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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 novembre 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we're going to have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AFFORDABLE HOMES
AND GOOD JOBS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 POUR DES LOGEMENTS
ABORDABLES ET DE BONS EMPLOIS

Mr. Calandra moved third reading of the following bill: Bill 134, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur les redevances d'aménagement et la Loi de 2023 sur la modification des limites territoriales entre St. Thomas et Central Elgin.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I always appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to another bill, which we believe will help incentivize and move housing construction across the province of Ontario. I'll be splitting my time, of course, with the Associate Minister of Housing, as well as the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Today, obviously, we're talking about Bill 134, which is the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. The bill is realistically titled and is simply put, Mr. Speaker. First, I think it's important to just talk about some of the things that we've been doing on housing and why we've had to bring forward this bill. It's not just about housing, I will say; it's also about helping unleash opportunity, specifically in St. Thomas. But I'll get to all of that.

As you know, Speaker, we have been focused since 2018 on how we can improve the environment to build more homes across the province of Ontario. We have set a very ambitious goal of building 1.5 million homes across the province of Ontario—

Interruption.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Probably my daughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Maybe you should answer it.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Want me to take it, Paul? Want me to take it?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, no. It'll be fine. If my daughter is calling me at this time, it's definitely not a good call. She's probably missing school or something like that.

But anyway, it's probably the school calling to say that my daughter is not there. Since I know the school watches intently, my daughter, of course, has permission not to be at school this morning, so I think everything will be just fine.

Mr. John Vanthof: Maybe it's Jagmeet calling for the—

Hon. Paul Calandra: It could be Jagmeet calling just to revise the number.

Interjection: The 613.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Right, the 613 number, as opposed to the 1—

Interjection: The 1-800.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, we don't need to go down that road. Who knew that people would still call 1-800? Anyway, Speaker, I know that I've completely lost my train of thought.

As you know, we've been focused on building more homes across the province of Ontario. We said we want to build 1.5 million homes—a very, very ambitious target for sure—but we've also said we want to do that in every corner of the province because we know how important it is that all communities participate in this goal of building homes.

And it's all kinds of homes that we are wanting to build. We want to build market homes, rental, affordable, attainable. The not-for-profit sector is important. We're also talking about building more long-term-care homes for seniors. We've got some projects that we're doing—a project in particular in Kenora, which is a mixed type of housing which has both long-term care, which has market and affordable housing elements in it. So, we've been very focused on that.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we've also introduced four bills, four pieces of legislation aimed at removing obstacles, cutting red tape, reducing costs so that we can get more shovels in the ground faster. We have seen the consequences of previous decisions, I would say, that really frustrated the home-building industry in the province of Ontario and which really kept them out for a long period of time. For over a decade, we had depressed housing starts across Ontario as it became harder and harder and harder to get shovels in the ground. At the same time, we saw infrastructure investment across Ontario not keep up with the demand of a growing population. All of that hurt in terms of getting more shovels in the ground.

So, we've said really early on in the mandate and made a commitment that we would bring in a new bill every year to help untangle some of the obstacles that were getting in the way, but at the same time, real progress on rebuilding our infrastructure so that we built a transportation system across the province that would help support a growing economy. Across that transportation centre, in particular in our larger urban centres of Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor, for starters, we want to build more homes along those transit corridors, which includes York region. When I say that, I mean the entire greater Toronto-Hamilton area. There are massive investments in transit and transportation happening in those areas, and we want to ensure that, along those corridors, we have as many homes built as possible. Not only does that help reduce our carbon footprint by taking cars off the road, but it makes it easier for people to get back and forth to work.

We also knew early on that we had to do a lot better in helping incentivize the construction of purpose-built rentals. We were at historic lows in this province when it came to purpose-built rentals and we were falling very, very far behind. A consequence of that, both on the rental housing side and on the home-building side, is that we started to see prices skyrocket and homes of all types becoming unaffordable.

We also started to see how it was impacting other sectors, whether it was for seniors, whether it was for students. We have some of, if not the best colleges and universities anywhere in the world, and people from all over the world want to come to our institutions here. As well, because of the changes and the improvements we made, as you will agree, Madam Speaker, in the education system, we're seeing more and more Ontarians who want to further their education, whether it's college or university or in the trades, becoming apprentices, which we've really seen a revitalization of that as well. But some of the factors holding us back in many communities, certainly in a lot of the smaller communities—the inability or the lack of available rental available housing stock.

So, these are all the things that we were facing. This bill here in particular, in turn, it brings forward a new definition of affordable housing. Now, this is a definition that takes into account a number of things, but most importantly, it takes into account both market conditions in an area but also income in an area. It takes those two factors based on CMHC data and StatsCanada data across the province. So in every community, the definition of affordable housing might be a little bit different so that we can meet the goals of each particular community, because what we heard from our municipal partners was that a standardized definition of affordability across the province is not something that would work for them. That is why the definition that we brought forward takes into account those conditions. I will say it has been very well received by our partners across the province—by “partner” I mean our municipal friends—and I dare say I think it was supported at second reading here in the chamber by all parties, so I was very, very happy about that.

0910

That, then, also with this bill, helps build on some of the more recent announcements that we made, of course again constantly focused on putting more shovels in the ground. The Building Faster Fund is another opportunity for us to support those communities that want to get shovels in the ground. Now, I will acknowledge I have been hearing from some of our big-city mayors that they had hoped that we would change the parameters around the Building Faster Fund. As I announced yesterday, that was not going to change, but I wanted to make sure that our partners in all communities understand the purpose of the Building Faster Fund.

We've introduced strong-mayor powers across almost 50 different municipalities. These strong-mayor powers are focused exclusively on helping put shovels in the ground faster. That is our focus right now. We've heard it constantly talked about, a wartime effort to get shovels in the ground so that we can build more homes across the province of Ontario. So we extended strong-mayor powers to almost 50 communities, 50 of the largest or the fastest-growing communities.

The Building Faster Fund, which is an over \$1.2-billion fund, is there to support communities that are able to meet their housing targets. I always try to give an example. There are some communities that are going to be able, in the short term, over the next year or two years, to not only meet but exceed their targets. There are some communities that will take a little bit longer to do so. But in those communities, which are more often than not in the short term, the communities that are able to meet their targets fastest are some of the smaller communities that have access to water and sewer capacity.

The reason that is important and the reason why the Building Faster Fund is so important to that—I take a community like mine in Stouffville. It is a smaller community in comparison to whether it be Markham or Toronto. They have the ability to meet and exceed their targets. They have the capacity in terms of water and infrastructure. But in order for them to do that, to meet and exceed the target, frankly, they need additional assistance, whether it is in terms of resources for planning staff, inspections, the whole gamut that helps them get the shovels in the ground faster, from review to shovels in the ground. They need assistance to do that.

The Building Faster Fund will give those communities that otherwise would not have the resources to meet and exceed the target access to funds that help them do it, while not punishing those communities that, for no fault of their own, might not, over the next year or two years, be in a position to meet that target, but may be in a position in the third year. Now, why bring that up? Because one of the things that is so very important—and we're hearing this right across the board—is how important it is that we make bigger investments in the infrastructure to support housing.

Again, you're going to hear this constant refrain: sewer and water capacity. We're hearing it across the board. In order for us to meet our 1.5-million goal, we are going to

have to make investments in that infrastructure, as well. We've started, of course, with an additional commitment in the budget to help unleash some of this sewer and water construction, but we know that we're going to need to do more, and at the same time it is one of the reasons why we are so aggressively calling on—and it's not just Ontario. I should say that it's not just Ontario, but all across this country, provincial governments are asking the federal government to refocus their very generous housing dollars on those areas that will help us get shovels in the ground.

While the federal government, I will say, has made a very strong commitment—I believe it's a \$15-billion commitment to help build—and this is the part where it gets a little bit frustrating. It's a \$15-billion commitment, which is a strong commitment; I congratulate them on that, but that commitment gets us 200,000 homes according to the federal plan. I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that \$15 billion will get us three million homes across the country, because where we are limited is by the sewer and water infrastructure. The provinces are prepared to partner with the federal government with the funds that they have allocated to get these shovels in the ground.

We had an announcement last week—I won't talk about it too much longer. We had an announcement last week in Toronto where a \$1.2-billion federal commitment would result in the construction of 2,300 affordable homes. I'll say this: a wonderful commitment in terms of money, but not a good outcome in terms of the numbers when you consider what shovels in the ground and what that money would mean to unleashing home construction in all sectors—affordable, attainable, market, long-term care and purpose-built rentals. So we're really, strongly calling on the federal government to reassess that and to work with every single provincial government so that we can build on that.

The other thing that this bill does is the Attorney General will be reviewing the Ontario Land Tribunal. I think this is a very important piece. We have to constantly review those. Whether it's the land tribunal, in this case—we have to be in a state of constant revision of those programs and adjudicative bodies, because circumstances are changing so quickly across the province of Ontario, and it is our goal to build these homes. The minister will be beginning a review of that—again, working with our municipal partners and our home-building community—with an eye on eliminating red tape, eliminating delays and what it takes to make a decision faster. I think that has been—I don't think; I know it's been very well received by both our municipal partners and our friends in the home-building community.

I want to just take another moment to talk about, if I can, the importance of making the correct investments in housing. The Minister of Finance, more than a year ago, talked about the importance of removing the HST from the construction of purpose-built rentals. This is something that we were on for over a year. We talked about it. We advocated for it. No progress was made on that. But recently, of course, the federal government decided that they would match Ontario's commitment to remove the

GST—or the HST and the GST would be removed, so the HST is gone from purpose-built rentals. Now, why is that important? Because not only is it an acknowledgement that high taxes stifle our ability to compete, but it stifles our ability, really, to get shovels in the ground. What that means for a unit, a single unit, is a savings of about anywhere between \$45,000 and \$55,000 per unit, making purpose-built rental affordable housing so much more attractive to the home-building community. We are seeing them respond, really, in numbers that we could not have imagined. We are at the highest level of purpose-built rentals in over 15 years, and I'm very confident that when next year's numbers are in, we will have exceeded all expectations, partly on the back of the reduction or the elimination of the HST on those homes.

And we're seeing them want to get into other areas as well, whether it's student housing, for instance, and how we can rejuvenate our cities.

We had our first housing forum yesterday, and that housing forum brought together stakeholders from across not-for-profits—there were mayors there, councillors there from across Ontario, home builders in the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors were there.

I had a really good opportunity to speak to a number of mayors, but the mayor of Kingston, in particular, talked to me about Queen's University and the challenges that they're having with student housing there, but that some of the changes that we are making and some of the things that they want to do will allow them to take some of their oldest homes, which have become student homes—admittedly, I may have visited a homecoming or two when I was in university, in some of the older homes that they have. Some of these policies will allow them to take down some of the oldest student housing in their community and replace it with five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-storey buildings for student housing, which will have an incredible impact on that university's ability to continue to compete and attract students—but also for him, an incredible impact on his city, because it allows them to rejuvenate areas of the city that otherwise have become unattractive for other people in Kingston to be a part of. So they are very, very excited by some of the things that we are doing.

0920

I know Minister Flack as well as the parliamentary assistant are going to talk about the extraordinary things that are happening, how this bill impacts St. Thomas. I know it's really important in their community. So I did want to touch on that, because I think they'll do a far better job of it than I could.

But all of that is to say, as I wrap up, that it's actually a very exciting step. Having this definition of affordable housing so well received, not only by the opposition but by colleagues across the province, really taking an obstacle out of the way, but also helping to build on some of the pieces that we've already introduced to get more shovels in the ground.

As I said yesterday at the forum, we have to dream big in this province, and we are not in a position where we can disappoint the people. I know we talked about it—a

question period thing, that we've got to get people out of their parents' basements. We are not in a position, as a parliament, to fail on that mission. If others could accomplish this in previous decades, there is absolutely no reason why we can't do it.

We're going to build more homes in our large, small and medium-sized communities across the province. We're going to build them across the spectrum—as I said, market rental, not-for-profit, attainable student housing, seniors' housing—because that is what the market requires us to do. That is what the people of the province of Ontario require us to do. This is the next step on the way—but it's certainly not the next step.

And with that, I will yield the floor to the associate minister.

Hon. Rob Flack: It's a great honour to be here today and speak after the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on this opportunity to build houses in this province, to speak about Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, as the Associate Minister of Housing.

Obviously, we need to build more homes, and faster. Too many people in this province are struggling to find an affordable place to live. It is a crisis, in my opinion. It's an all hands on deck approach.

I do, like the minister did, want to talk about the housing forum—the first ever in the province—throughout my remarks this morning.

Too many families can no longer afford mortgages and are having trouble saving up for the larger down payments they need to buy a house. Think about it: A lot of people have a lot of income, good incomes, they're saving as best they can, but the affordability crisis that we are faced with today in this province is hurting their chance to buy a home. In fact, we know of some people who have put up to 20, 21 offers on homes, weren't able to get it done, and since then have lost the ability to even afford to buy because of increased costs in this province, whether it's inflation, whether it's interest rates, whether it's the punitive carbon tax that we're all facing. It's a head-on storm in front of people. The higher cost is just making it unattainable to buy houses.

That is why affordable housing is a critical component of this plan. We are working hard to build a range of housing Ontarians need right across Ontario.

The proposed Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act is bold and innovative legislation that will help build a pathway to housing stability and home ownership throughout Ontario. It would update the definition of affordable residential units that would qualify for municipal development related charges, discounts and exemptions. This would support our government's efforts to help increase the supply of affordable homes by lowering the cost of building, purchasing and renting affordable homes right across the province. It would also help make it easier for people to find a home that truly meets their needs and their budgets. It would also help make it easier for people to find a home that is in the community they want to live.

But first I'd like to provide some background on how we got here. The effect of housing affordability is wide-

spread in Ontario communities, impacting local businesses and the local economy. That's what we're hearing from communities all over the province. It is a version of the same story wherever we go: Home ownership and rental prices are both increasingly out of reach for so many.

That is why our government needed to take a new direction, to take bold action. As such, our government did take action to start addressing the affordability crisis. Through Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, which supported our third housing supply action plan, we introduced discounts and exemptions from municipal development-related charges for affordable residential units.

Development charges are a tool municipalities use to raise money for growth-related infrastructure like water and roads, understandably. Development charges are one of the three main charges levied on new housing developments by municipalities. They also collect parkland dedication fees, which can be either money or land and which are used to create parks; and community benefit charges, which can be used to help fund community services or facilities such as libraries and community centres, all good actions indeed.

Our government specified that once the changes take effect, affordable—I emphasize “affordable”—residential units would not be required to pay development charges, parkland dedication fees and community benefit charges.

Under Bill 23, the Development Charges Act was amended to define an affordable residential rental unit as a unit rented at “no greater than 80% of the average market rent” and it was amended to define an affordable unit as a unit sold at “no greater than 80% of the average purchase price.”

The goal of this change was to make it cheaper and easier to build truly affordable homes, since development-related charges can add well over \$100,000 to the cost of a single-family home in some Ontario municipalities. This obviously makes housing unaffordable. It raises the price, with our head-on winds in terms of high costs, making it unaffordable for home buyers to even consider buying a home.

We've seen results. In the last month, I've visited new affordable housing sites, including a groundbreaking for a Habitat for Humanity site called Garafraxa Village in Fergus. I can tell you, it was a great pleasure to be there. We had FRPO, the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario; we had Habitat for Humanity; and we had the local municipalities. It's all hands on deck. Everyone is supporting this project, and it was exciting to see.

Habitat for Humanity was able to benefit from the removal of development charges and they saved hundreds of thousands of dollars, which allowed them to build more homes on this site and they will continue to do so in the weeks and months ahead. It's true for them and it's been true for any affordable housing that's been built since we passed Bill 23.

Again, from the housing forum yesterday, it was obvious that people truly appreciated the change based on

this legislation, as it has made housing for all purpose-built homes, be they homes or rentals, much more affordable.

Making changes to the Development Charges Act that would exempt affordable residential units from municipal development-related charges was an important step in working to support the building of more affordable homes in Ontario.

But the exemptions are not yet in force. For the purpose of these exemptions, we need to first identify the market rent and the average purchase price in the municipality. In developing this it was found that the definition of an affordable residential unit would generally result in prices not affordable to moderate-income Ontarians. In working to implement the exemptions for affordable residential units, our government engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including those in industry and the municipalities.

What we heard through these consultations is that they had to truly help more moderate-income Ontarians to find homes that they want to live in. The definition of an affordable residential unit needs to reflect market conditions and incorporate income factors. Market conditions and incorporating income factors are key.

0930

Speaker, the changes proposed through Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, consider this important feedback. We are proposing a revised definition of residential affordable units that would, if passed, take local incomes into account in addition to local market factors. Residential units that meet the definition would be eligible for the municipal development-related charge discounts and exemptions. This approach will reflect the ability of local households to pay for housing and recognizes the diversity of housing markets across the province. Toronto is different than Dorchester. Windsor is different than Ottawa. We understand this, and we have welcomed further feedback on the proposed amendments through our postings on the Environmental Registry of Ontario and the Regulatory Registry. During these consultations, we received nearly 100 submissions from individuals and organizations right across Ontario.

The new definitions we're proposing are as follows:

—for ownership, a unit would be considered affordable when the purchase price is at or below the least expensive of the following two criteria: a price resulting in housing costs that are no more than 30% of a household's annual income for moderate-income households, taking local income households into account; or secondly, at least 10% below the average purchase price of a unit in the applicable local municipality;

—for rental housing, a unit would be considered affordable when the rent is at or below the least expensive of the following two criteria: again, 30% of the household's income annual income for moderate-income households, taking local renter household incomes into account; or average market rent of a unit in the applicable local municipality;

—for both ownership and rental, moderate-household income refers to those in the 60th percentile of the income distribution in the applicable local municipality; and

—affordable residential units, both rental and ownership, that meet the province's new definition would be eligible for discounts and exemptions from the municipal development-related fees.

Through these proposed changes, we're taking the next steps in our efforts to lower the cost of building, purchasing and renting affordable homes right across Ontario. Discounts and exemptions on municipal development-related fees would help lower the cost of building, purchasing and renting affordable homes across the province.

Speaker, it's working. As the minister noted earlier, we're up nearly 15,000 new rental unit starts year over year. We're encouraged by this sign, and we've got to keep that momentum going. This would help ensure more Ontarians in all parts of the province can find a truly affordable home.

The proposed changes, if passed, would also incentivize builders to create housing at a lower cost. By exempting and discounting municipal development-related charges on affordable residential units, we are counting on the affordable housing building sector to step up and help build significantly more affordable homes, and I can say, Speaker, that based on the housing forum yesterday, people are committed, they're dedicated and they're willing to step up and help get the job done.

In addition to affordable homes, we also recognize the need for attainable housing, supporting the dream of home ownership for all Ontarians and building homes in mixed-income communities that are accessible to all. We're hearing far too often how people with good jobs still can't find a home to call their own. It is a tragedy. The dream of home ownership has become unattainable for so many Ontarians.

And, Speaker, I'll just pause here for a second and remind again—I'd like to use this analogy. When I bought my first home a long time ago, interest rates were 19%. I'd saved up, had a down payment and bought the house in Guelph, Ontario. I could make the math work. It was tight; it was tough. I took out an open mortgage. Fortunately, after a year, the mortgage dropped to 12%. I thought I was in Shangri-La—all this extra money flowing in to afford life etc. Think of it today—at 19%. We think of 6% or 7% today and it's unattainable for people. So when you can't make the math work today, it's obvious we have a massive, massive supply issue. That is why we have all hands on deck, again, to try and get that done so the math does work for Ontarians who do want to buy their own home or at least get stable housing in this province.

To help address this, we are working on a new attainable housing program to rapidly build attainable homes that will help families across Ontario build portable equity, portable equity. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, alongside Infrastructure Ontario—again, a partner at yesterday's housing forum—and other partner ministries will continue to work on developing an attainable housing program, including the definition of "attainable." I look forward to sharing more information about this as the program details become available.

Just pause for second and talk about the housing forum yesterday, it was a great event: nearly 300 people there. Again, as the minister said, we had mayors and wardens from Ontario's large cities and rural communities; we had developers there; we had home builders there; we had the modular sector there, which I will talk about in a bit and which was very exciting; not-for-profit was there, in spades, doing a wonderful job. We weren't sure how everyone was going to get along, but it was a wonderful example of a non-partisan focused event, trying to get shovels in the ground faster and more affordably for Ontarians. We look forward to sharing the results of that forum in the time to come.

Again, I will talk about our modular opportunities a little bit later. We need to ramp up this sector as an important tool in the toolbox, in terms of getting shovels in the ground faster and also to repurpose surplus government lands to make sure that we can help our communities get houses built for those who need homes, day in and day out.

Despite the market challenges for Ontario and Canada, as a whole, we have made meaningful progress. Both 2021 and 2022, we saw housing starts up over the highest ever in 30 years, close to 100,000 homes built in each of those years. We're down a little bit this year, but we're at a pretty good pace. These are the most housing starts we've seen since the mid-1980s. But despite this progress throughout Ontario, we're still seeing low housing supply and high rental prices.

Remember, we have a population that has changed. Since I was in high school—I've told this story before—I've seen the population of this province more than double. We've kept up in terms of creating economic growth. We're able to feed everybody. Wherever we are, we still export more food than we consume, but the third leg of the stool, where we are lacking success today is in the housing sector. That is what we're focused on and focused on every day.

Housing prices are not realistic or sustainable for too many Ontario families. We know this. Ontario's most recent housing supply action plan, the fifth of which will come out next year, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants is the latest in the series of steps taken by the province to help more people find a home they can afford. We're committed to advancing the housing supply action plan every year for four years—soon to be five years—to help address new challenges, meet the unique needs and adapt to the current environment that we all live in today.

As the minister noted and the parliamentary assistant will talk about in a few minutes in March of this year, the city of St. Thomas welcomed the new Volkswagen opportunity, Europe's largest automaker, and will establish its subsidiary PowerCo SE's electric-vehicle-battery-manufacturing facility—just now part of St. Thomas. As the MPP for that riding, we're obviously very proud of this achievement. It's obviously going to bring thousands of jobs not only to our local communities, but throughout the province: 3,000 direct jobs related to the plant, 30,000 tertiary jobs that will be supported right across from the

Ring of Fire right throughout the province—supporting this important manufacturing sector for the province. Again, it's what we need. We can grow the food to feed everybody. We're creating economic development. What we need, though, is houses and homes to get these people well housed to prepare for their futures in Ontario in this exciting sector.

Through the proposed Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, we are focused on creating the conditions for growth and the construction that will take place, making it less expensive to getting houses built. We are further incentivizing municipalities to build more housing with the government's Building Faster Fund, which is under way now. This new program will put municipalities and the province on a path to achieve our common objective of increasing housing supply. Again, I always emphasize this; we have a housing supply issue. It's 15 million people in this province—more than doubled in the last 40 years or 50 years. It's going to be close to 20 million people before we know it.

In fact, I think I'm right, and I've heard my colleagues speak. They expect the GTHA to be as big as the province is today, in total, in 10 years. So we are growing and growing fast.

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Our new program will incentivize municipalities to build more housing, as I said. It will provide financial support for municipalities that can be directed toward housing-enabling infrastructure and related costs that support community growth.

The province has also extended strong-mayor powers to 18 additional municipalities that are projected to have populations of 50,000 by 2031 and whose heads of council are committed to a provincially assigned housing target. These powers include:

- provide the tools for the mayors in these municipalities to help drive increased housing supply; and

- to speed up local planning approvals and enable mayors to put forward budgets that could allocate resources to priority items.

Extending strong-mayor powers is an example of how we are working with our municipal partners to ensure they have the tools they need to build more housing, including a greater supply of affordable units.

In conclusion, Speaker, I am excited obviously to be here as the associate minister and to support the proposed changes and measures under the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. This government will continue to work closely with municipalities to tackle Ontario's housing crisis and we'll help more Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and their budgets throughout the province. It's through this type of bold action that we will deliver on our government's commitment to help build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. And I want to emphasize again, Speaker, that affordable housing is a critical component of this plan.

I'll just conclude by saying I had the opportunity to meet with the University of Western Ontario this morning. I'm pleased to announce that they are building 1,100 new

beds for students. Shovels will be in the ground next year. So we're showing that success is on the way, but more is left to be done.

Again, from the housing forum, I want to emphasize that we had a really good meeting. I think the parliamentary assistant to the MMAH would agree. Scale and speed is important to get it done. The modular factor is going to be a key component. I was very proud of the people who showed up and helped participate in developing meaningful solutions and deliverables, not just talk. So, I'm excited about the opportunities that rest before us. I'm excited about Ontario's housing sector.

I would now like to turn the floor over to our parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's my pleasure to share the government's remaining time on the lead today, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and to speak to Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for providing a concise overview of the bill this morning—and his relationship with his daughter.

I also want to thank the Associate Minister of Housing for the detailed explanation of how this proposed legislation would support our government's efforts to lower the cost of building, purchasing and renting affordable homes across the province.

Updating the definition of affordable residential units that would qualify for municipal development charge discounts and exemptions will truly help in that regard. And I know, as the minister and the associate minister mentioned in their remarks, there has been a lot of support from our municipal colleagues, whether that's AMO, ROMA or the big city mayors around this proposed definition. I know, in speaking with some of my own local mayors in my riding of Perth–Wellington, they have told me that with this definition of affordable housing and a further bulletin—which would be coming after this bill, if it's passed—it would help get affordable homes built in some of my own communities in rural Ontario, and ensuring that those discounts are available for them. Some home builders have already approached my local mayors and local councils around how they could work together to achieve this. It's wonderful to see this progress already being encouraged in rural Ontario, and in my riding of Perth–Wellington in particular.

The Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, if passed, would also support our municipalities as they work to attract and create jobs. The proposed changes are meant to make it easier for communities to build the housing that Ontarians desperately need. This includes more affordable homes.

What I would also like to underline—and I think it's a key moment in time to do so—is that it would complement other measures our government has put in place to help increase housing supply across the province. As my

colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Associate Minister of Housing have already spoken about this morning, the proposed measures demonstrate our government's strong commitment to working alongside our municipal partners. We're committed to making life more affordable and better for everyone in Ontario, no matter where you live, whether that is in downtown Toronto or up in Kenora and Thunder Bay, Speaker, and supporting our municipalities with the tools needed to help get at least 1.5-million new homes built by 2031.

Speaker, we need to get shovels in the ground faster and to start building homes today for the workers of tomorrow. In March of this year, the city of St. Thomas welcomed the new Volkswagen plant. Europe's largest automaker will establish its subsidiary PowerCo SE's electric-vehicle-battery-manufacturing facility in their community of St. Thomas. Selecting St. Thomas as the location to build the company's first overseas battery cell plant is a major vote of confidence in Canada and Ontario. It's a vote of confidence in our shared work to position the country and the province as a global leader on the electric vehicle supply chain. It's a testament to Ontario's competitive environment, and we are an attractive investment destination with everything a company needs to grow and prosper.

The investment has been welcome news by local business leaders in St. Thomas but also surrounding communities—which my riding would include—in Stratford and St. Marys, Listowel and others as well, I know, from my colleagues in this place. It's a positive impact for our business community, a positive impact for our communities at large. It's going to attract thousands of good-paying jobs and ensure that we continue to build Ontario for the future. The Volkswagen Group and PowerCo SE's historic investment to build this facility here will bring thousands of good-paying jobs and even more families to beautiful St. Thomas and beautiful Stratford and, really, all the communities of southern Ontario.

The manufacturing facility will be the largest of its kind in Canada, and it has the potential to be one of the largest electric vehicle battery plants in the world—in the entire world. Potentially, St. Thomas, Ontario, is going to have the largest electric-vehicle-battery plant here. This plant will have six production lines and make enough batteries for one million cars every year. What's more, Volkswagen Group has plans to make 25 new electric vehicle models in the coming decades, and most of those batteries will come from St. Thomas. The plant is expected to employ up to 3,000 people and create thousands of spin-off jobs, as I've mentioned, across southwestern Ontario, helping support economic growth and prosperity for future generations. It's estimated that it could be worth as much as \$200 billion to the Canadian economy over the coming decades.

This investment represents the largest auto investment in our province's history, and it's a big win for Ontario, the people of St. Thomas and surrounding areas. This is an

example of how our government continues to work to create the right conditions for businesses and workers to succeed now and in the future. We're revitalizing Ontario's auto sector and making Ontario the auto powerhouse of North America once again. The cars of the future will be made here in Ontario, from start to finish, from the minerals in northern Ontario to the battery cells in St. Thomas to the batteries in Windsor and much more I'm sure to come. They'll be made—also very importantly—by Ontario workers. We recognize that this investment in St. Thomas will significantly strengthen the local community and, obviously, our provincial economy.

Through the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, Ontario is proposing changes to help support Volkswagen Group and PowerCo SE's historic investment in St. Thomas. The agreement that was negotiated in partnership with the city of St. Thomas provides for the city to give municipal-based incentives as part of PowerCo SE's project. However, the current rules against municipalities providing municipal-based incentives to any industrial or commercial enterprise limit the city of St. Thomas from providing some of the assistance outlined in the agreement.

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The changes we are proposing would give the city of St. Thomas the authority to provide PowerCo SE municipal-based incentives that were negotiated in partnership with the municipality. The new authority would be restricted to St. Thomas only. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would be provided with regulation-making authority to impose restrictions, limits and other conditions on St. Thomas's new authority. In addition, the province consulted on this proposed change through a public posting on the regulatory registry of Ontario for a 30-day period.

Creating and supporting more shovel-ready mega sites, like St. Thomas, will help Ontario remain competitive as the province competes for major global investments.

These proposed changes represent our government's efforts to attract new investments that will create more good-paying jobs and strengthen our economy.

Speaker, Ontario is a top-tier destination for investment and strategic business growth. Our government is committed to supporting and growing the province's workforce. Ontario is ready to help with the creation of good-paying jobs in our municipalities that will help rebuild our economy, after 15 years of Liberal and NDP coalition. And we're taking concrete action to attract jobs and investment.

The proposed changes in the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act are meant to further support municipalities as they work to attract and create jobs. A critical factor for securing new investment opportunities is having suitable industrial sites ready for companies to build on.

Similar to, as we are finding in municipal affairs and housing, and as the minister mentioned this morning, around infrastructure and waste water, it is having these sites ready, whether it is for homes or also, very importantly, for industrial companies that are looking to come to Ontario, to our attractive business environment,

and to benefit from where we are physically located in the world—but also the great employees we train and retain in Ontario.

In November 2019, Ontario launched the Job Site Challenge to create an inventory of investment-ready mega sites. It was designed to attract large-scale advanced manufacturing investments that have the potential to create hundreds of new jobs across the province, in communities, whether they're large or small. As part of this initiative, municipalities, economic development agencies and industrial property owners put forward large tracts of land of between 500 and 1,500 acres that could support large-scale manufacturing operations. One of the mega sites identified as part of the initiative involved 1,500 acres of land within the city of St. Thomas and the municipality of Central Elgin. However, with the land divided between two municipalities with different permitting requirements, we recognized that potential investors could face red tape and delays from unnecessary duplication. That's why our government took decisive action and introduced legislation to adjust the municipal boundaries so the site resides fully in the city of St. Thomas. The site was then selected by Volkswagen Group and PowerCo SE as the location to build the electric vehicle battery cell manufacturing facility we are speaking about today. This is an example of a successful collaboration across governments—provincial, municipal and federal. It represents a collaboration to cut red tape and ensure the benefits of economic growth are enjoyed across the province, helping to speed up construction timelines and ensure there is truly a shovel-ready site for potential investment.

Speaker, as we continue to work to attract investment, build Ontario up and strengthen our economy, we'll continue to attract more workers to Ontario. And we must ensure that all of our communities have the housing needed to support a strong workforce.

Our government also recognizes the growth demands being placed on large and fast-growing municipalities in Ontario. For example, the greater Toronto area is expected to grow by 2.9 million people by 2046. This means that within the next 23 years, we will need homes to accommodate an additional 2.9 million people. For my colleagues here this morning, for reference, when I graduated high school, which wasn't that long ago, the province was roughly 12 million people. We are now 15 million people. Within that short amount of time, we have grown by three million people, which means obviously we need more homes.

But it's not just housing; it's an economic problem that can affect the entire province and even the entire country. The GTA is just one part of the greater Golden Horseshoe, which is the economic engine of Ontario. It generates more than 25% of Canada's gross domestic product, but in order to tackle this crisis, Ontario requires workers, and workers require a place to live.

Speaker, the greater Golden Horseshoe is just one example. There are plenty of examples. Whether they're from Windsor, London, Stratford, Kingston, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, our government works to support municipi-

palities and helps make it easier to attract and create more jobs all across the province. The need for more housing will continue to grow, and it's critical that we get shovels in the ground today to start building homes for the workers of tomorrow.

Our government's housing supply action plans have made great progress in addressing our province's housing crisis so far, but there's still more to be done. As the minister mentioned earlier, and the associate minister, we had our housing forum yesterday, and it was wonderful to see, as the associate minister mentioned yesterday, the cross-pollination between the variety of stakeholders there, whether it was municipal partners; whether it was the non-profit, Habitat for Humanity; whether it was homebuilders. It was good to see those ideas and work with our colleagues, as I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to do as we move forward with future housing supply action plans.

The changes and measures proposed through the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act are forward-thinking, and I'm proud in part of this government that is taking historic action to increase housing supply and help communities meet their housing needs today and well into the future.

To complement the legislative proposals in the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, our government will also be consulting on other changes that can be made to help get more affordable homes built in Ontario and increase municipal efficiencies. We're committed to working closely with our municipal partners to ensure the right tools and processes are in place so that we're able to build at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

Our government will be consulting on proposed regulatory changes as part of the ongoing strategy to streamline hearings and speed up decisions at the Ontario Land Tribunal. Helping to resolve land use planning disputes faster will help municipalities to be able to build priority projects faster, including housing. Supply Ontario will also be engaging and working with municipalities to look at ways to increase procurement collaboration with municipalities to allow cost savings and efficiencies by both levels of government.

Speaker, I know it was announced earlier this year that our province will be freezing fees for building homes and other related infrastructure at 2023 levels and ensuring that we are also doing our part to ensure that we keep costs down for our homebuilders and our municipalities as they help us reach that goal of 1.5 million homes.

To support building more homes, our government will also be asking for feedback on proposed regulatory changes aimed at streamlining hearings and expediting decisions at the Ontario Land Tribunal. The Ontario Land Tribunal, or, as it's commonly known, the OLT, is an independent adjudicative tribunal and an important piece of the municipal planning and housing framework here in Ontario. When people are unable to resolve their differences on land use planning issues or having disputes with their municipal council that can't be settled, the OLT provides a forum to resolve those disputes. Improving the

processes at the OLT and helping to resolve land use disputes faster will help minimize delays and help us get priority projects built faster for communities across the province, and this obviously includes homes.

Too many people in Ontario are struggling to find an affordable home, and this proposal supports our government's efforts to provide more certainty for municipalities and make it cheaper and easier to build affordable homes across the province.

To further streamline hearings and speed up decisions at the OLT, Ontario is consulting on and developing proposed regulations to set service standards and to prioritize resolutions of certain cases, including cases that would create the most housing. Consultations will begin in early December. This contributes to the broader goal of supporting strong, healthy communities and the public interest.

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It also expands on the important work that is already under way to improve processes. Ontario has made investments to help the OLT to streamline processes, improve customer service and resolve land use planning disputes more quickly. Some of these investments were made to address a key recommendation in the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force report to increase resources at the OLT so that homes can be built faster. We know that principled and timely resolutions play an important role in the province's housing supply. We will not let red tape and long wait times delay critical projects in our communities, including much-needed housing.

We will also be engaging and working with municipalities to ensure that they can benefit from provincial supply chain programs and strategies led by Supply Ontario. This includes having access to category management and vendor-of-record arrangements, which combine Ontario's purchasing power to obtain better value for procurements. Supply Ontario is a crown agency supporting procurement across the Ontario public service and the broader public sector. It works to bring cohesion to the public sector supply chain by embracing innovation and leveraging diverse partnerships and relationships with suppliers. This can help harness Ontario's buying power to enable economic development, province-wide resilience and, most importantly, value for Ontarians.

Speaker, the proposed changes in the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act are what our province needs as we take the next steps to address our housing supply crisis and ensure our communities are set up to meet future housing demand. Our proposed measures will help support building more affordable homes in Ontario while also supporting municipalities as they work to attract and create good jobs.

Yesterday, at our housing forum, one common theme emerged, which is great to see from our government. All the stakeholders in the room agreed that we need to get more homes built in Ontario, including across the continuum, whether that's support for homelessness prevention; whether that's affordable homes, as we're talking about this morning; whether that's attainable and also,

obviously, townhomes and apartments. It's wonderful to see this collaboration amongst a variety of stakeholders across Ontario to ensure that Ontario remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

With that, Speaker, thank you.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for the presentation on Bill 134.

I have a question about the government's proposed plan to upzone and increase density near transit stations, and also allow municipalities to move forward with inclusionary zoning. It's a measure that was introduced in Bill 23; it will be affected by this bill. Cities have been waiting for upwards of two years for these proposals to be permitted by the provincial government.

My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. When are you looking at approving inclusionary zoning laws?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much for the question.

As the member knows, that is not part of this bill.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm hearing about housing forum this and housing forum that, and I think it's fabulous; I actually have FOMO.

I wonder if you can tell me who was invited to the party, what kind of feedback you got, and when we will be briefed on it—because I'm here with all ears.

Hon. Rob Flack: The housing industry in this province was invited: mayors and wardens; we had not-for-profits; we had people that develop homes; the modular home sector; community home builders. Everyone and anyone who can help get shovels in the ground and do it faster was invited. Close to 300 people were there, including staff, but I would say of stakeholders themselves, it was 200-plus.

We had great meetings. We had great interaction. We talked about scale and speed. It was a wonderful event. We look forward to sharing the results in the coming days and weeks.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I really enjoyed the opening hour-long debate from the two ministers and the parliamentary assistant and I'm so pleased to see that our government continues to take the housing supply crisis very, very seriously. The reality is, Speaker, that too many families across the province are struggling to find a home that meets their needs and their budget, and if we don't take decisive action now, a generation of Ontarians will never have the same opportunity for stability, and the dream of home ownership will slip further and further out of reach.

I was wondering if either of the ministers or the parliamentary assistant could elaborate on why the government is moving on Ontario's housing supply crisis so quickly and introducing yet another piece of legislation.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

Other than to keep the PA busy, I think this bill, obviously, as was mentioned in all of our remarks this morning, really was feedback from municipalities on getting affordable homes built and providing that definition. But it really is getting more homes built, and that includes a variety—the life lease community was at the housing forum yesterday as well—and ensuring that we have a variety of options for young people, for seniors, for families to get into the housing market in communities across Ontario.

Obviously, I represent a rural riding, and I tell my communities, "It's not just housing for Toronto. We're looking at housing in Harriston, in Listowel, in Stratford."

Speaker, I know this government will use everything in our power to help support our homebuilders and our municipalities to get homes built quickly.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Good morning. *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.*

It's always an honour to be able to listen about the government's plan—especially on this Bill 134, Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act.

In the Far North of Ontario, we have the communities I represent, the reserves I represent. There are 31 First Nations, but there are also 24 fly-in First Nations. There's a housing crisis happening, and it filters down to the northern municipalities. I know that, for example, in Sioux Lookout, there is a 6,000-person population and there's a real need for housing, and I'm not sure what the plan is for Sioux Lookout to be able to address the housing crisis.

I'm just wondering if this government would start looking at maybe creating an urban reserve where you give back the land to the people, the land that was taken away long before. Because we've got to be part of the solution. We have to be part of the economic spin-off. So, urban reserve—what are your thoughts?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I will say this: I'm not aware of the concept, and the member knows, of course, the bill is not focused on that.

I will say that the minister, Minister Rickford, is undertaking discussions led by not only Minister Rickford but spearheaded, really, by Chief Maracle of the Mohawks of Bay of Quinte with respect to housing on reserves. We understand that, obviously, this is an area of federal jurisdiction, but I think at the same time, there is a role for the province to play and that is why the minister is working closely with Chief Maracle to undertake a tripartite discussion on how we can improve housing on reserves across the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: This question is for the PA.

In his presentation, he talked about the initiative to build the Volkswagen Group and PowerCo SE's facility. As an EV driver, I'm very interested in when the government is proposing the legislative changes that, if

passed, would support Volkswagen Group and PowerCo SE's historic investment to build an electric vehicle battery cell manufacturing facility in the city of St. Thomas. Can the PA share with the House what the benefit is of this initiative to Ontarians?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for the question. Other than the thousands of good-paying jobs I mentioned in my remarks that will be attracted to St. Thomas and surrounding communities, the home building sector as well is going to see—I know, in the news recently, I think it was 1,500 units that need to be built within the next couple of years in the city of St. Thomas to ensure that homes are there.

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But then also, which I always go back to, after the recent announcement in March of this year, I believe, around Volkswagen, I was at a community event in my riding, which is close to St. Thomas obviously, and one of the car dealers told me this is great news for our region because they're going to sell those cars that we make in St. Thomas at their dealership. Across the entire supply chain, from the beginning to the end, it will be of benefit across Ontario.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: There are two excellent housing projects, Suomi Koti and Giwaa on Court, that have been unable to access the support they need to get shovels in the ground, although they have been shovel-ready for at least two years.

My question is, will the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan use his position as a government member and parliamentary assistant to the Minister for Northern Development to make sure that these projects get the information and resources they need to finally get built?

During a housing crisis, it's really unacceptable that these projects have been stalled for so long.

Hon. Paul Calandra: My understanding is that they actually have not applied for funding, but having said that—what we're debating today is a very clear and very concise bill with respect to a definition of affordability. It is a bill about improving the OLT, Ontario Land Tribunal. It's about supply in Ontario and it's about economic development in St. Thomas. Should the member opposite wish to speak about issues that are not relevant to this bill, I invite the member to do so at the appropriate time.

Right now, we're dealing with something that I think is very important to many different communities, including communities in the north, and that is the definition of affordable housing which takes into account the differences from community to community, both market conditions and income conditions in that community. So I'd really like to hear the member's thoughts on the bill that's before the House.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We have time for another quick question.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to ask my question to the associate minister. One of the constant issues that I hear from my constituents is, indeed, that there is a worry about

the provision of housing. Parents are worried their children will not have the same opportunities. They're priced out of the housing market and their local school closed due to lack of families in the neighbourhood, so unable to find a dream home, unable to have the life that their parents had growing up.

I'm wondering if the minister might be able to explain how this proposed legislation will help Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and budgets and brings the dream of home ownership back into reach.

Hon. Rob Flack: A recent report by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis found that the burden of government fees on housing “has significantly increased and now accounts for 31% of the purchase price of a new home in Ontario.” That's why we've tabled this legislation.

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

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): That's time. We're going to move to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an honour to rise again in the Ontario Legislature, and I'd like to take this opportunity to share with the Legislature an update on an important infrastructure project in Sarnia–Lambton. This week, our government wants public consultations into the much-needed and much-discussed Highway 40 widening project in Sarnia–Lambton. Expanding the seven-kilometre stretch of highway that links Lambton county's chemistry valley and Highway 402 is a critical infrastructure project that will support future growth in the chemistry industry in Sarnia–Lambton and Ontario and improve highway safety for residents of Lambton county.

Our government began the preliminary design and environmental assessment work for the Highway 40 widening in April 2022. Public consultations are the next step in delivering on this important project. I encourage all interested residents of Sarnia–Lambton to visit the website highway40widening.ca to review the project documents and to add their input on how best the Ontario government can expand this highway in the best way possible for our community.

Again, please visit highway40widening.ca before December 10 to share your opinion on the design and build of this future highway expansion.

Mr. Speaker, expanding Highway 40 is another example of this government's plan to build Ontario with investments in our transportation system that will reduce gridlock, improve economic productivity, and get drivers home to their loved ones faster.

ORDER OF ONTARIO

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last night, I had the great pleasure and privilege of attending the Order of Ontario ceremony, for the province's highest civilian honour. I was attending specifically to join Elizabeth Witmer and her family, but I must say, I was so pleased to bear witness to the strength and intelligence of the 26 appointees.

Elizabeth Witmer, as you know, is well-respected in Waterloo region. She was our first female MPP and is known as a quiet trailblazer who always carried a spirit of thoughtful leadership and reform. She continues to serve the public and is currently the chair of KidsAbility.

Elizabeth was in good company—amongst others, Marva Wisdom, Cindy Adams, the Honourable Rosemary Moodie. She was also joined by former MPP Dianne Cunningham from London.

Some of the appointees have spent their entire lives working to make Ontario a better, healthier and more inclusive place: Arthur Lockhart, who established the Gatehouse—included advocacy to move the shame of sexual abuse to a place of courage; Pauline Shirt, who is described as a wisdom keeper; Eric Lindros, for his charitable work and game-changing advocacy on concussion reform, through Rowan's Law; and restaurateur Biagio Vinci, who is involved in the Out of the Cold program and extended his work to feed hot meals to front-line health care workers during the pandemic—he does so to honour his mother—and last night, it was said that his greatest dish is compassion.

Speaker, there are too many to highlight.

Many of the Order of Ontario recipients were visibly uncomfortable in the spotlight. They are just good people doing good work, and our province is a better place because of them.

JACQUELINE USSHER

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's my privilege to rise here today to highlight the amazing work of a constituent in my riding of Perth–Wellington: Jacqueline Ussher, a paramedic with Perth county emergency medical services. She recently won the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs—OAPC—Humanitarian Award. The award was introduced in 2012, and it recognizes acts of unselfish donation of time or money by paramedic or emergency medical services professionals to relieve the suffering of humanity.

Jacqueline has shown an unwavering commitment to the well-being of the community of Perth county, particularly during the tough times of COVID-19. Not only did Jacqueline serve our community as a paramedic, but during the chaos of the pandemic, she identified a local issue that was exacerbated by the pandemic: food security. Jacqueline proceeded to dedicate her time and effort, working with the House of Blessing to ensure a continuous supply of food for people in need in Perth county.

Her volunteerism and dedication to the well-being of our community is commendable, and she is a great role

model for many who want to see our neighbours and friends prosper.

I know I speak for our community when I say that we are grateful for the hard-working and caring people in Perth–Wellington, like Jacqueline.

Jacqueline, thank you for making our community a better place to live and raise a family.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: People are hungry. Feed the Need in Durham is seeing unbelievable increases in visits. In 2019, they had 75,000 visits, and they are on track to hit 240,000 this year, so the growth is exponential. And despite the generosity of our community, food and funds cannot match the demand, which has grown so quickly. I have faith in the great work that Ben Earle, his team and all the volunteers are doing, but the needs are overwhelming our safety nets. More clients are fully employed and own homes. They just cannot make ends meet as their cost of living has increased over the past few years. We are seeing this across the country.

Speaker, 96% of food bank users in Durham indicate that the reason for their visit to the food bank last year was due to the rising cost of food needed to support themselves and their families. One in four food bank users last year were first-time clients.

The bottom line is that Feed the Need, like food banks across Ontario, is being asked to respond to challenges that are the result of policy failures at the provincial level. Social assistance rates are woefully insufficient, to say the least. Housing policies will not actually address the challenges faced by residents in Durham. And employment standards do not ensure good work that pays, at minimum, a living wage.

Carolyn Stewart, the CEO of Feed Ontario, answered reporters at Queen's Park about what the government can do to support food banks. They don't want government funding for food banks; they want government to fund people. They want better policy that addresses underlying causes of poverty, and to look at social assistance and a proper housing plan.

1020

So, Premier, please invest in communities, people and the systems they rely on so people can feed themselves.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

KATIE VINCENT

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: On Saturday, I was proud to attend the grand opening for the new Art Shelter in the sunflower field at Lakeview Village. Thanks to the \$103,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to the dance-theatre company Frog in Hand, this will be an exciting new community space for local art programs.

Since last summer, I had the opportunity to announce over \$3 million in OTF grants to over 20 local non-profits in Mississauga. This includes \$411,000 for DEEN Support

Services to expand their program for people living with intellectual disabilities. This includes \$350,000 for Armagh House, the only transitional shelter for domestic violence victims in Peel region. This includes \$149,000 for Team Unbreakable to expand their free mental health program. The Eagle Spirits of the Great Waters received \$21,000 for Indigenous workshops; \$191,000 went to the Don Rowing Club; and \$99,000 to the Mississauga Canoe Club, where I volunteered as property manager a long time ago.

Earlier this month, our sprint canoeist Katie Vincent won gold at the Pan Am Games in Chile. She was named one of Canada's flag-bearers for the closing ceremonies.

On behalf of all the members, I want to congratulate Katie. And I want to congratulate all our non-profits for receiving these grants and on everything they're doing for our community. I want to just congratulate them all for all they're doing.

HOUSING

Mr. Wayne Gates: Affordability: Our neighbours in Niagara are feeling the crunch on the affordability crisis, and it's hitting hard—especially around housing. Our municipalities in Niagara are falling short on housing targets at no fault of their own. The council in Niagara Falls hit the nail on the head, including Councillor Pietrangelo who said this: “We can approve them, but we can't ensure that they're going to be built. It's nice to have a plan, but it's better if it's realistic and achievable and I don't know how to make sure that it is achievable.”

The Conservatives' housing plan is failing this province after wasting years cutting deals with their friends in the greenbelt. They promised 1.5-million homes. In Niagara Falls, it's a 21-year wait-list for a one-bedroom apartment; nine years in Fort Erie.

Food bank usage has skyrocketed; 800,000 adults and children accessed a food bank in Ontario this year, an increase of 38%. Those on social assistance are facing legislated poverty.

Enough with the lip service. We need solutions. It's time for this province to roll up its sleeves, get back to building homes and tackle the affordability crisis head on. How can the Premier tell the people in Ontario we are 1,000 times better off from when he became Premier? Family, friends, grandkids are going to bed hungry every night in the province of Ontario. We deserve better.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Kevin Holland: I was pleased to attend the recent swearing-in ceremony of 45 new Ontario provincial police officers at the headquarters in Orillia. It was a momentous occasion, one that signifies the commitment and dedication of these individuals to serve and protect our communities.

Among these dedicated recruits is my good friend Curtis Trotz, who has made the transition from the city of Thunder Bay police force to serve at the OPP station in

Armstrong. Curtis's decision to join the OPP is a testament to his unwavering commitment to public safety and his willingness to embrace new challenges in the pursuit of a safer Ontario. Congratulations, Curtis.

I'd also like to extend my congratulations to Natasha McLellan, who will be serving right here at Queen's Park. Your presence and dedication to serving in the heart of our province's governance is truly commendable. Your service here, safeguarding the very institutions that shape our great province, is of immense importance. Welcome, Natasha.

I want to recognize the sacrifices made by the families of our police officers and the vital role that they have in supporting their family members as they serve our communities.

In closing, I want to thank all officers for their dedication to upholding the law, protecting our citizens. And once again, I offer my congratulations. May you all return home safely at the end of every shift.

BLENHEIM MEDICAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: Recently, I had the pleasure of joining members of the Blenheim Medical Health Foundation, who unveiled plans to develop a local health hub which will provide primary, multi-disciplinary health care to a catchment area that extends well beyond the community of Blenheim to include rural areas of South Kent, Ridgetown and surrounding areas. This facility will house a wide range of health care professionals and services, including family physicians, nurse practitioners, diagnostic imaging personnel, laboratory, physiotherapy, pharmacy and mental health care services all under one roof.

I'm so proud of this community-driven grassroots movement, and I want to acknowledge members of the foundation, including Mr. Ed O'Brien, Ms. Joan Hackett, Ms. Cathy Smith, Dr. Andrew Lanz-O'Brien, and the countless Blenheim-area residents and businesses who supported them all.

I also want to acknowledge the extreme generosity of Peter and Annie Timmermans, who selflessly donated the beautiful 26,000-square-foot building—the former Andersons agri-business and research building on Hyland Drive—to house our future health care hub and make this dream of comprehensive rural health a reality. The collective effort will create a warm, welcoming, comprehensive and professional space to better support all rural residents, from young families to seniors, who are all being supported by a central integrated whole-person health care facility.

ONTARIO YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Today, I would like to tell the assembly about Isabel. Isabel is a grade 12 student, and Isabel is enrolled in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship

Program. Isabel takes classes at the Carpenters Union, where she learns the basics of math and reading and writing, but she also takes programming with regard to skilled trades. Isabel is going to have all of the basic skills that she needs when she graduates to enter into an apprenticeship program. At the same time, she's going to get her Ontario secondary school diploma—all at the same time.

All of this is made possible by a great partnership between the Greater Essex County District School Board and the Carpenters Union, which has contributed approximately half a million dollars to make this program possible. And, of course, it's also made possible by the excellent policies of this provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage Isabel and the thousands of students just like Isabel who are going to finish their Ontario secondary school diploma and get great apprenticeship training through the programs offered by this government. Please, Isabel and all your friends, keep up the great work.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore the afternoon routine on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, shall commence at 1 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jill Dunlop: This morning I would like to introduce representatives from Western University: president Alan Shepard, Florentine Strzelczyk, Lynn Logan, Penny Pexman, John Doerksen, Keith Gibbons, Peter White and Sophie Helpard. I would like to invite everyone to attend their lunch reception.

I would also like to welcome representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome to Queen's Park today, gang.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Today I'd like to welcome Francis Garwe and Roselyn Sagar-Lal from the Durham Community Health Centre. Thank you for being in the House today.

I'd also like to acknowledge Nancy Henry, councillor for Ward 2 in Ajax—it's nice to see you—and Mayor Kevin Ashe, his wife Karen, and his group from Pickering as well. Thank you for coming today and thank you for the discussion on mental health.

1030

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance who are here today: Abby Samuels from McMaster University; Katie Traynor from the University of Waterloo; Carleigh Charlton from Brock University; Simi Olufowobi from Laurentian University; Riley Ambrose from Trent Uni-

versity; and Victoria Mills from Queen's University. Welcome. I look forward to meeting with you later.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'm very pleased to have met with OFVGA this morning. I somewhat share a farmer with my colleague from Oxford county: Mike Chromczak of Chromczak Farms, who produces some of Ontario's best asparagus and watermelon.

Welcome to the House, and thank you for all your hard work.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, I'd like to introduce Home Care Ontario, who are holding their annual awareness day today at the Legislature.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the official opposition, I'd also like to welcome the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association. I look forward to meeting with them and attending their reception this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of visitors. The Minister of Finance.

Interjection.

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

I want to acknowledge again the great mayor of Pickering, Kevin Ashe, joined by his wife, Karen O'Brien.

Kevin and Kim Cahill also did a great job. Thank you for being here.

Theresa Deboer and Ajax ward 2 councillor Nancy Henry, welcome to the House.

And my constituent manager, the great Edward White, is up there.

Mr. Adil Shamji: From the post-secondary sector, I'd like to welcome the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance as well as the delegation from Western University, my alma mater.

I would also like to welcome the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, who I'll be meeting with later this afternoon.

Finally, from a health care perspective, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Home Care Ontario as well as the Carion Fenn Foundation, which hosted a great reception this morning.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As a purple and proud graduate of Western University, I'd like to add my welcome to the delegation here today from Western, as well as to the amazing leadership of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, who are here today to meet with MPPs.

Mr. Dave Smith: He's not here yet, but I know he's coming for question period—I'd like to introduce former member of Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Daryl Kramp.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier.

The Conservatives have had to roll back major policy after major policy because they got caught rigging the system for their friends. And while they promised to be more transparent around land use planning after the greenbelt scandal, here we are again, a few weeks later, and the Conservatives are muddying it even further when it comes to Ontario Place. They're doing everything they can to ram their private luxury spa through, even skirting their own rules. They've proposed exempting the project from environmental assessment laws and the heritage act.

To the Premier: Is he overriding his own rules to avoid accountability under the law?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you know this, but in fact, legislators in this House have been talking about what to do with Ontario Place since the late 1980s. Since the late 1980s, legislators have been talking about what to do with declining attendance and what to do with the increasing subsidies at Ontario Place.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a point where we've submitted our development application to the city. We have done everything that is required by us, by law, and now we have to make a decision and move forward. This is a government that gets the job done, and we will bring Ontario Place back to life, finally.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, they got caught breaking the rules so now they're changing the rules. That's what's happening. This is all about this government giving themselves a free pass to do whatever they want for whomever they want with public dollars. They are already in hot water over using MZOs to help their rich friends get richer and what do they do now? They give the minister of Minister of Infrastructure the power to do her own MZOs—the same minister who is keeping this 95-year-long lease a secret from the public.

To the Premier: Is he just making it easier to give preferential treatment to his friends?

Hon. Kinga Surma: We were given a mandate in 2022, and Ontario Place was part of our mandate. We have presented legislation in this House before when it comes to building infrastructure to help us expedite it and do it efficiently. We did that with subways with the Building Transit Faster Act. Subways would not be under construction today if it wasn't through Minister Mulroney's leadership and presenting that legislation in the House. We did it with broadband and high-speed Internet access. I presented that legislation myself. And because we did it, we have fibre and we are connecting communities right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I will never be afraid to present legislation in order to build infrastructure in the province of Ontario and finally, after over 30 years of debate in this House, get

it done and bring Ontario Place back to life, a place that families can enjoy 365 days of the year.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, what is this obsession with a spa? I mean, really. I talk to people every single day. They're worried about how they're going to pay their rent, how they're going to make their mortgage payments, how they're going to buy groceries, where they're going to find a family doctor. None of them have told me they think a private luxury spa in downtown Toronto is the answer.

Back to the Premier: Why is this elite luxury spa his number one priority?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I can ask the leader of the official opposition the very same question. What is your obsession against a waterpark facility and a wellness facility that will be operational 365 days of the year at Ontario Place, that will also be contributing to annual maintenance of the site so that we have an Ontario Place that can be enjoyed for future years by our children and our grandchildren?

Mr. Speaker, we legislators have been debating this issue since the late 1980s. It is time to get the job done and this legislation will help us do it.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell what you my obsession is: It's stopping this government from ripping off Ontarians.

This government can pat themselves on the back all they want, but they know as well as we do that this was never about Toronto. The fight has always been right here at Queen's Park to protect public interests and expose their dirty deals.

The government is spending over half a billion dollars on a luxury mega-spa to hand public funds directly over into the profits of private companies. If this isn't about giving preferential treatment and avoiding public accountability, surely this government has a plan to invest in other municipalities.

To the Premier: Which other municipalities will get a deal from this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I feel I need to caution the Leader of the Opposition again on her choice of words.

1040

To reply, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm more than happy to discuss the historic deal that was created by the Premier and the mayor of the city of Toronto, an extraordinary deal that will make sure that we are protecting our highways in the city of Toronto, that we're supporting the TTC and keeping riders safe, that we're providing more operational funding for new transit lines that we are building and

also—contingent on federal government funding—additional funding for homelessness. The deal that was struck yesterday is an extraordinary deal for the people of the city and for the province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'm reminded by the member for Waterloo that it has been one year and one week since this government promised to make municipalities whole, but here we are.

Toronto is not the only municipality that needs support. Municipalities all across Ontario are doing everything they can to issue permits to encourage affordable housing developments, but they don't have the power to force developers to start building after they get their permits, and this province is doing nothing to help. They still haven't brought in use-it-or-lose-it legislation, as we suggested.

So, to the Premier, I'll ask again: When will this province give other municipalities a new deal too?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As the member opposite knows, we are bringing forward legislation around use-it-or-lose-it. The reason we can bring in such legislation is because this government is putting billions of dollars of infrastructure in the ground, and we want to make sure the infrastructure both below and above the ground is used for building homes for the people of the province of Ontario.

I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition that her party has voted against every single investment that we've made in terms of helping unleash home building. She and that party have voted against every single investment that we have made in terms of building transit and transportation across the province of Ontario.

We are bringing forward use-it-or-lose-it legislation, because we expect those people who have permits, who are holding up sewer and water allocation, to get shovels in the ground. We'll bring it forward. We'll do it in a fair way that brings our municipalities on board as well as those who are building homes, and I fully expect that the Leader of the Opposition will get up in her place and support that legislation. For the first time, she'll support building homes for the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: While municipalities are struggling, this government keeps ignoring their requests for help. While the housing crisis gets worse and worse and worse, this government has wasted years chasing the greenbelt for their speculator friends, issuing MZOs for their donors, bulldozing public parks for private luxury mega-spas nobody wants. They're distracted. They're up against the wall, under criminal investigation by the RCMP.

So, Speaker, back to the Premier: What will it take for this government to finally put the people of Ontario first and before their insider friends?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I see why the Leader of the Opposition is frustrated. She has a caucus that doesn't support her, a provincial councillor who wants her out of her job. She has members who refuse to even sit in the chamber when she's here. And we're seeing growth across the province of Ontario, despite the fact that we have a federal government, supported by the NDP, that have put us in a crisis and have seen interest rates increase faster than at any other time in history.

The socialist NDP are in a frenzy. Do you know why? Because we're creating jobs, because our municipal partners want to work with us to get shovels in the ground. Do you know who has come on board? Mayor Olivia Chow, an NDP stalwart. A former councillor, a former member of Parliament for the NDP has come on board, because she and the Toronto council understand that the best way to create jobs and economic growth is to cut taxes, work together, get shovels in the ground. It is only they who don't understand that.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

Ontario already has responsibility for the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 11. Last week, north of North Bay, on November 22, it was closed for 13 and a half hours. On November 24, it was closed for 12 and a half hours.

Our sympathies go out to the families involved. This isn't something new. If your car is registered in the district of Timiskaming, you're four times as likely to die on a provincial highway than if it's registered in Toronto.

My question to the Minister of Transportation is, can northerners also expect a new deal to actually put Highway 11 up to standards so people don't die on it?

Interjections.

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

To respond, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As the member knows, it is our utmost priority to ensure we have safe and efficient highways across this province, and that includes Highway 11. We have some of the safest roads in all of North America. We have the trans-Ontario standard that is met by this province and this province only—across the country and across North America.

And we will continue to work—we had the Good Roads Association that was at Queen's Park just this past week, listening about further measures that can be taken.

We commit to always ensuring that we have the safest roads, and working towards safety across this province, especially on the roads. We do have some of the safest roads, but we'll continue to make sure that we do whatever we can, making the necessary investments on Highways 11 and 17 in the north, to do—and ensure that our roads remain safe.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Highways 11 and 17 are certainly not the safest roads in North America.

There are many other roads in northern Ontario, and many of them were downloaded by the Harris government to municipalities—the town of Iroquois Falls, the town of Kirkland Lake, the city of Timmins. Many of these places are also suffering. They can't afford to provide vital services because they're actually looking after highways that should be provincial.

So those municipalities across the province—can they also expect that this government actually uploads the highways that a previous Conservative downloaded? Can they expect a new deal on roads as well?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, now the NDP want a new deal. You can see the divisions within the party. In the first question from the leader, they say that the new deal is something that we shouldn't be working on. Now they want a new deal. And when we bring new roads to different parts of the province of Ontario, what do they do? They vote against it anyway. When we brought back the Northlander, they voted against it. So they don't care about northern Ontario. When the Liberals called northern Ontario a wasteland that nobody should invest in, did they, who held the balance of power, bring them down? No. Not even once. This is a party that does not care about roads. It does not care about municipalities.

Do you know why we were able to strike a deal with Olivia Chow and the NDP council in Toronto? Because we work with them, Mr. Speaker. We work with our municipal partners, and that is why we are seeing growth across the province of Ontario, the likes of which we've never seen, despite policies of the federal government to hold back our economy.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

The federal carbon tax is hurting businesses across this province. It's significantly harmful to small and medium-sized businesses, which are crucial sources of employment for our regional communities.

When the federal government hikes energy costs with their carbon tax, it hurts these small businesses—their bottom lines. Unfortunately, this has meant that many small businesses and businesses have been left with the difficult choice of scaling back production, laying off employees, or closing their doors altogether. Sadly, the federal government, along with the independent Liberals and opposition NDP, do not care.

Can the minister please explain how, unlike the NDP and Liberals, who want to penalize businesses, our government is providing support for them?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: There is a very clear and concise differentiation between the Liberal-NDP coalition and the PC Party. They hurt business. We help business.

We've reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion annually. We've created the climate for businesses to succeed.

Speaker, we have regional development programs. We've invested \$110 million in regional development programs for 100 companies. Those 100 companies, in turn, invested \$1.18 billion in the province of Ontario and hired 2,300 people.

1050

That's what you get when you have a favourable business environment that is created. That is exactly what our party is doing. We can only imagine the heights we could achieve if we did not have a carbon tax.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the minister for his response and his solid work on a world-scale basis for the people in the province of Ontario. It's great to hear about the success of our government's regional development program.

Before we took office Ontario's manufacturing capacity had diminished. The NDP-Liberal agenda of high taxes and unnecessary red tape pushed manufacturers out of our province and into foreign jurisdictions. As a result, our economy stagnated and we were beholden to other countries to manufacture the goods and supplies that Ontarians needed.

Now they want to try their failed experiment all over again with the ever-increased federal carbon tax. Unlike the opposition, our government must support and protect our manufacturing sector, which is vital to our province's economic prosperity.

Can the minister please describe how our government's actions continue to strengthen Ontario's manufacturing sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The Liberal-NDP agenda of high taxes has crushed our manufacturing sector. Some 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost under that coalition. But we created the conditions for Ontario to become the manufacturing powerhouse that it used to be.

Now we are home to 20,000 manufacturers, employing more than 800,000 workers. This year alone, since January, we have seen 23,500 manufacturing jobs created. In fact, in one month this summer, we saw more manufacturing jobs created in Ontario than in all 50 US states combined. There's \$99 billion of manufacturing that goes on in Ontario every single year. Lower taxes and red tape reduction equals jobs.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Why is Ontario paying 330% more for surgeries in for-profit clinics than in public hospitals? The member from Eglinton–Lawrence stated, "These centres have higher costs because they're purchasing equipment."

Don Mills Surgical Unit, a for-profit hospital, expanded from three to six operating rooms and to seven recovery bays while our public hospital ORs sit dark and empty, against the Private Hospitals Act, which forbids expanding for-profit hospitals. Why is this government expanding private hospitals, where we pay more for less?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's pretty clear that the member opposite and the NDP have no interest in doing anything creative or anything different or innovative in the province of Ontario.

We have partners like the Don Mills surgical centre, which moved their 20-bed facility to a different location. It does in fact not contravene the Private Hospitals Act.

But what we have been able to do, what the member opposite does not want to talk about, is actually expand the access that is available. When we expanded the cataract surgeries in January, when Premier Ford made that announcement—we now have 14,000 people who have had access to minor surgery and cataract surgery, who are now back in communities, back volunteering, back working, back reading stories to their children. That's why we're doing this innovation. That's why we're doing this expansion.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have ORs in our public hospitals that sit empty that could do those 14,000 cataract surgeries.

Speaker, the previous Minister of Health is now a lobbyist for Clearpoint, the corporation that owns Don Mills Surgical Unit. The Members' Integrity Act prohibits former cabinet ministers from ever making representation to the provincial government. Don Mills received a 278% increase when Christine Elliott was Minister of Health. Does the Premier support the fact that his former Minister of Health is lobbying for preferential treatment for Don Mills?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order. Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite is very careful not to talk about the billion-dollar investment that—we are working with hospitals, including our surgical and diagnostic centres, to expand access.

We knew that because of the condition our health care system was left under the Liberals and the NDP, because of the conditions as we paused during the pandemic, we needed to aggressively work with our hospital partners to ensure that we were dealing with surgical backlog and surgical recovery.

And that billion-dollar investment has led to some incredible innovations, where we have partners—as the member opposite mentioned—where we now have ORs that are operating over later hours, into the weekend.

Why? Because those hospitals have submitted proposals, innovative ideas, to the ministry. We funded them, and we are dealing with that surgical backlog.

TAXATION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Last week, the federal government released their fall economic statement, which many would describe as disappointing. It was disappointing because it failed to end the damaging carbon tax that is hurting so many people in my riding and across the province. My constituents are rightfully asking why the federal government punishes them with this regressive tax while other provinces are exempt. The people in my riding are looking to all levels of government to step up and provide assistance during these challenging economic times. The people of Ontario want support and relief, not additional taxation that makes life more expensive. Can the minister please explain how this unnecessary tax creates economic hardship for all Ontarians?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the great member from Whitby for that question. He's a champion.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Your member opposite there also agrees with me.

It's a Durham day. We've got the mayor of Pickering here. We've got members from the council in Ajax. Guess what they have to do? There's no subway in Pickering. Many people have to drive their car to work, take their kids to school, move around the great riding of Pickering. That's why I was disappointed by the lack of action on the carbon tax by the federal government's fall economic statement.

Like the member from Whitby, I was hoping that the Liberal government would finally come to its senses and end the carbon tax, which seems only effective in hurting the pocketbook of Ontario families.

Sadly, the Liberals' attachment to the carbon tax seems to far outweigh their concern for the economy. While families and workers are calling for a break from this regressive tax, the federal government is ignoring their voices. So we're asking the federal government, don't just help Pickering; don't just help Ontario; help all of Canada with this—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the Minister of Finance: Our government has been very clear regarding the damage that the carbon tax is causing to hard-working families in Ontario. This regressive tax does nothing but increase the price of everything. Now is not the time to raise taxes or increase expenses. Families and individuals throughout Ontario are struggling due to higher inflation, rising interest rates and ongoing supply chain challenges. A carbon tax only increases those concerns and makes affordability that much more challenging. The carbon tax adversely affects our businesses and negatively impacts our economy and Ontario workers.

Can the minister please elaborate on why all members of this House should advocate for Ontario by calling on the federal government to end the carbon tax?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the hard-working member from Whitby, who—I call him the Gordie Howe, because he ran nine times and he has won nine times. So he's the number 9—and, of course, the Maurice Richard and the Bobby Hull. But I digress.

1100

Mr. Speaker, the other part of my riding, Uxbridge—guess what? People use their cars not only to get around in Uxbridge. Guess what the farmers do? They have the tractors in Uxbridge. They use energy and power. They need a break as well, the hard-working people and farmers of Uxbridge who grow the food, and obviously the food gets shipped and then we buy the food. We need to all work on affordability in this country, and it starts with the carbon tax.

We took action by lowering the gas tax, when combined with other measures, 10 cents a litre. And when we table the fall economic statement, I'm highly confident the members opposite will vote to reduce that gas tax and join us as we work all across Canada to make life more affordable for—

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

HEALTH CARE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the Premier. To quote the executive director of Victim Services of Durham Region, “Publicly funded prescription birth control will help empower survivors experiencing gender-based violence and human trafficking. Access to birth control is life-saving.”

Speaker, the lack of access to birth control is used by abusers and perpetrators of human sex trafficking to control their victims. Birth control is much more cost-effective than health care or even the therapy that we owe the survivors after freeing them from sex trafficking if they are pregnant.

Does this government agree that universal access to contraception will give survivors more control over their bodies and lives and help combat sex trafficking?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite should know that our government's history in dealing with human-trafficking survivors and perpetrators is clear and very, very deep. When I think of the work that the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has done, when I think of the legislation that we have brought forward as a government to protect and ensure that individuals who perpetrate human trafficking are brought to justice, it is our government, under Premier Ford, who has done that work.

I really think it's important for the member to understand that we are absolutely seized to ensure that every piece of human trafficking and the survivors' pathway to

treatment is something that our government and multiple ministries have been working on for many, many years.

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

MPP Jamie West: Back to the Premier: Speaker, access to birth control radically changed the face of the workforce. Family planning has empowered women to pursue the careers of their dreams. It secures economic freedom and has been the key to a prospering Ontario. However, Speaker, the cost remains a barrier to many women. Does the Premier believe that access to birth control is a right, and if so, will he be supporting the NDP member for St. Catharines' motion for universal access to birth control?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: If and when access becomes a barrier when it is financially there, we, of course, have programs in the province of Ontario. We have—

Interjections.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The members opposite don't want to hear it, but the truth is that we've done a lot in this space and we have put in a lot of protections. Individuals who are under the age of 25 have free access. Individuals, because of income thresholds, have access through the Ontario drug benefit plan. Do not tell me that having almost 50% of the population having access to those free programs isn't making a difference to the lives of women in this province. It is, and it does.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone—beautiful day to be in here with you.

Mr. Speaker, tell the Premier that instead of holiday bells, I am ringing the alarm bells, because the climate crisis is here and it's costing Ontarians already. While we wait to hear about the RCMP criminal investigation into the \$8.3-billion sale of the greenbelt, the government could and should read the damning report released last week by the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario. Spoiler alert: There's a frightening financial impact of the climate crisis on our infrastructure. If we don't begin to proactively plan and build for the extreme weather events that are definitely coming due to climate change, it will cost an extra \$4.1 billion per year.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yoo-hoo. Wake up all you fiscally responsible people—\$4.1 billion a year.

My question to the Premier is, when will he wake up, smell the wildfires and declare a climate emergency in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ontario is responsible for 86% of the greenhouse gas reductions for all of the country of Canada. Think about that: one-third of the population, 86%.

We have done the things that are going to make the impacts. We are leading the world in EV battery production for the electric cars. We've installed electric arc

furnaces in our steel mills—or are installing them—which will take two million cars off the road. We're investing in nuclear power—clean, green nuclear power. We're on target to meet our 2030 greenhouse gas reduction goals.

We're doing all this while building the economy and standing against the most punishing thing that people are experiencing in this province and all across Canada: the unacceptable, unfair carbon tax by your party in Ottawa.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will take their seats. Order. Order.

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Note to the Conservatives: Electric vehicles alone will not solve this climate crisis. Now, my question: How long is this government going to wait to invest in climate-resilient infrastructure? They are leaving Ontarians up a creek, literally.

The FAO report clearly proves that we need to be proactive about this—no more short-term thinking. The fatal consequences of climate change are already in effect. The global mortality rate associated with extreme heat accounts for five million deaths per year. The 2021 heat wave in BC amounted to over 600 people dying. It's only a matter of time before Ontario faces an extreme heat wave.

My question is to the Premier: Will he commit to an expansive and informative public education campaign and an extensive plan to ready our infrastructure before next summer comes blazing in with potentially deadly temperatures?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, Speaker, the member would know that Build Back Better is part of our plan to prepare our infrastructure for the effects of climate change. She would know that.

But not only that; we've introduced an urban park in Uxbridge because people want to care about the ground. The Nature Conservancy of Canada says we're leaders in protecting green space here in the country of Canada—the first operating provincial park in 40 years.

But all of what we're doing on top of that—we're giving people a break. We've lowered the price of gas so they can get to work or get their kids to soccer. We've taken away the cost of licence plate stickers. We're doing all of those things because your party in Ottawa has got their hand in their pocket, and every time they turn around, they're taking the carbon tax out of their pocket.

Everything is costing more because of the carbon tax. There are so many initiatives that this government and every other government could be doing if they weren't taxing the people to death with the carbon tax.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, the carbon tax is raising the price of everything. This regressive and harmful tax is hurting the people of Ontario by driving up

the cost of goods, of services and of essential items that they need.

The minister has previously warned about how the carbon tax is increasing the cost of raw materials from the forestry sector and is raising the price of products such as sand and stone. Not only does this federally imposed carbon tax make raw materials more expensive, but it also impacts the entire supply chain, resulting in higher costs for everything and everyone.

Can the minister please explain how the carbon tax is negatively impacting industries in the natural resources sector and consumers across the province of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Ric Bresee: The member from Brantford–Brant is absolutely correct: The forestry sector is just one of the many natural resources sectors that are being punished by the carbon tax. In fact, all of our northern and rural businesses are being disproportionately impacted by that Liberal carbon tax.

1110

Ontario's commercial fishing sector is feeling the financial pressure too. The Ontario Commercial Fisheries' Association recently told us, "One business estimates that the carbon tax is costing them \$88,000 per year." And if the federal government cared about the success of that business and the people we employ, they would cut the carbon tax.

With this regressive tax, they simply can't compete with the American businesses fishing in the same waters. We have urged the Ontario Liberals to call on their federal counterparts to end this tax that is making everything more expensive. Let's work together, do what's right and build a better—

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his response. It's disheartening to see the independent Liberals and the opposition NDP members continue to support such a regressive tax that harms our northern and rural businesses while consistently voting against measures that would make life more affordable for all Ontarians.

The carbon tax has contributed to higher fuel prices, higher shipping prices and more burdensome red tape and less innovation. Industries in the natural resource sector are legacy businesses that help build Ontario. Many of these businesses are vital to sustaining northern communities and contributing to Ontario's economic prosperity. Can the parliamentary assistant please expand on how the carbon tax is negatively impacting local businesses and our province's economy?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you for the great question. We have repeatedly asked the federal Liberals to help us by removing the carbon tax to put even more money back in the pockets of the people of Ontario.

I want to share further comments from the Ontario Commercial Fisheries' Association, who said that the

carbon tax “increases the cost of goods because everything is shipped,” and that “suppliers have passed their carbon tax expenses on their businesses, driving up the costs of everything.”

Our government is doing more every day to support job creators and build a stronger Ontario. That’s why our Premier and our Minister of Finance have reduced the gas tax.

Industries, small businesses, families and workers across this province are asking the members opposite to recognize these negative impacts. Speaker, Ontarians want solutions, not additional taxes. The members opposite need to stand up and call for the end of the carbon tax. Come on, scrap the tax.

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The cost-of-living crisis is getting worse. According to a recent report from Feed Ontario, 23% of food bank clients spend 100% of their income on housing. That’s all their income on housing. Without real rent control for all tenants, people are paying a larger and larger percentage of their paycheque towards rent, leaving little for all other expenses.

Premier, will you bring back real rent control measures that not only help keep people housed, but also help keep food on the table?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: History shows that if I was to do that, nobody would actually build rental housing in the province of Ontario, because when we stopped that, when we made a modification to that policy, we saw record levels of purpose-built housing across the province of Ontario.

In fact, we’ll go even a step further. It has now finally been acknowledged by the federal Liberals and NDP that when you cut taxes and when you make life more affordable for people and when you make life more affordable for those who construct rental housing, they’ll get in. When the Minister of Finance said that we have to eliminate HST on purpose-built rentals, the federal government fought us for over a year. And what happened when we finally were able to get that done, with no help from Jagmeet Singh and the socialist caucus in Ottawa? We are seeing a \$45,000-per-unit reduction in the cost of purpose-built rentals. And you know who stepped up to the plate? People who build purpose-built rentals, to the tune of we are at the highest level in over 15 years. That’s actually really good news.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Struggling is now the rule, not the exception, in Ontario. Feed Ontario says that 40% of Ontario food bank users were under 17. These are children; it’s 320,000 children in Ontario who are going hungry.

Under your watch, more and more children are going hungry. What are you going to do about it?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, one of the first actions that we brought in when we were elected in 2018 was to remove the lowest-income-earning Ontarians from the tax rolls entirely, because we thought it would be more important that they invest in themselves and in their families than sending tax dollars to the province of Ontario. Do you know who voted against that? It was the opposition.

When the Minister of Education said we have to bring down the fee of child care, but not in a way that would hurt or put one sector against another, but in a way that would advantage all Ontarians, and then when he fought to extend that deal, the opposition NDP voted against that.

When the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services increased ODSP rates and tied it to inflation, the opposition voted against that.

When we integrated fares so that people who take transit across the GTA to get to work, to get to appointments, to get to child care, would only have one fare to pay, reducing the cost by \$1,600, on average, per person, the NDP voted against it.

On affordability, this is—

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

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is to the Solicitor General. Speaker, I often talk about auto thefts and carjackings in this House, mainly because 33 division is among the hot spots for car theft and is in my riding. Even the federal justice minister is not immune to this crime. Two government vehicles assigned to him were stolen, and only one was recovered.

Michael Rothe, president and CEO of the Canadian Finance and Leasing Association, said in an interview with Maclean’s, “We’re a very safe country in many ways. But freedom isn’t free. Solving the car theft problem will actually help solve a lot of other issues, too.”

Speaker, I welcome the news of the Preventing Auto Thefts Grant funding. Can the Solicitor General please elaborate on how the government funding will help to tackle this urgent issue?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague opposite for the question. There has never been a government more concerned about public safety than our government, led by Premier Ford, and we have acted. The member is correct. Last week, we announced the first sums of money that will be going as part of our \$51-million investment to fight auto theft throughout our province. Mr. Speaker, it’s serious, because every few minutes, somewhere in Ontario, a car is getting stolen. It’s completely unacceptable.

That’s why I continue to call on our federal counterpart to meet me at the border, to meet me at the port of Montreal, to open the containers that are being loaded onto the ships and see for themselves. That’s where our cars are going. It’s completely unacceptable. We will do everything we can to continue to keep Ontario safe.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the Solicitor General for the information. Speaker, vehicle-related crimes cost Ontarians not only property losses, but they also rob people and their families of a sense of safety and security. The Ontario government is doing its job to combat this issue, but we cannot achieve an effective solution without active participation from our federal government.

To paraphrase Michael Rothe in the same interview with Maclean's, US Homeland Security is much more engaged than the Canada Border Services Agency, and our borders are more porous. Canadians are so frustrated to see containers with stolen vehicles going off to other countries.

Can the Solicitor General tell this House whether a timeline has been set for all levels of government to sit down together to address this crisis? And are there any public education programs planned in the near future to inform vehicle owners about car theft prevention?

1120

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague for the question again. Last Friday, I joined with the Premier and our caucus colleagues and Peel police services to announce the first \$18 million as part of the \$51 million that will be invested. I want to identify some of the municipalities that are going to be getting some of the money: Chatham-Kent, \$879,000; York region police, \$900,000; Toronto, \$900,000; Hamilton, almost \$900,000—and there's a greater list.

The member is also correct—our federal and our provincial and territorial ministers met in Bromont, Quebec. This was discussed in the meeting, and the other provincial ministers said, with me, to our federal counterpart, "You must do something at the border. You must step up border safety. You must go to the port of Montreal and you must see for yourself."

TAXATION

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: My question is for the Solicitor General. I rise today to address an issue that I have been hearing from my constituents in Mississauga—Erin Mills. It is clear to everyone but the federal government and the independent Liberal members that the carbon tax is negatively impacting Ontario's economy. People in my community are concerned about the potential effects of the carbon tax on our public safety system.

Last week, we heard from the Solicitor General, who spoke about the additional costs that the carbon tax is placing on our front-line first responders. Can the Solicitor General please explain the consequences of the federal carbon tax on our province's public safety system?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague opposite from Mississauga—Erin Mills for the hard work he does to keep his community safe, as well, every day. And he's right, Mr. Speaker.

I can equate it like this: Every million dollars of money that is wasted by a police service to pay the carbon tax

portion on a litre of gas equates to almost 10 officers—boots on the ground that can keep those communities safe. It's completely unacceptable that when a police chief has to present himself before a police service board to go through his budgetary lines, one of the lines is the carbon tax on fuel. It is absolutely ridiculous.

So we're calling on the federal government—call, yourself, the police service boards, call the police chiefs and see for yourself. We have to get rid of this tax.

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

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: It is reassuring to hear that our government continues to hold public safety as its highest priority.

With media reports about crime and illegal activity in many areas of our province, residents in my community are concerned about the financial impact of the carbon tax on the day-to-day work of our front-line police officers. It is reasonable that people are worried about how the carbon tax is placing a strain on policing budgets. All Ontarians deserve to live safely in their communities, and they are counting on our front-line officers to respond to emergencies. Even more so, our hard-working police officers deserve support from our government as they carry out their duties.

Can the Solicitor General please elaborate on how the carbon tax is negatively impacting police services?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague for this very pertinent question. I speak to many police chiefs early in the morning—I start at around 6:30—and many of them are telling me that they have to go before police service boards to negotiate their budgets. Some are hanging by a thread because the budgets are tight. When I found out how much fuel they are using, I asked the question, "Are you exempt from carbon tax?" They said, "No, it's part of the cost of fuel."

It is completely unacceptable that 10,000 vehicles a day, on average, are on the road to keep Ontario safe, and every time a police officer who's risking his life—or her life—for Ontario has to sign a chit for the carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, it's very clear: This is regressive. This is affecting public safety. Let's get rid of the tax.

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier. In Kitchener-Waterloo, one in 10 households struggle to afford to put food on the table—last year, it was one in 14; two years ago, it was 1 in 20. Things are not getting better in the province of Ontario—58,000 individuals in need; 4,629 households accessed a food assistance program for the first time, a 45% increase over the same quarter in 2020.

Yesterday, we received the 2023 Feed Ontario hunger report, and it was titled Why Ontarians Can't Get Ahead. Well, isn't that a good question, Mr. Speaker?

We all know the food bank model was fundamentally designed to respond to an emergency need, but emergencies are supposed to end. In Ontario, and KW, it is only

getting worse. When will the government acknowledge this and respond to this emergency?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you—through you, Mr. Speaker—to the member opposite for that question. We've been acknowledging and we understand that many have been hurting in this province for some time. That's why we moved early to reduce the gas tax back in the spring of 2022. Now we just are debating the fall economic statement, which extends that gas tax—so the member opposite has an opportunity to make life more affordable for the people of Kitchener and Waterloo. Not only did we do that, but we rebated the HST on purpose-built rental buildings to encourage more rental, which will help many people in this province. And of course, we didn't stop there to encourage more housing—the water systems infrastructure fund, \$200 million, so that we could build more affordable housing in this great province.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has an opportunity to support Bill 146 and make life more affordable for her constituents.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Fact: Hunger is becoming normalized in Ontario. Fact: Food banks are becoming a way to subsidize governments' balanced budgets, and this is especially galling in Ontario, where you have squirrelled away \$5.4 billion in an unallocated contingency fund. That is a fact that is hurting the people of this province.

The people who are living in tents are not concerned about the carbon tax. They're not concerned about the gas tax. They're concerned about surviving in this province. Last year's food bank use was double the increase seen in the 2008 recession—double since the last recession. This is not the future we want for our children, who now make up one in every four recipients, and families. People in Kitchener-Waterloo and across Ontario deserve so much more.

Feed Ontario has presented some really good suggestions on housing, on food insecurity, on employment. Will this government listen to the lived experiences of Ontarians and actually get back on track to working for the people we're elected to serve?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Fact: We reduced the gas tax. Fact: Ottawa increased the carbon tax. Those are facts.

We also announced a historic deal with the city of Toronto which will benefit not only just Torontonians, but people in the GTA and, frankly, the whole province of Ontario. Included in that deal, of course, is to help transit, to help housing, and yes, to help homelessness and shelters for those people the member opposite is talking about.

In fact, in the budget that she didn't vote for and her party voted against—the budget from last year—we increased the Homelessness Prevention Program by 40% for all Ontarians. Mr. Speaker, the facts are in: This is the party that supports the people of Ontario. The facts are in: That's the party that votes against it.

TAXATION

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is for the Minister of Energy. We already know that the federal carbon tax is making life more unaffordable for Ontarians when it comes to home heating costs. The federal government has announced an exemption of the carbon tax on home heating oil for some Canadians, but further action for all Canadians is needed.

1130

Heating is a necessity, but unfortunately, many Ontarians can't afford the luxury of picking and choosing what heating fuel they can use. Because of the carbon tax, they are unfairly forced to pay additional costs to stay warm during the winter. This is unfair and not right. Can the minister please explain how our government is supporting Ontarians to reduce the costs of home heating?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Speaker, the member for Burlington is absolutely right: Ontarians are struggling to heat their homes due to rising inflation.

The federal government's tax break only targets 2.5% of Ontarians, which is absolutely not enough. Our government has launched our Clean Home Heating Initiative program, the CHHI, providing recipients with a grant of up to \$4,500 to buy a standard air-source heat pump or a cold-climate air-source heat pump. This program will help save up to \$280 yearly on energy bills. On top of that, it would cut their emissions by a third. This past spring, we expanded the program to help even more communities.

Obviously, the best remedy to the problem, as the member for Burlington described, would be to eliminate the carbon tax. I hope that the federal government sees how harmful and ineffective this carbon tax is.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that response. It's reassuring to know that our government is taking the necessary steps to help Ontarians with the cost of keeping their homes warm this winter.

I'm disappointed to hear that the federal government refuses to address the problems the carbon tax is imposing on the people of Ontario.

Speaker, our government has known for years that the carbon tax is making life more unaffordable for Ontarians, and the Bank of Canada and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have confirmed our warnings about this regressive tax. The carbon tax is creating unnecessary burdens on the people of Ontario, and they're looking for financial relief.

Can the parliamentary assistant please elaborate on how our government is making life more affordable for all Ontarians?

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Our ministry is taking great steps to keep prices affordable for all Ontarians, especially when dealing with something like the carbon tax. Recently, the Minister of Energy announced that we increased the Ontario Electricity Rebate, the OER, up to

19.3%. Thanks to that, families will enjoy a \$26-a-month rebate on their electricity bills.

Because of the carbon tax, households heating with natural gas see a \$290 yearly increase on their energy bills, while those using propane will spend \$250 more annually. Speaker, it's ridiculous. We are talking about 70% of Ontarian households having to pay an average of \$270 in increased costs due to this tax. This is a reason why we increased our rebate. I'm hoping that the federal government finally opens its eyes and joins us in reducing costs for Ontarians.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, Londoners are facing waits for MRIs that in some cases are nearly 10 times the provincial average. Dawn from London West has waited 18 months for an MRI, well beyond the target 28 days. Tom learned in April of this year that he needs an MRI, and he finally got an appointment for February 2024—again, clearly nowhere near the 28-day target.

Without adequate health care staffing and resources, wait time targets are meaningless, and the result is 11,000 Ontarians who died while waiting on wait-lists for surgeries, MRIs and CAT scans last year. Why is this government more focused on improving profits for insider health care investors than in reducing wait times in Ontario?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm going to remind the member opposite that, in fact, since 2018, we have expanded the number of MRI machines that we are funding across Ontario—and that includes communities that have never had an MRI machine in their hospital before. What does that actually mean? I'll give a very specific example: An emergency room doctor told me, when we announced the MRI for that hospital, that they would no longer have to spend literally hours trying to find access to an MRI machine and then trying to arrange transportation through the paramedic service. We're bringing care closer to home, and it is making a difference in our communities.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education has informed me that he has a point of order he'd like to raise.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, guests from the Canada-Ukraine leadership are with us today, and I want to give special recognition to Roma Dzerowicz, Denny Dzerowicz and Victor Hetmanczuk, who were with us earlier this morning. We announced that Ontario will be the first province to mandate Holodomor education. I want to thank them for their leadership.

I encourage every MPP who is with us after votes to join us—the Holodomor awareness bus is at Queen's Park,

which is very special. I'm pleased to promote this wonderful education led by the Canada-Ukraine Foundation.

DEFERRED VOTES

CONVENIENT CARE AT HOME ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA PRESTATION COMMUNE DE SOINS À DOMICILE

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend the Connecting Care Act, 2019 with respect to home and community care services and health governance and to make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 pour des soins interconnectés en ce qui concerne les services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire et la gouvernance de la santé et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

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

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

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

On November 23, 2023, Ms. Jones, Dufferin–Caledon, moved third reading of Bill 135, An Act to amend the Connecting Care Act, 2019 with respect to home and community care services and health governance and to make related amendments to other Acts.

On November 27, 2023, Mr. Calandra moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pierre, Natalie
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Laura
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Martin, Robin	Wai, Daisy
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fedeli, Victor	McGregor, Graham	Yakabuski, John
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Karpoche, Bhutla	Taylor, Monique
Collard, Lucille	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 56; the nays are 32.

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

Ms. Jones, Dufferin–Caledon, has moved third reading of Bill 135, An Act to amend the Connecting Care Act, 2019 with respect to home and community care services and health governance and to make related amendments to other Acts.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 56; the nays are 32.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

VISITORS

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to welcome the grandparents and the parents of our head page today. Our head page is Leo Kemeny–Wodlinger. His grandparents Marika and Robert Kemeny are here with his dad and mom, Jason Wodlinger and Gabrielle Kemeny. Thank you so much for being here today.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt

Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,

Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

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 Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
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	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
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, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
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	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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 législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs 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
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, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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 Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	