that happens.

I am extremely frustrated and disappointed by the latest delay tactics that CTS announced just this morning. It's another delay tactic that's just meant to distract and delay from the work that needs to get done, and it is unacceptable.

But to be clear, construction is still ongoing, and CTS still needs to provide Ontarians with a credible schedule. The project has gone on long enough. Communities across the Eglinton road and across Ontario have been waiting for too long for this transit system to open. I've been very clear with Metrolinx that they need to do everything they can to force CTS to provide us with a credible schedule that will allow us to give Ontarians, once and for all, a credible opening date.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Ontarians paid a steep premium for the contract with Crosslinx Transit Solutions because the public was told that with a public-private partnership, the private would assume the risks and the public would benefit. Now we're hemorrhaging over \$1 billion with absolutely no timeline as to when the Eglinton LRT will be completed, or a credible plan to complete it.

Will the minister at least admit that this P3 project has failed?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I will say, and it's clear to everyone in this House, that the Liberals signed a contract with CTS in 2011 and they mismanaged it from the start.

Our government has been learning from the Liberal mistakes. That's why, when we put forward our subway plan for the GTA, we decided to do things differently. We brought in the Building Transit Faster Act, a piece of legislation that allows us to get rid of unnecessary delays. We break up procurements on our new projects—learning from Liberal mistakes of the past.

And what are Ontarians seeing for these changes? They're seeing real, significant progress on the Ontario Line, on the Scarborough subway extension, on the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, and on the Yonge North subway extension, which are all projects that member and her party opposite voted against.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to delivering transit.

We will make sure that CTS provides us with a credible schedule. We will make sure that it opens, and when it does open, that it is safe for transit riders.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'll tell the minister what Ontarians are dealing with. These are facts: over 12 years of construction; over \$13 billion in costs so far; hundreds of small businesses hurt; tens of thousands of people's

daily lives disrupted. And after all this, we still have no transit—not even a timeline or a credible plan.

Given the disastrous results of this P3 project, have this government and this minister learned a lesson and will they commit to never use P3s to deliver vital public infrastructure?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We have learned one thing, and it's something that all Ontarians know: The Liberals made mistake after mistake after mistake when they were in government, and the NDP supported them when they held the balance of power. We learned from the Liberal mistakes and that's why we committed to doing things differently. But unfortunately for Ontarians, that member and her party opposite don't support us. We brought forward the most ambitious transit expansion plan for the GTA, the most ambitious transit extension plan anywhere in North America, and they voted against it. We bring forward operational funding support for the TTC, as well as for all municipal transit systems, and they vote against it.

Mr. Speaker, we are learning from the Liberal mistakes. We are doing things differently. And we do have shovels in the ground on our priority transit projects. We will get those done.

With respect to CTS, we expect them to fulfill the commitments they made to the people of Ontario in 2011 and to open a transit system that works and that is safe.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Violence in our schools is reaching deeply concerning levels. Yesterday, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario reported that 77% of their members have personally experienced violence or witnessed violence against another staff person. Crowded classrooms, lack of supports, and underfunding on mental health are all contributing to this crisis. But instead of addressing this problem, the Premier is busy musing about parents hitting kids at home.

The tools to address this crisis are in the Premier's hands. When will he invest in schools to protect our kids and create a safe working environment for teachers and education workers?

1050

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

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

We all share an obligation to make sure our schools are safe amid rising violence taking place in communities across the country. That is exactly why this Premier and government increased funding in mental health by 550%, when compared to the former Liberals, to ensure every child in a publicly funded school—English and French,

Catholic and public—has access to the mental health support they need.

I just stood proudly with the member from Burlington, who announced a new strategy to lead the nation on mental health literacy in the curriculum—mandatory learning in grades 7 and 8 and grade 10.

In addition, to ensure we have more staff within our schools—while the increase in mental health funding has helped to deliver that—we just announced a plan to hire 2,000 additional front-line educators focused on literacy and math.

Across the board, we are working to ensure kids are safe, they are learning, and they get back on track in this province.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: When teachers have to go to school in Kevlar, it's clear that the government's approach is not working.

More than two in five ETFO members have suffered a physical or psychological injury because of the increased workplace violence, and this problem will only worsen if we continue down this path.

Our kids need supports. They need EAs. They need access to mental health professionals. And they need a government that actually cares.

Why is this government continuing to dodge responsibility for the structural issues causing violence in our schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, in addition to increasing mental health funding—when you compare to the former Liberals, who were investing \$18 million, today under our Premier's leadership, we're investing \$114 million. That will rise an additional \$14 million next year and \$16 million the year after that.

When you look at the hiring of staff, there are nearly 8,000 additional education workers and teachers in publicly funded schools, yet there are not more students. And specifically, the education assistants—we appreciate the critical work they do. We've hired over 3,000 of them.

The interesting point to mention, though, is that when we put investments—even incremental investments—on the table, systematically the NDP and the Liberals have opposed those investments.

We should work together. We should come together to ensure children are safe, they have access to the mental health supports they need, and they can succeed in Ontario schools.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Everywhere across Ontario, firefighters never hesitate to serve and protect their communities. Whether working in a volunteer or professional role, these dedicated women and men in our local fire services are on the front lines keeping our communities safe.

Being a firefighter is both rewarding and demanding, as there are extensive training and recertification requirements to remain current with industry best practices. At any emergency scene, firefighters can encounter many unforeseen risks and hazards. It is essential that all firefighters have access to training programs that will help them to better prepare for the challenges they face every day.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting firefighters to ensure they have the necessary skills to do their job safely and effectively?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member for that very important question, but most importantly, for being a volunteer firefighter in his riding.

Mr. Speaker, firefighters truly are often the first responders to emergencies. They are true heroes, and I want everyone to know that our government appreciates their service.

That's why I was proud to be in Mississauga yesterday with our Premier, the Solicitor General, members of our caucus, and Greg Horton, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, to announce \$700,000 in funding to support training for professional and volunteer firefighters. It includes funding for new courses in auto extraction, boating and water safety, and elevator rescue. This funding will also support training that provides firefighters with safety and survival training for dangerous situations that can occur on the job, such as becoming lost, trapped or injured.

Speaker, we will always make sure that our firefighters have the tools and resources they need.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: These investments made by our government into expanding firefighter training and supports is welcome news for firefighters and fire services across Ontario. I first want to thank all my firefighter colleagues across our province for their work in protecting our communities. And to the new recruits in Mississauga I got to chat with yesterday: Thank you for standing up to serve your community.

Firefighting is among the most stressful careers in Ontario, with the nature of the work being dangerous and unpredictable. The challenges they encounter can cause lasting impacts on their health and well-being.

Tragically, cancer is the leading cause of death among firefighters, accounting for more than 74% of line-of-duty deaths in 2022. On average, 50 to 60 firefighters die of cancer yearly in Canada, half of whom are in Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to better support our firefighters?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member.

Our firefighters are heroes who put their lives on the line every single day for all of us. When others run out of burning buildings, they are running into them.

That is why our government made sure to expand WSIB eligibility for firefighters battling thyroid and pancreatic cancer, and we made it retroactive to January 1,

1960. By expanding the list of presumptive cancers to now include thyroid and pancreatic conditions, our firefighters will get faster access to compensation and other benefits, ultimately supporting their recovery. These changes will apply to any firefighter, whether they're full-time, volunteer or part-time, as well as firefighters employed by First Nations band councils and fire investigators.

We will always stand shoulder to shoulder with our firefighters and fire departments and our heroes who are on the front lines every day serving all of us.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Premier stated that cash-strapped municipalities had a spending problem—nothing to do with Bill 23. The minister also stated that they are sitting on million of dollars of reserves. That's not the case in rural northern Ontario.

The town of Cobalt, population of 1,500, has been forced to raise its taxes by 12.5%. Black River-Matheson, population 3,500, has been forced to raise their taxes by 34.5%. Does the minister suggest that they should totally deplete their reserves so they aren't ready for any emergency, or is he actually going to make his promise true and keep these municipalities whole?

Hon. Steve Clark: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should read the financial information reports that municipalities provide our ministry, because clearly it does show that there are billions of dollars in reserves at the municipal level. But again, this is the second time in as many weeks that a New Democrat has questioned municipal spending.

I was a mayor for nine years. I was the CAO for just under a year. We never blamed the provincial government. We had control over our budgets. We decided the tax rate; we decided on the services we were going to provide our constituents. That decision was made around our council chamber table.

So it's pretty rich coming from New Democrats trying to spin an increase by a local council on the province of Ontario. It's wrong. I said last week to the member in Niagara that it was wrong, and I'll say it to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Councils are a mature level of government. They're elected by the people to make those decisions. I expect them to make them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

I was a councillor as well, for 12 years. Councils have to deal with the laws they are given.

In Black River-Matheson's case, they are trying to make sure they are ready for the developments coming from the gold mining that's around them, but they can't charge development charges. That's what the government is putting on them. They have to deal with that. They are a

mature level of government, dealing with a government that's putting things on them they have no control over.

Again, the government promised to keep these municipalities whole because of Bill 23. Is he going to follow through on his promise?

Hon. Steve Clark: The member opposite knows we're working with municipalities on audits to get the full picture of Bill 23. This is, again, just New Democrat math. The member opposite will never be a finance minister, based on that question in the House today.

We've made decisions to work with our municipal partners. We're listening to our municipal partners moving forward.

But let's call it what it is. We have a fundamental difference of opinion with New Democrats. We believe, as a government, that non-profit and affordable housing should have the best possible opportunities to succeed—and that's to lower the baseline costs, ensuring that there are no fees or charges.

1100

We're always going to stand up for our not-for-profits and our attainable housing, unlike New Democrats, who continue to want to add fees and add taxes. As the Premier said many times, New Democrats have never seen a tax they didn't like.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Graham McGregor: My question is for the Minister of Mines.

Speaker, the electric vehicle revolution is here. That's why we must act with urgency to ensure that Ontario capitalizes on this opportunity to transform the auto sector and create good jobs. While the NDP as the official opposition are still stubbornly saying no, our government is busy taking action to build the supply chain and secure game-changing investments. We know that mining companies, much like automotive companies, will seek out the best places to invest. We also know that these companies create jobs and economic prosperity wherever they set up shop.

Can the minister please explain how our government is creating the conditions to attract investments that will maintain Ontario's competitive economic edge?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you to the member for the question.

Bill 71 was passed last week to increase the efficiency of the mining industry in Ontario. This is imperative if we want to remain a globally competitive jurisdiction. The opposition voted no to this bill even though they know that the minerals in EVs are getting sourced from China, Russia and the Congo—places that do not share our world-class social, environmental and governance standards.

Speaker, instead of supporting a made-in-Ontario supply chain for critical minerals that will create jobs, reduce the reliance on nations like these, and strengthen our economy, the opposition said no. I guess they are satisfied with things the way they are right now; on this side of the House, we are not. That is why we are doing

everything in our power to seize the generational opportunity that is the global need for critical minerals.

Our government—

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: It really is quite sad that the opposition NDP continues to prove they're the party of no by voting against legislation that will advance mineral and economic opportunities for our province, especially for the north. The people of Ontario witnessed once again that the NDP are truly the no-development party, as they chose ideology over investments.

While the opposition continues to neglect the needs of northern Ontario, our government must be focused on creating opportunities that will bring jobs and prosperity to northern and Indigenous communities.

There is no supply chain without mining, but it all starts with exploration.

Speaker, can the minister please expand on how our government is saying yes to supporting mining exploration?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you again for the question.

Speaker, in my riding of Timmins, after 33 years of the party of no, the people had enough. They had enough of the lack of action and the neglect to the mining sector, which is essential to northern communities like Timmins.

Thankfully, our government, under Premier Ford's leadership, is prioritizing sectors that are important to the north by investing through our Critical Minerals Strategy. We invested \$35 million in our Ontario Junior Exploration Program to find the mines of the future, but of course, the NDP voted no. The NDP voted against incentives that helped Ontario regain the top spot in Canada for exploration investments in 2022, totalling \$989 million.

It is irresponsible that NDP members from northern ridings and mining hubs are voting against exploration investments and against Bill 71, but we have come to expect that from the party of no. They are neglecting the livelihoods of their constituents—

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

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the Premier.

Auto insurance rates continue to climb in Ontario.

In Brampton, it has been reported that auto insurance premiums are up by 37% since 2021, meaning Bramptonians pay the highest auto insurance rates in all of North America.

This government keeps giving auto insurance companies the green light to put their hands deep into the pockets of drivers.

Premier, please tell the people of Brampton why they deserve to pay the highest auto insurance rates in North America.

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, monsieur le Président. Through you: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

We understand and share the concerns that drivers have regarding the cost of auto insurance. No question, costs are up. That's why we've been getting things done. In fact, in the 2023 budget we continue to build on that work. We've helped consumers save \$1.8 billion on their auto insurance over the last couple of years.

I'm not sure the member opposite and his team over there have ever met a driver they like. When we took the tolls off the 412 and the 418 in Durham, they voted against it. When we cut the gas tax, which way did they vote? Did they vote yes or no? When we reduced the validation stickers and actually rebated two years of fees, which way did they vote? What does the opposition have against drivers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member from St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It is quite obvious from that answer that if there's anybody this government loves more than the greenbelt developers, it's the auto insurance companies.

Last term, your Conservative government rejected an NDP bill aimed at lowering insurance rates, pledging to take independent action. However, recent reports reveal a 12% surge in Ontario car insurance rates, with some areas in Niagara witnessing 18% hikes. Regular families already grappling with the cost-of-living increases have not seen the promised action from this Conservative government. Billion-dollar car insurance companies, under this government's watch, are permitted to exploit Ontarians.

Through you, Speaker: Premier, why will you not utilize your power to mandate lower rates across Ontario?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I know the member opposite, just like everyone in this House, reads the newspaper and realizes that right across the world insurance rates have gone up. What's causing that? Well, labour shortages, supply, the price of everything has gone up. But this government is doing something about it.

In fact, the Solicitor General just announced over \$50 million to attack auto theft, which is a component of rising insurance costs in Ontario.

Through the Ministry of Finance, we've asked FSRA for data so we can attack fraud and abuse.

In fact, we've also spoken with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to make sure that auto insurance companies in Ontario treat customers fairly, and we continue having a dialogue with them.

This government is acting. We've been able to get some things done. There's more to do, and we're going to continue working on behalf of Ontarians.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier.

It's abundantly clear that the Premier is intent on destroying the people's greenbelt. Last week, the Premier said, "The greenbelt is just a big scam." What is it the

Premier has a problem with? Is it protecting farmland and ensuring food security? Is it that the greenbelt is widely supported by people across party lines? Is it the fact that we are protecting our natural spaces and heritage, that we're protecting our aquifers and drinking water? Is it the fact that, in 2015, we added 20,000 acres at 21 river basins? Or is it that we're fighting sprawl and climate change?

Speaker, through you: Just exactly what is the Premier's problem with the greenbelt?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: This is a member who sat in the government that opened up the greenbelt 17 different times. He talks about farmers, but in this place, his party was the only party that evicted farmers from their land. His federal cousins right now have a program to reforest farmland.

1110

He talks about sprawl. Well, the problem that we have is that people have no homes to buy. We have one of the largest land masses in the world, and we have a housing crisis. Why? Because they put obstacles in the way. Year after year after year, they put obstacles in the way, and now families can't afford to buy homes. Young Ontarians who want to buy their first home can't afford to do it. People who are looking for rentals can't find a rental. But finally, we've taken the obstacles out of the way, and we're getting the job done.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Added 20,000 acres, took out 340; added 21 river basins. There's a big difference.

Here's the crux of it: We all know that the Premier had a problem with the greenbelt even before he got to Queen's Park. In 2018, a video surfaced of the Premier in a backroom, promising his friends that he'd crack open the greenbelt. After that video became public, the Premier promised Ontarians again and again and again, "Don't worry, folks, I'm not going to touch the greenbelt"—and in 2022, he did.

If you get caught doing something and then promise again and again that you're not going to do it, and you continue to do that for years and years, knowing full well that you're going to do it anyway, how would you describe that, folks?

Would the Premier and members opposite agree with me that, actually, what I just described is the real scam here?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, do you know what the real scam is? It's that for 15 years, that member and his party systematically destroyed the province of Ontario with the co-operation of the NDP. They made it absolutely unaffordable to heat your home. Imagine, in the province of Ontario, you had to choose between heating or eating—Liberal legacy. They closed hospitals. They didn't build long-term-care homes. They said that the north was a wasteland that nobody should invest in. That is the record of the Liberal Party. They brought this province to its

knees. The highest-tax jurisdiction, the most indebted jurisdiction—that is the legacy of the Liberal Party, and that is why they continue to be punished. That is the scam that they perpetrated on the people for 15 years.

And what are we doing? We returned hope and opportunity to the province. Thousands of jobs are coming back—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We can wait all morning if need be. I think there's a member who's ready to ask a question. Order.

Start the clock.

The next question.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs.

Our government must recognize the tremendous potential of Indigenous businesses in helping to build a stronger Ontario. Sadly, for many years, under the previous Liberal government—they chose to ignore the potential economic development opportunities that many Indigenous businesses had to offer.

That is why it is crucial that our government supports the vital work that Indigenous communities and businesses provide to our province. For example, at a time when our province is leading the way in mineral exploration, critical infrastructure projects and clean energy initiatives, it is essential that our government continues to collaborate with Indigenous communities as partners in these sectors.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is promoting economic development and improving employment opportunities for Indigenous people in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Brantford–Brant. This is an important question.

As we stare down the opportunities as Ontarians, we want to make sure that Indigenous communities and Indigenous businesses are in play. That's why, whether it's through our Ministry of Indigenous Affairs's focus on economic diversification, business and community funds and regional partnership grants, we've paired with the Chiefs of Ontario to support Indigenous businesses through a grant and loan program, e-commerce, supply chain mapping, training and economic development and—one of my favourites—an opportunity for apprenticeship reconciliation. This is where Indigenous peoples have, for a long time, worked on major projects in their communities and never received the hours that they ought to have if they were to apply to a Red Seal certificate. This is an opportunity to reconcile their skill set and contribute to local large-scale energy and infrastructure projects for their communities and regional economic development.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: The partnerships that the minister described is just one example of how our government is committed to strengthening the relationships with Indigenous partners and recognizing the excellent long-term results that will benefit everyone.

However, there are many more economic development opportunities that are already present in Indigenous communities across our province—particularly for Indigenous communities in rural, remote and northern regions in Ontario. Their needs are unique when considering opportunities that will create employment, reach markets and provide services.

Speaker, can the minister please expand on programs that will support prosperity in Indigenous communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The Indigenous communities of southwestern Ontario know that we're working closely with them on the opportunity on the south end of the supply chain for electric vehicles, battery storage and legacy infrastructure.

But up north, in addition to the two programs I just mentioned, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund has sharpened its focus on the opportunity to support Indigenous businesses and young people in Indigenous skilled trades job development. This has manifested itself in the Pikangikum youth sawmill, an incredible opportunity as that community opens up the Whitefeather Forest; Garden River First Nation, to increase ecotourism, working with Grand Council Treaty 3 Gamikaan Bimaadiziwin; the Turtle Lodge project to be used for year-round healing and event space; and providing Black Diamond Drilling—a company we met at PDAC and have already started to encourage the expansion of their business in the mining sector.

We're proud of those—

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

TENANT PROTECTION

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

Kara Petrunick lives in St. Catharines, Ontario. Her landlord just hiked her rent by \$350 a month; it's a 17% rent hike. If Kara had known she was going to receive a rent hike like this, she would never have moved in.

But even the government's own brochure for tenants and landlords fails to explain that rentals first occupied after November 2018 are exempt from rent control.

Premier, do you think it is acceptable for renters living in new rental homes to receive 17% rent hikes?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member: I thought that perhaps the member would celebrate the fact that we've got politicians from Niagara region here—and our historic investment in our Homelessness Prevention Program, something that Niagara politicians have been advocating for for years.

I appreciate the reception we had last night.

The issue that the member brings forward is at the fundamental core to our housing supply action plan. We made a decision, as a government, in 2018 that was going to benefit opportunities for more housing stock. What has happened? Two record years in terms of purpose-built rental.

Now our housing supply action plan is turning on other measures. The bill before the House, Bill 97, the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, will provide a number of protections for tenants in the province.

The member opposite still hasn't tipped her hand. Is she going to stand up for tenants and support Bill 97? That's the question.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, renters are not being helped by the Conservatives; they're being harmed by them. It's not just Kara.

A new report by Urbanation shows that rental prices are skyrocketing at alarming rates, well beyond what people can afford. Rent in Toronto for an available one-bedroom went up 20.5% last year; in Markham, rent went up 30%; in Brampton, 31%; in Scarborough, 32%. No one can afford rent hikes like this, Minister.

How high does rent have to get for the Conservatives to realize their housing plan is not working?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, as the Premier said many times, it's supply and demand. We have a severe housing supply shortage in the province, and we're going to do whatever it takes, as a government, to solve that problem. We've committed to building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

Her assertions are incorrect. This year, because of our intervention and because we invoked the cap when inflation was over 5%, the vast majority of renters had their rents capped at 2.5%.

We were one of the only provinces or territories in Canada that had a rent freeze during the pandemic and ensured that evictions would not take place when our most vulnerable needed us.

What were the policies we put forward? Pro-rental housing policies.

Again, when it came time for her to cut the fees and charges on new family-sized rental accommodations, the member voted against that.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Mantha: My questions are to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, for fair compensation for ministry employees.

Speaker, summer is just around the corner, and across the province, people are getting geared up to head outdoors. Most people in northern Ontario head out onto treaty land to enjoy the beautiful natural resources that we are so lucky to have. To ensure that everyone can access these lands safely and responsibly, we rely on the hard work of conservation officers.

Despite the demands placed on conservation officers to carry out duties ranging from inspections, investigations

and enforcement, they are being grossly underpaid when compared with other provincial employees doing similar work.

In 2022, conservation officers came to Queen's Park demanding a wage that reflects their work. The minister said that he would support their efforts and ensure they are treated fairly.

My question: Will the minister commit to resolving the classification issue the conservation officers raised in October and pay them a wage that reflects their duties?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question.

I want to celebrate the great work that conservation officers do throughout Ontario. Unquestionably, all over this province, every day they interact with people and are doing a fantastic job protecting our natural resources and making sure that those interactions are positive ones.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with conservation officers. My understanding is that OPSEU and the employer are working on a classification review. I also understand that the director of our enforcement branch is part of the committee that's designed to review this classification.

I also want to highlight that we brought more conservation officers to Ontario, more boots on the ground. Speaker, 25 new CO positions graduated last year and are helping the people of Ontario every single day. I thank them for their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, to the minister: If employees are not paid fair wages, they will end up looking for work elsewhere.

This isn't just happening with conservation officers. Last fall, I wrote to the Minister of Natural Resources about staffing issues in the aviation, forest fire and emergency services after receiving complaints about the high turnover rate among wildland firefighters in Chapleau due to low wages. The minister assured me in his response that the MNRF was exploring recruitment and retention strategies to overcome these staffing shortages. Last week, I was informed by Chapleau Cree Chief Corston that Chapleau will only have four operating crews this season, down from 10 last season.

Speaker, with forest fire season starting earlier and lasting longer, communities in the north are put at risk if we are not ready to respond quickly and effectively.

Will the minister immediately raise wages for wildland firefighters and maintain adequate staffing levels in the AFFES across northern Ontario?

Hon. Graydon Smith: I was proud, a couple of weeks ago, to visit the AFFES base in Thunder Bay and visit the great people there doing work to protect us as we prepare for this wildland fire season.

We've seen what can happen in Alberta—and we know that our people actually are in Alberta right now, as I discussed in this House, supporting those fine people to get them back to some level of normalcy.

Those firefighters are ready to go in Ontario. We have crews that will assist any time wildland fire breaks out in

Ontario. We are prepared. Those great people are ready to get in the planes, the helicopters, be on the ground and keep Ontario safe from wildland fires.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Litter negatively impacts our environment, our wildlife, our economy, and it destroys the natural beauty of our province. That's why our government must take action to ensure that we properly address this issue.

The people of my riding, as well as individuals and families across Ontario, value our province's natural environment, are eager to contribute to its preservation. Ontarians are doing their part to keep our land and water clean, and they expect that our government will continue to take action to help protect our environment.

Speaker, could the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to effectively address the problem of litter in Ontario?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member opposite for that important question and for the great work he does for the people of Brampton. I know they care deeply about this subject.

Speaker, it was our government, thanks to the leadership of the member for Barrie—Innisfil, that first launched a Day of Action on Litter, combatting this and engaging communities from across our great province. I don't care about your political stripe; I thank the many men, women, children, seniors who got active and participated and reported into our ministry. It's going to be another historic year.

We've also worked with partners like Pollution Probe, launching the largest of its kind—the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, capturing microplastics in harbours in my own community. In fact, the Seabins are in Cobourg harbour as we speak, capturing microplastics and partnering with the U of T Trash Team to study the impacts that these plastics are having on our Great Lakes.

Finally, we've launched extended producer responsibility, transitioning the Blue Box—one system across Ontario with among the highest targets in North America, so that we can leave behind a cleaner planet for our next generation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the minister for that great response. It's always great to see him down in Brampton, working with the member from Brampton North on different environmental issues.

It's encouraging to see that our government is taking decisive action and is working to reduce, prevent and divert waste and litter. The goal is to keep our litter out of landfills and away from our natural spaces.

I hear that many residents, community groups and schools in my riding want to be involved in actions that protect our environment by taking part in a litter cleanup.

Each of us has a responsibility to do all we can to help keep our province clean and maintain its natural beauty.

Speaker, can the minister please provide information and resources that will help Ontarians preserve and protect our natural environment?

Hon. David Piccini: Again, I would encourage all Ontarians to get active and participate on the Day of Action on Litter—it doesn't have to be on that day; it could be every day of the year.

In fact, I just partnered with Earth Rangers to launch the battery blitz—we were in Thornhill—and it was an incredible opportunity to engage youth, to challenge them to recycle the batteries. There was a time not long ago when these batteries were ending up in landfill. Thanks to the leadership of this Premier and this government, we're now recycling those batteries. I was at C. R. Gummow in Cobourg for the same thing, seeing how inspirational it was to see youth getting active on combatting this.

The member talked about waste water infrastructure. What we inherited from the previous Liberal government was a decade of darkness when it comes to investing in the critical infrastructure, waste water and stormwater.

We're building a new water station in Cobourg. We're building modern waste water and water infrastructure to support a growing province so that our next—

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

1130

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, in 2020, Denise Sandul placed a single white cross for her son Myles, who she lost to an overdose. Today, Sudbury's Crosses for Change has more than 244 crosses.

The Office of the Chief Coroner just released its preliminary report, and last year, five northern cities had the highest opioid mortality rates per 100,000 population. Sudbury made the list, along with North Bay, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Timmins.

Last year, 106 people Sudburians died from opioid-related overdoses, and that was an increase from 98. Those are the facts, and the facts don't lie.

My question is to the Premier. How many people have to die before the Premier admits that the Conservative government's actions have done nothing to address this crisis?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question.

Quite the opposite: Our government has been doing a great deal to support all Ontarians with respect to their mental health and addictions, with the Roadmap to Wellness and investments of \$525 million on an annualized basis—the \$3.8 billion. The \$90 million that went specifically to the Addictions Recovery Fund—those beds are focused, 54% of them, in northern Ontario. That has created 7,000 treatment spots. We are catching up and doing the work that wasn't done by the previous government, supported by the NDP.

And those investments in Sudbury, for instance—over \$12 million towards building a continuum of care. That includes over \$2 million in annual, new funding specifically for children and youth. We're investing not only in building a continuum of care, but in prevention and building resiliency in children as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

MPP Jamie West: Back to the Premier: I've asked this question to the Premier several times; he has never answered—even though he's here.

Do you know who is taking real action, Speaker? Réseau Access Network. Since October, Réseau has been running Sudbury's supervised consumption site, and every day, they help people and save lives. But without provincial funding, they may not be able to continue beyond the end of this year. Réseau has been waiting to hear about their request for funding since August 2021. That's one year and nine months ago. They haven't heard a peep from this government.

My question is, will the Conservative government fund Sudbury's supervised consumption site so that Réseau can continue to save lives?

Interjections.

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

Members will please take their seats.

Once again, I'll point out to the House that it is inappropriate to make reference to the absence of another member, but it is not inappropriate to make reference to the presence of another member.

It's also within the standing orders—it allows the government to respond to a question if they choose to respond, or any minister or any parliamentary assistant can respond.

Start the clock.

The response? The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, we've made historic investments.

But do you know who doesn't show up and has never showed up? It is the NDP. This is a group that had the balance of power in this place—and they like to forget about that. They had the ability to keep the Liberals in power or to end the misery of the people of the province of Ontario, and they chose to keep them in power. When they had the opportunity to demand anything, did they do anything on mental health? No. Did they do anything to stop the opioid crisis that was emerging at the time? No. Did they say, "You have to invest in health care"? No. Did they talk about jobs and the economy? No. They talked about a stretch goal in insurance and then abandoned that immediately. Sound familiar? Because it sounds exactly like what the NDP in Ottawa are doing when it comes to the investments that we are making in the auto sector. They sit on their hands, they do nothing, they don't show up. They collect a paycheque, and then they go home. That's—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. The next question.

SENIORS' SERVICES

Mr. Will Bouma: If I may say, Mr. Speaker, it's very good to see you in the chair today.

My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

I was very pleased that my riding of Brantford–Brant was able to celebrate the 99-day countdown to the start of the Ontario 55+ summer games. We are excited that this year's games will take place in our community from August 11 to August 13. The city of Brantford and the county of Brant were originally scheduled as the site for the 2021 winter version of the games, but, as we know, COVID messed up all those plans. But we are excited and eager for the opportunity to host the games this summer.

We owe it to the seniors of our province to support events that help to promote wellness, physical activity and social connections within our communities.

Speaker, can the minister please provide more information about how the Ontario 55+ summer games will create opportunities for seniors?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I want to thank the wonderful member from Brantford–Brant for the question. He is doing a marvelous job advocating for seniors in his community.

Thanks to the leadership of the Minister of Tourism, we have invested \$235,000 through the Games Ontario program for the 2023 Ontario 55+ summer games. This event will bring together hundreds of seniors to stay active and socially connected, and for some friendly competition. I was so excited to celebrate the 99-day countdown to the events and join in on the games.

Congratulations to everyone involved in this fantastic event.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Will Bouma: It was wonderful to have the minister in the riding and to have him to share the gift of laughter with the group that was gathered for the event.

The Ontario 55+ summer games is just one example of how our government is committed to supporting active living and sports at all ages and stages of life.

The Ontario 55+ summer games will attract participants and visitors from across our province and beyond, and it will also be an opportunity to showcase our local communities and our local facilities.

While events such as these provide opportunities for seniors to participate in large-scale summer and winter games, it is also vital to the health and well-being of our seniors that they have access to programs and services year-round.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is making sure that seniors can stay active and connected every single day?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Seniors are the backbone of our society. That is why we have invested nearly \$70 million since 2018 to fund nearly 300 senior living centres across the province. They are keeping seniors active and socially connected.

In fact, our government invested over \$200,000 since 2018 into the Beckett Adult Leisure Centre in Brantford.

It was this wonderful centre that hosted us on May 3 for the celebration.

We are committed to seniors.

And we are pleased to share that there are only 90 more days until these games begin.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier.

The Better Way Alliance, a group of business owners that's in the House today, and their members across Ontario and Canada are creating good local jobs with good wages, paid sick days and fair scheduling, often in industries that do not offer these benefits. As they know, and as we all learned during the pandemic, healthier communities lead to healthier economies.

Almost all other OECD countries provide paid sick days, but this government cancelled the few paid sick days that were available during the pandemic.

What is this government's plan to ensure that all workers in Ontario have mandated paid sick days to keep our workplaces and our economy healthy?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud that, under the leadership of Premier Ford, on October 1 we're increasing the minimum wage to \$16.55 an hour—in fact, the highest of all provinces in the country.

Furthermore, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are going to be the very first jurisdiction in all of North America to ensure that workers have portable benefits in the province. There are millions of workers today who don't have health and dental benefits, and we're going to ensure that we bring forward a plan for portable benefits to help these workers.

1140

Lastly, we are investing record amounts in training programs to help people get better jobs and bigger paycheques. We know there are over 300,000 jobs going unfilled today. We're going to help lift people up to get into meaningful employment, to provide more income for themselves and their families.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Again, to the Premier: 70% of all Ontario jobs are created by small businesses, and the Better Way Alliance has identified a lack of commercial rent standards as one of the biggest barriers to the successful operation of a small business. Many small businesses are forced to close or downsize because of unfair commercial rent increases and practices.

An Indian importing company in Mississauga East–Cooksville that has been operating since 1982 recently faced a 300% rent increase. Instead of a planned expansion and hiring spree in 2023, the company was forced to lay off employees just to pay the rent.

Will this government provide standards and protections for commercial leases?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: At the height of the pandemic, the government acted quickly.

Again, we always look for a partner in the New Democrats, but we never seem to get it. Our government has done a myriad of things to help small businesses weather the storm, and the government is always there, as the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development talked about. We continue to work with small business on a daily basis. It would be nice, for a change, to actually have an opposition who would join us in many of the initiatives on how we support small businesses.

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

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I need to ask for the House's attention, and I need to take a few minutes to once again address the House regarding the participation of independent members.

As members are aware, we recently adjusted the speaking time available to the Liberal independent members during debates on second and third reading of government bills and on substantive government motions. The eight Liberal independent members had previously been granted two 12-minute allotments of speaking time in each debate. Following the resignation of the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, we reverted to the practice of granting the Liberal independents a single 20-minute allotment of speaking time for debate, which had previously been the practice of the House when there had been seven Liberal independent members.

After making a statement to that effect last week, I was approached by the member for Ottawa–Vanier with a request that I grant the Liberal independent members two 10-minute speaking blocks in debate rather than a single 20-minute speech. While considering this matter, I returned to the statement I made at the opening of the current Parliament. On that occasion, I explained that my guiding principle was to ensure that each individual independent member had a reasonable opportunity to participate in debate that was proportional to and in keeping with the time any other individual member might expect to have.

I've concluded that the request from the member for Ottawa–Vanier is compatible with that initial principle. It would be fair in that it would not grant the Liberal members any more speaking time than they are currently allotted. That being the case, it would not be providing them with a more generous opportunity to participate than other members benefit from. Given this reasoning, I'm prepared to agree to the member for Ottawa–Vanier's request.

Therefore, going forward, the Liberal independent members will be permitted two 10-minute speaking allotments during debates on second and third reading of

government bills and on substantive government motions. It will continue to be possible to share this time, but it may not be banked.

I want to thank the House for its attention.

INDEPENDENT MEMBER

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I am seeking unanimous consent that notwithstanding order 100(a)(iv), in addition to the five minutes allotted to an independent member, that the member for Algoma–Manitoulin be allotted five minutes to debate ballot item number 47, standing in the name of the member for Oakville.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), in addition to the five minutes allotted to an independent member, that the member for Algoma–Manitoulin be allotted five minutes to debate ballot item number 47, standing in the name of the member for Oakville. Agreed? Agreed.

BIRTHDAY OF MEMBER'S ASSISTANT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Sault Ste. Marie has a point of order.

Mr. Ross Romano: I have a very special happy birthday announcement I want to make to Kathy Beattie from my office, who's in the under-press, and—

Applause.

Mr. Ross Romano: The standing ovation came a little before—I wanted to say a few words.

Kathy has been with me for many years now and has been an absolute star in my office. She makes sure that I'm doing all the things I'm supposed to be doing—as with all of us in this House—and I want to thank her for all of her outstanding work.

Thank you so much, Kathy.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt on a point of order.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my good friend Harout Arthur Matossian and his daughter Emma Matossian to the House. Arthur and his company were at the forefront of fighting the pandemic during COVID, and they donated thousands of pieces of PPE to long-term-care homes, hospitals, seniors' homes, and other non-profit organizations.

Thank you very much, Arthur. Welcome to the House.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GREAT-NEPHEW

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I just received word that my eldest niece just gave birth to a baby boy during question period, so I wanted to say congratulations.

Applause.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE NOBLE HOUSE CORPORATION ACT, 2023

Ms. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr19, An Act to revive The Noble House Corporation.

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

First reading agreed to.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Sandy Shaw: “Petition for Better Staffing, Better Wages and Better Care in Ontario’s Public Hospitals.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas registered nurses and health care professionals are the backbone of Ontario’s public health care system; and

“Whereas nurses and health care professionals are fighting for better staffing, better wages and better care in Ontario’s public hospitals; and

“Whereas the government has the power to direct the funding and priorities for the Ontario Hospital Association in this bargaining process;

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

“Support nurses and health care professionals represented by the Ontario Nurses’ Association in their collective bargaining with the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) by demanding the OHA reach a negotiated agreement with nurses that results in better staffing, better wages and better care in Ontario’s public hospitals.”

Thank you for this petition to the people of my riding. I’m going to add my name to it and give it to page Leonard to take to the table.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Deepak Anand: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) identifies intimate-partner violence as a major global public health concern, as it affects millions of people and can

result in immediate and long-lasting health, social and economic consequences; and

“Whereas other Canadian provinces including Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador have passed legislation on the disclosure of intimate-partner violence history, to protect its citizens from domestic violence; and

“Whereas the disclosure mechanisms outlined in Clare’s Law would be an additional tool for police services to prevent intimate-partner violence; and

“Whereas over” 43,000 “people, as of April 19, 2023, have signed the petition ‘Justice for Bobbi: Adopt Clare’s Law in Ontario’ on change.org; and

“Whereas people at risk of potential harm have the right to be informed of their intimate partner’s violent past—if the partner was a repeat offender of domestic violence;

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

“To urge the government of Ontario to adopt mechanisms for disclosure outlined in Clare’s Law—whereby information relating to intimate-partner-violence convictions can be used to assess the risk of and prevent harm from intimate-partner violence.”

I fully support this petition and will sign and give it to Sanskrati.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to present this petition for a long-standing issue that should be changed in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Extend Access to Post-Adoption Birth Information....

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

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

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

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I have a petition here:

“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 \$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 ... and the Ontario Disability Support Program...;

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

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

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

I will affix my signature and send it to the table with Mackenzie.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are fundamental for students achievement; and too many school boards are jeopardizing student achievement by straying away from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and parents are being bullied and denied representation at school board meetings, and trustees are being bullied by other trustees;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Minister of Education to set provincial priorities in education in the area of student achievement, and authorize the Minister of Education to issue policies and guidelines setting out the training to be completed by board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents, and require boards to adopt codes of conduct that apply to members of the board.”

I endorse this position. I will affix my signature and give it to page Kundanika, who I’m sure will execute her duties appropriately.

LAND USING PLANNING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: “Protect the Greenbelt and Repeal Bills 23 and 39.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bills 23 and 39 are the Ford government’s latest attempt to remove protected land from the greenbelt, allowing wealthy developers to profit over bulldozing over 7,000 acres of farmland;

“Whereas green spaces and farmland are what we rely on to grow our food, support natural habitats, prevent flooding, and mitigate from future climate disasters with Ontario losing 319.6 acres of farmland daily to development;

“Whereas the government’s Housing Affordability Task Force found there are plenty of places to build homes

without destroying the greenbelt, showcasing that Bill 23 was never about housing but about making the rich richer;

“Whereas the power of conservation authorities will be taken away, weakening environmental protections, and preventing future development;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately repeal Bills 23 and 39, stop all plans to further remove protected land from the greenbelt and protect existing farmland in the province.”

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

SCHOOL BOARDS

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

“Whereas the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are fundamental for students achievement; and too many school boards are jeopardizing student achievement by straying away from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and parents are being bullied and denied representation at school board meetings, and trustees are being bullied by other trustees;

1510

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Minister of Education to set provincial priorities in education in the area of student achievement, and authorize the Minister of Education to issue policies and guidelines setting out the training to be completed by board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents, and require boards to adopt codes of conduct that apply to members of the board.”

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Leonard.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: “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 \$1,227 for ODSP” recipients;

“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 ... and the Ontario Disability Support Program...;

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

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

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

I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for this petition. I agree with it wholeheartedly, will sign it and give it to page Akshitha.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Graham McGregor: I carry a petition that says, “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are fundamental for students achievement; and too many school boards are jeopardizing student achievement by straying away from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and parents are being bullied and denied representation at school board meetings, and trustees are being bullied by other trustees;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Minister of Education to set provincial priorities in education in the area of student achievement, and authorize the Minister of Education to issue policies and guidelines setting out the training to be completed by board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents, and require boards to adopt codes of conduct that apply to members of the board.”

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition. I will affix my name to it and hand it to page Frederick.

FERRY SERVICE

MPP Jamie West: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly ...:

“Whereas the Wolfe Island ferry and Glenora ferry have had serious service disruptions due to a staffing crisis created by the Ontario government; and

“Whereas residents and visitors to Wolfe Island have been trapped on the island for up to 12 hours with no way to leave, even for emergencies or work; and

“Whereas Glenora ferry has had a reduced schedule during this year’s busy tourism season, creating hours of lineups and delays for passengers; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) ferry workers are drastically underpaid in comparison to the rest of the marine industry, causing recruitment and retention issues; and

“Whereas instead of paying competitive wages and hiring more permanent staff, MTO has contracted out the work to Reliance Offshore, an out-of-province, private temporary staffing agency, which charges up to twice as much hourly as ministry staff earn; and

“Whereas contracting out the work is a waste of our public funds on a stopgap solution that doesn’t provide long-term stability to our ferry system;

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

“(1) Fix our ferries—stop the service disruptions and reductions caused by ministry understaffing.

“(2) Repeal Bill 124, which has imposed a three-year wage cut on already underpaid ferry workers during high inflation, and pay them fair, competitive wages.

“(3) End the outrageously expensive contracts with private temporary staffing agencies and hire permanent Ministry of Transportation ferry workers to work and live in our communities instead.”

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Dominic to give to the Clerk.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Andrew Dowie: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are fundamental for students achievement; and too many school boards are jeopardizing student achievement by straying away from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and parents are being bullied and denied representation at school board meetings, and trustees are being bullied by other trustees;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Minister of Education to set provincial priorities in education in the area of student achievement, and authorize the Minister of Education to issue policies and guidelines setting out the training to be completed by board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents, and require boards to adopt codes of conduct that apply to members of the board.”

I wholly support this petition. I will be affixing my signature, and I’ll send it back with page Sanskrati.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I’d like to present this on behalf of the Ontario Nurses’ Association. The petition is entitled “Petition for Better Staffing, Better Wages and Better Care in Ontario’s Public Hospitals.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas registered nurses and health care professionals are the backbone of Ontario’s public health care system; and

“Whereas nurses and health care professionals are fighting for better staffing, better wages and better care in Ontario’s public hospitals; and

“Whereas the government has the power to direct the funding and priorities for the Ontario Hospital Association in this bargaining process;

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

“Support nurses and health care professionals represented by the Ontario Nurses’ Association in their collective bargaining with the Ontario Hospital Association

(OHA) by demanding the OHA reach a negotiated agreement with nurses that results in better staffing, better wages and better care in Ontario's public hospitals."

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2023

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 16, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to implement Budget measures and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I'm very pleased to rise and join the debate in this House this afternoon with respect to third reading of Bill 85, the Building a Strong Ontario Act. I will be sharing my time with the member for Markham-Thornhill.

Mr. Will Bouma: A great member.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Absolutely.

Speaker, Bill 85 represents a thoughtful, transparent plan—a targeted approach to helping people and businesses today, while laying a strong fiscal foundation for future generations, and it contains a path to balance the budget while still delivering on our plan and making the investments that are so necessary for a stronger Ontario. Our plan recognizes the resilience of Ontario's economy, despite the fact that we are facing economic challenges at this time that are felt worldwide. We are continuing, therefore, to create the environment for a strong Ontario economy, both for today and tomorrow.

Our plan provides more support for employers and Ontario workers. Our plan builds a strong health care system and invests in people and the necessary infrastructure which Ontario needs. It is a plan that prioritizes the critical mining sector in Ontario's north, which, in turn, will make Ontario's manufacturing sector globally competitive in the south.

Because of the failed tax-and-spend policies of the previous Liberal government, Ontario lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs between 2004 and 2018. And look where that left Ontario, Speaker: higher debt, lost jobs and a downgrade to Ontario's credit rating, all under the previous Liberal regime.

1520

Our province, along with the rest of Canada, is headed for some potential uncertainty in the global economy in 2023, and now is not the time for repeating or doubling

down on failed policies which we saw in Ontario from 2004 to 2018. The budget bill that has been tabled by the Minister of Finance is an important opportunity for all levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, to work together on priorities that matter most to families and businesses.

We have set out a financial blueprint to address the ongoing housing affordability crisis, and we welcome co-operation and input from municipalities and the federal government to work with us to build new homes, invest in green spaces, invest in infrastructure and also to defer the harmonized sales tax on all new large-scale, purpose-built projects. This is an issue that affects so many, and we are investing in housing because this budget is about people.

We are building on the work we have already done to make Ontario a global leader in manufacturing and to bring investments and jobs back to Ontario. Our government is proposing a new Ontario-made manufacturing tax credit that would help more Canadian-controlled private corporations and local manufacturing companies invest and expand so that their products which benefit families today and tomorrow are made right here in Ontario.

Ontario is leading the nation, Speaker, in new technological developments which are essential to our energy supply. Our government believes that clean, safe, reliable, emissions-free nuclear energy is essential to our energy supply mix. Therefore, Speaker, I am proud of our government's investment and support for the continued safe operation of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station and the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear station within my riding for the construction of the small modular reactor which will be operational by 2028.

Ontario is a leader in battery procurements, with the largest battery storage project in Canada being built right here in our great province of Ontario. In doing so, our support will attract electric vehicle supply chain investments to Ontario, thus making Ontario a leading jurisdiction to build the cars of the future.

Our government is making these investments because our budget is about people. It's about Ontario's future and future generations, and that means investing in families and businesses. That will ensure that Ontario can thrive and that Ontario can grow, both presently and into the future.

What I am most proud of is that our government has a solid fiscal path to balance Ontario's budget in the very near future and, at the same time, this budget bill allows us to increase spending in crucial areas, such as health care, education and infrastructure. Our government's fiscal blueprint projects a smaller-than-forecasted deficit of \$2.2 billion this year, a \$1.3-billion deficit next fiscal year and a return to a balanced budget with a surplus of \$200 million the following year. This fiscal prudence and the stability that is associated with it provides businesses, credit rating agencies and global investors with the confidence to invest in Ontario, because those partners understand that our government has its fiscal house in order, and to quote our Minister of Finance, "What's good for Ontario is good for Canada." This principle is essential to Ontario's success within Canada and for Canada.

Now, in this budget, our government is investing more in health care to reduce wait-lists and provide better outcomes and to add more family doctors, more nurses, more PSWs. These investments and improvements will connect Ontarians to more convenient care through their OHIP cards.

Bill 85 will, if passed, invest \$1 billion over three years to get more people connected to care in the comfort of their own homes and within their communities. Now, we are accelerating these investments to bring funding in 2023-24 up to \$569 million, which includes nearly \$300 million to support contract rate increases to stabilize the home and community care workforce. Our government is providing an additional \$425 million over three years for mental health and addictions, including a 5% increase in the base funding of community-based mental health and addictions service providers. We are funding an additional \$80 million over the next three years to further expand enrolment for nursing programs. Our government will invest an additional \$202 million each year in supportive housing and homelessness programs in Ontario.

So despite the negative assertions of the opposition, we are investing in public services. As a result, our budget improves public services by making it more convenient and faster for Ontarians to access those public services. We are investing in services. We are investing in people. We are investing in the future of Ontario and leading Canada's growth and prosperity as a result.

As we come near to the conclusion of the debate on Bill 85 for third reading, our government, I submit, has presented to the people of Ontario a responsible, transparent and common-sense budget that will support families, workers and businesses across this great province. Our government believes in a strong and resilient Ontario, because it is the people of Ontario who make it so.

I urge all members of this House—in particular, I urge members of the official opposition, His Majesty's loyal opposition, to reconsider their position, to carefully read the budget bill, to carefully consider the debates in this House and to come together to pass this budget. Because we owe it to our children and our grandchildren to invest responsibly in their future today. If we do that, we can and will have a prosperous tomorrow for the next generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): He's sharing his time?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the member from Markham–Thornhill. Thank you for the assistance.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I am honoured to rise today and speak on the third reading of Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act, 2023. I'm happy to share my time with my colleague and friend, the member from Durham. Thank you for allowing me to speak for 10 minutes.

Speaker, this budget not only maps out the plan to attract jobs and build infrastructure but is also a plan and vision that will lead all of us in Ontario to prosper. I am here to speak not only to hard-working residents of my riding of Markham–Thornhill but to all residents of Ontario on how to navigate the way through these uncertain economic times—how our government is supporting businesses and people during this challenging time.

Madam Speaker, this is a budget which will prepare the province for the uncertain economic times. Each and every day, families, businesses and workers are facing immense financial pressures by the current economy as Ontario wrestles with the above-target consumer price inflation, high interest rates, a generational labour crunch and possible recession. Bill 85 plans to actually make an economically stronger Ontario.

Growth has slowed and is expected to remain modest in the coming years. In face of all these economic challenges, our plan is comprehensive and is connected to everyone. We are building Ontario's economy for today and tomorrow.

1530

Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite that the residents of Ontario are in agreement with what we have to offer in Bill 85. For instance, Ian Howcroft of Skills Ontario said, "Skills Ontario is thrilled by the increased investments, supports, and actions announced by the provincial government to promote and grow the skilled trades and technologies. This support will continue to positively impact the number of young people across Ontario who will choose to enter the trades and go on to have rewarding careers. There is an enormous shortage of skilled workers, and the government should be recognized and applauded for addressing this long-standing challenge with a multitude of skills solutions."

Ingrid Palmer, chair of the Child Welfare PAC Canada and former youth in care, stated, "By implementing the Ready, Set, Go framework, the Ontario government is beginning to break down the complex barriers faced by youth from care who experience disproportionate risks and challenges throughout their lifetime. The Child Welfare PAC fully endorses this approach, which incorporates a data-driven system and a better-resourced, graduated introduction to adulthood. With multiple pathways to brighter futures and improved outcomes, this framework will help us support our most vulnerable youth and provide them with the tools they need to succeed."

Madam Speaker, let me explain our road map to economic prosperity for Ontario. We are unlocking northern Ontario's economic potential by committing close to \$1 billion. We will support critical legacy infrastructure such as all-season roads, broadband connectivity and community supports to the Ring of Fire region, which has one of the most promising mineral deposits in Canada.

We'll bring manufacturing jobs back to Ontario. We will attract more than \$16 billion in investment by global automakers and suppliers of electric vehicle batteries and battery materials. Just look at the recent announcement by Volkswagen of its planned EV plant in St. Thomas.

Ontario is the emerging centre of Canada's electric vehicle revolution.

Markham–Thornhill is the most ethnically diverse riding in all of Canada, according to the census. We welcome many new Canadians. It takes ambition, a strong will to never give up and a commitment to work hard when one relocates from one country to another. And it takes ambition and willingness to be an entrepreneur. Our government has a plan to do all it can to help these international migrants. That's why we are enhancing the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program with an additional \$25 million over three years. We will attract more skilled workers, including in-demand professionals in the skilled trades, to the province.

In the same vein, we are expanding the Ontario bridge training program with an additional \$3 million in the budget to help internationally trained immigrants find employment in their fields here and get faster access to training and support toward an Ontario licence or certification, so new immigrants, without any delays, hit the ground running and start contributing to Ontario's economy right away.

And not only this, our list to make life affordable and easy for the people of Ontario goes on and on. We are investing an additional \$15 million over three years for the Racialized and Indigenous Support for Entrepreneurs Grant program.

Speaker, we'll continue to provide gas tax and fuel tax rate cuts until December 31, 2023. We are eliminating double fares for most local transit services in the greater Golden Horseshoe when commuters also use GO Transit services. It will help tremendously in regions like York region—Markham—because we have a very ineffective public transportation system compared to the GTA. The government is working to expand this initiative to support more people using public transit coming to Toronto.

We will provide financial support to more seniors by proposing changes to expand the Guaranteed Annual Income System—what we call the GAINS program—starting in July 2024, to see 100,000 additional seniors be eligible for the program and the benefit adjusted annually to inflation.

We are investing in supportive housing with an additional \$202 million each year in the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program to help those experiencing or at risk of homelessness and those escaping intimate partner violence and to support the community organizations delivering supportive housing.

Madam Speaker, we are helping more Ontario students become doctors by investing an additional \$33 million over three years to add 100 undergraduate seats, beginning in 2023, as well as 154 postgraduate medical training seats to prioritize Ontario residents trained at home and abroad, beginning in 2024 and going forward. Ontario residents will also continue to be prioritized for undergraduate support at medical schools in the province.

Starting fall 2023, we're expanding the program to allow pharmacists to prescribe over-the-counter medications for more common ailments.

We are continuing the 2022 budget commitment to invest \$1 billion over three years to get more people connected to care in the comfort of their own home and community.

The government is now accelerating investments to bring funding in 2023-24 up to \$569 million, including nearly \$300 million to support contract rate increases to stabilize the home and community care workforce. This funding will also expand home care services and improve the quality of care, making it easier and faster for people to connect to care. These services helped my mother a lot when she was bedridden and she was dying, with dementia, before she passed away, Madam Speaker. It was a wonderful program. Our government invested over \$1 million.

In my closing, Madam Speaker, I can go on and on about the effective measures we have taken for the economic betterment of our people but my time is limited. I encourage all members to vote in favour of the spring budget bill. Let's get it done.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member has talked about preparing to navigate people in these uncertain economic times. Right now in London, a corporate landlord recently purchased Webster apartment units and they're systematically renovating vulnerable seniors and people on ODSP and OW. They're being renovated, and London rents have increased by 25% since last year, so also the rents have soared.

I want to know why this Conservative government removed rent controls, and what's in this budget to protect tenants who are now being renovated and who are facing double the rent if they have to look for another unit.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member opposite for the question. Inflation, as we know, is affecting everybody, not just here in the province of Ontario but across the country, the continent and indeed the world. But here at home in Ontario, it's left many, especially the more vulnerable, feeling pressure on their household budgets, and everybody is affected by this on the rental side, landlords and tenants. Landlords certainly face tenants who aren't paying, and they can't make ends meet.

The government understands that it's a challenging time for many across the province, and therefore has acted early to provide relief. As a result, for example, we are providing more than \$6.5 billion a year in electricity price relief for both consumers and job creators under our comprehensive electricity plan. We, as well, made adjustments to the core allowances for the ODSP and of course have added 100,000 more seniors in terms of eligibility for the GAINS program.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's so good to hear my colleagues talk about the budget and the great things that we're doing.

I have a question for the member from Markham–Thornhill. I think just the most incredible part about this job is the incredible people that you get to meet. Something that struck me so much about the member for

Markham–Thornhill is his absolute passion for the most vulnerable in the province of Ontario. In fact, I think that’s something that he’s carried with him, being a refugee himself, from his homeland. As a new Canadian asking a new Canadian, I just have so much respect for what he brings here.

1540

Part of what we’re doing, and I think what’s so exciting for me, is that our government announced last year that it would be increasing the ODSP rate by 5%, and now, with budget 2023, we have confirmed ODSP will be indexed to inflation. I was wondering if the member could highlight why this is an important move to help Ontario’s most vulnerable.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my good colleague from Brantford–Brant for the kind introduction and kind words. Thank you for standing up for so many vulnerable and marginalized people in your riding, and for all your passion.

Madam Speaker, our government announced last year that we would increase the ODSP rate by 5%. When I got elected and appointed as a parliamentary assistant this term, dealing with the MCCSS, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, I was blessed to serve under Minister Michael Parsa and blessed to give my input on behalf of the vulnerable, marginalized people in Ontario. There are many in my riding of Scarborough. These are things that are very important to us and to our government: the increase of 5% for ODSP for the first time after a long time, but also the increased threshold from \$200—we increased the limit to \$1,000 without affecting their benefits.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The province is signatory to Treaty 9. Unfortunately, in this budget, we haven’t seen very much help for First Nations. Even though we have spoken about the water crisis, the housing crisis, communities being landlocked in their own reserves—and yet, silence; we haven’t seen anything helping them. We’ve seen First Nations come here and tell this government that they’re bringing this government to court because of the lack of help, of exchanging and trying to find solutions.

I ask this government: We are a signatory to Treaty 9—we all are. So why not fix the water crisis? Why not fix the home crisis and also the landlock that Attawapiskat is facing? Why not do this when we’ve brought this over and over and over again?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I can’t imagine the member opposite is reading the same budget bill that I’ve been reading or listening to some of the comments from the Minister of Finance and others in support of the bill. Indigenous communities are very much a centrepiece of this budget bill. We’re investigating residential school burial sites. We are making investments in the Ring of Fire and continuing to work with First Nations and industry on key Ring of Fire projects. We’re supporting racialized and Indigenous communities and businesses by investing \$50 million over three years in the RAISE Grant program.

We’re providing rapid training through micro-credentials and addressing homelessness—and this was just addressed today—through supportive housing, and that is the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program.

I can’t even get all of the aspects of this that support Indigenous communities into this short answer, but I do encourage the member opposite to read the bill.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): That’s the time for the answer. Thank you so much.

We’re going to move to the next question.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Being a Brampton boy, born and raised, being born in Peel Memorial Hospital and raised in our community, one of the frustrations we have in my community is that we always feel like our decisions are being made by somebody else. It felt like the powers that be in downtown Toronto decided they wanted to give everybody else a bypass highway, but when it came time for Brampton to go and get our own bypass highway, we were cast aside by the previous government.

Now, under this Premier’s leadership, we are investing in Highway 413, which is finally giving Brampton its own bypass highway—the downtown Toronto environmentalist critics be damned.

I know the member for Durham also had some of these decisions that didn’t really reflect his own local priorities around tolling on Highways 412 and 418. Just like in my community where drivers were getting shafted by downtown Toronto decisions that didn’t reflect the community, his area was getting shafted as well. I wonder if the member could talk about—I see in the budget a commitment around keeping those tolls away—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member from Durham.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the great member from Brampton North for the question. One of the key aspects of building Ontario is being able to move people and goods throughout Ontario, and that means more highways, because if we have gridlock, we do not have prosperity. This is what we speak of when we create the environment for prosperity and growth. So the 413 is very much a centrepiece of that. It will be toll-free, it’s going to be built and it’s going to make a difference to how we move people and goods across the GTA.

That toll-free approach is exactly why we also removed the tolls from 412 and 418—and in my riding, 418 in particular. It affects driver behaviour. It has reduced gridlock significantly because those tolls aren’t there anymore. That’s what it’s about, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The last question.

MPP Jamie West: I’ll be brief because we don’t have a lot of time. The autism wait-list has grown from 28,000 to 60,000. There’s not one word on autism in the budget. I’m just wondering why the Conservative government doesn’t think that’s important?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, Speaker, again, the members opposite aren’t reading the same budget bill or can’t be reading the same budget bill as I have. There are

increased supports for children with autism and their families. That's a fact.

I can tell you that I hear about it in my own community. Autism Home Base is a hub for adult autistic young people, and they are very much applauding this budget and all of the measures that we've introduced to enhance support for autistic families, whether the children be under the age of 18 or over the age of 18. We have to focus on all of them because they have different needs at different ages, and I can speak from experience on behalf of my son, Jake.

I'm proud of this government's record and its plan of action to support autistic citizens and their families.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to further debate.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's my honour to rise today to speak to this budget bill on behalf of the good people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. You put me in this place, you trusted me, and I work every day to make sure that I continue to earn that trust and be an MPP you can be proud of. So you can be sure that what I'm about to say about this budget today reflects everything I have been hearing from you, all your hopes, your dreams and your disappointment in this government with this budget.

It really is like we're talking about two Ontarios. In this province of Ontario, if you are, let's just say, an international corporation like Therme getting a 95-year lease on our public lands, you're doing pretty well. If you're a for-profit corporation that is profiting from the privatization of our health care system, if you are profiting from seniors' knees, their eyes, their hips, those operations, you're doing pretty well in this province. If you're a developer that now has got your hands on the greenbelt—the government was supposed to be a steward of these lands in perpetuity—you're doing pretty well in this province.

But do you know what? We just heard it here: If you have a child with autism, you're struggling in this province. If you are a middle-class taxpayer, you are having a hard time making ends meet. A small business owner, barely recovering from COVID: It's going to be difficult for you. A working single mom in this province, trying to feed her kids, put clothes on their backs, keep a roof over their heads: This bill does not speak to you at all. It's like this government doesn't understand what's going on in the real main streets of all of our ridings and all of our communities.

There's an affordability crisis happening out there. People can't pay their bills. People are struggling to buy groceries. The cost of bread is something that gets talked about in our communities. That's what people are facing, and this government has set their priorities, and it's not those people. You are not serving those people. There really are two Ontarios. The people who have the ear of this government, the corporations, the wealthy: You were reflected in this budget. But if you're an average working Ontarian, this budget does not speak to you.

1550

Recently, there was a survey done—very recently—by Angus Reid, a reputable pollster. They polled Ontarians to

see what are their priorities, their number-one priorities: 79% of Ontarians selected health care as a top priority if they were over the age of 55. Cost of living and inflation: 62% of Ontarians were concerned with those, followed by health care and housing affordability. Those are the top priorities of the people of the province of Ontario, and this budget that this government put forward is exactly in opposition to what people are concerned about—absolutely in opposition to this.

When we talk about cost of living and inflation, the government talks about the cost of living, about inflation and inflationary pressures, but let's be perfectly frank: This government has seen a windfall when it comes to inflation. While the people of the province of Ontario are struggling because of inflation, because of the high cost of everything—gas, energy bills, food, housing—this government is seeing a windfall. Your revenue when it comes to sales tax in the province of Ontario has gone through the roof. Why? Because people have to pay sales tax on hugely inflated grocery bills. That's why.

In fact, this is a government that highly benefits from land transfer tax. Why is land transfer tax so high now? Why are people struggling to pay that? Because of the skyrocketing cost of housing in this province. This is a government that is benefiting from the struggles of the people of the province of Ontario. You've made money because people are struggling.

You would think, if this government actually was concerned with the people of the province of Ontario and the struggles they face, that they would share that windfall. That would be the decent thing to do, right? You're the government. You took their money, their taxes, and now they're struggling. Now would be the time for you to step up and help them, but in fact, that is not the case.

This is a government that currently has underspent their planned spending when it comes to health care. Even your promised spending is underspent, and the FAO has been very, very clear, particularly when it comes to the health care sector, that this shortfall of underspending in health care means that we will not be able to continue to support existing health care sector programs and announced commitments. So you're already failing when it comes to health care and your spending in the province of Ontario, when people, as we know when it comes to health care, are really concerned and we are facing a crisis in health care.

This is not normal behaviour, really, for a government. It's not normal for a government to profit off the misery of the people of the province of Ontario and not share that wealth. You would expect a government to say, "Do you know what? We did pretty well. People are struggling, so let's give that back to the people who have paid this." But instead, as I said, who do we see profiting in this province? Well-connected developers, huge multinational corporations that are getting their access to public domain lands and developers, not the people who we hear from every single day in this province here.

I'm not sure how this government measures success. They seem to measure success by talking about—

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, they seem to measure success by the number of—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We just have a point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'd just like to welcome our guests from the Ireland Canada Business Association and our guests from the Republic of Ireland who have joined us here today.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you.

I apologize to the member. The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has the floor.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Welcome. It's a pleasure to see you here in the gallery. I'll try to be as scintillating as possible so that it's worth your visit here.

What I was saying is that you would know, you would see that your members are struggling. People and businesses are struggling. People are finding it's very, very difficult to pay their property tax, to pay their income tax, to afford their groceries and to afford everyday, basic necessities. But this is a government that is not sharing the windfall that they have seen from the increase in the sales tax revenue, the land transfer tax revenue, the gas tax revenue that this government gets. They're not sharing that.

We would measure success by seeing that everyday Ontarians are doing better, but in fact, that's not the case. People are doing much worse in this province. This government has been in power for five years and things have not gotten better; they've only gotten worse. Really, there's no better example of that than people in this province not being able to afford baby formula. I mean, how is this in the province of Ontario, which has been described as the capital, the economic engine of Canada? How is it possible that families are unable to afford to pay for baby formula?

The MPP for Niagara Falls brought this up in the House, questioned the Premier about the increasing cost of baby formula. It needs to be said that the cost is rising by \$5 to \$10 per case, with cases that last mere days. That reaches about \$75 a month for families trying to feed their babies. They're trying to feed their babies. They're struggling with the high cost of living, but there's nothing more upsetting than to hear that people can't afford to feed their babies. This budget does nothing to address the affordability crisis.

We've asked time and time again for this government to stand up to corporations that are price-gouging, corporations that are taking advantage of people who are desperate, but this government has done nothing. We ask you to stand up to corporate bullies. We measure our success by how we make life affordable for average people, for moms feeding their babies. That's a measure of success that I would like to see this government stand up and talk about.

We have a number of reports coming from the FAO, which is an independent office of the Legislature that

provides excellent information for us as legislators to do our job. I would say that the most recent report, which the FAO released today, about women in the labour force is really extremely disheartening, but it's really not surprising. We see a report from the FAO that says that there continues to be a stalled gender wage gap in this province. Further to that, the FAO has said that while women have made progress, they still continue to earn, on average, about 84 cents to the dollar that men make. That's a significant gap. That gap in wages would help women, mothers to be able to afford the rising cost of baby formula. What we see instead of a government that understands that women are major contributors to their household income is single moms who are raising a family. Women who have so many responsibilities inside the home and in the workplace are not in any way being protected by this government.

In fact, the FAO also finds that—what did he describe it as? A motherhood earnings penalty. This wage gap, this penalty that women face economically when they're in the workforce, is only exacerbated when they do have children. Using this data, the FAO finds that after having a child, Ontario mothers' earnings are cut in half and it can take up to four years to return to their pre-childbirth earnings level. This is unbelievable. This is the kind of stat that speaks to the poverty that we see in this province. It speaks to the fact that we have a child poverty rate in this province that we should all be ashamed of. It speaks to the fact that one of the highest users of food banks in this province are kids. It speaks to the fact that families and parents and teachers run—in schools, they have to run nutrition programs that aren't funded by the government, that are funded by donors and are funded by fundraising to make up the shortfall for people's ability in their household to feed their kids.

1600

There is a wonderful program in Hamilton called Food4Kids. They also identify a gap. While there are nutrition programs or breakfast programs in schools, oftentimes kids go home on the weekend and they're hungry. There isn't food for them at home. This fantastic program makes sure that kids are sent home with backpacks with food so that while they're not in school benefiting from nutrition programs, they do have food over the weekend. This is a program that is only run by donations, by people who step up and see the need, not by this government.

If this government were quite clear on the important role that women play in making sure that families are thriving and are able to meet the basic necessities, they wouldn't actually have spent so much time attacking women-led working sectors. What we have seen from this government is a government that continues to attack health care workers and education workers. These are primarily women-led sectors.

First, we have a government that took midwives to court. I can't think of a more women-led sector than midwives. This is a government that took them to court to fight their pay equity award. This is a government that,

with Bill 124, has frozen the wages of public sector workers, including nurses and PSWs, primarily women-led industries. This is what this government has done.

This harmful legislation—not only legislation but attacking them in court—is something that this government needs to really acknowledge. You need to understand that you are hurting children. When women can't earn a decent living in this province, when families go hungry, it's the children who suffer the most. That's how we would measure success. We would measure a successful budget that made sure that children were front and centre, that their well-being was the first thing that we ensured.

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. The other priority that I read out for the people of the province of Ontario is housing affordability. We know that we have a housing crisis in this province. We've been saying it for quite a long time. We are talking about the entire spectrum of housing, from single-family homes to rental units to social housing. All of that needs to be addressed by this government.

This government's idea that they can hand over the greenbelt to developers, that developers will build these large homes on wetlands and protected lands and that that will magically trickle down to allow there to be housing in other areas is magical thinking. It's not borne out by economics, and it really is just another way that this government has a cover story for how they are making sure that their friends, their donors and their connected folks benefit without any protections, any assurances that what they're doing will allow everyone to benefit.

We need look no further than the homelessness crisis that we're facing in all of our communities and the costs, both the financial and the social cost that the homelessness crisis is causing in the province of Ontario. The government introduced Bill 23. The most significant thing about Bill 23, this housing bill that they put forward, is that it basically takes away revenue from municipalities and gives a break to developers. It is simply a taxpayer-funded gift to developers. This revenue hole at the municipal level is absolutely going to cost taxpayers.

The government also promised that when they took away the development charges, they would make municipalities whole. It's not in the bill. I don't see it in the bill. Municipalities are left holding the bag. You gave developers a gift, but you gave it with somebody else's money. And you know what? The Association of Municipalities of Ontario was very, very, very clear on this—very clear that what you are doing would, in fact, cost municipalities.

But it's not just municipalities. When I talk about municipalities, I'm talking about the things that municipalities provide. They build our roads. They provide the water and the waste water infrastructure. They collect our garbage and our recycling. They build roads, and they build schools. And municipalities are now in crisis, and they have to do one of two things. They have to raise property taxes—which they are doing all across the province of Ontario. This government has created a chaos in municipal budgets by dumping costs on them which

they are unable to support, unless they cut services or raise taxes.

There's only one taxpayers' pocket, and this is a government that doesn't care whose pocket it comes out of as long as the changes they make benefit their friends and benefit their insider developers. It's such a narrow-minded, short-sighted approach to housing, with absolutely no guarantee that what you are doing will result in housing that people can afford or housing that will address not only just the homelessness crisis but the fact that tenants can't pay their rent. Tenants are being renocticed with absolutely no protections by this government.

The municipalities have been begging you not to do this, to make them whole, but you've turned your backs on them, including turning your backs on taxpayers and people who live in municipalities. All 444 municipalities across the province of Ontario are going to struggle because of your actions and your lack of investments in this budget.

But don't take it from me. Let's return to the Angus Reid poll that said “the majority of those who voted for the Progressive Conservatives”—so your voters, people who voted for you in 2022—“believe the government has done a bad job ... on the cost of living.” Seventy per cent said you did a bad job on the cost of living, 65% are saying you're doing a bad job on health care, and 70% said that you're doing a bad job on housing affordability. These are your voters, and do you know what? For once, I agree with them. This is a budget that fails to meet the moment, and it is a budget that is a disgrace when people in this province are struggling.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions, and I'll recognize the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you and good afternoon, Madam Speaker, and I want to correct what I believe is information that isn't necessarily accurate when it comes to—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize to the member. You're not sitting in your seat and your mike is not on.

I'm going to move to the next question. Member for Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for their submissions. She touched on a few issues that are very strong in my heart. So in a previous life, literally a year ago, I dealt with matters under the child protection act. It was important work. It was necessary work, and I valued that work because I knew I was making a difference. One of the things that really spoke to me in the budget was proposed measures to improve outcomes for the youth leaving the child welfare system by investing over \$170 million over three years to set them up on a path of independence, which is so important when you're talking about children.

Will the member opposite support these strong initiatives that will help our children?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member for the question, and thank you for your work that you have done in protecting children in the province of Ontario.

I would say when it comes to crown wards, there's a lot that this government could do. I would say that I work with a group that has worked with universities, including McMaster University in my riding, to make sure that anyone that was a crown ward at any point in their life, even if they're now adults, is able to access free post-secondary education. So anything that we can do to improve the outcomes for crown wards is something that I would support.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

1610

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much for the presentation from the member from Hamilton West, Dundas and Ancaster—not necessarily in that order.

You spoke about motherhood wage penalty, the gap between women's wages and the average man's wage doing equivalent work. I wonder if you could talk about a disability penalty. When I think of the social assistance rates that are available for people with disabilities and really how all of that money is always spent locally, and yet it's not nearly enough for people to live on—if you would address that, I'd appreciate it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member for the question. We stand up all the time and read a petition from Sally Palmer and the work she does to help us understand that the ODSP and OW rates in this province are legislated poverty. We need to understand that not everyone can work, and people go through very difficult periods of their lives. In fact, this motherhood earning penalty, as I described it, says that when women have babies, they plunge into poverty and it takes them many, many years to recover.

So looking at the social assistance rates and the ODSP rates that are punishing and that ensure people live in poverty—it's something that this government should do. The first thing they did when they came to office was cut in half the increases to OW and ODSP. It's my feeling that it would just be the humane thing to do to understand that families and children live in homes where they're suffering under these rates.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to clarify what I believe is incorrect information regarding development charges in the province of Ontario. Madam Speaker, the member opposite was talking about affordable housing and not-for-profit housing. Our government is giving organizations, not-for-profits like End Well—one of the best not-for-profit organizations in Ontario. They're waiving development charges so that they can build more units. They're waiving development charges so that people can build more rental units, purpose-built rental units.

The opposition says we need more units for people across Ontario. We're incentivizing builders to build more of these rental units. They are freezing—not taking away, but freezing DCs, development charges, on new builds so that young families can finally realize the dream of home ownership.

My question to the member opposite: Why are you against giving not-for-profits, people who want to rent and young families a break in getting into the housing market?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: If the government wanted to target this kind of support, they wouldn't have just written a blank cheque so that developers get the same break that wonderful organizations like End Well does.

In fact, the chief planner of the city of Hamilton, Steve Robichaud, told city councillors: "Will the purchaser or tenant actually benefit from that?" Speaking to the development charge waivers, he said, "The developer keeps those profits and prices stay the same."

So in fact, the evidence, even from the chief planner from the city of Hamilton, is clear that waiving these development charges does not benefit young families that want a home. They benefit developers, and it costs taxpayers more money.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague for her remarks. Last week, we had a constituency week and I took the opportunity to visit a number of community service agencies in the London area. I visited staff at Community Living London, Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, L'Arche, Meals on Wheels etc. One of the things I heard repeatedly was that there has been no increase at all in base funding for many of these vital community support agencies for a decade or more. They are already dealing with wages in that sector that are far below the wages that are paid to similar workers in the institutional sector.

I wondered if the member would like to comment on whether there was any funding in this budget to help stabilize and ensure the sustainability of that vital community support sector.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Absolutely no—there's nothing in this budget that will support the not-for-profits that, right now, are the last line of protection for people in this province who are struggling. We need not-for-profits. They have been serving for years and years and years, but what we see in Hamilton are some of these front-line servicing agencies closing because of the wage freeze with Bill 124 and because of the lack of funding.

I just have to say, this is a government that has had the biggest spending budget in the history of Ontario. They still have the second-largest debt-to-GDP, but let's just say this: They have the lowest per capita spending in all of Canada on the kinds of social services that we all rely on. And who's picking up the slack? Those not-for-profit agencies that are seeing their doors bulging with people there looking for the help that they're not getting from this government.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Kevin Holland: For 31 years I was the mayor of my community, 10 years of which I sat on the district social services administration board. Through 15 years of the previous government, we lobbied for increases in funding to help those most vulnerable and at risk of homelessness. We never received anything.

I've sat here and I've listened to the members opposite talk about how there's nothing in the budget for the most vulnerable. Do you not think a 40% increase for homelessness prevention programming, nearly \$202 million more, bringing the total to \$700 million for homelessness prevention programming—that represents a tripling of funding in Thunder Bay for the Thunder Bay DSSAB. How can you sit there and say there aren't supports in this budget for those most vulnerable in our community? Do you not think that an increase of 40% for homelessness prevention programming is a benefit?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for the question. I would just say that you are a government that gives with one hand and takes with the other. So you've got \$202 million: Divide that by 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario. It doesn't add up to much. Some \$450,000 is what it costs to build one unit of affordable housing—

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member can yell and holler at me all he wants, but I'm here to say—don't take it from me; take it from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which said that the homelessness crisis in your community is a made-in-Ontario crisis brought about by the policy decisions and choices of provincial governments. So there it is, right there, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise to participate in the third reading debate on Bill 85, the budget bill. You know, Speaker, you can oftentimes talk about your values, but you really have the opportunity to show your values when you put a budget forward because it really shows the priorities that a government has. Right now, when you look around Ontario, there seems to be a crisis kind of everywhere: the health and education systems; the housing affordability and cost-of-living crisis; the climate crisis; the crisis of poverty that so many people are feeling in our communities. I want to talk about what could be in this budget to address those crises but are not.

I'll start with health care, mental health and education. According to Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer, over the next five years, looking at how this budget lays things out, the province of Ontario is going to underspend on health care, long-term care and community care by \$21.8 billion, when you take into account population growth, inflation and what the government has said they want to accomplish. That is going to continue a crisis in our health care system, a crisis that's going to have profound additional costs to our communities: emergency room closures; surgical and wait time backlogs; the continuing loss of front-line staff in our health care system, who are overworked, underpaid and undervalued.

We just saw a report yesterday coming out in our education system on the rising levels of violence. I just met with Catholic educators a few hours ago in my office, talking about this issue. So much of it stems from the fact that we don't have sufficient resources for educational assistants and other staff to support students in our classrooms, especially students with special needs. That's why

it's so distressing when the FAO projects—again, looking at inflation and population growth—that the government will underspend what our education system needs by \$6 billion.

1620

Speaker, the values of the Ontario I want to live in are values that are centred in building caring communities and investing in the future. That's why it distresses me to see this budget underfund education and health care and, finally, mental health services.

Mental health service organizations in this province said they needed a minimum 8% increase just to maintain existing services. The government will talk about the 5% increase that's in this budget for mental health, and that is welcome—there's no doubt about it—but it's insufficient to actually maintain existing service levels, which to me is unacceptable when we have 28,000 young people on a wait-list to access mental health services that can be as long as two and a half years.

Think about young people on suicide watch. Think about young people with complex eating disorders and other complex mental health crises having to wait 18 months to two and a half years to access services. To me, that's not the Ontario I want to live in.

Let's talk about the housing affordability crisis. This government's solution to the housing affordability crisis is “pave at all costs”: pave over the farmland that feeds us; pave over the wetlands and green space that protect us, clean our drinking water. It's especially troubling when you think about the climate crisis that we're experiencing right now. Look at the hazy skies you see outside this building right now from the forest fires in Alberta. Think of the people experiencing flooding in the Ottawa River valley—once again, a 100-year flood; it seems like we have one every couple of years. Yet this government wants to pave over the wetlands and green space that protect us at a cost that is fiscally irresponsible.

Think about this: It costs 2.5 times more money to service a sprawl household versus a home built within an existing urban boundary. The city of Ottawa did a study determining that it cost them \$465 per person every year—that's property taxpayers—to service a home through sprawl. They make \$600 a year—they bring in more tax revenue—for one built within the existing urban boundary. That's \$1,000 per taxpayer per household per year if we decide to build homes in communities that people can afford, in the communities they want to live in, instead of sprawling out and paving over our greenbelt.

This budget wants to expand highway construction. We already owe \$52 billion in unfunded infrastructure costs because of the sprawl developments of the past. Then on top of that, according to the Financial Accountability Officer, we're going to pay an extra \$26.2 billion this decade alone for infrastructure costs due to the climate crisis.

At some point, we have to ask ourselves, when are we going to start building communities we can actually afford, with houses where people want to live in close to where they work, not imposing the costs of sprawl on them and protecting them from the climate crisis?

Speaker, I want to close, and I only have a couple of minutes left. Poverty costs this province \$33 billion a year, and yet this budget maintains legislated poverty for people on ODSP and Ontario Works. That's not the Ontario I want to live in.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions.

Mr. Mike Harris: While I may disagree philosophically with a lot of what I heard from the member from Guelph, the one thing we do agree on is better connection between Waterloo region and particularly Kitchener and Guelph. There is a long-standing tradition of governments talking about building a new Highway 7, and it's something that has moved very slowly, but we have seen the most progress under this government.

I'm very curious to know whether or not the member from Guelph supports building a new Highway 7 and whether or not he sees it as a way to reduce gridlock, reduce congestion, reducing idling and make it safer for people to get back and forth between our two great cities.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I always appreciate questions from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. We're neighbours. We may not always agree, but we always figure out ways to work together, so I appreciate that.

When it comes to building highway connections between the two cities, multiple governments have talked about this. I'm not opposed to building the highway, but I think there are ways that we can address gridlock more immediately and that are a higher priority.

First of all, why don't we have an all-day direct bus connection between Guelph and KW? We finally got an announcement for a limited connection from Metrolinx just in the last few weeks, but let's actually start building direct transit.

Secondly, and this is something I know the two of us agree on and have been working on: Let's actually finally deliver all-day, two-way GO between KW, Guelph, Brampton, Toronto. I think we can go a long way towards addressing gridlock in a very affordable, environmentally responsible way by prioritizing transit links between our two great cities.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I thank the member for his very passionate speech outlining what we should be focusing on. I heard a government member, during their line of questioning, proudly proclaim that this government was looking to increase ODSP by 5%. In the midst of an affordability crisis, do you believe that this is enough money—below inflation—for some of the most vulnerable among us?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

No, it's not. How can we expect people to live on \$1,200 a month when the average rates in a city like Toronto is—rent for a one-bedroom apartment has hit \$2,000 a month. I was distressed; I want to read this out: The Daily Bread Food Bank just recently had a news conference, and in March of 2023, there were 270,000 client visits to the food bank in Toronto alone.

We're facing a serious crisis here that is having a direct impact on people's lives, not to mention the fact that it's costing our province \$33 billion a year. That's the highest number ever recorded in the history of a food bank.

They support doubling ODSP rates, but I want to put it on record today that they asked for at least a \$100 top-up for individuals and \$200 per month, just to get us—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. Next question.

Mr. Mike Harris: Listen, it's great to hear that the member from Guelph supports building Highway 7 and wants to see that get done and wants us to be able to honour our commitment for our two great regions of the province. I think when we look at some of the other things that the member talked about and just hearing from the member from Humber River–Black Creek—we have already seen ODSP rates go up 5%. The member from Peterborough–Kawartha was just reminding me that this has already been done. We've removed clawbacks and we're working with the federal government to try and figure out some more ways that we can get creative and build those partnerships.

Again, I'm wondering, in the spirit of collaboration that both you and I have, how do you feel about the federal government really actually trying to keep up to their end of the bargain, and should this all just rely on the province?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: We need both the federal government and the provincial government to step up to the plate. The federal government needs to deliver on their promise of a Canadian disability benefit. But let's be clear, Speaker: The level of government that administers social assistance rates is the provincial government; it's the provincial government's responsibility. And it's the provincial government's responsibility to end legislated poverty in this province. This budget—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's a special honour to be able to rise here today to speak in support of Bill 85, the Building a Strong Ontario Act, introduced by the Minister of Finance, because as parliamentary assistant at the Treasury Board, I've had the opportunity to work with the minister and with our colleagues to help develop the 2023 budget. I want to thank the minister and his staff, and also the President of the Treasury Board and our team at TBS, for all their work over the past few months.

Speaker, before I begin, I'd like to note I will be sharing my time with my friend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to travel around the province for a pre-budget consultation with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. In Mississauga, the minister and our team visited the Hazel McCallion Campus at Sheridan College to listen to stakeholders, including many from Mississauga–Lakeshore. The 2023 budget reflects their concerns and their priorities.

1630

In this budget speech, the minister got into his electric vehicle and took us on a trip around the province. This

afternoon, I'd like to take us on another trip around Mississauga–Lakeshore, and I will start at the Mississauga Hospital, where I was born and my sons were born, and my mother worked in the kitchen as a first-generation immigrant. The hospital opened in 1958, and Mississauga needed a new hospital 15 years ago, but the former Liberal government never approved the funding.

Our 2023 budget includes a historic multi-billion-dollar investment to support a complete reconstruction of the hospital, and work is already under way, with an eight-storey parking structure with spaces for 1,500 vehicles. The new hospital will be almost triple the size, 24 storeys and three million square feet, with a thousand beds and 80% in private rooms. Speaker, this will be the largest and most advanced hospital in the history of Canada.

In total, the 2023 budget includes over \$48 billion in hospital infrastructure. That is an increase from \$40 billion last year and \$30 billion in 2021. Speaker, that is an increase of 60% in the last two years.

In March, Trillium Health Partners and Infrastructure Ontario signed an agreement with EllisDon and PCL Healthcare Partners to deliver the new Mississauga Hospital with a progressive P3 approach. There are projects like this under way right across the province. Soon we'll be able to drive just over to Etobicoke Creek to visit the Queensway Health Centre, where they're building a new nine-storey, 600,000-square-foot tower with over 350 new hospital beds in a modern centre of complete care. As the minister said, in 2023-24, the health budget is \$81 billion, an increase of over \$6 billion over last year. That is an 8% increase.

Back in Mississauga–Lakeshore, we'll be able to walk outside our new hospital and take the new 18-kilometre Hazel McCallion LRT line on Hurontario, which is on budget and on schedule to open in the fall next year. We'll be able to take the LRT down to Port Credit GO station, with 15-minute service or better, and to our new BRT line along Lakeshore. We're building a modern, reliable interregional transit network across the GTA. In total, the 2023 budget includes \$71 billion in transit infrastructure, up from \$62 billion last year. That's an increase of 15% just in the last year alone.

Along Lakeshore, we might find a new home in Brightwater or the new Lakeview Village, which will add almost 20,000 new homes along the waterfront thanks to an MZO announcement on Friday by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. And again, I want to thank him and his team for all their work on this file. The 2023 budget also recognizes the need to build on previous investments, like the Lakeshore Lofts, Indwell's first affordable and supportive housing development in Mississauga, which just celebrated its first anniversary.

I was proud to join the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in Mississauga, where we announced more details about our investment of \$700 million each year through the Homelessness Prevention Program, including a \$202-million increase over last year and over \$42 million for Peel region, a 38% increase.

I want to thank Jannies Le, the executive director at Armagh House, for joining us at our consultation at Sheridan College in Mississauga. Armagh is the only transitional health facility in Peel for victims of domestic violence. They're working on doubling their capacity, and the 2023 budget will help them finish their project. As Jannies said, "The additional investment into the Homelessness Prevention Program is hopeful for the women and children living in shelters in the region of Peel. Armagh's current expansion to build 10 additional apartment units is nearing completion, and with the support of the HPP funds, we will be able to serve those families."

Speaking of families, we can stop next at Alpha Discovery Kids Preschool in Sheridan Park, and I want to thank the Minister of Education for joining us at the grand opening for 93 new child care spaces, which is part of our commitment to add 86,000 new high-quality child care spaces by 2026. In total, the 2023-24 education budget is \$35 billion. That is an increase of over 7% since last year.

Then we can walk over to Wellbrook Place, a new state-of-the-art long-term-care home on Speakman Drive that will open later this year with 632 new residents. This will be the largest long-term-care home in Ontario. As I said earlier today, I had the opportunity to visit the construction site with the Minister of Long-Term Care, and I want to thank Tess Romain and her team at Partners Community Health for all their work on this project. It is part of the historic investment of \$6.4 billion in the largest long-term-care building program in Canadian history, adding 31,000 new beds and upgrading 28,000 beds, and that includes 1,100 new and upgraded beds in Mississauga–Lakeshore alone, more than any other riding in the province of Ontario.

My constituents are excited about this investment in health care, education, transportation and long-term care. It's worth taking a moment to ask how we have been able to do all this. Well, we've been able to do this because the Premier and the Minister of Finance have made Ontario open for business once again. We are cutting taxes and energy costs. We are building a world-class skilled workforce, and we're reducing the burden of red tape. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction is continuing to work on Bill 91. These policies have produced an economic recovery that leads the country, and it's given us the resources we need to make these investments.

For our final stop today, we can drive our electric vehicle to the Ford assembly plant in Oakville where I worked for 31 years. When we were elected in 2018, companies were leaving Ontario. Ontario had lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, including many in the auto sector. Sergio Marchionne at Fiat Chrysler told us that Ontario was the most expensive place in the world to do business, and the former Minister of Finance from Mississauga–Lakeshore said assembly line manufacturing was a thing of the past. My friends at Unifor 707 in Oakville watched as Ontario lost automotive sector jobs in St. Thomas, Oshawa and Windsor to Michigan, Mexico and overseas.

Now, since 2018, Ontario has added over 600,000 new jobs in the last two and a half years. We have attracted over

\$25 billion of investment from global automotive manufacturers. That includes \$1.8 billion to transform Ford's Oakville assembly plant into a global hub to manufacture electric vehicles beginning next year.

The 2023 budget includes a new Ontario-made manufacturing tax credit to attract even more investment in new equipment and machinery. Speaker, on Saturday Unifor 707 celebrated their 70th anniversary with a new confidence and optimism that we didn't have five years ago, and in large part, that's because of this Premier and our Minister of Finance and budgetary policies of this government. So I look forward to voting for this motion, and I urge all members to join me.

Now, as I said, I will share my time with the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. I recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you very much, and a big thank you to my good friend the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore for sharing his time with me.

I think it's always important to be able to speak to the budget. While the budget features many initiatives that will benefit my riding and our region, I want to take a moment to discuss one portion that I was able to help announce just a short time ago. Animal and animal-related agriculture are both crucial to the economic stability of rural Ontario. This is something that residents of Kitchener–Conestoga know very well. I have about 1,200 farms in my riding. However, many regions across the province are experiencing a shortage of veterinarians who care for livestock.

1640

Any gaps in service create risk to farmers and their animals, and also jeopardize the security of our food supply chains. I was pleased to join the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, as well as the Minister of Colleges and Universities, at the University of Guelph to highlight the \$15 million we are allocating in this budget to help address veterinary shortages in rural and northern communities.

The government is also launching the Veterinary Incentive Program to encourage recent veterinary graduates to practise in underserved and northern communities. We do have some members from rural and northern communities here today, and I'm sure they're very excited to hear about this announcement. Students will spend two years at Lakehead University and two years at the University of Guelph.

What does this mean for the residents of Kitchener–Conestoga? This means that agriculture, a key sector of our region's economy, will continue to be healthy. For our farmers, this will mean they can be confident raising healthy livestock, with qualified vets available. Vets diagnose and treat diseases and disorders, as well as advise farmers on hygiene and general strategies for their animals. It also means that our food supply chain will be kept safe, which is something we all rely on.

After our announcement at the university, the day concluded with a tour of Ontario Drive and Gear. Some of

you may have heard of the Argo all-terrain vehicle that serves many people across, quite frankly, North America. It's manufactured in Waterloo region, in my riding, in New Hamburg, Ontario.

This leads me to my next point, Madam Speaker. Here are two damning quotes from the former Liberal government's final report on the economy: "The structure of the Ontario economy will continue to shift from goods-producing to service-producing sectors." It goes on to say, "shifting employment from goods-producing industries, in particular manufacturing" to other sectors like the service sector. Years of mismanagement under the previous government cost Ontario a staggering 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Just in Waterloo region alone, we lost about 20,000 manufacturing jobs under the previous Liberal government.

A week ago today, I was able to attend the 12th Annual Manufacturing Summit, hosted by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. The Premier spoke of the importance of manufacturing in Ontario, and it seems this sector has taken note. Let's compare the tone of what I like to call the Liberal's eulogy to manufacturing jobs in Ontario to the reaction to this budget: "Manufacturing is no longer an afterthought in provincial budgets, it is a centrepiece. With this consequential budget, Ontario establishes a leading position among provinces in spurring an industrial resurgence." This is Dennis Darby, the president and CEO of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I couldn't have said it better myself. This is great news for the people of Kitchener–Conestoga, as manufacturing makes up roughly 20% of our region's economy.

Waterloo region currently has about 650,000 residents, and the population is expected to hit a million people by 2051. As the Premier noted again in his remarks last week, we can't keep attracting workers to Waterloo region if they don't have a place to live. Our government is doing everything in its power to get more houses built while addressing other key housing issues. We'll be investing \$24 million over the next three years in the Ontario Land Tribunal and the Landlord and Tenant Board in an effort to help clear backlogs and streamline processes via more adjudicators and administrative support. Speaker, this is something that comes up often at my constituency office, and I'm sure it does at yours as well. We want to make it easier for both tenants and landlords to have their cases heard in a timely manner.

The budget also contains a promise to continue pushing the federal government to reduce taxes on new and rental housing. To again borrow a comment from the Premier's remarks at the manufacturing summit in Kitchener last week, "Solving the housing crisis requires that all levels of government work together," so we hope that the federal government will do the right thing and follow our lead by reducing the cost to make new and rental housing.

We're investing \$25 million over three years to attract more skilled workers through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. So what does this mean, again, for Kitchener–Conestoga residents, Madam Speaker? This

means that we are taking the fight to the skilled labour shortage to ensure that critical infrastructure we need gets built and that critical jobs are filled. We're investing \$2 billion in the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund over the next five years to help small and rural municipalities pay for roads, bridges, water and waste water projects. This is incredibly important for my riding as we continue to grow, Madam Speaker.

As I begin to wrap up my remarks here today, I want to highlight why I am proud to support this bill. My riding of Kitchener–Conestoga and the entire region enjoy many competitive advantages. We have a good quality of life, three post-secondary institutions, hospitals, innovation hubs and, as I alluded to earlier with the member for Guelph, access to highways connecting to several US border crossings. That said, we need to work hard to keep these advantages, so we will be investing \$70.5 billion over the next 10 years for transit, including continued investment towards that all-important two-way, all-day GO service along the Kitchener Line.

The budget builds on our commitment to addressing backlogs by providing more OHIP-insured cataract surgeries. The Ministry of Health is investing up to \$8.5 million annually to support the delivery of cataract surgeries for patients at four facilities across the province, including—we're very lucky to have this partnership in our region with TLC Laser Eye Centres in Waterloo. They've been doing fantastic work with St. Mary's hospital, might I add, to help alleviate some of the pressure in cataract surgeries in the region for almost a decade.

We are also funding historic hospital expansion, including the construction of a new acute-care facility, seeing the Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's hospital come together as our region, as I had said, expands to somewhere in the neighbourhood of a million people over the next 40 years.

Through this budget, we are investing in housing, highways, transit, education, health care, skilled trades, manufacturing and, of course, mental health. These are exactly the kinds of investments that will enhance our competitive advantage here in the province of Ontario and keep Waterloo region a world-class place to raise a family for years to come.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the members opposite. I appreciate the debate, because there was personal touch in that information you learn about the different members.

I was looking through my notes when we first debated the budget bill, and one of the things that really stuck out to me is—Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking talked about the need for sustainable funding for not-for-profits. I've had conversations with other not-for-profits since I've been elected, and I have a difficult understanding why not-for-profits, some of them going on for decades—literally 50 years, for one in my community. Why is it they have to apply for funding every year? Why isn't there a better formula where they can plan and have

predictable funding for a longer stream after they have proved after a decade the great work that they do?

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you very much to the member from Sudbury. I think there has been quite a focus on not-for-profits. If we look just alone at what we've done with not-for-profit housing organizations over the last year, give or take, with the housing bills that we've seen come forward from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we've actually given the opportunity for non-profits to really, truly participate in mostly the rental housing sector by removing development charges charged to them, which is a major hindrance to them actually getting involved and being able to make a difference in their communities.

But if we go back, too, we've also seen lots of great things in regard to fundraising. There has been some more ability for them to work with the public, especially involved in 50/50 raffles. I know that's something in my community that has been a big hit in helping clubs like the Kinsmen Club or the Lions Club, especially through the pandemic, to be able to continue the good work that they're doing. So I'm very happy to stand behind this budget and very happy to see what we're doing for the non-profit sector in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank both members for their remarks. Maybe this one will be directed to the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore, given I know he's got tremendous experience in the manufacturing sector. I know it's been a difficult couple of days for me and my community, Windsor–Tecumseh, with the discussion of the Stellantis plant. That's evidence, however, of Ontario attracting billions of dollars in automotive and clean steel investments in the last few years. We definitely want to keep on attracting those investments. So this budget contains measures like the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. That's introduced in this budget.

1650

I'm wondering, why is it important that we have many, many facets of investment, including this particular tax credit in the 2023 budget?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Windsor. I'll tell you this: When my father first immigrated here to Canada in 1950, that's where he went to work. He was in Windsor, working at the Campbell Soup plant back then, in 1950, and then he moved to Port Credit, where he worked in a refinery.

I was lucky; I worked in the automotive industry, and I think the automotive industry is the lifeline to this province. We've invested over \$25 billion in automotive investment in this province to attract the automotive industry back to Ontario, to make it the number one jurisdiction in the world to build EVs. But not only that, we'll be building the battery here, and we're going to be using our own natural resources so we don't have to depend on countries like the Congo, where they use child labour for the minerals. The 10% reduction for manufacturing to keep those jobs here and attract more is what

we need to attract even more than \$25 billion moving forward.

I want to thank the member for that question.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Earlier today, I asked a question of the Minister of Finance—actually, the Premier, but it was answered by the Minister of Finance—around auto insurance and the fact that rates in Brampton had gone up by 37% in the last two years. When I was looking at that report, I had noticed that, actually, number three in all of Ontario, the third city in terms of the highest rate of increase, at almost 20%, was Mississauga.

So my question is for my friend the member of Mississauga—Lakeshore. I know he cares deeply about his constituents. How does he feel about the fact that auto insurance companies have jacked up their rate almost 20% in his area, and do you believe that the government could be doing more to bring this under control?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. I'm the first to complain about insurance; I'll tell you the truth. I have two young boys, and our rates are very high, and I agree with you: Insurance is high. But what we're doing right now is even fighting crime. Car theft is one of the number one issues too, that auto insurance is so high. So we're investing in our police to stop crime.

In my neighbourhood alone, we've had 25 cars stolen over the last month. My neighbour's car got stolen—well, once, it got stolen, and then the second time, they tried again to steal the other car. They were not able to do that. Not only that, on the other court, one of the neighbours came out, and they were stealing his car at 3 o'clock in the morning. The criminal told them, "Go back in the house and call the insurance tomorrow morning." That's how it's become now in that business.

So I know it's a difficult issue, and I agree that we have to do something to improve the cost of insurance through the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Madam Speaker, I want to expand a little bit on what my colleague was mentioning earlier about DCs, development charges. We hear often from the opposition what I would say is not necessarily factual: Development charges can be applied to all new builds, and often we hear that municipalities are being handcuffed and cannot raise or generate any revenue because development charges have been waived.

I would like either of my colleagues to speak to the development charges and clarify, present the facts: Where have they been waived and why, and can municipalities still insist that developers pay development charges on new builds?

Mr. Mike Harris: I hate having my back to you when I answer your question, but just for the sake of the microphone—listen, I think there has been a lot of misconception when it comes to parts of this bill and when we talk about development charges. All new builds are

still subject to development charges, unless they are purpose-built rentals or they are not-for-profit. For anything else, it still applies. There is a bit of a sliding scale when it comes to some certain developments not being able to have 100% of development charges charged at the time, but they can charge up to 80%, and then there's that 20% that gets made up after that. But just to be very clear again, purpose-built rental and not-for-profit housing are not subject to development charges. New greenfield, brownfield, infill, single-family homes that are being built out in the country, and townhomes still can be part of that development charge process.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: A quick question for my friends across the aisle: You've been probably in meetings with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario or the Ontario Good Roads Association and know that there's a \$52-billion infrastructure backlog in Ontario that's putting huge pressure on municipal budgets.

On top of that, according to the Financial Accountability Officer, Ontario will experience an additional \$26.2 billion in infrastructure costs due to the climate crisis. This has led to some real-world situations. In Chatham-Kent, there's a local highway closed. I know the member from Haldimand-Norfolk keeps asking about an unsafe bridge in her riding.

Can the members explain why there isn't anything in the budget that really addresses this critical need for infrastructure funding to repair the infrastructure that we already have in Ontario?

Mr. Mike Harris: Listen, this question is coming from a member who has consistently voted against infrastructure spending for the last five years, so I find it a little bit—I don't want to use the term "rich," but I do find it a little bit interesting that he would ask this question. There are billions of dollars earmarked in the current budget for large-scale infrastructure. We talked a little bit about it earlier, especially the roughly—I think it was \$70.5 billion over the next 10 years for transit.

This member spoke about the climate crisis, spoke against gridlock and carbon emissions, and talks about the fact that he wants to see more people get off the road, wants to be using transit. He mentioned two-way, all-day GO specifically. These investments will help two-way, all-day GO become a reality, and I hope he will support this budget, and I hope he will support the transit infrastructure within it.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don't have time for another back-and-forth or question-and-answer, so we're going to move to further debate.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I was listening to the member from Durham earlier, and a lot of talk about transparency and fiscal responsibility, so I wanted to look at that a little bit and where money is being spent by this government. It really puts that into question, the transparency and fiscal responsibility, so I'd like to make a tally here.

I'm thinking here of the mandate letters that have been in court now for five years, and still the government is too

frightened, I assume, of what the public will think to reveal what ministers have been directed to do. We all hear every day in this Legislature what the government wants people to believe—they've got a narrative—but wouldn't it be enlightening to compare these creative narratives to what has actually been laid out in the mandate letters? Unfortunately, it's clear the government would rather spend our tax dollars on lawyers rather than on public transparency. So I ask, is that an example of fiscal prudence?

The Ontario Superior Court has ruled that Bill 124 is unconstitutional wage repression, and the repression of the right to collective bargaining is what Bill 124 does. But is the government prepared to stop fighting nurses, educators and other public-sector workers? No. They would prefer to keep spending taxpayer dollars on lawyers and court costs.

Now, we know that if they lose their appeal of Bill 124, they will be forced to pay back wages, probably in the billions, that will be owed to those workers. And these are the workers who did so much for people during the pandemic, who have been treated very poorly by this government. In the end, if they lose that case—first of all, the case is costing a lot of money—then they're going to have to pay out a lot of money. So why keep fighting and spending tax dollars on a court appeal?

I like to think in terms of strategy, and again, I'm asking myself: What is in those mandate letters? Let's put this together with another massive health care expense, so that people can see that the wage repression represented by Bill 124 is actually part of a larger strategy to collapse the public health care system so that well-connected people can come in and make hefty profits on the backs of people who are ill.

Bill 124 has effectively pushed health care workers out of hospitals, and hospitals have been forced to spend an incredible amount of money on agency nurses. The fact that people close to the Conservative government own some of these agencies is one piece of the puzzle, but it's only one. Agencies are costing the public 550% more than it would cost to pay staff nurses. So then you can see that the repression represented by Bill 124 is actually not about saving money; it's about creating a permanent state of crisis in public health care so that there are opportunities created for private shareholder profits.

1700

Now, wouldn't it be interesting if we could see the mandate letters for the Ministry of Health and the rationales for imposing Bill 124, which has led to an increase of 550% in health care costs for nursing staff? I find that incredible. Well, let me see: a massive transfer of public dollars into for-profit hands at the expense of health care workers, the ones who actually work on staff and are committed to their communities.

But there are other court cases. There's the court case around Treaty 9 and undoubtedly there will be more with the imposition of Bill 71. We heard from the Chiefs of Ontario, representing 131 First Nations. The first letter came from the Matawa group, nine First Nations, all in the area of the Ring of Fire and where a lot of the mining the government hopes will take place. Treaty 9—really a very,

very serious court case—and then Whitesand, all sending letters in opposition to Bill 71 and effectively saying, "Cease and desist. You do not have the right to be on our property. You do not have the right to be digging and exploring without our consent, without our agreement."

I just want to say, as we've made very clear on this side of the House, that talking about First Nations' rights is not saying we don't want mining, but that we want mining done responsibly and we want those relationships built properly, with justice at their core. Right now, that's not what's happening.

To me, this is the same old, same old story, and it can be spun any way you like. The latest spin from the Minister of Indigenous Affairs is legacy infrastructure. I think we're going to hear those two words again and again as the latest spin. It sounds nice, but when you shove things down people's throats with a father-knows-best attitude, you are showing yourselves to have exactly the same approach as the architects of the residential school system. Surely we should be past that, and we should be capable of recognizing when we are bringing that kind of arrogance: "We know best what's good for you. We're going to do it anyway, whether you like it or not."

The result is actually uncertainty for business. It's uncertainty for business because there will be court challenges, and if it comes to it, do we really want to see Ipperwash happening here in northern Ontario? Surely not, but that is exactly what's being invited right now. We had 80 people from the Far North of Ontario here, and chiefs, saying very directly, "The Ring of Fire will not happen without our consent." Well, the Premier was not willing to even meet with them. What kind of consent is that?

The first letter I received, going back to April 3, was from Matawa—and by the way, Matawa includes Marten Falls and Webequie. Those are the two First Nations that agreed to have the road. I find it perplexing to hear the Premier say that those two First Nations—that it's going to be their job to convince everybody else that this is a good deal. First of all, it's not their responsibility to do that. Secondly, they signed the original letter in opposition to Bill 71. Matawa and Marten Falls signed the letter in opposition, so you cannot expect them to do the work that was asked for, which was to set up—let's see if I can remember the correct words—a process—I'm sorry, I've lost the words now, but a process for negotiating so that companies and First Nations—

Interjections: Framework.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: What was that? Framework. Thank you very much—to establish a framework so that business had security and First Nations had security, knowing that they would be able to work together and come to an agreement that everybody could live with.

I want to talk a little bit about—jeez, I'm going to run out of time, and I had so much I wanted to share. Biigtigong Nishnaabeg, also known as Pic River First Nation, is just east of Marathon on Lake Superior. They recently signed an agreement with Generation Mining. The town of Marathon and Biigtigong Nishnaabeg worked very closely together. That's a relationship they've been

working on for years. And the relationship with Generation Mining has also been worked on for years. The entire community voted on whether they would go ahead with this agreement, and that actually was a very beautiful ceremony in which that agreement, in principle, was signed.

It's possible to do this right. It's possible to build these relationships. If we really wanted to, we could get clean water in every one of those communities at the snap of our fingers, but instead, that doesn't get done and, in fact, it's kind of used as a bit of a—the nice way to call it would be a bargaining chip. “If you do what we want, maybe we'll give you your water.” Instead, we have a bill—Bill 71—that overrides the wishes of First Nations and tramples on, compromises on environmental protections for mine remediation. We know that these things can work if they're done properly, with respect. We also know that pushing through Bill 71 was not an act of respect and that it will not provide the business security that people are looking for and it will lead to more court cases.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We're going to move to questions.

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened intently, and I enjoy hearing about all of the different locations across our province, and I appreciate it, truly. I just wanted to know what the member's opinion would be on the First Nations and industry Ring of Fire projects. These investments are part of Ontario's commitment of close to \$1 billion that will support critical legacy infrastructure, all-season roads, broadband connectivity—which is such a huge issue across our province. I'm just wondering, will the opposition please support these measures, because it will allow communities to work towards their own benefit, keep costs down and help the labour force in those locations?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think that communities would like to see those benefits, but I don't think they want to see them at the end of a bludgeon, frankly. They don't want to be bullied. They want to have fair, free consent and good negotiations, and until those negotiations take place, we shouldn't be bulldozing over their legal rights.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member for your presentation here. We need to understand that in this House, this is the crown, and you are a signatory to Treaty 9 and you have an obligation to make sure you are engaged in free, prior and informed consent in any lands that belong to Indigenous communities and First Nations governments.

In this House, we've heard how opposed they are to this. The member from Brantford–Brant brought Logan Staats to the House, and he stood in his place and said to this government, “We are opposed to you taking our land.” We had the Land Back movement with Skyler Williams in Caledonia. We do not want to see an Ipperwash, an Oka Crisis, another Caledonia here in the province of Ontario. You shouldn't want it either.

So why is this government recklessly pursuing a divide-and-conquer colonial strategy when they know it will only

lead to confrontation and you are not living up to your responsibilities as signatories to Treaty 9 and representatives of the crown?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: To be honest, I don't understand why at this historical moment this is taking place, because we have the information we need; we have examples of good, solid working relationships. So I do see it as a divide-and-conquer. It will pit municipalities against First Nations, which is a dreadful thing to do. Frankly, it just says again, “First Nation lives are throwaway lives, and we don't really care. We're going to get the resources, we're going to get the money and to heck with them.”

1710

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the remarks from my colleague the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North and want to thank her for the issues that she raised and the concerns that she identified with this budget.

One of the issues that we face in my community, in the London area, is a dire shortage of family physicians, primary care providers. We're short 65,000 family doctors in the London area, which has a huge impact on people's ability to access the preventive programs and services they need.

I wondered if the member would comment on whether there was anything in the budget to deal with that significant shortage of family physicians across the province and what the people in her community are facing in terms of access to primary care.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the question. We have about 45,000 people who don't have access to primary care at this time. I know that the government has opened up some spaces for doctors, but it's not enough. We really need to increase the spaces to train doctors. We also need to increase incentives to bring doctors to remote regions. I would like to see some of the work that's being done to incentivize other health care workers to work in remote regions applied to doctors and see those spaces increased.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North for her comments. I'll build on my earlier question to the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore: We've seen the success the province can have in attracting investments that create good jobs, and our government has been able to attract billions of dollars' worth of investments in automotive and clean steel manufacturing. That includes the recent announcement from Volkswagen and the Stellantis/NextStar Energy battery plant in my riding. So my question is whether you have support for the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit that is included in the budget.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: That's a very good question, and it's difficult for me to answer that directly, because I've also seen and heard the minister opposite talk about refunding billions of dollars from WSIB resources, and I know that there are many workers who are forced onto ODSP, which is public money, when it should be paid by

business. So I can't say. Is that tax credit coming off the backs of injured workers who don't have enough to survive on? Hopefully not, but I do see that aspects of this budget have come directly from supports intended to support injured workers.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to my colleague. This budget bill, when we look at it, talks about a lot of investment in the Ring of Fire. We've seen First Nations come here. You mentioned it in your allocution—dans ton allocution—and talked about what First Nations said: pre-informed consent. And last week, we heard the Premier telling First Nations—pit First Nation against First Nation. I would like to hear from you, is that worthy of a Premier, saying that—pitting First Nations. Instead of de-escalating the issue, he poured gas on the issue. I'd like to hear your concerns or your thoughts on this.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to that. I was appalled, to be honest. We don't need to be escalating conflict between Indigenous communities or attempting to. I don't think the communities are actually willing to fight against each other, but to hear the Premier suggest that that's what should be done, it's not fitting to a leader of this province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: We have seen a successful story right here in Ontario, where Ontario can be attracting investments that will create good jobs. Our government has attracted billions of dollars in investments in automotive and clean steel manufacturing, including Volkswagen's first overseas EV battery manufacturing plant. Will the opposition help Ontario keep up the momentum by supporting proposed measures like the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think, again, I'll say it's a little bit outside my expertise, that particular element of the budget. But again, my concern is, tax credits can work very well for establishing businesses, but what I also want to see on the other side of that is that the protections for workers are there, and I don't see that. Even with the new diesel standards, they are not low enough to truly be protecting workers from being poisoned at work. And I want to see that the money is restored to the WSIB, and that the primary purpose of what used to be called the Workmen's Compensation Board is returned. I would love to see a balance between tax credits and truly looking after workers.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We don't have time for another back-and-forth on questions and answers, so we're going to move to further debate. I'll recognize the member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me today as I rise to speak about the truly inspiring budget 2023 that was put forward by the Honourable Minister of Finance. I am inspired by this budget because it is an incredibly positive turn for our province and for our economy, because, Speaker, if you'll

forgive a very well-worn cliché, a rising tide floats all boats. I am inspired to see that this government, under the leadership of the Premier and the finance minister, are continuing to engage with and encourage real, sustainable growth in our economy—growth in jobs and industry that will not only support us financially for generations to come, but will also guide this province to be a world leader in the very innovative and modern high-tech green solutions that the entire world needs right now. This is an incredibly impressive feat. Investors and countries all over the world are chasing these investments to recognize and react to the existential threat of climate change.

We know that the internal combustion engine was a marvel of the 19th century and revolutionized the industrial world throughout the 20th century. But like many of the technologies that have effectively rocked our worlds and improved our lives and livelihoods, after a time, we came to realize that there is a challenge with the internal combustion engine, as the use of fossil fuels leaves emissions in our atmosphere.

So if cars are polluting, why don't we just stop using them? No, that's actually not the answer. Vehicles have provided a means of mass transportation to bring people to where the jobs are, to where the food is, to bring the food to where the people are, to bring emergency services to where they are needed, quickly and efficiently. No, the answer is not to turn back the clock and reject automobiles, but rather to become more innovative and fix the problems with them while maintaining and even improving the benefits of them.

So yes, the whole world is seeking billions and even trillions of dollars in investments to produce cars and other vehicles that do not produce CO₂ or other greenhouse gases. To lean on another well-worn cliché, necessity is the mother of invention. Keeping our world from overheating and reducing our dependence on petroleum as a fuel is an existential necessity, and with necessity comes invention. The scientists, the engineers and the entrepreneurs have faced that challenge and brought forward ideas that will, I am optimistic, get us over that hill.

1720

So the inventors have done their job and now the investors are doing theirs. They're the ones that make sure our economy actually provides the things that we need. In a recent debate about mines, which the other member had spoken about very eloquently today, it was noted by the Minister of Mines that governments do not dig mines, companies do. And by that same token, governments—not even this one that is so dedicated to building Ontario—are not going to be the ones that build the new technologies that will update and replace the vehicles of old with newer ones. No, it is companies that will build those electric vehicles—companies like Umicore, Stellantis and Power One, and I could go on, actually. The Premier and our fantastic Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade have been out there making sure that we have the jobs for the future prosperity of this province, and pushing for those green jobs for us and for the future of the whole planet.

Earlier in this session of the House, we also debated something called the Working for Workers bill and that bill was focused on making sure workers in this province are the best-treated workers in the world. And it still manages to do that without driving away the manufacturers that bring the jobs—as we know the previous government did for 15 long years in this province. Ultimately, I would submit to this House, Speaker, that the budget is doing even more for workers across the province than Bill 79 actually did because you can only say that you're working for workers if you have workers. And the definition of a worker, Madam Speaker, is easy to understand: A worker is a person with a job.

It seems simple, but I really wonder how it is that the opposition party that purports itself to be the “labour-friendly party”—the opposition that claims to be the political face of unionism in this province despite evidence to the contrary—does not seem to get the idea that you can only call them workers if they have jobs. This Progressive Conservative government is bringing the jobs to this province. The previous government chased them away. I guess they didn't want to help workers; they didn't even want to have workers.

So, Speaker, this budget is very focused on the things that we need in this province to bring jobs to this province. I wish to be precise with this House: We are bringing jobs of tomorrow, the high-tech green industry jobs with fully sustainable supply chains. We are bringing investments to this province that are not the fly-by-night jobs, here today then gone tomorrow. We're bringing the long-term, high-paying, “increase the standard of living for the people of today and their children” type of jobs, and for those children, so that they have jobs when they get old enough. This is generations of jobs, generations of workers that are being supported. I would go so far to say that this government, this Premier and this Minister of Economic Development, Minister of Labour and Minister of Finance are creating jobs for this century. And so, Speaker, that's what this budget is about.

What's even more awesome, Speaker, is that we're not just planning to bring those jobs, we're not just budgeting funds to attract the industries—we're doing it. We have the track record. We've not only reversed the loss of 300,000 jobs caused by the naysayer NDP and “study it forever but don't actually do anything” Liberals—we have not just talked the talk, Speaker, but we've walked the walk. We've brought over 600,000 new jobs to this province. We have the track record. We have the right plan, the right program and proven successes under our belt.

When this budget bill was introduced, the Minister of Finance took us on a verbal road trip, if you will, to show us the \$2-billion investment from General Motors, then passed by the Tesla plant on the way to Alliston where Honda is making hybrid vehicles, then the Ford electric vehicle plant, then off to Hamilton where ArcelorMittal Dofasco was producing green steel, continued on to Cambridge and Woodstock to see the Toyota hybrid facility and Ingersoll to see another EV plant by GM and to Windsor where Stellantis and LG Energy are putting \$5

billion into a large-scale battery plant and, of course, mentioning St. Thomas, the future site of the Volkswagen plant.

All the major auto sector companies know that Ontario is the place to be. The major steel manufacturers know that Ontario is the place to be and the battery manufacturers know that Ontario is the place to be. I have to add that the minister didn't extend his road trip a little further east to my hometown, Loyalist township, and yet another investment in battery production by a European giant in the industry, Umicore.

These are billions of dollars of investment that the whole world wanted, but Ontario got. This Premier, these ministers and this Ontario Progressive Conservative government achieved this. We did more than talk; we got it done.

And to the naysayers, to the members of this House who somehow think that it's not important enough to support this budget, I say this: I want each of you to remember that when you choose not to vote for this, the people of Pickering, the people of Durham region, the people of Richmond Hill and the people of Alliston are watching. The people of Oakville and Hamilton, the good folks of Cambridge and Woodstock, Ingersoll, Windsor and St. Thomas are watching and the people of Loyalist township in my Lennox and Addington county are watching. Trust me when I say that all of these people think it's important to get jobs for themselves, for their communities and for their children, and all of these people know that you can't support workers or even call them workers if they don't have jobs.

Speaker, I started this speech saying the budget inspired me. I would say the budget inspired optimism for real growth, for real, sustainable prosperity for the entire province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to questions.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I thank the member for his speech. Aside from all the things the member spoke of that were part of the budget speech, I don't think there was really a true focus or an understanding of the fact that we are truly in the midst of an affordability crisis. I think we all agree on the need to create more jobs, that's for sure. But there are countless thousands of people unable to work for a number of different reasons—people on OW and ODSP—and the government's response was a below-inflation increase. In Toronto and other places, the cost of rent is at \$3,000 a month. Do you truly believe that with a 5% increase to ODSP, to the most vulnerable among us, that this is enough? They are barely treading water, and they're sinking. Don't you think more needs to be done?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank the member for his question. He's absolutely right. Inflation is running high. Inflation is running high across the world. We are participants in the world economy, and that is challenging for many, many people.

This is why this government increased ODSP by 5% and guaranteed with this budget that it would be locked into an inflationary index on an ongoing basis. It guaranteed that there was an increase in the allowance for

them to work on top of that income, from \$200 to \$1,000. There are a lot of different ways that you can support people who are struggling.

Those are just a couple of them. The budget is full of many more of them, and I would encourage the member to focus on those and see the growth that the entire province is going to gain, and that will, in turn, pay for all of the social programs that we need.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Madam Speaker, I was very interested in your very detailed statement, and I appreciate that. We talked about different methods to create a more, let's say, balanced approach to this Ontario economy and create more jobs, which is so important. Could the member talk a little bit more about the tax credits that are available to businesses that are so important to creating a thriving economy?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the member for the question. We are proposing with this budget a new Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit that will help local companies, small and large, invest to keep people moving, to keep people employed, to make sure that the products of the future are made right here in Ontario. We saw, Madam Speaker, over the last several years, over the COVID crisis, how challenging it can be when we aren't manufacturing the products we need right here in Ontario. Whether it's PPE or pharmaceuticals or our vehicles or whatever the product may be, we need to have a stable supply chain here in Ontario, and this type of tax credit helps to bolster that and keep all of that manufacturing right here.

1730

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate the member quoting John F. Kennedy—"a rising tide lifts all boats"—but we know that neoliberalism is a failed strategy. We know that it has shown to result in higher incidents of poverty and health care costs for the average person anywhere that notion was applied.

My question to you is, what do you say to the people that have no boats? What do you say to the people that, in fact, see this government supporting people with the big boats? Corporations, the for-profit health sector—to look at companies like Therme, who are getting a 95-year lease. They're doing well. Their boats are being raised by this government. But people in the province, moms that have kids with autism, people that are using the food banks—this is an aphorism that is an insult to them when they themselves see that they are suffering and you are just saying that if we support the bigs, they will profit, when it's not the case.

Mr. Ric Bresee: While I appreciate the member's question, I have to respectfully disagree with the idea that "all" only includes the wealthy. "All" includes all of the people of Ontario: the people that are in business, the entrepreneurs; the people that are struggling; the people that are doing well—all the people of Ontario.

This government is applying extra attention to those areas where people are struggling the most. We can talk about the ODSP—I mentioned it in my previous answer. We can talk about the Guaranteed Annual Income System: We've doubled the value and we're adding 100,000 new people to the eligibility for that. This government continues to not just increase business but also increase the available supports for the people who need it most.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. Yesterday, there was a member from the opposition who, when I asked a question about Moody's, which is a financial rating service, where they've upgraded the province's debt, said that it was irrelevant, that it didn't matter, that it was of no relevance to people walking down the streets in her community. I was shocked, quite frankly, by that statement. That's financial illiteracy.

I'm wondering if you can talk to why it is important that Ontario have a strong debt rating and is financially sound and how this budget is moving in that direction.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank you for the question. I can tell you, going back about a year ago, all of us were out knocking on doors and talking to the people during the election. One of the comments I heard—I won't say the most, but a lot—was how people were worried about the fact that we were constantly running deficits. This government is moving towards—not this year, because we've got some challenges, certainly, but we are moving towards a balanced budget. That is so important. It affects the credit rating.

Just like governments, all of us have a credit rating and it affects our ability to do the things that we want to do. It affects our ability to get a mortgage to buy a house—which is the goal of this government: to make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity to afford their own home and, if they can, to actually buy a house.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Hastings-Lennox and Addington. The member talked about working for workers, and I've got to tell you, that bar is really low. It is the "low-hanging fruit" bill. I want to know, in this bill—he talked about how, during the election, what he heard most was people talking about the government debt. What I heard most was people talking about the affordability crisis, talking about putting food on the table, putting gas in their cars.

So I want to know, in this budget, are you happy? Are you happy that more working people than ever before—every single year, that number increases—are having to use food banks to make ends meet? Does this make sense in this budget?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the member from Sudbury for the question. Yes, again, we've talked about the idea that there is a global economic challenge going on right now. We are seeing inflation. We are seeing the broken supply chains through COVID. We're seeing all kinds of these pieces adding up to a challenge to what our residents are facing every day.

That's why this government kept putting money back into their pocket, whether it's cancelling the tolls on the highway, whether it's putting money back into their pocket from the licence plates. All of these things are pieces that go back to affordability. We've continued to lower the price on gas. That is an incredible boon, especially to the people in the member's and my ridings,

who have no choice but to use their vehicles a lot because we live in the rural environments. It is important that we continue to use these tools to make sure that people can afford to live every day.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We don't have time for another question and answer.
Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Mike Civil

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques 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	
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
Khanjini, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (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	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Vacant	Scarborough—Guildwood	