

Legislative  
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of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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Mardi  
5 décembre 2023

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 December 2023

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 décembre 2023

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 VISANT À AMÉLIORER L'ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to the courts and other justice matters / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les tribunaux et d'autres questions relatives à la justice.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak to the bills that are before us. Speaker, we're speaking about Bill 157, Enhancing Access to Justice Act. I want to begin by summarizing the sweeping changes of issues that this bill touches for the Ontarians whose head might be spinning when they read about the bill. There are 19 schedules; it's quite broad.

I'm going to say right now that the theme that connects my concerns about this bill is my disappointment that we have before us a bill that touches on so many issues, while simultaneously failing to meet the moment for so many of those issues that this bill plans to address. This bill is like using a teaspoon to shovel your driveway when what you really need is a snow blower, otherwise, you can't get your car out of the garage. At this rate, we will probably get Rihanna's sixth album before we get real action to fix Ontario's broken court system and realize access to justice from this government.

In my speech, I want to outline what needs to change to enhance access to justice and to share what Ontario stakeholders have been asking us to do on a host of issues this bill comments on, from improving cannabis retail, to protecting survivors of sexual violence, to fixing the courtrooms and the administration of justice in this province. The theme that can tie this together is that this government's bill is potentially passable without being praiseworthy.

Speaker, as the critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General, I take my responsibility very seriously. I have met many important stakeholders at Queen's Park and in

the community: stakeholders from the legal and adjudicative tribunal community; unions that represent workers in the corrections, law enforcement and court systems; victim services groups; the gender-based violence sector; human rights organizations; organizations committed to honest government and upholding our democracy; small landlords and tenants and countless others. I've accepted their invitations to attend meetings, AGMs, events, workshops and conferences, and I am so deeply grateful for the warm welcome they have extended to me since my appointment to this portfolio. They've had so many different opinions to share. Each and every single one of them want to improve access to justice, and in addition to my staff's excellent note-taking, I've kept all of the communications.

Speaker, my presentation today is largely based on those meetings and conversations. It is my intention to bring their stories, their voices into the Legislature to help unpack all that is in Bill 157. Therefore, I want to open my remarks with schedules 6 to 9 and 18. I believe they are very substantial and worthy of further debate. My enthusiasm will be focused on rolling up our sleeves and getting to work to fix our broken court system.

Let's set the stage for why these reforms need to happen, including the appointment of judges and aspects of our legal system.

Ontario courts and systems for administering justice are in full-blown crisis, and all members in this House know that changes are needed. Ontarians are repeatedly telling us they're losing faith and that our justice system is not working. People are being released from detention centres and jails without supports to be integrated back into their communities and certainly without a pathway to housing, and innocent people are getting hurt. Public safety is being compromised because there are not enough resources in the courts to properly screen. People at high risk of committing violent offences again are being detained not long enough and those at low risk are being detained for far too long. Police officers and other emergency service workers are being put in the path of unnecessary risk.

We can't fix our crisis in the courts by tinkering only on the edges. Having faster judicial appointments and a better system for coordinating federal and provincial family law is laudable, but it doesn't come close to meeting the moment in this bill. Again, this bill is potentially passable without being praiseworthy.

I want to share a story from my riding of Toronto Centre about the crisis in the justice system. It is the crisis that this government is attempting to address without actually doing the real work to address it.

Toronto's very new, expensive downtown courthouse was sold to the public as a means to expedite trials and to

increase efficiency. Instead, due to this Conservative government's failure to adequately staff the courthouse, there have been over 300 courtroom closures over a six-month period this year alone, Speaker, including 18 courtroom closures on a single day.

What's more, workers have been injured at the downtown courthouse, including one who was seriously hurt when brand new shelves fell down and caused the worker to be hit on the head with metal and boxes. OPSEU, the union that represents court workers, wrote to the Premier and this Attorney General in 2021 to warn them of the health and safety risks associated with the new courthouse.

Speaker, anyone who can read this bill can see for themselves that the government has put absolutely nothing in Bill 157, not a single word, to address the staffing crisis in the courts. There's nothing about clearing the backlogs, hiring or retaining the court staff required to keep those courtrooms open and processing trials quickly.

I'd like to give the government the benefit of the doubt and recognize that schedules 6 to 9 aspire to improve various court functions more smoothly and efficiently, but setting aside the issues contained in those schedules, these schedules unfortunately don't go far enough, and they won't actually help Ontarians waiting in line for justice. It will not get to see that their court hearings will become scheduled faster.

We have been talking about access to justice and the failures of the government as of late. We are definitely in a crisis. I think about this crisis often, and I keep coming back to a story that haunts me.

Emily, a young woman who was sexually assaulted in her home, bravely took her rapist to court, despite how difficult it was, only to have her court case delayed again and again because of closed courtrooms, until it was finally thrown out because it passed the 18-month timeline. She bravely spoke to Abby O'Brien of CTV News, and I want to directly now quote from this article:

"On Nov. 7, a sexual assault charge laid by Toronto police against the man Emily reported raped her in January 2022 was stayed and the case" has now been thrown out, the court documents show.

#### 0910

In her words, Emily said, "I crumbled ... It took so much even to do that first step of giving my statement to the police and going to the hospital. Then, a year and half later, I decided to go back to Toronto to do this trial, face this man, and tell my story. Now, it's ... over."

Emily's experience is no anomaly. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, anyone charged with an offence has the right to a trial within a reasonable time frame. Barring exceptional circumstances, that time frame is 18 months in the provincial courts of Ontario.

Staffing issues at Toronto's newest Ontario Court of Justice ... however, have caused delays and courtroom closures that, in some instances—where cases are being thrown out. The courthouse located at 10 Armory Street—not too far from here, Speaker—opened in February, taking over proceedings from six Ontario Court of Justice facilities in Toronto, a move that the union that represents

many of those courthouse workers warned would cause hardships for both staff and those who are in the system.

In his decision, released on November 7, Judge Brock Jones said, "This case should serve as a chilling reminder that this inexcusable state of affairs must never be allowed to happen again...."

"The emotional trauma associated with never knowing the outcome of a case on the merits will often be long-lasting and severe for both victims and accused persons."

The judge identified the staffing shortage as the reason for the delays in the trial. "There is no reason this case could not have been completed ... had the courts been properly staffed," Judge Jones wrote. "Instead, two full days of court time were lost and the case adjourned." It is deeply unacceptable that this happened. Emily and the judge have said it all.

But this is far from the only time a very serious criminal case was thrown out in the courts due to delays. I am now going to share another article from CTV. This article involves a second criminal case—sexual assault of a minor. It's one of the latest cases to be thrown out at Toronto's newest courthouse due to the "staggering" number of courtroom closures fuelled by staffing shortages at the facility.

In September 2023, charges were stayed against a young person, identified only as C.L., accused of the sexual assault of another young person. The charges were stayed due to the closures of the courtroom.

C.L.'s trial was scheduled for March 23, the decision said, but four of the 12 courtrooms were closed that day and only 15 minutes of court time could be allocated to the matter. The next day, on March 24, five of the courtrooms in the building were closed, and the matter could only be addressed for one hour. The trial could not be completed in the given time and was adjourned until July.

At that point, it had now been over two years since the charges had been first placed on C.L. Citing his charter right to a trial within reasonable time and recognizing it had been breached, the youth applied to have the charges stayed—an application granted by the court in June.

Can you imagine, Speaker, experiencing a sexual assault as a minor, going through the legal proceedings that took two years and then having the whole thing thrown out because of delays—that this government could not have been doing enough to prevent? This is the stuff of nightmares, and this is why I am staying up too late. I recognize this probably keeps a lot of people up in Ontario.

Speaker, another criminal case thrown out in September, this time a charge involving impaired driving. The case was called "the tip of the iceberg" by a justice advocate who spoke about it. Schedules 6 to 9 are inadequate to address the iceberg of backlogged cases. Thanks to the excellent reporting from the Toronto Star and, in particular, Jacques Gallant, we have the excruciating details of how this impaired driving case was thrown out.

Ontario Court Justice David Porter, who stayed the impaired driving charges, said, "Staff shortages have continued on a daily basis, resulting in courts being closed almost daily, thus preventing cases scheduled to be tried

from proceeding. The crown provided no evidence of what, if any, extraordinary measures have been taken to address this urgent” issue.

During the week of September 4, 14 courtrooms were closed on Thursday; 15 on Wednesday; six on Tuesday, the Ontario Court of Justice told the Star. “Due to the staffing shortages, about 1.5 hours of court time could be used for the first day of the two-day impaired driving trial this past June,” Judge Porter wrote. The trial was supposed to continue the following day but had to be adjourned until October because of the lack of staff, and the assigned courtroom was closed once again.

Justice Porter noted that the delay between the original trial date and the new dates “is solely attributable to the actions of those responsible for the administration of the courts.”

Alarm bells have been ringing since the new building started hearing cases. Before delivering a judgment in April, Justice Brock Jones said in court that “the burden on the staff is the greatest it has ever been,” and they are often expected to work well past regular court hours. “They need and deserve the level of resources and support required for them to do their job properly, and to reflect on their professionalism and dedication to the administration of justice,” the justice said. “They are the backbone of this courthouse. We cannot function without them.”

The only way that we can begin to make things right for Emily, C.L. and all the other survivors and victims of crime who have been denied their day in court, Speaker, is to make sure that no other survivor or victim experiences the indignity of having their case thrown out due to avoidable staff delays.

So what solutions will help Ontarians schedule their court hearings faster to avoid these tragedies; solutions that should be in a bill titled the Enhancing Access to Justice Act, but unfortunately are not; solutions that should include the hiring of enough support staff—clerks, court reporters, trial coordinators, judicial assistants etc. We need to bring all of those levels up. We need to reduce the strain on staff and keep all and every available courtroom open. Solutions that increase pay to incentivize the court staff to stay—because recruitment is not enough, Speaker, if we don’t retain them.

This government has failed to adequately staff Ontario courts, leading to the dismissal of serious criminal cases, including allegations of sexual assault. The Attorney General claims that the ministry continues to recruit and onboard staff. Still, the union that actually represents those court workers, OPSEU, has countered by saying, “Any new positions that have been created barely scratch the surface of the staffing needs, as many experienced court staff were lost during the amalgamation” of those courts.

Why is there nothing in the 19 schedules, Speaker, in Bill 157 to address the hiring and the retention of court staff to prevent further court delays?

This government could fund and commit to funding existing renovations in the courthouses or to build new courthouses in regions where there is not enough infrastructure, but they’ve chosen not to.

Speaker, you will recall that, in 2020, this government cancelled plans to build a new courthouse in Halton county one month before construction was due to start. After that project was cancelled, the Halton County Law Association wrote to the Premier and the Attorney General, highlighting the myriad inadequacies and the chronic dysfunction in the existing Halton courthouses. I heard concerns from lawyers and court workers when the federation of Ontario law societies visited us here. Since the project was cancelled, courtrooms in the existing Halton courthouses have been closed for technology failures, broken a/c units, mould, asbestos and gas leaks. One trial, which should have taken one day, was delayed for over one year due to issues with the Burlington courthouse. The judge in that case called it an “embarrassment for the people of Halton.”

#### 0920

When this bill goes to committee for public input, and where amendments will be tabled to strengthen and improve the bill, it would be wise for the government to consider amending Bill 157 to reverse its decision not to build a new, consolidated Halton courthouse.

The court system can be modernized with additional amendments at committee that could implement a province-wide standardized technology platform for scheduling, filing documents. The government could increase training for judges, justices of the peace and support staff in conjunction with standardizing this technology use.

But I would be remiss to not touch on the most important action this government could take to table a bill that lives up to its name of enhancing access to justice, and that is increasing funding to legal aid. Bill 157 makes changes the government hopes will help clear some court capacity. But if you want to free up court resources, you need to reverse the cuts to legal aid funding. The government cut legal aid funding to Legal Aid Ontario by \$133 million in 2019. And this year, they’re underspending this funding to Legal Aid Ontario by \$103 million. It is well known that self- and under-represented litigants lead to extra court time and cause delays. All of the delays I have mentioned have been exacerbated directly or indirectly by a lack of legal aid funding. So I wonder whether or not the government will consider amending Bill 157 to reverse its devastating cuts to legal aid. It is well known that self- and under-represented litigants lead to extra court time. So what’s the solution? It’s simple: funding legal aid. Legal aid pays for itself in shortened court time, smoother processes, and the unquantifiable quality-of-life gains for Ontarians who need legal representation but cannot afford it. These cuts are not money-saving, they just push the costs down the line, creating massive inefficiencies. Bill 157 is not living up to its aspirational title.

Currently, a single person without dependents has to earn less than \$18,795 a year in gross income to qualify for legal aid. Anybody earning over \$18,795 is out of luck. Let’s juxtapose that with what a CERB recipient would earn in a single year, which was deemed a living wage—without having to pay for court costs—and you’ll recognize that that amount, \$18,795, is significantly too low.

Speaker, a member of the Federation of Ontario Law Associations was sharing their thoughts with me on how to modernize access to justice in Ontario:

“We’re concerned about the financial cut-offs in terms of whether people are eligible because there’s such a gap between the top limit of eligibility for legal aid and people who are unable to afford a lawyer. We have major areas within the province where no one is able to access their legal aid certificate. And that’s a huge problem for us within the clinic system. We also in the clinic system have funding issues because of inadequate compensation. We’re having a great deal of difficulty maintaining staff. So without continued adequate funding going into that system, we’re really undermining the administration of justice—particularly for our low-income residents.”

Another lawyer told me, “One of the things that I’m hearing a lot from members is that a great deal of the backlog and wasted judicial resources in the system comes from the high turnover rate that we are seeing. It’s difficult to maintain staff who have experience and who are more efficient in particular areas. So I encourage you in your efforts to look into that. Because I know that it has been impacting my practice,” said the lawyer, “and the practice of others I represent.”

Lawyers, from all over Ontario, are in agreement: Our legal institutions need better resourcing and funding to retain highly qualified and experienced staff to deliver the quality of service that Ontarians expect and deserve.

Like me, you may be wondering if this government will consider amending Bill 157 to change the threshold to access and increase legal aid funding. In fact, in the minister’s remarks, yesterday in his one-hour lead, he spoke about how this bill plans to advance the government’s so-called digital-first approach to the courts. Let me be clear, we need to bring our courts into the modern age—I’m a huge advocate of doing that—but a digital-first approach to justice should not mean a digital-only approach to justice.

The rapid shift to digital hearings has meant many vulnerable people across Ontario are not being able to access justice. This government knows it to be true. The Ombudsman of Ontario’s report, earlier this year, was absolutely scathing on this point. It found that a digital-only approach presented and created “insurmountable challenges” to Ontarians struggling to access justice. There is a deeper warning in this example, because the Landlord and Tenant Board’s digital-only approach has made the backlog worse—all-time historic high.

Tribunals Ontario published their annual report, at the end of June this year, and showed an increase in case backlog from 34,731 cases in March 31, 2021, to 53,057 cases in March 31, 2023. The backlog got bigger. Digital-first is a great sound bite, but a useless talking point when Ontarians have to wait longer than ever to access justice.

Speaker, we have to keep going, because this bill is enormous. So what else does it do? It amends rules governing the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee to remove the requirement for the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee to consider cultural identity as

a statistic for judicial candidates in their annual report. This committee considers, interviews and recommends judicial candidates to the Attorney General. They are meant to be independent, arm’s-length, as a committee. Their role is under strain.

The committee’s experience benefits all Ontarians. It helps to ensure that we hire the very best judges. This committee is required to produce an annual report on judicial candidates and to include statistics on: sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, cultural identity—as we know is being struck out—disability status and ability to speak French of candidates who volunteer that information, including whether the candidates identify as an Indigenous or, as a member of the francophone community, at each stage of the process. This change builds on the government Bill 256 tabled in 2021 where it increases cabinet’s influence over the committee, by increasing the number of committee members appointed by the Attorney General.

Interestingly, the committee is required by law to produce an annual report. It has not produced an annual report—not in 2019, no report in 2020, no report in 2021 and no report in 2022. When reporters FOIed the reports, the request was denied with an explanation, “a search was conducted, and no responsive records were located.”

So how does this help, Speaker? When the Attorney General is failing to even produce this report, how does that ensure that the government is meeting its own standards so that the government can effectively find, hire and train new judges? I’m very deeply invested in the success of the judicial system. It makes our democracy work. But it’s also deeply concerning, Speaker, when the government doesn’t want the public to know basic statistics that they are supposed to report on and that reporters can’t gain access to so that they can do their job. It makes me wonder why the government is doing this, and I simply don’t know. What I do know, Speaker—and I think we all do, because we’ve heard it in an interview on TVO—is that the Attorney General wants to see more judges who share his values. Is that the aim of this? Is it possible the government fears a report showing that the recommendation list is becoming more male, more pale, more stale, and it might be embarrassing for them? I don’t know, Speaker, because we don’t have the report to show us otherwise.

**0930**

This government has politicized Ontario’s judiciary by increasing the Attorney General’s influence on the judicial appointments advisory committee and on the filling of judicial vacancies. Judicial independence is a core value of the justice system, and I think that this government would be wise to consider amending Bill 157 to remove the Attorney General’s influence over the judiciary.

This government has given itself more influence over filling judicial vacancies ostensibly to make the process move more quickly. However, the city of Cornwall has had a criminal judge vacancy for close to two years, and thanks to the Attorney General rejecting all of the recommended candidates, they still sit without that justice. Maybe it’s changed; I’m not sure. Will the government consider amending Bill 157 to create a statutory timeline



to make sure that no other community goes without a judge for such a long period of time?

Additionally, Bill 157 amends Ontario laws to remove the Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Justice from the Civil Rules Committee and to allow the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice to appoint an associate judge to the committee.

Additional amendments to this bill would require that all records and other information collected, prepared, maintained or used by the ministry in relationship to the business of the Civil Rules Committee and the Family Rules Committee is not to be disclosed publicly unless authorized by the Attorney General and excluded from the application of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

What does that mean? Well, the Civil Rules Committee and Family Rules Committee have broad powers to change the rules of practice and procedure for those courts and all civil proceedings and family law proceedings. The rules can have a huge impact on legal proceedings. If you miss a deadline, if you file something not in accordance to the rules, it means that you are barred from legal remedies.

My office recently worked with a constituent—and they're still working with the constituent; my staff are still working with this constituent—who missed an arbitrary deadline in a hearing when they had to file something in order for them to get their appeal. It was devastatingly time-consuming for this low-income, racialized individual living in social housing to navigate this process on their own. I won't use her name, Speaker, but this is the kind of court error that made work for my office as we tried to help a vulnerable person navigate the system.

Without knowing more about why this is happening, it's concerning that the government is suddenly trying to make documents and information about changes to the civil rules and family law rules secret. It only reinforces the question: Why? Why can't the public know about information and documents that are being considered? Who is sending the information the government doesn't want us to know about? What is the advantage of keeping our justice system's rules secret, and how does this lead to fairer, better and faster trials? I'm not seeing the path, Speaker.

Further amendments to schedule 6 would allow that when a judge presiding over the final order in child protection and extraordinary measures are involved—which, as we all know, can mean mental health treatment, including admission to a secure facility—an adoption and adoption licensing hearing is appointed to another court, that judge continues to have jurisdiction to complete the hearing and provide a decision.

Now, Speaker, this sounds like a great idea. Bringing in a new judge at the final order stage of a proceeding would almost certainly add more time and expense to the proceeding to allow the new judge to learn the file. I applaud the government for finding this minor efficiency and taking this step, but what I don't see is why only allowing this during the final order stage of a proceeding. Why not say “in all stages except the preliminary,” or something to that effect?

It would seem better for the same judge to preside over the majority, if not all of the proceeding, to reduce court time and expense. In all of our constituency offices, we assign workers to each constituent as much as possible so that constituent can have a seamless experience when receiving service through our office. They don't have to re-explain their situation an undue number of times. It is common sense, Speaker. Why don't we extend that same common sense and reasoning to the court systems in a way that allows us to go deeper and faster to ensure that Ontarians have access to justice.

Since I'm talking about efficiencies, why not centralize a single case's court proceedings to one judge as much as possible?

I have another recommendation, Speaker. I've heard from many, many stakeholders that are having difficulty through Family Courts in Ontario. There are significant inefficiencies, and there is a way to make it all much smoother and less stressful for families.

Family law matters experience judicial overlap between the federal and provincial courts, forcing families to move between two systems. They have to interact with two different court systems. I think we can imagine that it is inefficient and it's certainly been confirmed by many who work in the system. It is emotionally and financially draining. It is a process fraught with difficulty.

There are 25 court locations in Ontario with unified Family Courts, but there are many more locations without it. Why don't we unify all of them, especially since the federal government has provided funds to expand the unification of Family Courts and the funding has been available since 2018? We have no reason not to do it. This is the kind of substantive change that I would have liked to see in this bill.

Speaker, I strongly believe that this government could have gone even further in reforming family law to make it work for Ontarians. We can review and appropriately expand the number of dispute resolution offices so that fewer matters go to court in the first place. This would save taxpayers money and Ontario families the expense and grief of unnecessary court proceedings.

Speaker, I'm going to move to schedule 18. This schedule is supportable, but, following the theme of my remarks today, not praiseworthy. It's a small change that means victims of certain prescribed crimes, and they are sexual crimes against minors or those with a disability when the crime took place; human trafficking-related crimes; and crimes that would have colloquially been described as “revenge porn” crimes, will have one less section to fill out in their affidavit or filings in civil court because the emotional distress is now presumed to have occurred for those crimes. It's a simple change, a good change. The process should be straightforward so that survivors don't have to relive their trauma again and again and again.

**0940**

I heard from a lawyer in the sector who said, “I do think it is a good idea generally to broaden the ability of survivors to sue for the harm that has been done to them.”

But, again, the bill could go further. It's not a big win. It's a small procedural change that will benefit a very small number of victims. Victims who are minors, those with disabilities and those who have been trafficked are less likely to have the time, resources and money to go through civil court. So how many people will this substantially help? This is another case of the government taking a tiny step, making a tiny change, and calling it a big win for survivors.

Still, at the same time, they are slashing legal aid budgets. Let's remember that in 2019, this government ended the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and replaced it with the Victim Quick Response Program+. The Victim Quick Response Program+ isn't available to victims when they can access public programs, even if those programs have months-long wait-lists.

I heard from a constituent of mine who is a lawyer, who said, "It is deeply hypocritical of this government to dismantle the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board but continue to do things that allow them to make announcements that make it appear that they support survivors as a core value. There are actual, substantive changes that they could enact to better the lives of survivors of violence, but they won't touch those."

Will the government consider making amendments to Bill 157 to increase access to the Victim Quick Response Program+? That would be supportable because that would mean that the government is doing much more.

They could also properly fund the Ontario courts—coming back to my main point—so that sexual assault cases aren't dismissed for delays over and over again.

This government could also fund sexual assault support and rape crisis centres. In 2020, this government decided to stop renewing its annual \$1-million funding boost to rape crisis and sexual assault support centres. Some of those centres are now seeing the longest wait-lists they have ever experienced. Those sexual assault centres, rape crisis centres—those workers have warned that wait times act as a deterrent for victims, because victims will stop trying to access services because they've been told to wait.

In Bill 157, the government can actually increase funding to rape crisis centres and sexual assault centres to truly support survivors.

It is well studied that impoverished and low-income people are over-represented in the criminal justice system. This government is sitting on billions of dollars in a contingency fund. Why not use some of that money to support survivors and victims, instead of punting and punishing those disproportionately impacted impoverished people?

Another consideration is, to what extent are victims retraumatized when they have to go to court—which is very expensive to access and very timely to access—to go tell their story again in a civil trial? And how is there any guarantee that that case is also not going to be tossed out because of the extraordinary delay in the courts?

More so than the small change that schedule 18 makes, this bill could also go further to support survivors by

incorporating my private member's bill Stopping the Misuse of Non-Disclosure Agreements Act.

We've heard stories in the media about the perpetrators of violence and abuse, those who are powerful and wealthy—individuals and institutions and corporations who have used non-disclosure agreements to silence survivors of sexual violence, bullying and intimidation. The latest slate of criticism comes out of the #MeToo movement. Details of alleged and proven abuse, and then, later, legal action surrounding Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, Olympic coach Larry Nassar have highlighted the role that these clauses within the NDAs play in silencing survivors. Closer to home, we had NDAs used here in Canada, in the Albert Schultz case, to silence survivors. It was revealed that Hockey Canada paid out \$7.6 million in 1989 in several sexual assault-related settlements, and non-disclosure agreements bound some of those claimants involved in the settlements. There are growing calls to outlaw non-disclosure agreements across the country, as Hockey Canada and other sports organizations reel from sexual assault scandals, including some that have led to multi-million dollar payouts to keep details about those incidents secret.

If the government had incorporated—feel free to lift it right from the bill—the aspect of that bill to stop the misuse of NDAs, they would prohibit people in positions of power with money for privilege and access to stop abusing survivors. Survivors could request other types of agreements, such as a one-sided confidentiality agreement to protect their own privacy, should they so choose.

NDAs are used by perpetrators to cover up sexual and physical violence, workplace harassment, wrongful dismissal and many other situations of discrimination that individuals, workplaces and other groups would rather not deal with. The misuse of NDAs also perpetuates patterns of harm and abuse. When survivors can't speak out in warning or to affirm to others that they aren't alone, harm continues. Influential people use power while those who have so much to lose will lose.

There is a website entitled Can't Buy My Silence. It contains heartbreaking stories of people who have suffered greatly before and after being presented with an NDA. They also include people who have chosen not to sign, and they were denied the financial compensation they deserved for their suffering. No one should have to decide between the two: taking away their voice or taking away their compensation.

That, Speaker, would help survivors. That, Speaker, could easily be put in Bill 157.

I want to share another relevant story. In early November, I attended a panel by the Criminal Justice Association of Ontario. They brought together stakeholders in criminal and youth justice to discuss what changes front-line workers needed. I was particularly struck by stories from youth justice centres. Those centres work with youth and provide them and their immediate families counselling and support. Recognizing that perpetrators of violent crimes are oftentimes repeating cycles of violence, they continue to provide counselling and support to violent offenders to

rehabilitate everyone in their community and, then, to invest in preventing violence at all costs. That was good work. It began under the previous government. I was a sitting councillor at that time when the ministry came to me to provide a briefing of what this facility would do and how it would impact and support my local community. I was supportive then, as a local city councillor; I remain supportive now. This is the kind of creative, innovative approach that we need to see more of. That is good work, and it has been carried forward by this government. It should be expanded as quickly as possible so it can be accessed across Ontario.

People who commit violent crimes and sexual violence will still need to live in our communities whether any of us like it or not. That's just the reality. People are not disposable. We need to ensure that they have real pathways to rehabilitating the whole person so that they can come back into the community and be fully integrated, and where the community and that person who committed harm can be safe. This government loves to take away the whole pie, and then throw back a few crumbs.

Now I'm going to move on to a few other schedules, because I do need to provide comment on them. Some of them are straightforward housekeeping schedules, and I won't speak too much about those. But I will speak about schedule 1, the Architects Act. This schedule has been quite controversial, Speaker, as you know, and I hope that at committee we can gain a much better understanding about schedule 1 and the decision that was made leading us to schedule 1.

#### 0950

I've heard arguments from the Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario, the AATO, and the Ontario Association of Architects, the OAA, on this licensing. They are not in agreement. One is much bigger, with more members, more money; one is smaller. The government has chosen, through this schedule, to side with the OAA. I would like to know more about how this government came to this decision, what conversations were had, who said what to whom and the rationale that was used to arrive at the decision.

I would encourage the minister to meet with the Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario, and to meet again if they already have. I've met with them. I've heard their following concerns: The OAA made an error when they went ahead and created their own class of architectural technologists by way of a policy, even though the Architects Act requires you to do this through regulation. AATO took OAA to court, and it ruled that the certificates that the OAA issued were void because they were formed under a policy and this was made under a consent order.

AATO met with the Ministry of the Attorney General and asked them not to make the very changes that they are now making in schedule 1, which they see as now rewarding bad behaviour because even the court ruled in their favour. It's really unclear to me, by reading schedule 1, whether or not this change is retroactive. We need to know that, as it will have significant implications in the bill.

Speaker, I'm concerned about the implications of setting the wrong precedent on the matter. Regulatory bodies are entrusted with incredible trust and powers of self-governance. We have many of them in Ontario. Every single member of this House knows that self-governance is supposed to impose higher standards, not lower standards. Every self-regulating profession has to prove to Ontarians every year that they deserve the trust legislatively invested in themselves. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice found that the self-regulating profession did not live up to its own standards. The consent order made clear that a regulatory body issued licences that were clearly outside of their scope.

Giving a professional body that broke trust everything that it wants is setting a dangerous precedent. We want Ontario's regulatory bodies to respect their boundaries. We want and embrace that professions will change and that professions need to be modernized, and absolutely, they should. But when a profession puts the cart before the horse or, in this case, accepts licensing fees for something they are not legally entitled to license, why are we rewarding them when the power that they have broke the trust that they were given? I need to stress that people paying licensing fees went through training, but their trust was betrayed.

Speaker, I am initially concerned and eager to learn about how we can ensure that there are appropriate differences between architectural technologists and licensed technologists, because I'm not sure if I see the clear difference in this bill. And what I want to point out is that there are contradictory and overlapping regulations and red tape. I hope that this government isn't about to saddle Ontarians with needless confusion and additional red tape. I hope this government continues to consult with these stakeholders and considers their input when this bill gets to committee.

Schedules 2 and 3, the Cannabis Control Act and Cannabis Licence Act: Who is asking for these amendments? Because when the minister was asked by the press about the provision prohibiting the growing of cannabis in child care facilities, except for home child care facilities, and, specifically, are there instances of this happening, the minister was not able to provide any examples.

Speaker, the harm that comes from cannabis oftentimes happens when an underage person consumes an inadequately labelled product. The cannabis plant and its leaves do not have bioavailable THC. Cannabis buds need to be processed and cured before they have any psychoactive effects. Unprocessed cannabis plant leaves are not more harmful or psychoactive than any other random plant that could be found around the house or in a daycare setting. None of this is to say that this is necessarily a bad regulation, it's just the concern of, how did we get here?

Cannabis plants have intense light requirements indoors that can be potentially harmful for developing eyes. Moreover, the lamps cannabis plants need can get hot, and for the reason that we want to protect children's hands from open stoves, we want to limit opportunities for children to burn their hands on these bright lamps. But

when listening yesterday, I didn't get the sense that the government knew this. Is the schedule here before us because children have been munching on plant leaves and they've gotten high? I don't know, Speaker, because the minister couldn't give us any examples.

The government can do much more to keep children in child care safe by providing more funding for more inspections. This government could ensure that child care providers earn a decent wage—while experienced providers in the profession, in the long term, develop deepening quality of care for our children—to provide workers with stable careers so that they can stay where they want to stay.

I do, however, want to comment on the kinds of reforms for enhanced community safety that can be accomplished through cannabis regulation.

First, let me be clear: When cannabis harms do come about, they are oftentimes from the illegal markets, and the regulations surrounding cannabis are making it impossible for legal cannabis to compete. Legal cannabis companies have to pay taxes through production and the sales process. Like any other industry, we understand this need, and this unique sin tax imposed on the cannabis industry means that we're not going to create a level playing field against the illegal cannabis market.

Speaking about a level playing field, the regulatory changes proposed in the background to this bill are even more controversial. I honestly thought the Premier would appreciate that a diverse and competitive market of many small businesses and cannabis suppliers would deliver the most affordable cost and choice to consumers. This change would promote centralization in an industry that is already experiencing enormous consolidation. Allowing retailers to own up to 150 stores from the existing 75 stores during a period of industry centralization will allow businesses to take a Starbucks approach and weed out their competition, which could be bad.

But here is the rub, Speaker, when I wonder why the government would make such a hoopla about a non-issue like cannabis in child care facilities and then move to quietly advance the centralization and the consolidation of big cannabis corporations by giving them much more expansion power.

A cannabis market that looks like a grocery market—a market that should be competitive but is not, should be innovative but is not and should be affordable but is not. It's not a market where we compete with illegal suppliers. It is a cannabis industry that stems from the flow of money into gangs, human trafficking, money laundering. It will not make the cannabis industry safer for Ontarians.

I'm eager to learn in committee about what kinds of regulations this government and the Indigenous community want to see in the regulation of cannabis on-reserve. I would be remiss, Speaker, if I didn't mention that First Nations are a significant stakeholder who live in a geographic area, and they are in the best place, in the best position, to understand what their communities need.

This government might remember the private member's bill entitled cannabis retail amendment act, put

forward in 2020 by the member of Davenport and now Leader of the Opposition. I certainly do, because I supported her bill, as a city councillor, because her bill proposed giving cities a say in the location and distribution of private cannabis locations within their communities.

**1000**

Speaker, it was before my time at Queen's Park, but I can tell you that the New Democrats pushed for responsible legalization, and continue to do so—for the legal, regulated retail cannabis industry.

This party advocated for strengthening the municipalities' role in distributing pot shop licences to avoid a situation where some neighbourhoods had too many while others had none.

The previous Liberal government put some restrictions on the cannabis retailing framework after hearing back from children and health experts and municipalities, like Toronto, on how we wanted that program to be rolled out. I very clearly remember the debate at city council when we voted to opt into the new cannabis retail framework. Shortly after, the Conservative government got elected in 2018, and all that careful research, consultation and planning was tossed out without further notice. Toronto had already opted in under a different plan, but they were getting a new one in the rollout. The new plan was blunt and without the urban planning refinements and considerations of the previous plan.

Under the Conservative government, cities can still either reject cannabis stores entirely or opt into a provincial framework where they have no say, absolutely zero input, in where cannabis shops go.

Speaker, in this bill, when it comes to further expanding retail cannabis, especially since it's happening without any consultation or notice with cities, I strongly encourage this government to look at the past Ontario NDP bill that will work with cities and empower their business districts which are still continuing to recover from COVID-19.

As I mentioned, there are 19 schedules to this bill, and this bill is broad, substantial and far-reaching. It touches the Coroners Act. It touches the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. It creates a condition where we want to see more being done to ensure that community members are protected, public safety is enhanced and access to the courts thoroughly delivered. It touches the Juries Act, the Justices of the Peace Act, the Land Titles Act, the Law Society Act, the Legislation Act, the Provincial Offences Act, the Public Officers Act and, finally, references to the crown.

We need to see the court system corrected and fixed. This crisis in access to justice must be addressed, but there's not enough in this bill to do that, and I'm hoping that we can see more positive changes at committee.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to questions.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Thank you to my colleague from Toronto Centre for the comments. I listened intently.

This is a very good bill that we're putting forward, in my view—the Enhancing Access to Justice Act. A few reasons why I intend to support it are because it's going to

be making it easier for victims of crime, such as victims of terrorism, vehicle theft, human trafficking-related crime and hate crime, to sue an offender for emotional distress and related bodily harm; it will protect children and youth by banning the growth of recreational cannabis in homes that offer child care services—there are a lot of other good things in the bill. I want to know whether the member across thought these were good ideas and worth supporting.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I don't believe that the member was listening as intently as he says, because I did highlight exactly what were the deficiencies in the bill and what I'd like to see improved. It tinkers around the edges, and it doesn't go far enough. It certainly doesn't address the challenges and the crisis we have in the court system.

As I've mentioned, the central theme of all my remarks today is that this bill is possibly passable but not praiseworthy, and I stand by that.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The next question?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member from Toronto Centre. You do an incredible job of representing your community, and you're doing a great job here of advocating for access to justice for the people of Ontario.

What you described at the beginning of your remarks was a court system that's in chaos, that's in absolute crisis in this province, with people being denied access to justice. A rape case of a woman, Emily, who had the courage to bring forward her case to the courts—having it thrown out because there weren't enough court staff to keep the courts open.

Can you describe with a little bit of detail, in the time that you have, some of the crisis that's happening and some of the impacts that that is creating for people in Ontario?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York for his important question. Obviously, we see the fact that criminal cases are being tossed out and charges are being stayed. That costs time and resources for the court system: the reporters, the lawyers on both sides, the crown and the trial lawyers involved.

What I cannot quantify is the emotional harm that it re-creates for those survivors and victims of crime, and that, to me, is a tragedy, because they never got their day in court. They never will get closure on what happened to them, a very traumatic incident. And not to mention, Speaker, the accused: The accused will have that charge and that report hanging over their head forever, also without their day in court.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here with you in the morning. Thank you to my colleague from Toronto Centre for that long talk; it's hard to do. We worked well together at city hall—we were seatmates for eight years—and I know how hard you work for your community and all of Ontario, so I appreciate that. Thank you.

Just with regard to this bill and your ideas for it, that it's not going far enough: Can you give us maybe your top two suggestions for improving this bill?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York. I also have some very fond memories of our time sitting together at city hall and working constructively and collaboratively on many issues.

The top two issues that I would like to see in this bill—and it's easy—are twofold: One is to adequately staff the courts, to do everything you can in all your powers to ensure that the minimum requirement of time constraints is met. The standard has got to be met. No more throwing out of criminal cases. That is one thing.

The second thing—I'll add a third if I have time—is to fund legal aid. You need to be able to do it. People are being impacted by not having access to the judicial system that they so rightly deserve.

The third is to fix the tribunals.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The next question?

**Hon. Doug Downey:** There's just so much to unpack there, but I want to start by thanking the member for filling an entire hour on a whole variety of topics. There are things that I heard that are encouraging to me. I heard you say that unified Family Court is something that you would like to see expanded; we're on record and the Auditor General has confirmed, even a couple of years ago—we're waiting on the federal government.

And so I would just ask for the member to confirm that they will stand with us in the request of the federal government to expand unified Family Court here in Ontario, and that is something perhaps we can advocate for together.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much to the Attorney General for his question. I didn't get a chance to congratulate you on your one-hour lead as of yesterday.

Absolutely, I will stand with the government and every party in this House as we advocate for the unification of Family Court. It is unduly unfair to families who are trying to access and navigate two systems. It's costly, it's time-consuming and, of course, the emotional duress—it just doesn't work. We have a proven record of it working when we unify, and that's where we should be moving to.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Toronto Centre on her very thoughtful comments on Bill 157. She talked about the changes to the coroner's inquest rules in schedule 5; she has advocated, as have I, for the government to implement the findings of the Renfrew county coroner's inquest on the murders of Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam and Anastasia Kuzyk several years ago.

So my question is, do the changes that are included in this bill require the government to implement any recommendations that may come out of a coroner's inquest? Because we have certainly seen the government refuse to implement the number one recommendation out of the

Renfrew inquest, which is to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic.

**1010**

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much to the member for that significant question. No, there is absolutely nothing in this bill that speaks to the recommendations that came from the Renfrew inquest. Not only is recommendation 1 from the inquest free of monetary obligations, declaring IPV an epidemic allows us to address it with the same type of urgency. But I would draw the government's attention to recommendation number 4 in the Renfrew inquest, which is to create an implementation framework to make sure that everything in that inquest report can be implemented as quickly as possible. That can go into Bill 157; it would strengthen the access to justice bill.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Good morning. I want to thank the member for her contributions this morning.

One of the things that I like to emphasize is positive moves within time, and this bill has made changes under the Victims' Bill of Rights, expanding the list of crimes where victims are presumed to have suffered emotional distress. Right now, under this section, that only includes assault by a spouse, sexual assault and attempted sexual assault. This is now proposed to be expanded to include human trafficking and certain sexual offences, including those committed against a minor.

My question to the member is, does the member oppose think that these modifications are a positive move?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you for your question, to the member.

I did say in my remarks that it is positive. There is some merit, but it doesn't address the core issues that we have that are failing the justice system. By ensuring that there is not a requirement to meet the emotional duress, including those three categories, what it doesn't do is actually remove the cost or additional charge in time that a victim of crime would have to go back to court for and have the resources to sue through another civil court system in order for them to access justice. That is why that section falls too short.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We don't have time for another round of questions and answers, so we're going to move to members' statements.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Colleagues, the traffic in Brampton is out of control. Our population has doubled in the last 20 years; our transit, road and highway infrastructure has not.

Highways are a provincial responsibility, and Brampton residents had to watch as the previous Liberal

government studied, delayed and ultimately cancelled Brampton's bypass highway, Highway 413. When our party made the 413 a key platform item in the 2022 election, Brampton responded in a huge way, sending me and my four PC Brampton colleagues to Queen's Park as part of the majority government. The message was clear: Build the highway; get it done.

Apparently, the federal Liberal environment minister wasn't listening, and his government wasn't listening, because they have stepped in and declared a federal impact assessment. This is massive government overreach, for one purpose: to kill the Highway 413. Colleagues, the federal impact assessment is the same study required for a nuclear power plant. The federal government has never declared one for a new provincial highway before the 413. That means highways like the 401, 412, 404 and 418 never had to undergo this impact assessment. And yet, when Brampton wants a new highway, we hear all the excuses come out.

Speaker, I am, and my residents are, so tired of excuses. I have one message to the federal Liberal environment minister: Get on board with Highway 413, or get out of our way.

### INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I am proud to rise today on international world volunteer day, a day to celebrate the important role that volunteers play in our communities across the globe.

According to Volunteer Canada, over 12 million Canadians generously contribute their efforts to numerous causes annually. Here in Ontario, their contributions have shaped our province through their compassion, community and spirit of giving back. Their impact is immeasurable.

My community is blessed with countless volunteers and community organizations who give so generously to improve the lives of others, and I thank them all.

Today I'm proud to be joined by two amazing community volunteers, Brigette Contento and Michael Verrelli, who lead the Humberlea Community Group and do so much to build a happier, healthier and safer community. They organize food drives and bring food to our most vulnerable. They've created an outdoor skating rink and set up an outdoor library in their park. They host year-round events for our children, like their annual Santa Claus parade, spooky Halloween get-togethers, Easter egg hunts and more. When they're not busy hosting their own events, they're attending and helping in others and are members of various committees like the 31 Division Community Police Liaison Committee.

Brigette and Mike, thank you so much for making our community better every day. We are all lucky to have you. And thank you to all volunteers everywhere.

### DRAGON BOAT TEAM CANADA

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Recently I proudly welcomed the remarkable Dragon Boat Team Canada to the House,

together with the Premier and my colleagues. This summer, the team won gold at the 16th annual World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Pattaya, Thailand. This victory serves as a source of pride for our country. It is also a testament to the resilience and talent embodied by the team. Meeting these gifted athletes was not only a privilege, it was also an opportunity to acknowledge their unwavering dedication and skill, and to recognize the honour that they have brought to Canada on the global stage.

Beyond individual achievements, the visit highlighted the collective spirit and unity that sportsmanship fosters, emphasizing the significance of athletics in building a sense of community and national identity. The team's triumph in Thailand exemplifies the pinnacle of their training and teamwork, reflecting the values of perseverance and excellence.

Speaker, it is crucial that we collectively recognize and emphasize the importance of supporting and celebrating achievements in the sporting arena. By doing so, we not only honour the athletes themselves but also inspire future generations to pursue excellence and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Ontario's sporting legacy.

#### VOLUNTEERS IN LONDON WEST

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Speaker, the holidays can be a difficult time, and this year more Londoners than ever are struggling. At the same time, more Londoners than ever are also showing up to help, and I want to recognize just a few.

First, the staff and volunteers at Northwest London Resource Centre who stepped up in a big way to meet the need, expanding food bank services in my riding from two days a week to six in partnership with the London Food Bank.

Next, Fran and Mary, residents of 30 Base Line Road in London West and organizers of their building's caring cupboard. When the cupboard was put out of commission by a fire last month, they collected grocery store gift cards for the seniors from their building who relied on emergency food supplies. Thankfully, their cupboard will reopen for food donations again this week.

Special appreciation to the hundreds of volunteers at churches around the city who cook and serve community meals for people and families who are struggling, often including musical entertainment, as at St. John the Divine Parish in London West.

Finally, much gratitude to the 700 local businesses and non-profits that are part of the annual Business Cares Food Drive and the many, many Londoners who contribute so generously in ways big and small.

Thank you to all. And to all residents in London West and to everyone in this chamber, I wish you a safe and happy holiday season, however you celebrate.

#### LOPLOPS GALLERY-LOUNGE

**Mr. Ross Romano:** Good morning, everyone. Today, I want to congratulate a local Sault Ste. Marie business on

their 20th anniversary. Loplops Gallery-Lounge is a fixture of downtown Sault Ste. Marie and our local music scene.

Owners Stephen Alexander and Jennifer Bellerose have seen ups and downs during the last several years with our economy, especially the last few years when COVID was happening. Over the last 20 years they've really been able to see a bit of it all, but they've remained strong through adapting their business model with the changing of the times.

It is great to see the fun holiday-themed event, the 12 Musicians of Christmas, is back after a five-year hiatus, and I just want to offer my congratulations to both Steve and Jenn on the very many great memories that we've had at Loplops over the years. I'm looking forward to another 20 years ahead.

1020

#### FOOD BANKS

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Unfortunately, Speaker, more Ontarians than ever before are turning to hunger relief organizes because they can no longer afford basic necessities like food and shelter. Hunger in Hamilton is reaching record levels, with the number of people turning to food banks nearly doubling since last year. Almost 50% of households say they would become homeless without food banks.

People, including families with young children and seniors, cannot keep up with soaring food prices, unaffordable costs. It's heartbreaking that in our communities, hungry seniors are seeking help to find meal programs because they can no longer afford to feed themselves.

This last weekend, I participated in the Salvation Army kettle bell drive, and I was moved by the generosity and compassion of Hamiltonians. There are also many ways you, too, can give back this holiday season:

—the Ancaster Community Services Holiday Assistance Program will provide over 150 holiday hampers and gifts to income-challenged families and seniors in the community;

—Good Shepherd Christmas Wonderland is bringing people together to share a festive meal;

—Neighbour to Neighbour, who have been serving our communities for 35 years through their community food centre, will be providing a free Christmas meal that is open to all; and

—we could consider donating to support free and low-cost programs for vulnerable seniors through Dundas Community Services.

I want to send out my thanks to all of these organizations and volunteers who are bringing joy to people in our communities who are hungry and alone. This holiday season, I want to express my warmest wishes to you and your family for a joyous and healthy holiday season.

#### EVENTS IN HALIBURTON-KAWARTHA LAKES-BROCK

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** As Christmas approaches, bringing snow and good tidings,

I'll share with you news about fun in my riding.

From Sunderland to Haliburton and all places between,  
There's good times to be had and good friends to be seen!

People lining the streets to spread Christmas cheer,  
Hearing carols and laughter when Santa gets near!

There's good food and good drinks, and of course the reindeer!

None of this would happen without volunteers.

Kids waiting for Santa, along the parade route they stood

Smiling and laughing and telling him they've been good

All the local craft shows bring the people flocking,  
With goodies aplenty, you'll sure fill your stocking!

As we continue to celebrate this holiday season,  
Let us always remember that Christ is the reason.

Through the cold winter nights, let compassion exceed,  
Say hello to a stranger and help those in need.

With my speech almost over and my time almost out,  
Come to HKLB and see what it's all about.

Merry Christmas and happy new year.

#### MODEL PARLIAMENT

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** From the 2015 National Youth Survey, the agency found that Canadian youth are less interested in politics and they feel less strongly that voting will make a difference. The voter turnout among youth in 2011 was over 35% lower than that of individuals aged 54 to 74, while research shows that political participation affects youth development.

The High School Model Parliament program presents an ideal opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience as MPPs, fostering an understanding of parliamentary processes and the significance of the democratic system. Several students attending debate classes in my riding of Don Valley North have applied and been chosen to take part in this fantastic program. I look forward with anticipation to seeing them in the chamber, engaging in meaningful discussions on various issues.

This initiative serves as great means to engage and involve the youth. Today, they take every opportunity to learn and experience, and tomorrow, they will emerge as leaders.

Congratulations to all selected participants. We eagerly anticipate hearing the perspectives of our youth.

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm rising to highlight a recent investment that our government has made to combat auto theft in Ontario, and specifically in my region of Hamilton.

Mr. Speaker, every 14 minutes a vehicle is stolen in Ontario. In the last year alone there was a 14% increase in auto thefts right across Ontario. This investment of over \$895,000 over three years will ensure that our Hamilton Police Service has the tools and the resources that they need to fight car theft and to keep our communities safe.

When the investment was shared, Hamilton police chief Frank Bergen said, "We thank the provincial government for funds received from this grant, which will be used to combat auto theft through increased staffing: two new investigators and an analyst. We will also be working closely with our policing partners to share strategic intelligence" involving "organized crime groups that impact our city."

This funding to the Hamilton Police Service is part of the government's new Preventing Auto Thefts Grant Program designed to support new and enhanced crime-fighting measures that focus on prevention, detection, analysis and enforcement. This Preventing Auto Thefts Grant is just one of several measures enacted by our government to fight auto theft. Earlier this year, Ontario also announced the organized crime towing and auto theft team to help police services identify, disrupt and dismantle organized crime networks.

Mr. Speaker, with the crime of auto theft growing across Ontario, I am proud that our government is tackling the issue head-on.

#### PAM DICKEY

**Mr. Dave Smith:** As we approach Christmas, I think back to all of the people that I know who try to make life better in some way for others. There's a truly kind-hearted lady in my riding who freely gives her time to make a positive difference for so many. I'm talking about Pam Dickey from Trent Lakes. She lives just outside of Buckhorn and has been volunteering for community care for a number of years.

During the pandemic, not only did she help out by delivering groceries to some vulnerable seniors but she also took to the phones to do wellness checks just to make sure people who couldn't get out still had a friendly voice to talk to on a regular basis. For the last year or so she has also been volunteering with Community Care Meals on Wheels.

Speaker, this Christmas, Pam has taken it upon herself to make sure that 20 seniors who have lost their spouses will still have a homemade Christmas dinner. In her very own kitchen, she's cooking enough turkey, mashed potatoes, vegetables, cranberries, gravy and all of the other fixings to make a traditional Christmas dinner, and then she'll personally deliver all of those dinners to 20 very lucky single seniors.



Pam, thank you for what you do. You exemplify the true meaning of what Christmas is.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Good morning. I want to welcome to the House today Bill Gleed and his son Derrick Gleed. Derrick is a former regional councillor from Durham. Bill Gleed is an insurance professional, for decades beloved by thousands of clients and beloved by the McCarthy family. Welcome to the House, gentlemen.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** It is my very great honour to welcome Thornhill resident and student Ella Rosen in the gallery.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I wanted to introduce my new legislative assistant Susan Sharma. She's doing fantastic work in my office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1030

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I'd like to welcome to the House a guy who has been putting up with me since I was born and who has supported me every step of the way: my dad, Jim. Welcome to the House.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I have a few to introduce today. I'd like to begin by introducing and welcoming:

Brigette Contento and Michael Verrelli of the Humberlea Community Group, as well as Alonzo Jones, CEO of the Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario, which, since 1969, has been the statutory regulator and governing body for architectural technologists, architectural technicians, registered building technicians and registered building technologists;

Also, other members of the Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario, including Cindy McPhee, who is a principal designer with First Step Design Ltd.; Frank Balenzano, who is a plans examiner and building inspector for the city of Brampton and AATO board member; and Tony Bianchi, who is an AATO board member, though retired.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** I'd like to welcome the students today from Trafalgar Castle School, who will be performing later on today as the choir on the grand staircase. Welcome to the Legislature.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'd like to welcome to the House Richard Bradley from Moore Falls, Ontario.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning, Speaker. This question is for the Premier. People in this province should expect quality health care that's available when they need it. But under this government, we're seeing critical services disappearing from communities. Emergency department closures are happening more frequently, and they are staying closed longer. A new report from the Ontario

Health Coalition reported a staggering 868 emergency department closures this year alone.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: What possible explanation can this government offer to Ontarians who lost over 30,000 hours of emergency care this year?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I've said many times that when individual hospitals have to make a very challenging decision based on the health human resources that they have available to them to temporarily close for an hour or shift a part of their operation, it is disruptive for a community. But that is exactly why our government has made such a conscious effort and investments in our hospital systems, in our health human resources: expanding the number of nurses that are training in the province of Ontario; expanding the number of residency positions that are available for physicians in Ontario.

We'll continue to do that work and we'll continue to expand the health human resources because we know how important it is to the people of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the minister can try to spin this any way she wants. She can try to downplay it, but the reality is very different. The Ontario Health Coalition blames these closures on "unprecedented failure of leadership" by this government.

Folks in Huron, Perth and Wellington are experiencing multiple simultaneous closures. Durham had 51 closures this year alone. People in Clinton haven't had reliable access to an ER since 2019.

The holiday season is one of the busiest times for local hospitals and emergency rooms. What is this Premier going to do to stop emergency department closures over the holidays?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** What we will continue to do is work with our hospital partners, invest, ensuring that we have alternative payment plans so that physicians have the opportunity to practise in those underserved areas. We have a new program in the province of Ontario, peer-to-peer, emergency department physicians being able to phone a friend and talk through issues. That has ensured that people actually have access when they need it.

We now have, in northern Ontario, physicians who are in our emergency departments having access to other physicians who have practised for longer and are able to walk through specific issues. That one change alone has ensured that we have had no physician shortages or issues in northern Ontario. Those are the kinds of policy changes that are actually being suggested by our hospital partners and making an impact in our communities.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Phone a friend, Speaker? That's their fix? Are you kidding me? That is cold comfort for all of those people out there—thousands of them—whose emergency rooms and clinics have closed, 2.2 million Ontarians who don't have access to primary care.

The newly renovated Mindemoya Hospital had to close because this government didn't fund the staff to keep it open. Hospitals and long-term-care homes are being gouged by private staffing agencies taking over our health care system. Perth and Smith's Falls hospital was forced to spend a whopping \$2.8 million this year on temporary staff through private agencies. I've talked to local hospitals in northern communities who are worried about making payroll.

Speaker, we need investment to finally address these staffing shortages. Will the Premier stand up and commit new hospital funding to ensure care is available when the patients of Ontario need it?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, where was the party opposite when we actually announced, through our last budget, an expansion of primary care? They voted against it. Where was the party opposite when we made investments and made announcements of over 50 new capital expansions, whether those are new builds in South Niagara, whether those are expansions in communities across Ontario? Where was the party opposite, the NDP? They voted against it.

We'll continue to make those investments. In last year's budget alone, we had an average increase in our hospital budgets of 4%. Those are the changes that we make as a government to make sure that our hospitals and our community system is robust and there for us when we need it.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is again for the Premier. The government's announcement to shut down the Ontario Science Centre and lay off staff and reopen it in a new building half its size is very, very unpopular, especially for people in some of the most impacted neighbourhoods like Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. It's a decision that also doesn't make a lot of sense to most people.

The official opposition NDP have unearthed yet another secret government document that's called "Ontario Science Centre modernization relocation plans"—very interesting. But what's really notable about this document is the date: August 27, 2021.

Speaker, why did the Premier keep his plans for the science centre a secret during the 2022 election?

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

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the leader for the question. I got this feeling that the word "tourism" is a bad word. We're talking about—now hang on for a second—tourism, which represents almost \$36 billion in economic activity, just under 400,000 jobs and 82,000 business-related jobs and careers in tourism. Yet we talk about an opportunity, a destination—tourism is about finding a place to go, drawing people in, not just people in Ontario but the people across Canada and maybe into the United States. It's driving tourism. A destination is important, whether it's a spa, common areas, water parks, paddling, walking and being casual in an area where

you can sit and be quiet—all these great things that tourists like. They want to come to. They want to come here. We're making a world-class destination.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

The supplementary question?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the FOIed secret documents that we've unearthed clearly show that the Premier had already made a decision to move the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place nearly two years before he told the public. We also know it wasn't until later that year that the government commissioned their business case that would justify a decision the Premier had already apparently made. That business case was withheld from the public for another eight months, despite repeated requests from opposition members to make it public.

1040

Speaker, to the Premier: Why should the public trust a Premier who clearly believes in decision-based evidence-making instead of evidence-based decision-making?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** As they say, two cases are better than one—two business cases that suggest that this is a wonderful opportunity, opportunity that we'd like to think we want to explore for the people of Ontario.

But more importantly, again, back to that "tourism" word that everyone—or not everyone, just certain people don't seem to like. We talk about building up opportunity in Ontario in jobs and careers, destinations, making an Ontario Place that people want to come to visit and stay maybe an extra day or two longer because the destination is so special, and the opportunity is an experience that those people and their families want to experience. That's what tourism is about.

People in Ontario do a fabulous job. Those working in the industry are doing a better job because of COVID. They're smarter, they are ready and they want people to come to Ontario. They want them to visit. They want them to stay. We want to welcome people—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Final supplementary?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Back to the Premier: Can I just say, if this was such a great idea, why did they work so hard to keep it secret for so long? I don't buy it. I don't buy it, and I don't think the people of Ontario buy it. They know there's something dirty about this deal.

Earlier this year, the NDP released an FOIed secret document showing that the government had already decided to pay for a new parking garage for Therme as early as January 2021—again, nearly two years before the public found out. We know they planned to move the science centre also nearly two years before the public found out.

We can wait for the Auditor General's report tomorrow or the Premier can set the record straight right now: Is he building a half-sized science centre on top of the Therme parking garage to justify spending 650 million public dollars on a private luxury spa?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to caution the Leader of the Opposition on her choice of words.

Response, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Again, thank you for the question. Ah, the science centre: You know, it's a fabulous place. They talk about space, and though I wasn't in the business of real estate and development and designing, I do know that there's something called common area when we talk about space. Common area is that area in a building that people move through, where they don't necessarily stop and wait, but they move through, and it's part of the design. The existing science centre has fabulous and large common space areas.

Well, the new science centre will not have that much common space because it will be more efficient, more directed, more targeted to exhibits, and I believe that's what the science centre is about: drawing people in, educating them, creating—dare I say it again—an experience. Don't worry about the common area, worry about what they come to see. Those are the displays. Those are what's out there for people to learn from—not hallways, exhibition space.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, I will just say, not all kids have backyards or great big spaces to run around in. Children who live in apartment buildings, they deserve to have space too, right? Why not? Give me a break.

Speaker, while this government is busy planning for a luxury spa in downtown Toronto, the people of Brampton are facing property tax increases up to 34% next year—wild. That's because the government's plan to dissolve Peel region is estimated to cost the city of Brampton more than \$1.3 billion. So I'm going to ask the Premier, how can he justify the largest tax hike in Brampton's history in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I can say this: The government is continuously focused on reducing taxes, building more homes. It has been at the core of what we have been doing since 2018. We will certainly never allow a community to raise taxes so that the people in that community can't afford to live there.

It is only really the Leader of the Opposition who is consistently talking about increasing taxes on the people of the province of Ontario. When we have reduced it—when we have reduced taxes, she has actually voted against those reductions.

It was so bad that when we reduced taxes on the lowest-income-earning Ontarians—virtually removing them from the responsibility of paying taxes—the NDP, actually, voted against that, because at the core of what the NDP believes is that people have to be dependent on government. We believe you give the people the tools to succeed and they will do just that. They will succeed, and we will continue on that, because the job is not done.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This deal between the Premier and the new Liberal leader is going to make life more expensive for 1.5 million people in Peel, over 600,000 of them in Brampton alone. People still don't know how their public services are going to be impacted, but what they do know is that thanks to this Conservative-Liberal deal, their taxes are going up and up and up.

So back to the Premier of this province: What does he have to say to the people of Brampton about their 34% tax hike?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'll say this to the people of Brampton: I'm very, very confident that there will not be a 34% property tax hike—unless, of course, there is an NDP council or an NDP mayor. Then, all bets are off, because we know the history of the NDP. It's the same old song they're singing about.

This is a party that's against the 413; they were virtually—not virtually—were wiped out of Brampton, Mr. Speaker, because they are so old-school. They're against development. They're against people. They're against business. They're singing the same old tune over and over and over again. This is a party that has no ideas. Even their time in opposition is starting to come to an end, colleagues, because they are so bankrupt of ideas.

So we've created thousands of jobs across the province of Ontario. We've cut taxes. We've made investments in all of the important areas for the people of province of Ontario. Consistently, they have voted against.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Will Bouma:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, when global companies were considering locations to expand in, Ontario was never on the short list. Businesses did not want to navigate through mazes of red tape while paying tax hike after tax hike.

When we came into office, we immediately took action to scrap the Liberal-NDP agenda of tax hikes and red tape. Now, Ontario is the first place that comes to mind when companies want to invest and expand. By creating the conditions for businesses to succeed, we've seen record investments and job growth across the entire province of Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister highlight some of the recent investments that Ontario has welcomed?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** We were at the opening of Kainos—it's an IT company from Ireland. Just yesterday, they announced—and we did the ribbon cutting at their facility in downtown Toronto: 100 employees, on their way up to hiring 300 employees. Again, all because we have lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario. We graduate 65,000 STEM grads each and every year. Welcome, Kainos and the 100 employees that they've brought.

The week before, we welcomed Unilever to downtown Toronto. They're from the UK, obviously. They have

opened their world's first and only AI lab right here in Ontario, right here in Toronto. We competed with 50 countries around the world to attract Unilever here, and we won. They have several hundred employees that will be employed here at their downtown operation in Toronto. So, Speaker, we're very grateful—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. And the supplementary?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you, Minister, for that response.

You would think that, with more than 700,000 jobs created since we took office, the Liberals and the NDP would realize that our approach of lower costs works. Instead, they continue to advocate for policies that would crush businesses, penalize workers and destroy our economy.

While we have been laser-focused on creating jobs and growing the economy, the Liberals spent the last six months just to end up with a new leader who endorses the same anti-growth agenda as the NDP. By reducing the annual cost of doing business by \$8 billion annually and cutting burdensome red tape, we have seen job-creating investments flood into the province of Ontario.

1050

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on other investments and expansions Ontario has secured over the past few months?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Last week alone, we had several hundred million dollars in new investment. Heddle Shipyards is investing \$107 million in St. Catharines so they can tackle the Vessel Life Extension project. That's 30 new jobs—\$3.4 million in support through our government's AMIC operation.

Medicom, a \$165-million investment in London: This is a 140,000-square-foot production facility that's being built. There's 135 new jobs coming. If you remember before the pandemic, Speaker, we made virtually no PPE here in Ontario. Today, we make 74% of the PPE we buy. Once Medicom is up and running, making nitrile gloves here in Ontario, 92% of all PPE that we buy will be made domestically right here in Ontario.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** My question is to the Premier. Speaker, this government decided that the luxury spa act, Bill 154, won't be going to committee or have any more time in this Legislature, but folks have real concerns. In this bill, the Minister of Infrastructure is being gifted the power to issue minister's zoning orders. Ontarians see that MZOs are a government gift for their insiders to fast-pass process. MZOs don't get shovels in the ground faster. They often don't have community buy-in, but they do make some people stinking rich.

My question is: Now that the Minister of Infrastructure has the power to issue MZOs, who is going to get rich next?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, I tell you what's going to happen, and what has continuously happened in the province of Ontario, is that the people of the province of Ontario continue to prosper because of the policies of this government.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade just talked about a massive investment that is coming to Ontario. This is on top of \$27 billion worth of other investments.

We all know that when they had the opportunity, they literally drove out the auto sector. Do you remember that? The auto sector was gone, and they were transitioning to a service economy. We said that we're going to reinvest and bring jobs back to the province of Ontario.

The member asked, who's going to prosper? The people of the province of Ontario will continue to prosper. Ontario Place will bring thousands of jobs. It will bring thousands of tourists from all over Ontario, all over the United States. It is a destination that we should continue to be proud of, but, unfortunately, under the Liberals and NDP, they allowed that destination to crumble. We are bringing it back to life, just as we brought it to life when Bill Davis was the Premier. We're going to bring it back to life and make it even better than before.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** My question is back to the Premier. Ontario Place is a public outdoor treasure, globally recognized for its heritage. Because of Bill 154, neither the Environmental Assessment Act, nor the Heritage Act, will apply. Because of Bill 154, this PC government will be allowed to break the laws with impunity. Because of Bill 154, the Minister of Infrastructure now gets to issue MZOs. She also gets a fancy-schmancy luxury spa as her legacy project.

Speaker, we saw preferential treatment and MZOs given out as party favours by the previous Minister of Housing. So, my question to the Premier is, who gets the first MZO from the minister of mega-spas and where did they get to sit at the wedding?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I tell you, Speaker, this is a party that is virtually being wiped out one member at a time, right? They're fighting with themselves.

I tell you what's happening, Mr. Speaker. Do you know who's going to get new things? The city of Toronto is going to get new buses and trains because of the deal. That's what's going to happen. Our streets will be safer; our buses and our transit system will be safer because of this deal. We will revitalize a destination that she calls a "jewel." We're actually going to revitalize it so people want to come back to it.

Thousands of jobs will be created by this. So, who's going to prosper? The people of the province of Ontario will prosper. It is a gift for all of Ontario.

I know the member has weddings on her mind. She was just married recently. I congratulate her for that, Mr. Speaker; I think we all do.

It highlights the problem of today's NDP. They stand for nothing. They're angry at each other. They're angry at

the province. They're angry at the people. And that is why they keep losing election after election after election.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Our government was elected with a strong mandate to serve the people of Ontario. After years of neglect and disrespect from the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, Ontarians support us to make decisions that will make life better for everyone. This includes taking leadership to address affordability concerns and ensuring that our health care system receives the support that it requires.

Unfortunately, our hospitals are having to deal with unnecessary rising operational costs thanks to increasing federal taxes, rising interest rates and ongoing international supply chain issues. Hospitals across Ontario should be able to focus their resources on providing front-line services, not on taxes and red tape.

Could the minister please inform the Legislature about how rising costs from increasing federal taxes are negatively impacting our hospitals?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for raising this very important issue.

Since the federal government imposed a carbon tax, the financial burden is already making an impact on hospitals across Ontario. The federal government's carbon tax will impact Ontario's hospitals by increasing annual heating costs by \$27.2 million for 2022. What would that \$27.2 million purchase? It would have offered an additional 104,615 MRI operating hours, providing scans for an additional 157,000 patients. These are real issues that are impacting our hospital partners and, of course, our patients.

That's why our government will continue fighting the federal government's carbon tax on behalf of the people of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** Thank you to the minister for her response.

While our government is advocating for all Ontarians, the opposition NDP and Liberals are oblivious to the far-reaching negative impacts that higher taxes and burdensome red tape are causing, among many other things they're oblivious to.

When it comes to accessing specialized health care services, there are times when residents in northern Ontario need to travel to other parts of our province. I know that many of my constituents rely on vital programs, like the northern travel grant, that help offset long-distance travel costs. With costs for fuel and accommodation continuing to rise, it is not right or fair that residents in the north should have to endure these additional expenses just because they need medical care and services.

Can the minister please explain how increasing taxes and burdensome red tape are negatively impacting the people of northern Ontario?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The member is raising a very important issue that is actually costing all Ontario residents, but particularly our northern residents—to fill the car, heat your home and feed your family—even though our government is always looking at ways to make life more affordable, including looking at changes to the northern travel grant, to ensure it continues to serve northerners in a way that is convenient and effective.

We know the federal government is making that travel more expensive. Over the last number of months, we have demonstrated the real cost of the federal carbon tax on families, students, seniors and on our institutions and services the people of Ontario have come to rely on.

We call on the members from across the aisle to join us in demanding that the federal government repeal this tax that is disproportionately impacting northern Ontario.

#### GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** My question is to the Premier. When asked for an update on the Eglinton Crosstown public-private partnership, Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster essentially said he would let the public know when he knows. After a decade under construction and over \$1 billion over budget, this response from Mr. Verster is unacceptable.

What is it going to take to fire Mr. Verster?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Mr. Speaker, our government has launched the largest expansion of public transit in the history of this province. The NDP and the Liberals have voted against it every step of the way.

**1100**

Let's look at the Ontario Line: 28,000 cars being taken off the road, and what do the NDP do? They vote against that.

We were just announcing a milestone on the Yonge North subway extension just this past Friday, another large milestone in making sure we get shovels in the ground. That project will reduce travel time by 22 minutes, but it will also put over 26,000 people in 10 minutes' walking distance to a transit station.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have built an incredible \$70-billion program to support public transit across this province. It's about time that the NDP support that plan.

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

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** Mr. Verster, and you as Minister of Transportation paying him \$1 million a year, have had multiple chances to explain significant operational failures. For the tens of thousands of people whose daily lives are disrupted and the hundreds of small businesses who have been forced to shut down, Mr. Verster's response is an insult. Is this government so incompetent that you cannot recognize massive failure, or do you really like Mr. Verster that much?

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

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Transportation can reply.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** The NDP have had multiple opportunities to support public transit in this province and they have said no every single time. On one hand, they want to support the Liberals and the highest carbon tax, on the other hand, they don't want to support \$70 billion of public investment into transit. They've got to pick a side. Like the House leader said, they stand for absolutely nothing.

When we're taking 28,000 cars off the road on the Ontario Line, on the Eglinton West LRT extension, taking 6.5 million fewer trips in your cars, what do the NDP do to that? They vote against that every single time. The highest carbon tax from the NDP, no investment in public transit—they vote against it every single time.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we will build highways, we will build roads, we will build subways and we will build LRTs and change the transportation network across this—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. The members will please take their seats.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The House will come to order. The member for Waterloo will come to order. The government House Leader will come to order.

I think we're ready to start again. Start the clock. The next question.

## HOUSING

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Every day, we hear from people who are struggling to find a home. When this government isn't busy blaming this province's challenges on other levels of government, we hear them talk and talk about a promise to build housing. But, Speaker, just like they broke their promise to protect the greenbelt, leading to the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal for which they're now under RCMP criminal investigation; just like they broke their promise to lower income taxes for middle income families, they're breaking their promise to get housing built. They promised to build 1.5 million homes by 2031, but the current forecast is they will get just 870,000 houses built by then. And to date, cities have received more support from the federal government than through this government's Building Faster Fund.

My question to the Premier: When will he admit to the people of Ontario that, once again, he has broken their promise to them and that his housing plan is failing?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Maybe you should go talk to your new leader. The number one concern for their new leader is, "Let's raise \$1 million, because someone has to pay for my salary." That's what her number one issue was. That

shows me you picked the wrong leader. Maybe you should have picked the guy in the far back instead of that leader.

The number one issue—

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Just a second—we stopped the clock, Premier.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Premier. Premier, I had to stop the clock because I couldn't hear you. So just a second.

The House will come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Order.

Restart the clock. The Premier has the floor.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Your leader has the worst record in Ontario on building homes, and you have the nerve to say anything about building homes? Again, maybe you should sit down and have a heart-to-heart with your leader. She was against building the 413 that is critical to Brampton and Mississauga. She was for the carbon tax. For 15 years, she was all in favour of taxing people. She raised taxes in Mississauga to unprecedented heights. That's what your leader is about. We're about lowering taxes, building the 413, getting rid of the carbon tax and building more—

*Interjections.*

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

Members will please take their seats. I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House at each other.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Order.

Let's restart the clock. Supplementary?

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Clearly the Premier is worked up about our new leader, as he should be.

Ontario Liberals are incredibly proud of our new leader. A big city mayor and former MP, Bonnie Crombie has a great deal of experience working to improve the lives of Ontarians, not like this government working to help their insider friends. She's getting new developments approved. Mississauga, once considered a suburb, has been transformed under her leadership into a full-fledged metropolis. In fact, last year, the city of Mississauga issued a record number of building permits, and the city currently ranks fourth in the continent for the number of construction cranes. To imply that housing construction is in decline because of mayors like Bonnie Crombie is not only disingenuous but deeply disappointing—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask the member for Don Valley West to withdraw the unparliamentary comment and then conclude her question.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Withdrawn.

Building 1.5 million new homes requires something akin to a wartime effort. It requires co-operation with civil society and other levels of government. We cannot, and should not, be kneecapping them.

Speaker, once again to the Premier: When will he admit his housing plan is not working and start working with, not

against, our municipal partners to get the housing crisis solved?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, this is a leader that said no to removing tolls, no to scrapping the licence plate stickers, no to cutting taxes. Do you know why? Because their leader was too busy flying around in the private jet of her buddy the developer. Everyone knows who this developer is, and it's going to come back to haunt her. Flying around in the private jet, going to her \$5-million estate in the Hamptons—she's out of touch with the average person.

#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. In the past year, we've seen emergencies like wildfires, floods and storms in all parts of Ontario. The people in my riding of Burlington and across the province are looking to our province in times of need. It's our responsibility to keep all Ontarians safe in the event of emergencies. We must continue to do all that we can to ensure our province is prepared as much as possible for any urgent situation that may arise.

Speaker, can the President of the Treasury Board please share what our government is doing to strengthen emergency management and ensure that Ontario is prepared for the future?

1110

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Thank you to the member for Burlington for the question. Simply put, there is nothing more important than the safety and the well-being of our families and our loved ones. Our government, through Emergency Management Ontario, supports emergency preparedness and mitigation, and we coordinate response and recovery with our partners, keeping the more than 15 million people in Ontario safe. This is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year job, and I am so proud and grateful to all the dedicated emergency responders and personnel who do it.

I'm pleased that our government has earmarked a \$110-million investment to strengthen emergency management and to make Ontario even more safe and more prepared. And I'll have more to say about those investments in the supplementary.

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you to the minister for her response. It's encouraging to see our government demonstrate leadership in protecting the well-being of our families and our loved ones. The people of this province, including my constituents in Burlington, will be pleased to know that our government is taking every necessary step to keep them safe.

The President of the Treasury Board spoke about the \$110-million emergency management support we outlined in our last budget. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is spearheading a comprehensive emergency management plan and safeguarding our province through this investment?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Again, thank you to the member for the question and for the opportunity to speak about the important investments that our government is making.

One of the ways our government is ensuring that Ontario is safe, practised and prepared is the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant. This new grant will help communities purchase critical emergency equipment and supplies, such as sandbagging machines or generators, or could be invested in emergency management training. This grant is a prudent and responsible investment that gives communities the tangible resources that they need to keep people safe when the next flood, wildfire or severe storm impacts our province.

I look forward to continuing to work with local levels of government, First Nations communities and organizations to prepare for emergencies now and in the future.

#### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier. The Ontario Health Coalition released their report today. Just this year in the province of Ontario, there have been closures in 868 emergency departments and 316 urgent care centres.

These closures are affecting my community at the Douglas Memorial urgent care centre in Fort Erie. Nearly half of the population of Fort Erie is over 55. Some 8,000 residents do not have a family doctor, and there is no reliable public transit in town. Having an urgent care centre open 24/7 can mean the difference between life and death for our residents.

Speaker, when is the Premier going to stop fighting nurses in court, repeal Bill 124, properly fund our public health care system and ensure that every community has access to the health care they deserve and need when they need it?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I'm going to again remind the NDP member that as we bring these investments forward, whether it is through the fall economic statement or our budgets, your party and you vote against them. So when we make changes legislatively for as-of-right, which allows physicians who wish to practise in the province of Ontario to quickly do that without having to wait for their licence to be transferred, the member opposite votes against that legislation. When we have capital investments of over 50 new expanded, renovated hospitals, including, of course, in his own area with the South Niagara Hospital, you vote against it.

I will say, you do show up for the photo op, but you vote against it when you have an opportunity to make a difference in your community. That's your legacy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Supplementary question? The member for Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The Ontario Health Coalition was able to identify 1,199 vital hospital services closures;

that's 868 ER closures, 316 urgent care closures, 11 obstetrics closures, labour and delivery closures, ICU closures, lab closures. Every single one of these closures puts people's health and lives at risk.

The minister must be very proud; her plan to create a crisis is working perfectly. How many more private clinics will the minister be able to fund given this level of crisis?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, I think it's important to remind the member opposite that, in fact, these were numbers that had never been managed and measured previously. There was no provincial government that was accessing and ensuring that hospitals made sure that data was here. Frankly, you cannot manage what you don't measure. We're measuring those changes.

I have to say, the investments that we continue to make, whether it is a 50-bed rehab expansion in Sudbury at Health Sciences North, whether it is a 72-bed expansion at St. Joe's—again, where was the NDP? They were voting against these investments in their own community. Again, they will show up for the photo op, but when they can make a difference in their community and support those changes and investments, they vote against it.

#### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. There's nothing the people of Caledonia want more for Christmas than to hear that the reconstruction of the Argyle Street bridge will begin. I've promised this House I will rise on this matter until shovels are in the ground. This is my fourth question related to the bridge since August 2022.

A few weeks ago, I sat in traffic in the middle of the bridge when the sound of sirens was heard. An ambulance was attempting to get across. Cars had nowhere to go, the paramedics were clearly frazzled, and people were panicked. This should not be happening on any bridge in this province, and yet it has been happening on a daily basis in Caledonia for the past few years.

The people of Haldimand county are fed up and they are tired of this government's inability to get the job done.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the date the reconstruction of the Argyle Street bridge will begin?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Safety is a top priority for this government. As the Minister of Transportation—we have a budget of over \$27 billion to invest in our roads, our highways and bridges.

I look forward to working with the member. We have made significant progress on that specific project. We appreciate the challenges that she has mentioned, and we are working with the appropriate partners to ensure that project is well under way.

Unlike the Liberals and NDP, our government is committed to making sure that we're building highways, we're building roads, we're investing in our bridges across

this province—\$27 billion in our budget over the next 10 years, which both the Liberals and NDP have voted against every single time.

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

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** There we have it: no Christmas miracle in Caledonia this year, but rather more excuses that don't hold any weight.

The progress—I'd like to know what that progress is.

The ministry kicked Lorrie Harcourt from her home, the toll house, in 2019. She could still be living in her home that she spent 35 years redoing.

The lack of an answer leads me to question, what is holding up the reconstruction? Why doesn't the minister just tell us? The people of Caledonia are good people, and they deserve a good reason, and maybe they'd be sympathetic if they actually knew what that reason was. But as I warned the previous minister, many fear the bridge is at risk of collapse. No government, no minister wants that on their hands.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he clearly articulate why he's taking this risk and what it is that is preventing the reconstruction of the bridge?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Mr. Speaker, we understand and appreciate that there are challenges across this province. We have made a commitment to support investments, unlike the previous Liberal government, who, for 15 years, did absolutely nothing to support the bridges and highways across this province.

We are saying yes to investing in rural communities across the province—including the Argyle Street bridge, with a new five-span steel arch bridge. The design of the bridge replacement is complete, and our government is in the process of obtaining final approvals to proceed with construction.

Thanks to the Premier and the leadership of this government, we're investing in our roads, we're investing in our bridges—\$27 billion. That project will be a part of those investments.

Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government had 15 years and did absolutely nothing with infrastructure.

We're going to continue to make sure we make the necessary investments to build bridges, build roads, build highways and build transit across this province.

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#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Ms. Laura Smith:** My question is for the Solicitor General. Our government recently announced the introduction of Bill 157, the Enhancing Access to Justice Act, 2023. This proposed legislation contains several pivotal changes, including amendments to the Coroners Act.

The Coroners Act currently requires a mandatory inquest for each construction-related death, and Bill 197 will introduce the creation of a coroner-led annual review and public report of multiple accidental construction-related deaths each year. These changes highlight our government's commitment to the safety and well-being of our workers.



Speaker, can the Solicitor General please explain how the proposed amendments to the Coroners Act will allow for faster and more meaningful recommendations for construction-related death investigations?

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I want to thank my colleague from Thornhill for the question. Any death, Mr. Speaker, is too many. Public safety is paramount, and our government is committed to exploring any option that may prevent further deaths. That's why my friend and colleague the Attorney General introduced Bill 157.

The member is right. The Coroners Act currently requires a mandatory inquest for each construction-related death. Our proposed change would require an annual coroner-led review of accidental deaths that occur at or in construction projects in the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, the main intent of the proposed amendment to the Coroners Act is to prevent further deaths in the industry by reviewing construction-related trends and sector-wide issues, and make recommendations that can be identified faster. Mandatory annual review of construction-related deaths will lead to quicker justice. And at the end of the day, a safe Ontario is a strong Ontario.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you to the Solicitor General for his response. It's reassuring to hear that our government is going to make the process easier and quicker for families.

Losing a loved one is a tragedy and one of the most terrible things to happen to a family. Anyone who has lost a member of their family in an accident reserves the right and deserves the right to an inquest and to be a part of the process. It is of critical importance that our government provide Ontario families with assurance in upholding their right to an inquest.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General please tell the House how the proposed changes to Bill 197 will help bring justice to families?

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** Again, I thank the member from Thornhill. The member is right. The death of a loved one is the most terrible thing that can happen to any family. Our hearts go out to the families who lost a spouse, a sibling, a child or a parent.

I agree that the families need to have the right to request an inquest if necessary. That is provided in Bill 157. Their request for an inquest will be reasonably considered by the coroner. The proposed change for Bill 157 will make the delivery of the facts for families that much quicker. Mr. Speaker, these amendments would streamline the process, bringing justice to families in an expedited manner.

At the end of the day, our government will always be there for our workers, the workers who help build Ontario every single day, who keep us safe. We will always have their backs.

## HOUSING

### TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. Desjardins Credit Union just released a report showing

short-term rentals are having a negative impact on housing affordability. The report found that neighbourhoods with a lot of short-term rental listings see their rents rise faster, have lower vacancy rates and higher home sale prices.

To increase the number of homes available for long-term rentals, Desjardins is calling for governments to crack down on short-term rentals in investment properties.

My question is this: Can you move forward on this simple request?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Let me just say this: I too have concerns with that, but at the same time, as we know, coming out of COVID, there are a number of challenges we faced, in particular with respect to the Landlord and Tenant Board. That is why we put significant resources behind ensuring we could catch up.

I'm fully aware of the fact that, in many instances, people have turned to the short-term market because of the challenges with the Landlord and Tenant Board. As the member will know, though, the Attorney General has put significant resources into ensuring that we can bring the case backlog up to date.

Principally, many of these delays were as a result of—as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, we weren't allowing evictions during that time period. We were ensuring that people could stay in their rental homes. But it's also about additional supply, and that's why we're so focused on building more: 15,000 starts.

But I do share the member's concerns. I am concerned about that, but I think we have to put in the climate to ensure that people who are in the short-term market feel confident about getting back into the rental market.

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** When we're thinking about rental enforcement, that perfectly relates to my second question.

Back to the Premier: Justin is a University of Toronto student living in downtown Toronto. When his apartment was bought by a US investor landlord, he became a victim of illegal harassment to drive himself and his neighbours out of their homes. When his neighbours had given up and moved out, their landlord turned their homes into pricey short-term rentals where you can rent out one bedroom in an apartment by the week. That is the new reality for students in Toronto today.

Justin and his neighbours have called provincial bylaw officers begging for help, and no one has returned their calls. Can this government work with these tenants to enforce our rental laws?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Really, high-level, I think that the real problem there is that students don't have the ability in many instances to live on campuses. We've seen in many communities across the province of Ontario that they have been frustrating the ability of our colleges and universities to build student housing on their campuses. It's one of the reasons why we have said that in the new year, we're going to double down and make sure that we work with our partners in that sector, so that we can get more student housing built. It is absolutely vital that we do

that, and as I said, we will double down and make sure that we can get that accomplished.

### SKILLED TRADES

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Ontario is experiencing historic labour shortages. There are currently about 300,000 unfilled jobs across Ontario, and many of these vacancies are in skilled trades. Our government must continue to show leadership and take action by working with employers and unions to encourage more people to enter the skilled trades.

By the year 2025, it is projected that about one in five job openings will be in the skilled trades. That's why urgent action is needed now more than ever. In the next decade alone, Ontario will need over 100,000 more people in the construction industry only.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to address labour shortages in the skilled trades?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant and member for Mississauga–Malton.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills for the important question. Our government is on a mission to help our young people enter skilled trades. That is why we're making historic investments to show our young people that these careers are ones they can be proud of.

The minister was recently in Mississauga, joined by the wonderful Minister of Education, to visit our latest Level Up! skilled trades fair. Across the province, more than 28,000 young people, parents, educators attended our fairs last year, getting hands-on experience in Ontario's 144 trades. I'm proud to say that under the leadership of this Premier, we are seeing an increase in the number of apprentices signing up across the province, up 24% last year alone.

To the workers of Ontario: We will continue to work with our partners in the industry. We will continue to make investments to fix the system and help more people find good-paying jobs—

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

The supplementary question?

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** It is reassuring to hear that the skilled trades career fairs for our students are having such a positive impact on our young people. However, while we continue to see more young people taking an interest in entering the skilled trades, it is also a concerning fact that women are significantly under-represented in this sector.

1130

Given the critical labour shortages that we are encountering, our government must address barriers that are creating challenges for women to enter the skilled trades. That's why our government must do all that we can to empower the next generation to explore these careers.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please explain what our government is doing to break down barriers for

women entering careers in the skilled trades and the construction industry?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the member again for that wonderful question. Our government has been clear since day one: Women belong on shop floors and construction sites just as much as men, full stop.

Actions speak louder than words. We have made investments to support the training and retraining of women in the workforce, whether it is \$650,000 to introduce them to the electrical trades, \$1 million to the Goodwill Amity program, \$225,000 to the career accelerator program, \$700,000 for the digital project program and many more.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the government mandated that employers must provide women on construction sites with personal protective equipment that fits them properly. The steps we are taking are making a difference. We have seen almost a 30% increase in women signing up for apprenticeships. The minister sat with Natasha Ferguson, a young Black woman who has overcome these biases. Under the leadership of this Premier, we are breaking down barriers and working for our workers.

### NORTHERN ONTARIO

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** To the Premier: The cost of living in the north is very high. A 2016 report stated that First Nations families in northern Ontario spend more than half of their income on groceries to meet basic nutritional requirements.

Speaker, last summer I visited Keewaywin First Nation, and I met April McKay, who has a community garden that provides fresh produce to Keewaywin. Is there any way that this government can help other people across the north like April who want to create community gardens and improve food security?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I thank the member for this question and for the evolving discussion we've had on this topic. It's important that we recognize that over the past couple of weeks some of those cost drivers, the carbon tax etc.—but having lived in the isolated communities there's no question that food is very expensive, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't just go to the cost of the food; it goes to the nutritional standards for the people living in those communities.

The short answer is, absolutely. Food security is ready to move forward. The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is already supporting communities like Eabametoong First Nation. Neskantaga and Marten Falls have called for this. We have new partnerships with the University of Guelph and a great discussion with the Minister of Agriculture about how we can put these pieces together, provide the capacity to build community gardens, micro-farming and other kinds of techniques—vertical growing—so that that kind of nutritional food can be built potentially year-round in those isolated communities.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** In line with when we talk about the cost of living on First Nations, it is about 25% higher than the rest of the country. This past summer, I visited Webequie and, Speaker, the price of gas was \$4.59 per litre, but the fuel experts tell me that it costs \$2.50 per litre delivered, whether by truck or airplane.

What is this government doing for the people in the north who need affordable gas for sustenance—hunting and fishing?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I thought we were going to continue talking about food security. That throws me for a bit of a loop.

I mean, we have reduced the fuel surcharge on planes flying into the isolated communities. Of course, we continue to strenuously oppose the carbon tax, which is going to continue to drive up the cost of gas. I'm not sure what the member's opinion is, Mr. Speaker, but I can guarantee him that we will continue to focus on reducing costs for isolated and remote communities.

Turning back to food security for a moment, Mr. Speaker: Next week I'll be attending a conference and an MOU signing with Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services, the Mushkegowuk tribal council, the Sioux Lookout area management board, Keewaytinook Okimakanak and the Island Lake communities from Manitoba, who will converge to sign a memorandum of understanding to consolidate their food-purchasing power and to explore options to grow food in their own communities. I'm going to be there, Mr. Speaker, because this is important for nutrition and affordability for isolated communities.

#### HOUSE SITTINGS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** A couple of members have informed me they have points of order, but before we do that: 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, December 6, 2023, shall commence at 1 p.m.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** First point of order: the member for Niagara Falls.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'd like to introduce a few people from my riding: Heather Kelley from Fort Erie; Lisa Bowen from St. Catharines, who is in Jennie's riding; and Sue Hotte from Niagara. They're from the Niagara Health Coalition. I'd also like to welcome everybody from the health coalition who has come from across the province of Ontario.

#### TOUR FOR HUMANITY RECEPTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Education has a point of order.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** On behalf of my colleagues, I want to encourage all parliamentarians to join us for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the award-winning Tour for Humanity bus by the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies. The bus is here at Queen's Park. There's a reception during lunch between 12 and 1. You are encouraged to join us in room 228 as we celebrate the launch of Holocaust education in Ontario.

#### DEFERRED VOTES

#### TIME ALLOCATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next we have a deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to government notice of motion number 20, related to allocation of time on Bill 136, Bill 150 and Bill 154.

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 December 4, 2023, Mr. McCarthy moved government notice of motion number 20.

Mr. McCarthy then moved that the motion be amended by adding "and that, in the case of any division related to any proceedings on the bills, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes" at the end of the motion.

Mr. Vanthof then moved that the amendment be amended by replacing the words "five minutes" with "one hour."

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

All those opposed to Mr. Vanthof's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rakocevic, Tom
Bell, Jessica	Hardeman, Ernie	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Harden, Joel	Romano, Ross
Blais, Stephen	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Hazell, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bourgouin, Guy	Hogarth, Christine	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bowman, Stephanie	Holland, Kevin	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Sattler, Peggy
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Sylvia	Saunderson, Brian
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Schreiner, Mike
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Shamji, Adil
Clark, Steve	Karpoche, Bhutita	Shaw, Sandy
Coe, Lorne	Ke, Vincent	Skelly, Donna
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Graydon
Dixon, Jess	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	Lumsden, Neil	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Downey, Doug	MacLeod, Lisa	Stiles, Marit
Dunlop, Jill	Mamakwa, Sol	Tangri, Nina
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	McCrimmon, Karen	Tibollo, Michael A.

Ford, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Vanthof, John
Ford, Michael D.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Mulroney, Caroline	Wai, Daisy
French, Jennifer K.	Oosterhoff, Sam	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pang, Billy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Pasma, Chandra	
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 0; the nays are 100.

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

Pursuant to standing order 50, I'm now required to put the question on the amendment to government notice of motion number 20.

Mr. McCarthy moved that the motion be amended by adding, "and that, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bills, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes" at the end of the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. McCarthy's amendment to the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of Mr. McCarthy's amendment will please say "aye."

All those opposed to Mr. McCarthy's amendment will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1147 to 1148.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. McCarthy moved the amendment to government notice of motion number 20.

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

#### Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Bresee, Ric	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Clark, Steve	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Coe, Lorne	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Crawford, Stephen	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Dixon, Jess	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Dowie, Andrew	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Downey, Doug	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Dunlop, Jill	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Fedeli, Victor	McGregor, Graham	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Michael D.	Pang, Billy	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	

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

#### Nays

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

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 34.

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

Pursuant to standing order 50, I am now required to put the question on government notice of motion number 20, as amended, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 136, Bill 150 and Bill 154.

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

All those in favour of the motion, as amended, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, as amended, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1152 to 1153.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. McCarthy moved government notice of motion number 20, as amended.

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

#### Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Bresee, Ric	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Clark, Steve	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Coe, Lorne	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Crawford, Stephen	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Dixon, Jess	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Dowie, Andrew	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Downey, Doug	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Dunlop, Jill	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Fedeli, Victor	McGregor, Graham	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Michael D.	Pang, Billy	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	

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

**Nays**

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

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 34.

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

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

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

*The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.*

**PETITIONS****LABOUR LEGISLATION**

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Roger Jankiewicz, who is from Hanmer in my riding, for these petitions.

“Enact Anti-Scab Labour Law....”

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978, in British Columbia since 1993, and in Ontario under the NDP government, it was repealed by the Harris Conservative government;

“Whereas anti-scab legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of scab labour during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and long term, as well as, the well-being of its residents;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To pass the anti-scab labour bill to ban the use of replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with my good page Leo.

**ORGAN DONATION**

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Mrs. Johansson from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions.

“Saving Organs to Save Lives....”

“Whereas there are currently 1,600 people waiting for a life-saving organ transplant in Ontario;

“Whereas every three days someone in Ontario dies because they can’t get a transplant” they need “in time;

“Whereas donating organs and tissues can save up to eight lives and improve the lives of up to 75 people;

“Whereas 90% of Ontarians support organ donation, but only 36% of us are registered;

“Whereas Nova Scotia has seen” an increase “in organs and tissue for transplant after implementing a presumed consent legislation” back “in January 2020;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Change the legislation to allow a donor system based on presumed consent as set out in MPP Gélinas’s bill, Peter Kormos Memorial Act (Saving Organs to Save Lives).”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my very patient page Leo to bring it to the Clerk.

**WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE**

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** I have a petition entitled “Improve Winter Road Maintenance on Northern Highways.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Highways 11 and 17 play a critical role in the development and prosperity of northern Ontario;

“Whereas the former Liberal government introduced private winter maintenance contracts, and the current Conservative government has failed to improve winter road conditions in northern Ontario;

“Whereas injuries and fatalities are twice more likely to occur on a northern highway than on a highway in southern Ontario, per capita;

“Whereas current Ministry of Transportation classification for winter highway maintenance negatively impacts the safety of drivers on northern highways;

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

“Classify all 400-series highways, the QEW highway and Highways 11 and 17 as class 1 highways;

“Require that the pavement in class 1 highways be bare of snow within eight hours of the end of a snowfall.”

I fully support this petition and will sign and give it to Peter to bring to the Clerks’ table.

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Charles Allan from Val Thérèse in my riding for this petition.

“Occupational Exposure Limits for Diesel Emissions Underground....”

“Whereas the current Ontario occupational exposure limits (OEL) for diesel ... exhaust, 400 ... total carbon, is unsafe for underground workers;

“Whereas the best current scientific evidence as published by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienist (ACGIH), CAREX Canada and the Occupational Cancer Research Centre (OCRC) all recommend an OEL based on elemental carbon of 20 ...”

“Whereas the proposed OEL of 120 ... elemental carbon poses an unacceptable risk for lung cancer to our highest exposed workers in the province which are underground miners;

“Whereas proposed industry limits will result in hundreds of lost lives, undue harm in our communities and incalculable financial loss due to our health care and WSIB ... ”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to lower the occupational exposure limit for diesel emissions to a safe limit of 20 ... for all underground workers in Ontario.”

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

### PRÉVENTION DU VAPOTAGE CHEZ LES JEUNES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier Claire Redmond de Chelmsford dans mon comté.

« Protéger les jeunes du vapotage ...

« Alors qu’on en sait très peu sur les effets à long terme du vapotage sur les jeunes; et

« Alors que la commercialisation agressive des produits de vapotage par l’industrie du tabac, fait en sorte que de plus en plus de jeunes deviennent dépendants de la nicotine par l’utilisation de cigarettes électroniques; et

« Alors que les leçons importantes apprises sur les effets du tabagisme sur la santé ne doivent pas être répétées avec le vapotage et le principe de précaution doit être appliqué pour protéger les jeunes contre le vapotage; et

« Alors que plusieurs agences de la santé et les Médecins pour un Canada sans fumée appuient pleinement les propositions concrètes visant à réduire le vapotage chez les jeunes incluses dans » mon projet de loi;

Ils et elles demandent à l’Assemblée législative « de demander au gouvernement Ford d’adopter immédiatement le projet de loi » 151, « le vapotage n’est pas pour les jeunes, afin de protéger la santé des jeunes de l’Ontario. »

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

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pause for a second: I think I should point out to the members that it is totally inappropriate to distribute or consume Christmas candies while the House is in session.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** And how would you know, Speaker?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There’s no evidence that the Speaker consumed any candies.

Start the clock.

### NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Joanne Mann from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

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

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

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

“Whereas gas prices cost more in northern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to establish a committee with a mandate to fix and improve the NHTG;

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

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my very patient page Mustafa to bring it to the Clerk.

### MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Diane Grylls from Chelmsford in my riding for this petition.

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury....

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario;

**1510**

“Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family;

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physio-therapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

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

### HEALTH CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Pauline Pasierowski, who is from Chelmsford in my riding, for this petition:

“Health Care: Not for Sale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J'aimerais remercier M. Champagne de Copper Cliff dans mon comté—en effet, c'est dans le comté de Sudbury—pour ces pétitions :

« Soutenez le système d'éducation francophone en Ontario ...

« Attendu que les enfants francophones ont un droit constitutionnel à une éducation de haute qualité, financée par les fonds publics, dans leur propre langue;

« Attendu que l'augmentation des inscriptions dans le système d'éducation en langue française signifie que plus de 1 000 nouveaux enseignants et enseignantes de langue française sont nécessaires chaque année pour les cinq prochaines années;

« Attendu que les changements apportés au modèle de financement du gouvernement provincial pour la formation des enseignantes et des enseignants de langue française signifient que l'Ontario n'en forme que 500 par » année;

« Attendu que le nombre de personnes qui enseignent sans certification complète dans le système d'éducation en langue française a augmenté de plus de 450 % au cours » des dernières années

Ils et elles demandent à l'Assemblée législative « de fournir immédiatement le financement demandé par le rapport du groupe de travail sur la pénurie des enseignantes et des enseignants dans le système d'éducation en langue française de l'Ontario et de travailler avec des partenaires pour mettre pleinement en oeuvre les recommandations. »

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

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I'd like to thank Melisa Comeau from Chelmsford in my riding for these petitions.

“To Raise Social Assistance Rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and woefully inadequate to cover the basic costs of food and rent;

“Whereas individuals on the Ontario Works program receive just \$733 per month and individuals on the Ontario

Disability Support Program receive just \$1,169 per month, only 41% and 65% of the poverty line;

“Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada's inflation rate in January” was over “5.1%, the highest rate in 30 years;

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to increase social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works and to increase other programs accordingly.”

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

### PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Mike Gervais in Val Therese in my riding for these petitions.

“Repeal Bill 124....

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

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

“Whereas Ontario's public servants have dealt with” three “years of unheralded difficulties in performing their duties to our province” through the pandemic;

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Immediately repeal Bill 124 and show respect for the public sector workers.”

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my very patient page Emma to bring it to the Clerk.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GREENBELT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr. Flack, on behalf of Mr. Calandra, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts, to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations / Projet de loi 136, Loi modifiant la Loi de

2005 sur la ceinture de verdure et d'autres lois, édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge et abrogeant une loi et divers règlements.

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

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Thank you, Speaker. It's great to be here. Please know that I'll be sharing my time today with the parliamentary assistant to municipal affairs and housing.

As the minister has in the past informed us and has outlined, our proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act resets decisions made by the government at the end of 2022 by proposing to restore all of the properties that were redesignated or removed from the greenbelt. It protects those lands, and in doing so, redefines how changes to the greenbelt boundaries can be made in the future—through legislation instead of regulation.

It's clear that while our government remains committed to tackling Ontario's housing supply crisis, we have to do it in a way that maintains and reinforces public trust and is sensitive to the concerns of communities across this province. Achieving this demands a multi-faceted approach, which is why, in addition to the proposed bill before the House today, you will hear and have heard us speak in support of Bill 150, the proposed Planning Statute Law Amendment Act.

That proposed legislation, if passed, would reverse provincial changes made to municipal official plans, except where these changes are needed to align with legislation or regulations. This includes winding back changes to urban boundaries while maintaining protections for the greenbelt.

We are seeking municipal feedback on potential changes in addition to those already included in Bill 150 and made by the province that affected municipalities would like to see maintained. That proposed legislation provides us with an opportunity to reset our relationship with our municipal partners. It recognizes that municipalities are in the best position to understand the unique needs and concerns of their communities.

**1520**

While we are certainly interested in hearing from the municipalities on provincial changes they'd like to see kept, our government has proposed to maintain a handful of provincial changes under this legislation. These are changes that directly support provincial priorities. For example, changes related to the greenbelt are among those we are proposing to maintain. Similarly, we are also proposing that provincial-official-plan modifications be kept to protect the Niagara Escarpment Plan area from incompatible uses. The Niagara Escarpment, just like the Oak Ridges moraine and the protected countryside, forms an important part of the greenbelt area. So you see, Speaker, two pieces of legislation before this House are reinforcing greenbelt protections while reinforcing public trust in our land use planning processes.

Speaker, in resetting our relationship with our municipal partners, these pieces of legislation are recognizing that we all share the same fundamental goals: to confront Ontario's housing crisis; to create sustainable, livable

communities; and to do this by working together as partners in a manner that maintains and reinforces the public trust. An indication of the buy-in we have received is that almost all of our 50 largest and fastest-growing municipalities have committed in writing to their provincially assigned housing targets. In turn, the province has given the mayors of 46 Ontario municipalities strong-mayor powers as another tool to help get shovels in the ground faster.

I continue to encourage all municipalities to commit to their provincially assigned housing targets. We want Ontario to be a place where everyone—including newcomers, young families and seniors—can afford to call somewhere in Ontario home.

We've also heard loud and clear from communities that our main focus should be on building housing on land that is already within urban boundaries. This is land that can typically be developed faster because of proximity to existing or planned infrastructure—the roads, utilities and community services. So we are working with our municipal partners to unleash housing potential within their boundaries. At the same time, we have doubled down on infrastructure projects that support these many initiatives.

Speaker, as I said earlier, our intent with this proposed legislation and with the proposed Planning Statute Law Amendment Act is to write a new chapter on land use planning in Ontario. Our commitment to effective, transparent and community-focused land use planning complements other key goals of our government—that is, building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. To some, these two objectives might seem at odds with one another, but our government is nimble, innovative and capable of balancing growth with sustainability and protections with prosperity.

Speaker, I'd like to talk about some of the ways we are working with our partners to build more homes faster. Since we took office, our government has introduced four housing supply action plans to ensure that economic and population growth are paired with rapid growth in housing. These plans address the full continuum of housing. This includes affordable, community, market and rental, high-rise, low-rise, long-term care—the full range to meet the needs of Ontarians. The plan put forward is a comprehensive range of actions to get shovels in the ground faster. We're reducing red tape that slows construction and pushes home prices even higher. We are making development costs more predictable and reducing municipal fees and charges on priority types of housing. We're permitting more gentle density as of right—in other words, without the need to apply for rezoning to allow for additional residential units. We're promoting building up and around transit. And we're encouraging thinking outside the box on ways to build more homes; for example, laneway houses and modular construction.

Just last week, we convened more than 75 organizations, including municipal partners, as part of Ontario's first-ever annual housing forum. Together, we discussed how we can continue to get more shovels in the ground sooner and build more homes faster. The insights gathered



at the forum will help inform our next housing supply action plan next year. The forum focused on four main themes or four pillars. The first was building housing-enabling infrastructure: the roads, the utilities and the amenities essential for new development. Next, we discussed barriers to the missing middle—thinking of this as this gap in housing options that exists between single, detached homes and high-rise buildings. A further topic was ensuring housing meets the needs of all Ontarians—what we build, how we build, and where we build. And finally, we looked at ways to leverage innovations like modular housing.

It really was a great convention, a great gathering. I called it a cross-pollination of ideas. With all stakeholders together, we got some great insights that, again, are going to provide scale and are going to provide speed to our next housing supply action plan. This type of pragmatic, realistic suggestions that people with front-line experience and expertise provided so well is important. This collaborative and solutions-based forum will be invaluable as our government works on its next housing supply action plan, delivering more homes, built faster, throughout Ontario.

As I mentioned earlier, municipalities are critical partners for our government as we help communities get shovels in the ground faster and work to build more homes.

This past August, we launched the Building Faster Fund to reward municipalities that build homes. This is a three-year, \$1.2-billion program to provide funding to municipalities, and it's based on their performance against assigned municipal housing targets. The Building Faster Fund can be used to help pay for the infrastructure that supports housing development—because you can't have housing without the infrastructure to support it. We're talking here about infrastructure like roads, water, waste water, and related costs to support community growth. While, in total, there are 50 municipalities with housing targets, I should also add that the program reserves some of the funding for small, rural and northern communities that have not yet been assigned a housing target. The fund has \$400 million to distribute each year for the next three years, obviously totalling \$1.2 billion, and the allocation to each eligible municipality's portion of the \$400 million will be determined by their share of the overall provincial housing supply goal. A municipality's performance will be evaluated by how close they come to their assigned annual target when comparing the number of housing starts and additional residential units they manage to the beginning in a given calendar year. Municipalities can access a portion of their allocation if they achieve 80% or more of their annual target, and those exceeding their target will be eligible to receive additional funding. Municipalities falling short of achieving at least 80% of their annual target will not receive any funding. Funding from this program will begin to flow in 2024-25.

Speaker, you can't have housing without the roads, water and waste water to support it. In short, housing and infrastructure go hand in hand. That's why we recently

announced our new Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. This fund will invest a further \$200 million over three years to help municipalities repair, rehabilitate and expand their critical drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure. This responds directly to our municipal partners' needs and wants. They told us they needed more funding options to meet the growing demand for infrastructure in their communities. Municipalities need to be able to service the new homes we need them to build, and they're strategic partners to get shovels in the ground. This fund will help build stronger, more prosperous communities.

And there's more, Speaker. In our fall economic statement, we announced the launch of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank. This will enable public sector pension plans, other trusted institutional investors and Indigenous communities to become even more involved in large-scale infrastructure projects right across this province. Through a new arm's-length, board-governed agency, this plan will work.

**1530**

I'd like to take this opportunity to repeat our government's call to the federal government. We'd like them to come and join us on a new federal-provincial infrastructure fund to help us meet our infrastructure needs—so badly needed throughout the province.

Our federal government partners have heeded our call to help people in Ontario needing access to rental housing. We are working closely with them to increase the supply of purpose-built rentals. Ontario is working to remove the full 8% of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on qualifying new, purpose-built rental housing. Removing the HST will make it easier and cheaper to build this important type of housing in Ontario, and we're hoping this measure will help spur more construction of badly needed rental units.

Speaker, this list of innovations and incentives I have discussed are already making a difference in helping us build more homes Ontarians need and deserve. We are proving that governments committed to collaborating with partners and the public can successfully develop and protect land, even in the face of the housing crisis that we have today.

By supporting our proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, the members of this House have the opportunity to help us write a new chapter on land use planning in Ontario—one that resets the boundaries of the greenbelt, that restores all of the properties that were redesignated or removed in 2022, that protects greenbelt lands, that reinvigorates it by keeping the 9,400 acres that were also added, that remakes how changes to its boundaries can be made in the future, that reviews it through a non-partisan lens—I repeat: that reviews it through a non-partisan lens—and that rebalances it with our commitment to build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031 in a way that maintains and reinforces public trust.

I will now turn it over to the parliamentary assistant.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate? Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Before I begin my debate this afternoon, I just wanted to say a few words about my uncle Adam Shaw. He lost the love of his life, his wife, my aunt Marie. She took sick suddenly and passed just over the weekend. We're all very saddened by this. My uncle is a hale and hearty 90 years old, but he's taking this very hard.

We are sending out all of our love to you, Uncle Adam. You know that we have your back. We are so sorry for your loss.

To Damien and Lise: Thank you for everything that you've done to keep Uncle Adam fed. We appreciate everything that you've done for us as our family moves through this tragedy.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you.

We're here to debate this bill, the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, which is essentially a bill that reverses all of the assaults and the unrequested changes that this government imposed on the province of Ontario when it came to the greenbelt.

What I want to say clearly: We are here today because this is a victory for the people of the province of Ontario. The people of the province of Ontario were mobilized like I have never seen before. People from all communities, all ages, all walks of life saw this as something that they needed to speak up and stand up to. We saw that people understood what this was. They were completely outraged not only because there was this greenbelt grab, essentially stealing what they saw as something that was important to them, something that should be preserved as a legacy for our future generations—these two million acres that protect some of our most endangered species; these lands that prevent our homes from flooding, that clean our drinking water. They understood what was being lost or what was being stolen from them. I would say that it's not only just that they understood what was lost; they were outraged by the way in which this was done. They know that this greenbelt grab is nothing short of insider dealing, and they know that the Premier, when he promised once, twice, three times and looked directly into the people of Ontario's face and said, "I won't touch the greenbelt"—they know that couldn't have been further from the truth.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I will ask the member to withdraw.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I withdraw.

Evidence has showed that he was already planning to do this. Documents show that while he was campaigning, he still had the intention to open up the greenbelt.

People in the province of Ontario may be kind and forgiving, but they're not stupid, and they knew what had happened to them. So this victory is for all of those people.

I'm going to take the time here to mention some of the environmental organizations, grassroots groups that formed over this, that have done the hard work to hold this government to account, to force this government to do what they should have done in the first place, which is listen to the people of Ontario and do the right thing. So many of these groups also came together and worked collaboratively across the province.

If I omit some of you, please write or call my office as you always do, and I will make sure that I get you on the record.

I'm going to start by reading this list. It's important that they get acknowledged: Environmental Defence, Greenbelt Promise, greenbelt alliance, the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario, National Farmers Union, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Nature, Suzuki foundation, the Council of Canadians, Ontario wilderness committee, Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition, Wellington Water Watchers, Stop Sprawl Peel, ACORN, Ontario nurses for the environment, and regional groups such as Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, Stop Sprawl Durham, the biodiversity and climate action group, Prince Edward County Field Naturalists—I'm going to just skip over these. Maybe I'll go back at the end of my speech and finish the list.

I would also like to say my particular thanks to GASP, which is Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet. Being a grandmother of seven grandchildren, with one on the way, due December 10, I sympathize and I identify with these grandmothers who are acting for those future generations, which is what we all here, as legislators, should be doing—not thinking about the bottom line, not thinking about the first quarter, not thinking about our insiders, but thinking about the legacy that we will be passing on to future generations.

This also comes in the context of what people are experiencing in this province. As we've been hearing, people are struggling in this province. We hear about the increased food bank usage and people struggling to keep a roof over their head. We hear, sadly, stories of seniors who are losing their homes, who are actually resorting to meal programs for the first time in their lives.

Unfortunately, this government is focused not on the people of Ontario, if you ask me, but they've been focusing, really, on reversing the damage they've done, reversing their bad legislation. They have not really taken the time that we've had here, and even in the last week that we have here, to move legislation that will in fact help people in the province.

You have a majority. I'm going to talk a bit about that. I'm going to talk about the fact that we have all these time-allocated bills. There's no reason for that. Every bill that you put forward will get passed. Instead of using that majority to bring relief to people, what has this government spent the last session doing? You spent the last session introducing legislation that then had to be reversed, and now we are—for example, we've spent time discussing new, sweeping powers that you're giving for pet projects like the Ontario Place luxury spa. These are things the people of the province of Ontario don't understand—why this is a priority for your government, that that's what you're doing.

Rather than a government mired in scandal and focused solely on their insiders, we need a government that acts for people. This government has been in power for five and a half years, and in that time, things have only gotten harder for Ontarians.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yes, the member from Brantford–Brant clapped when I said things are getting harder for Ontarians. They're probably getting better for his insiders.

I also would like to remind the member from Brantford–Brant that he has had more code zeros in the province than any city in Ontario, despite the fact that we brought it up again in the House.

So I think, again, this is proof positive—this is an example of how this government is not paying attention to the needs of the people, that instead they're focusing on themselves. Whether it's housing or groceries or transit, none of this is affordable for people. The government, with their majority, has something to do about it.

1540

We put proposal after proposal forward. We put proposals to close loopholes that let unscrupulous landlords gouge tenants. We put forward actions that would prevent seniors like the 90-year-old woman we had here who was being demovicted from her home—we put in proposals to prevent people from being renovicted or demovicted, and this government said no. We tabled a motion that would invest in non-market and affordable housing options, and the government said no. We proposed a smart solution, an innovative solution to help people reduce the cost of heating and lower emissions, and the government said no.

I also want to say that this is during a time that this government is under an RCMP investigation. I am pretty sure, and it has been said, that this is the only time in the history of Ontario that this has happened. That's spectacular, given that we had some of the governments that we've had previously—the fact that this government rose to that height. You are the only government that is currently under RCMP investigation.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Overachievers.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Oh, yes, overachievers.

I think that it's really important to note that the RCMP has identified a special prosecutor. The RCMP has launched a criminal investigation into the greenbelt changes made by the Ford government. Of course, the investigation centres around the controversial decision to open up protected greenbelt lands for housing development, which has sparked quite serious scrutiny.

The role of the special prosecutor, which is really shocking when you read it, is connected to the complexity of working with witnesses who may be bound by confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements—and that they are there to deal with issues of security. This is the special prosecutor. This is serious. The fact that this is what the government has wasted time and energy doing, that this is not over, is really something that this government should take to heart and should—instead of continuing to move bills forward that are not focusing on the people of Ontario, that are focusing on themselves in the light of this special prosecutor, the RCMP investigation, and in the light of what we expect will be revealed tomorrow in the Auditor General's report.

I'm sorry to say, it probably will be a sad day when we see some of the workings around the MZOs in the

province that are under investigation and some of the other things that the Auditor General will reveal. Let's remind ourselves that that's how we got to this part in the first place. An Auditor General's investigation revealed clearly that there was preferential treatment of insiders and developers when it came to the Ford government's use of MZOs and urban boundary amendments and the greenbelt expansion. Then, of course, we had the Integrity Commissioner's report. Side by side, those two reports paint a very damning picture of this government. The Integrity Commissioner's report found, in fact, that the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing broke the Integrity Commissioner's act. The shocking thing is, he broke the Integrity Commissioner act when it came to insider dealing and when it came to conflict of interest. These are serious, serious charges.

Subsequent to that, we, as the official opposition, have attempted to strengthen the laws for us, as legislators, to follow, but also so that we can begin to build faith and trust in the people of the province of Ontario that what happens here, in their House, is acting above board and with the utmost transparency and integrity. So we did put forward a bill, the Strengthening Members' Integrity Act, which was an act that would have strengthened the bill. In fact, it was the Integrity Commissioner himself who asked for some of these changes, to allow him to be able to do a more thorough investigation.

We put that forward as an opposition day motion. Many of us debated why this would be important—that as people who represent our ridings and represent the province, we should expect to be held to a higher standard; that given the cloud of suspicion that has befallen this House, we would expect that a government would be more than willing and eager to make changes so that they could show good faith and show that their intentions were to never conduct themselves in the disgraceful way that they had up until this point. But the government, again, said no to these changes.

Then, finally, in order to, again, look at the ways in which we govern ourselves—both sides—we put forward a private member's bill called Cleaning Up Corruption Act, 2023. Because there are glaring and obvious loopholes in our integrity laws, we thought that it was time for the standard for elected officials in our province to be raised; that we needed a system that values the integrity Ontarians expect from the government, and also a system that allows Ontarians to hold their government accountable and prevent cultures of corruption, preferential treatment and backroom dealings from becoming the norm for those who hold public office. This was a good bill. This was a bill that would amend the Auditor General Act. It would also amend the Members' Integrity Act. Those are the two acts, again—those are the two independent officers of the Legislature. As you will recall, it brought forward the reports that have put us where we are today. The very fact that we're standing here today, debating a bill where the government is revoking, rescinding, restoring or repairing what they have done to the greenbelt is because of these reports.

So I think the fact that we have been focused on trying to learn from the lessons from the government's actions, that we have genuinely been trying to protect the respect of this place and to protect democratic norms in the province—we put those forward, and the government, of course, has voted them all down.

It is stunning to me that, perhaps—we know how this place works. Perhaps the government doesn't want to support anything that His Majesty's loyal opposition puts forward. I guess I can go that far—that that's fine. But where is your legislation? Where are you putting forward legislation based on what we've experienced in this province, based on the cynicism, the profound lack of trust in government that is the direct result of your actions?

I ask the members on the other side: Is this something that you want to be associated with? Is this what you want your legacy to be?

It is my contention that if the government moved forward with bills that strengthen some of these provisions that help guide us, people would see that as an act of good faith.

We have here the Seven Grandfather Teachings carving in the Legislature. Really, they are a set of guiding principles for how to conduct an ethical and a respectful life. What we were saying with these two bills that we moved forward to strengthen the Integrity Commissioner's act and to pass the bill, which was the act to end corruption in this province—what we were saying was that we, too, need to be governed by a set of principles, just like we see there.

I'm genuinely disappointed—I almost want to say "sad"—that we have a government that doesn't want to take action on this. It is really something that you would think that the government would be moving forward on—that we shouldn't have to be saying that, and people outside this House shouldn't have to be saying that this government is not acting in their interests or is acting for the benefit of insiders. But if you put something forward—again, Ontarians are a forgiving people, and they would see that this is a government that has learned the error of their ways and is working to earn the trust of Ontarians. That's what we have to do every single day when we come to this House. We earn their trust to be put here and to be elected here, and it is our job every single day to earn their trust. Whether you're in opposition, whether you're in government, whether you're a cabinet minister, or independent MPPs, that is your job.

1550

Unfortunately, I have to say that turning down those two amendments, and then the debate that we've been seeing in the House shows there's nothing that's really changed here.

We're going to discuss Bill 150, which talks about revoking changes that this government's abuse, essentially, of issuing MZOs—but the irony of the fact that we have had time allocation on a bill that did not go to committee, which was the Ontario Place bill, which in that bill gives a new minister extraordinary powers to issue MZOs. The irony of it is insane.

So we are here to discuss a bill that is reversing bad actions when it comes to good faith on the part of the government issuing MZOs.

We just passed this morning Bill 154, the Ontario Place act that didn't go to committee, that had limited debate—because the government again used their majority to stifle debate on this—and then, in fact, we would basically call this bill "passing a law to break the law" because, in this bill, it gives extraordinary powers to one minister. I think it needs to be said that it's giving extraordinary powers to one minister. It's so strange to me that this is a government that says they don't like big government, that they work for the people, but they love to concentrate power in the Premier's office. Now we see power concentrated in the Minister of Infrastructure's office, and in this bill—really, this is a bill that's about the government giving itself the power to bypass and even break multiple provincial laws in order to essentially ram through the Ontario Place redevelopment on behalf of a private luxury spa operator, with near total impunity. Again, I talked about all the things that the people of the province are struggling with—top of mind is not a luxury spa that most people won't ever be able to afford to go to. But this is the bill that gives this government immunity or writes into the bill, basically, a law to break the law. It prohibits lawsuits against the government or remedies with respect to anything done under the act, including—and here's a list to beat all lists—government misrepresentations, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust, or breach of fiduciary obligations.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** They're ahead of the game.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Isn't that crazy? Exactly.

So are you anticipating that you will need to protect yourselves from this? It just goes beyond anything that anybody has seen. We know the government has pushed the envelope with indemnifications like this before. We saw that they gave long-term-care operators indemnities. We saw that they give themselves indemnity when it came to some other bills. But these go so much further than any previous legislation. But what for?

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** A luxury spa. I know the government likes their spa services, but this is ridiculous—to impinge on people's constitutional rights, to write a law that allows you to break the law, for a luxury spa. It's insanity.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** You can't make it up.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** You cannot make this up.

Let me just say that this is not normal. Governments that behave like this are not generally democratic, I would say. This kind of concentration of power, exempting themselves from the rule of law, does not speak to a democratic government. Nobody you would ask would say that. I don't know how you can think that this speaks to a democratic government. There are governments around the world that would pass laws like this that would be called autocratic. People would never expect to see something like this in the province of Ontario, but here it is.

This is not the only assault, I would say, on our democratic norms in the operating of this House with these two bills—not only the Ontario Place bill where debate was stifled on. There was no committee. All the people who were upset—Ontario Place for All—all the people who were concerned about all the things that you were going to do with Ontario Place were not allowed to come to committee to speak to the government to say, “I don’t agree with this. Why do you have to cut down 850 trees? Why is this necessary? Why are you spending, basically, three quarters of a billion dollars of my money to build a parking garage for a private spa?” They don’t get to ask those questions. I can understand why the government wouldn’t want them to ask those questions because none of the answers are a good look at all for this government.

The idea that you are time-allocating these important bills—both the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act and Bill 150, which is the bill to restore the forced urban boundary expansions of this government—is nothing short of an assault on our democracy. There is no other way of putting it. People that I talk to feel this.

As I said, what the government did when it comes to the greenbelt—I have never seen people mobilize like this on any other issue. And the fact that this government had to walk this back is because of those people, because of their work in this province.

But a normal—

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Three ministers gone. And how many staff?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yes, exactly. And the fact that we lost three ministers over this, that countless senior staff are gone—this is a significant event that’s still unfolding in the province.

Our normal process is, we have second reading debate and then we send bills to committee. If you really concerned yourself, as I know some of the MPPs opposite do, with our Westminster parliamentary tradition, you would know that committee is a vital component of our democratic functioning. People come to committee to speak directly to their government on bills that impact them and their lives. They come with expert ideas. They come with lived experience. They make suggestions to make bills better. But the government did not allow this. In fact, at committee, the government only allowed one hour to hear from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who promised that he was an entertaining guy when he gets going. The jury is out on that, I have to say.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Come on.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Okay, not bad.

When I asked this question in the House—don’t get angry now—about why people weren’t allowed to come and speak to this bill, the Premier stood in his place and said the people of Ontario “don’t give two hoots about” the greenbelt. Come on. People do care. They’ve shown that they care because they’ve written to all of you; I know they have. And despite the fact that they weren’t allowed to depute at the committee—which, again, is an important part of our Westminster parliamentary norms—the committee room was packed. There were people in the

hallway. Even if they weren’t allowed to speak, they wanted to hear what was being done with the greenbelt.

So I just have to say that, in all the disappointing things that we have seen when it comes to the greenbelt, the fact that people were shut out from this debate is right up there with one of the biggest disappointments that I share with this government, along with some of the other actions that, again, seem to shut out people from this House and from the things that are important to them.

When it comes directly to the bill itself—I have three minutes left—there were a lot of questions that I have and that residents and stakeholders have, and I have here many, many of the submissions from stakeholders who weren’t able to speak at committee.

One of the things that they were really concerned with is that this government restore some, but not all, of the protections to the greenbelt. Let’s be clear: The greenbelt is not better off. There are still protections for the greenbelt that have not been restored with this bill, particularly when it comes to the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. That important area had four layers of protection; only two have been restored. We moved amendments that would have restored those amendments, but the government voted those amendments down. As was said by one of the stakeholders, by only returning two of the four prior Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve protections, the Ford government is not keeping its promise to Pickering residents—that’s from Stop Sprawl Durham. They have quite a few things to say, but they weren’t able to say them at committee.

**1600**

The other thing that I think is important to note is that when it comes to protecting the greenbelt, people were very concerned that there still exists in this legislation a process for removals. So there still exists, in the legislation, a process for this government to continue to remove, at a future time, lands from the greenbelt. First of all, that is in direct conflict with what the Premier and, in fact, the minister has said—that we won’t be making any changes to the greenbelt in the future. Unfortunately, I feel like that’s a dog-whistle signal to developers—“Hold on. We’re doing this now, but there is provision here to allow things to be removed from the greenbelt.”

I also want to say that many questions remain. Will this government, now, that they have returned this—does this mean that the government does agree with their own housing task force, that they did not need the greenbelt to build housing? Many people are not buying what they consider a cover story about housing, because many experts, including your own task force, said that the greenbelt is not needed to build the housing that we needed.

Unfortunately, we have wasted so much time in the province. We’re so far behind in getting people the housing that we have needed. We have spent a year, a year and a half—even longer. The government has been in power for five and a half years. All the time, effort and angst over this greenbelt grab could have been spent developing strategies and developing good ideas to help

people with their housing, because we know people need housing.

In our riding, in Hamilton, we have people sleeping on the street, on cardboard. They need to be housed. We have seniors struggling to keep a roof over their head.

I wish, rather than the government carving up and eyeing the greenbelt, that they had their eye on people in this province—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you. Further debate?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on Bill 136, Greenbelt Statute Amendment Act, 2023. It's a pleasure to speak here, this afternoon, for third reading of our government's proposed bill before this House.

I want to lead off with an overview of the bill, but I know my colleague across the way mentioned—just for the record, I know this was a debate at committee on Friday; thank you to the committee members for working with us on a Friday.

And before I forget, as I mentioned at committee, my thoughts and prayers are with the member's family, during this difficult time, on the passing of her aunt.

At committee, we debated about the amendments you mentioned earlier. This bill, actually, ensures that the greenbelt is protected in whole and that those two additional amendments, which were in the original Greenbelt Act, are not required. It would actually create duplication and red tape. We are ensuring the greenbelt is protected and whole—to be clear, for the record. Just to read that into the record here, this afternoon—they would not be necessary.

The proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, would amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Act. If passed, the bill would enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023—that is, our proposed legislation would effectively restore the protections that were previously provided by an earlier act dealing with the agricultural preserve.

There are many pieces to this proposed legislation, so I will highlight the major actions and what they would do.

I'll speak on how we are proposing to put the lands back into the Greenbelt. I'll talk about the lands that we've recently added to the greenbelt and look at our proposals to strengthen the protection of the greenbelt. We're proposing to return 15 sites, totalling 7,400 acres—or, for those who prefer metric, 2,995 hectares—of land that were redesigned or taken out of the greenbelt in Oak Ridges moraine areas in late 2022. The lands in question, which we propose to return to the greenbelt, are in the cities of Hamilton, Markham, Pickering, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, the towns of Ajax, Grimsby, Whitchurch-Stouffville, the township of King and the municipality of Clarington. As I mentioned, we are also proposing to reverse the redesignation of land in Grimsby, which is the protected countryside of the greenbelt, and the land in King township, which is the Oak Ridges moraine area.

We're also proposing to update the land use schedules of the greenbelt plan. This would help us restore the same protections to the lands that they had before the change in late 2022.

I should mention that some of the lands we are restoring or redesignating also come under the policies of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act. For the lands that also fall under the policies of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, we're also proposing to reverse the redesignation made in 2022. A redesignation changes the uses that are allowed on a parcel of land, and in this case, we would be restoring the designation of those lands to "countryside" from "settlement area." This would have the effect of limiting the uses of these lands and giving them the protection that they had prior to the changes in 2022.

We're also proposing to restore protections previously provided by the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005. This would mean reinstating the easements and covenants provided for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. These easements and covenants restrict development by limiting the land to agricultural uses, restoring them to what they were before the changes in late 2022, and would recognize the importance of the agricultural lands in this area. It would also ensure their sustainable use for present and future generations.

Speaker, as my colleagues have mentioned in this place on many occasions around this legislation, on parliamentary conventions and procedures, this legislation, if passed, would codify the greenbelt into legislation.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** And Speaker—as my members across make comments—this legislation would be codified, which means this place itself would have to agree to change the greenbelt. This government has said it will not change the greenbelt and is restoring the greenbelt lands to what they were and, in addition, adding lands, as well, to the greenbelt and protecting those lands.

If a future government—I know we have a new Liberal leader—no offence, Speaker. I know you're in the Chair right now. We have a new Liberal leader who has said that she's open to opening the greenbelt. That is her prerogative, and if they ever—hopefully many, many years from now—form government, they may choose to open the greenbelt, but they will have to answer to the people of Ontario if they do that. And to do that, they would have to bring forward legislation to change the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve as well.

This legislation would enshrine the boundaries of the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine areas in legislation. It would also remove the regulatory authority to change these boundaries in the future. Just like the very bill we're debating today, any changes to the boundaries of the greenbelt area or the Oak Ridges moraine area would need to be debated and passed in this House. All the same due diligence needed for regulation would continue, such as including consultations on any boundary changes on the Regulatory Registry and the Environmental Registry of Ontario, also known as ERO, most commonly.

We're also proposing the additional protection of the boundaries through the legislation because Ontarians have made it clear that they want an enhanced level of protection across these lands while still making sure lands are available for important infrastructure, as was intended when the original Greenbelt Act was passed in this place in 2005.

Speaker, I've talked mostly about what our proposed legislation would do to reverse actions taken since 2022. Back on that date, lands were also added to the greenbelt, as I mentioned earlier. Lands on the Paris-Galt moraine were added, and 13 urban river valleys were added as well, or expanded. The lands that are designated as urban river valleys provided a corridor of protection for natural heritage, like wooded areas and waterways, that run through urban areas as well. These corridors connect the greenbelt to the Great Lakes, inland lakes and areas beyond the greenbelt's boundaries.

**1610**

Speaker, in addition to protecting natural features and water features, urban valleys protect recreation, tourism and cultural opportunities in all natural settings. While some privately owned lands may be included in urban river valleys, the policies of urban river valleys apply only to publicly owned lands, and they rely on municipal official plan policies for their implementation. In these official plans, urban river valley lands are mostly designated as parks, open spaces, recreational areas and areas for conservation protection and/or environmental protection.

Speaker, taking together all of these reversals and additions, we're adding 9,400 acres—or, again, for those metric individuals watching this afternoon, 3,800 hectares—to the greenbelt.

Let me tell the House a little bit about the Paris-Galt moraine. The moraine extends from Caledon to the Paris-Brantford area and is home to critical groundwater resources. It's about 130 kilometres long and spans as wide as 11 kilometres at certain points. We've added land in the Paris-Galt moraine to the greenbelt area, and we've designated it as a protected countryside with a natural heritage system.

Speaker, the future of the greenbelt is bright. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated earlier this year, our government will soon be proceeding with the planned 10-year review of the greenbelt. This review will be led by impartial, non-partisan experts in conservation, agriculture and the environment, and it will include engagement with Indigenous communities and municipalities. Once the experts have finalized their recommendations, they will be provided to the Auditor General and the Commissioner of the Environment for consultation. This is to ensure that the review process is fair and guided by recent recommendations to improve the process.

Speaker, the greater Golden Horseshoe is one of the fastest-growing regions in North America. I know as I was sitting here listening to the debate this afternoon from my colleagues, the member from Essex was so kind as to give me a Christmas card. Within that Christmas card, he wrote

a lovely note congratulating me on recently—well, not recently—getting engaged this year. Then, he said, “I hope you have a marriage happy and long and that you have lots of children.” Well, that's not up to me, Speaker; it's up to me and my partner. I don't know how Meghan feels about that, but it demonstrates that our—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** The Minister of Children and Community Services says he will talk to my fiancée about that. I'm sure she's going to text me after this.

But it demonstrates lots of young families coming to Ontario. Ontario is growing. It's one of the fastest sub-national regions in North America now for growth. Half a million people have moved to this province in 2022 alone. Recent projections show that as many as four million additional people will move to Ontario by 2031.

Speaker, our government's open-for-business approach has re-energized Ontario's economy and is drawing even more people to our province, and that is a good thing. Since 2018, the year our government came to power, Ontario has created over 700,000 new jobs. That's why our housing goals match the economic aspirations of the province. That is why job one for us is building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said when we first introduced the proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, if our proposed legislation is passed, we will deliver on our commitment to fully restore the 15 sites removed or redesignated from the greenbelt lands in late 2022, and we will have delivered on ensuring that any future changes to the greenbelt boundaries could be made only through an open, public and transparent legislative process in this place. We will have followed through on maintaining the lands added to the greenbelt in 2022, and we will have delivered on restoring previous protections to the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

The proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act addresses a process that was open to error and resets the clock on greenbelt protections in Ontario. While we work with our municipalities to get more homes built across Ontario, while the NDP and Liberals may put up roadblocks to that, we will continue to get more homes built, ensuring that we support our communities, ensuring that we continue to foster economic growth in Ontario, the good work under the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, ensuring that we build schools, roads, hospitals.

We are going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to reinforce our government's commitment to transparent processes and working with our municipal partners to achieve great things for this province and for this country. And with that, I'll give two minutes of my life back to my colleagues.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Flack has moved third reading of Bill 136, an Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts,

to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations. Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion please say “nay.”

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.*

### NEW DEAL FOR TORONTO ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 SUR UN NOUVEL ACCORD POUR TORONTO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 154, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la relance portée par la croissance (cité de Toronto) et la Loi de 2023 sur la reconstruction de la Place de l'Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Surma has moved second reading of Bill 154, an Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023. Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is required. Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1618 to 1623.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Members will please take their seats.

On November 29, 2023, Miss Surma moved second reading of Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023.

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

#### Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Hogarth, Christine	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Holland, Kevin	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Sylvia	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David

Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Wai, Daisy
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ford, Michael D.	Pang, Billy	Yakubuski, John
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** 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	Pasma, Chandra
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Sattler, Peggy
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutla	Schreiner, Mike
Bowman, Stephanie	Kernaghan, Terence	Shamji, Adil
Fraser, John	Mamakwa, Sol	Shaw, Sandy
French, Jennifer K.	McCrimmon, Karen	Taylor, Monique
Gates, Wayne	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 61; the nays are 24.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I declare the motion carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

### NEW DEAL FOR TORONTO ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 SUR UN NOUVEL ACCORD POUR TORONTO

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 154, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la relance portée par la croissance (cité de Toronto) et la Loi de 2023 sur la reconstruction de la Place de l'Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved third reading of Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1628 to 1633.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Members will please take their seat.



Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved third reading of Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023.

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

#### Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie
Barnes, Patrice	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Romano, Ross
Bresee, Ric	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Byers, Rick	Hogarth, Christine	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Stan	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecca, Stephen	Smith, David
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Michael D.	Pang, Billy	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Shamji, Adil
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutla	Shaw, Sandy
Bowman, Stephanie	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 63; the nays are 28.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** 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.*

### PLANNING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

### LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Mr. Flack, on behalf of Mr. Calandra, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Official Plan Adjustments Act, 2023 and to amend the Planning Act with respect to remedies / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur les modifications apportées aux plans officiels et modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire en ce qui concerne les recours.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Today, it's my pleasure and privilege to rise for the third reading of our government's proposed Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023. I'll be sharing the government's lead-off time today with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Speaker, it would be helpful to look at the bigger picture in which this legislation has been brought forward. When our government took office in 2018, it very quickly became apparent that Ontario is facing a severe housing shortage. This isn't something unique to Ontario. Indeed, the rest of Canada and many other G7 economies are facing similar challenges. Ontario remains the engine of the Canadian economy. It is our economic brand for people all over the world.

Speaker, many of us in this House have stories of family members coming to Ontario to build a better life. I think of my parents and their forefathers; my mother was from the Ottawa Valley, just like the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—one of the founding fathers, actually, of the city of Pembroke. And why they came was for opportunity. My father—on his side of the family—came from England to build a better life right here in Toronto. An important part of that dream was to own their own farm, own their own home, own a place where they could raise their family. And with a decent job and watching the pennies, it was attainable for most people.

**1640**

But today, things are much different. The math simply doesn't work for first-time homebuyers.

I have an example to share. I'm one of four boys. Each of us was able to buy our own house at a very young age and make the down payments, get into the mortgage world, and make payments and build equity in our home, knowing it would go up in value over time. Unfortunately, every one of our daughters and sons in our family has not been able to get that job done yet. It's wrong. We need to change it, and that's what this government is faced with doing and will continue to do in a very prudent way.

People with good jobs are being priced out of the market. Even families with two good incomes find it impossible to get onto the housing ladder and to make it work. At the same time, rental accommodation is desperately scarce. Even though we've seen new rental starts and builds year over year up 43.5%—or nearly 15,000 new units—rental accommodation still is desperately scarce.

Affordable rental apartments were a rite of passage for young people just starting out and making their way in the world, in Ontario and Canada, for newcomers adjusting to life in Canada, or for seniors who want to downsize and

stay in the community they raised their families and want to continue to live in. But the construction of new rentals has virtually ground to a halt up until the last year. People avoided investment in rentals because it just wasn't profitable. The result is a generation of young adults being forced to live in their parents' basements or people making do with less as their rent costs more.

Speaker, we know that demand on our existing housing supply will only intensify. More than 500,000 people moved to the province in 2022 alone. In my adult lifetime, I've seen the population of this province more than double. Recent projections show that as many as four million additional people will move to Ontario by 2031, making this province nearly 20 million people in total. In 2022, Ontario's population was just over 15 million people, and by 2046, that figure is expected to be north of 21 million souls; that's almost 44% growth. In fact, some of my colleagues in the GTHA will say that in the next 10 years the GTHA itself will be the size of Ontario today. In a little more than two decades from now, we have an opportunity to change our housing market conditions as they sit.

There's a very good reason why people are moving to Ontario in droves, by the millions: It's opportunity, it's promise, and it's about building a better life, just like the generations before us who built Ontario and who built Canada.

Our government's open-for-business approach is attracting investment and spurring job creation. Businesses of all sizes are setting up shop. Last year, 18,000 businesses opened right here in Ontario, representing 41% of the Canadian total. Good things happen in Ontario. Since we took office in 2018, over 700,000 jobs have been created; where many were lost, we see job growth continuing on the rise.

We want the province to thrive, to be a place where people can come to build a better life and raise a family. To match this bold growth, we need a bold plan to build more housing. That's why our government is determined to work with our partners to build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031.

Speaker, this picture I paint, one of severe housing shortage coupled with a strong economy and growing population, illustrates why our government has placed building more homes front and centre. Since taking office, our government has brought forward four housing supply action plans. The plans have helped get shovels in the ground faster to build the full range of housing to meet the needs of all Ontarians—this includes affordable, community, market and rental, high-rise, low-rise and long-term-care housing. We've made good progress, with housing starts returning to levels not seen since the 1980s.

The severity of the housing challenge Ontario faces was the driver behind our government's original plans to open up more land for housing development. One of the ways we sought to do this was by expanding some urban boundaries through the official plan process. But as has been acknowledged publicly, these decisions may not have been made in the way that supported our goal of building 1.5 million homes while balancing the needs and priorities of local communities and instilling public trust.

That is why our government introduced Bill 150, the Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023. This proposed legislation would reverse provincial changes made in November 2022 and April 2023 to official plans and the official plan amendments in 12 municipalities. Those are the cities of Barrie, Belleville, Guelph, Hamilton, Ottawa, Peterborough, and Wellington county, and the regional municipalities of Halton, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York. The reversal includes changes to urban boundaries while maintaining protections for the greenbelt. This really is a reset for the government to work with our municipal partners so that we can remain focused on working together.

Speaker, let's look more closely at how the proposed legislation would work. The reversal of the official plan decisions made by the province would be retroactive to the original date they were made, either on November 4, 2022, or April 11, 2023. Construction that has already received a building permit since that time would be able to continue. Applications already in progress seeking planning permissions—for example, zoning bylaw amendments or plans of subdivision—would continue to be processed. These in-process applications would need to conform to the municipality's official plan, approved under the Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023.

As we have discussed, the proposed legislation would reverse changes to urban boundaries while maintaining protections for the greenbelt. However, through the legislation, we are proposing to maintain a limited number of provincial changes to the official plans. These instances include changes the province made to protect the greenbelt, to protect public health and safety, and to align with existing provincial legislation and regulations. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be further exploring these retained modifications in his remarks, in a few minutes.

We recognize that, in some cases, more than a year has passed since the plans were first approved. That is why we have a 45-day engagement with municipalities. This ends on December 7, 2023. We anticipate that the impacted municipalities, as well as affected lower-tier municipalities, will submit comments and provide information on proposed updates.

We wrote to the affected municipalities on November 2, and asked them to submit comments and information on the projects that are in progress. We also wanted them to bring forward requests for provincial modifications that they would like to see maintained from the original decision. More specifically, we asked for information on projects where construction has already begun based on the official plan or official plan amendment decisions—particularly those projects that are directly enabled by the provincial changes that were made to the plan, and we asked for more information related to these changes that the municipality would like made to that official plan, based on the modifications the province had previously made and which the municipality supports.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs will then assess the items brought forward by municipalities in a consistent

way, based on criteria. For example, the ministry may consider items such as whether the change is consistent with provincial policies—for example, increasing housing supply or boosting density around transit—or whether the change might resolve the conflict with provincial legislation or regulations, or if the change might be needed to address a public health and safety concern, or changes may be needed to address a provincial priority project—for example, a long-term-care home or a transit-oriented community. If the proposed change meets the criteria to be included in the official plan, the province will consult with the municipality and explore the most effective way to implement it.

People are understandably passionate about the communities they serve, and we acknowledge that time and attention lately have been focused on ensuring we're living up to the standards that people expect of all of us.

**1650**

Our approach, which I believe is more productive, is not to focus on those things we disagree on, but rather to focus on the things we agree on with respect to official plans.

I'm happy to report that this bill has generally been received by the different parties we work with in a positive way.

Shortly after we announced we would be reversing the official plan decisions, we received a thoughtful and constructive letter from Colin Best, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Mr. Best outlined the association's thoughts on how the municipalities and the province could work best together. Mr. Best said, "We commend the government for making efforts to ensure that these changes are made in consultation with municipalities and that considerations are being made to ensure that no unintended consequences arise from the proposed reversal."

The 45-day consultation window I mentioned earlier will ensure affected municipalities have their say as we finalize the official plans. We will evaluate the feedback from the consultation to determine the appropriate next steps, potentially, including further legislation or other actions.

Also, Niagara region chair Jim Bradley was quoted in the media, saying, "I want to commend Minister Calandra and the provincial government for making that decision and reviewing the official plans, not just ours but numerous municipalities right across the province." Those comments show that we are on the right track with this legislation and with the general reset that we have been working to achieve.

Speaker, the proposed Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, would introduce immunity provisions to help mitigate legal risk for municipalities and the province resulting from this legislation. The proposed immunity provisions would apply to all matters related to modifications under the act affecting 12 municipalities' official plan matters.

Bill 150 would also amend the Planning Act to introduce immunity provisions related to the making, amending or revoking of ministerial zoning orders.

Bill 150, the Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, is about working effectively with our municipal partners. It's about rebuilding trust so we can continue to focus on building more homes right across Ontario. Our government wants to ensure that people have ready access to a home that suits them, day in and day out. Whether that's home ownership or a rental apartment, this is another step on the important pathway to helping Ontarians realize their dream of affordable, accessible housing.

Thank you for your attention, Speaker.

With that, I would hand it over to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate? Further debate?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It's wonderful to be here this afternoon with all of you to speak on another very important piece of legislation. I'm pleased to share the government's time today, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and speak to the Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023. I'd like to spend some of my time discussing how this proposed legislation will better support our municipal partners in advancing local planning priorities while helping us address the province's housing supply crisis.

Speaker, as all members of this House know, one of our most valued relationships is with our partners at the municipal level. They are and will continue to be an integral part of our efforts to build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. As I've said in this House before, the province is on the right path to building more housing, but our municipal partners need our support, and they need us to take some additional steps.

Since being appointed to the ministry, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Associate Minister of Housing and I have been working very closely and meeting with colleagues at different levels of government to find ways to build housing even faster. We've been asking our municipal partners what they need to do to ensure we are maximizing opportunities to get shovels in the ground.

One of the ways is through municipal official plans. As you may know, Speaker, official plans set out where offices and shops can be located; where industry and development can thrive; where parks and schools should be located; where infrastructure like roads, water mains and sewers will be needed; and of particular interest to us today, where new housing can be built.

Official plans can help implement the provincial planning statement. This statement sets out the province's priorities for land use planning, including direction that municipalities must follow when making decisions under the Planning Act for community development and growth. Land use planning helps set the goals for the community while keeping economic, social and environmental factors in mind. Planning helps balance the interests of property owners with the interests of the community as a whole, and municipalities work to reflect the interests of their communities in their official plans.

The official plan process is complex and nuanced and requires balance—a balancing act between long-range and big-picture planning, between long-term infrastructure goals and short-term development pressures and between opposing land uses that need to be managed so they can successfully co-exist. All of this and more brings us to why we are here today.

Our government recognizes that municipalities are in the best position to understand the unique needs and the concerns of their communities. Our proposed legislation would wind back provincial changes to the official plans and the official plan amendments made by the ministry in November 2022 and April 2023, except where these are needed to align with legislation or regulations such as the protections for the greenbelt.

Speaker, it's my privilege to talk about these exceptions. The provincial modifications we wish to keep were made to protect the greenbelt or protect public health and safety. We also want to retain the modifications that bring official plan boundaries into conformity with existing provincial legislation and regulations.

Let's look at the modifications we've made to ensure municipally approved official plans reflect the policies and mapping supporting the greenbelt. In some cases, the municipality-adopted urban boundary in the official plan may have encroached into the greenbelt when this type of urban expansion doesn't align with the greenbelt plan. As you are aware, Speaker, we also have before the House—which we also passed recently—legislation to enhance greenbelt protections. We work through the official plans to identify and then address inconsistencies within the greenbelt, and these are some of the modifications we're proposing to retain in the official plans of the city of Hamilton, the county of Wellington and the regions of Niagara, Peel and York.

Another set of modifications we propose to keep relates to Indigenous communities and their interests. These modifications would strengthen the approach municipalities take in working with Indigenous communities. They would also help to ensure that obligations are met; for example, ensuring that where a marked or unmarked cemetery or burial place is found, Indigenous communities with a known interest in the area are notified. To align with Indigenous interests, we are proposing to keep these provincial changes in the municipally approved official plans for the cities of Hamilton, Belleville and the county of Wellington.

Another set of modifications we propose to maintain relate to incompatible and sensitive land uses. A stark example of an incompatible land use would be a heavy industry facility next to a long-term-care home. In that example, an official plan would need to reconsider not only the long-term-care home but also the industrial plant. The plant, which might be a major employer and a significant contributor to the community's prosperity, would likely find its operations hampered because of its proximity to a long-term-care home. And the residents of a long-term-care home would find their quality of life negatively affected by the plant.

These examples show us where official plans have an important role to play, in this case, to ensure that land is used in a way that works for everyone. To this end, the provincial modifications would have added language to some official plans to clarify that the municipality would need to follow provincial guidelines so that we don't end up with long-term-care homes next to heavy industry, to continue with that example, and if it proves impossible, the official plan includes language to ensure measures are taken to mitigate any potential adverse effects.

**1700**

To align with these sensitive land uses, we are proposing to keep these types of modifications to the municipally approved plans of the cities of Hamilton, Peterborough, the regions of North York and Niagara.

As we've seen that provincial modifications were made to address health and safety as it pertains to sensitive land uses, other modifications were made to address safe drinking water. Municipally approved official plans must include provisions for wellhead protection areas, and this requirement is in alignment with the Clean Water Act.

Many municipalities across Ontario rely on wells to supply safe drinking water to their residents, and we must guard against the risk of pollutants seeping into the ground and contaminating well water. That's the purpose of wellhead protection areas. These are the areas around a well where landowners and the municipality must manage any activities that could become sources of contamination, and these wellhead protection areas must be identified in official plans. To that end, we're proposing to keep modifications like this to the municipally approved official plans of the cities of Barrie, Belleville, Peterborough and the regions of Peel and York.

Recognizing the province's investments in infrastructure and the need to plan and protect for new infrastructure corridors, we are maintaining a set of modifications related to infrastructure and planned corridors. These corridors are reserved for large linear infrastructure projects such as new highways or hydro transmission lines. Once potential future corridors are identified by the province, they need to be included in official plans. As a result, we're proposing to keep modifications that protect the Highway 413 corridor and the northwest GTA transmission corridor. These affect the official plans of Halton and Peel regions.

As I have said, reversing the provincial official plan decisions that were made would better reflect the local priorities and support the needs of local communities, needs and priorities that are consistently evolving, which means that the plans that shape them must evolve as well.

We recognize that in some cases the province may have modified and approved an official plan more than a year ago. And a lot can happen in that time. Plans might need to be adjusted to account for local priorities and planning for 2051 and potentially to support our province-wide target of building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031, and that is why we're also looking for feedback on potential changes that were originally made by the province that the municipality would like to keep.

We're also interested in what projects might already be under way, and we have given impacted municipalities

until Dec 7, 2023, to provide these updates to the official plans. Municipal staff can also reach out to the staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide additional information.

Speaker, I should also add, the immunity provisions in the legislation would apply not just to the provincial government but also to our municipal partners. These strengthened immunity provisions will mitigate any legal risk that may arise as a result of this legislation.

As the Associate Minister of Housing has said earlier this afternoon, the proposed bill has generally been well received by the impacted communities. By focusing on items that we all agree on, we're able to leverage the municipal official plans to help meet our shared priorities. This collaboration will address changes to accommodate circumstances or projects that are already under way or to maintain changes that the province made.

Speaker, we must not lose sight of the impetus for our proposed legislation. Ultimately, we want more homes in Ontario—a lot more homes—and not just homes in downtown Toronto but homes across communities in Ontario, whether it's in my riding of Perth–Wellington or in the riding of Ajax or in Ottawa. We want to achieve our goal of building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031 by supporting our municipal partners. And this is not just an aspiration; this is a practical objective we're already delivering results on.

Over the past three years, housing starts have been robust and, despite a recent slowdown, this has continued well into 2023. From January to October of this year—the latest figures that are available—Ontario saw almost 75,000 housing starts. That's essentially unchanged when compared to the same period in 2022. And for rental accommodations, 2023 saw an increase in rental starts of almost 41% compared to the same period in 2022. In 2022, Ontario saw nearly 15,000 rental starts, which was an all-time high. And I'm pleased to report that in 2023 we had already surpassed that figure at the end of October of this year.

Speaker, as I've said, all levels of government need to work together to address the housing crisis. Our proposed Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, is another way that we are collaborating and engaging with municipal partners to support their communities as they develop and grow. We are committed to increasing the housing supply in Ontario. Our call to action is to get shovels in the ground across this province, from Windsor to Mississauga to Kingston, Speaker. We need all hands on deck, but we need to move forward in a way that is reasonable, responsible and strikes the optimal balance between local interests and provincial priorities.

I know when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing came into his role, he reached out to our municipal partners on the housing task force recommendations. Our government has already implemented full or partial recommendations—23 of the 74—and we continue to work on those that are remaining with our municipal partners. I know my local municipalities appreciate the opportunity to provide that feedback, to share

with the minister what they believe could be the next steps in our housing supply action plan, which I know the minister has mentioned is coming in the new year—something to look forward to in 2024.

As we continue to move forward, to get more homes built across our province, Speaker, it is about ensuring that the dream of home ownership is there for the next generation and for future generations that come to Ontario—no matter where they come from, whether it's another province or another country in the world. We will ensure that our communities remain vibrant places to live, work and raise a family. This is why I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** As I rise today, I just have to remark on what we just witnessed in this House, which was a shocking abuse of power.

This government passed a bill, the Ontario Place act. They shut out debate at second reading. They passed what's called a time allocation motion to short-circuit debate at second reading. They did not send it to committee for people to talk about this important bill that will impact Ontario Place and has given the government extraordinary powers to protect themselves and to issue MZOs. Then they short-circuited third reading debate. We were not allowed to debate this at third reading. These are key components of our Westminster parliamentary democracy—key—and we just witnessed this government abuse that.

I would say, you know, there's a famous philosopher—his name is John Stuart Mill. He wrote on things that this government—it might fit with their philosophy on government. John Stuart Mill talked about the tyranny of the majority, and that's what we've witnessed here. This government has the majority and they used it to further their own ends, and they shut out the people of the province of Ontario when it came to what they're doing at Ontario Place.

My question would be, Madam Speaker, why have they done this? To build a luxury spa for a foreign company—it's a remarkable question. Why would they use this extraordinary use of power and short-circuit democracy for a luxury spa for a for-profit, private company? That's the question. You know, eventually, all things come to light—the light of day, as we see with this legislation. The question is, what has Premier Ford signed Ontarians up for? Why are we not allowed to debate this bill? Why can we not see the details of the 99-year lease given on behalf of us? What we just witnessed here is nothing short, as I said, of another nail in the coffin of what we used to think was a democratic province in Ontario, and it really has been shameful, shameful behaviour here today in this Legislature.

**1710**

I also want to respond to the member from Perth–Wellington, who said they're going to codify in law these changes that they're making to the greenbelt. But follow with me: We are here debating a bill that is putting in place

restoring a bill that this government already overturned. It's a bill that they passed; they overturned the bill, and now we have a bill before us to do that. So it doesn't matter what you codify in law. You said your government has said they won't open the greenbelt, but you did do it and here we are with a bill before us that's simply trying to overdo what you've done, which is to overturn a previously existing bill.

It used to be, again, in the province of Ontario, that statutes and laws warranted a certain amount of respect. They're weren't just obstacles, as this government likes to say, the laws of the province of Ontario. Things that were debated and voted in this esteemed House are not just things you can overturn. They're not just obstacles for this government to get its way. They used to command a certain amount of respect, but unfortunately I don't see that here. So the idea that we're passing a new statute to reverse the repeal of another statute—the irony is unbelievable in this House. I'm sorry to say, Madam Speaker, it is, to me, really disappointing and—what is the word I want to say?—a disappointing and disgraceful moment here in this House.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Again.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Again.

I also want to go back to saying that the reason we are here debating this bill that is going to revoke/reverse the things this government did when it came to forced urban boundary expansions on municipalities across the province—the reason we are here: We are sharing this victory with all of the people that came together, the grassroots organizations that worked together to push back on this government. They attended rallies, they took signs, they signed petitions, so they were united in demanding that this government—you know, they were asked to protect the greenbelt in perpetuity, and then they understood that the second part of the greenbelt scandal, greenbelt scandal 2.0, if you will, was this forced urban boundary expansion and the issuing of MZOs all across the province. This is the second piece of a land grab scandal that has seized this House, that seized the government for at least the better part of a year.

It's also the reason that we have, for the first time in the province of Ontario, a government that is under criminal investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It's stunning. I just want to make sure that we understand how serious this is because the division—the special prosecutor that is looking into the actions of this government is the sensitive and international investigations unit. This unit looks into high-risk matters that cause significant threats to Canada's political, economic and social integrity of its institutions across Canada and internationally. Those are some serious matters.

So I would like to think, as I have been saying, that the government, the minister and the Premier understand where we are in the province; that this is a government that has learned the error of their ways, has learned that we are in a situation like this because of acts of this government that disrespected the laws, that disrespected the will of the people of the province of Ontario. But as we see with the

bill that was just passed, it would be apparent that they have not learned the lesson.

You know, it's been said many times, and I'm of this sentiment: The Premier said he was sorry, and I agree with people across Ontario who say he was sorry that he got caught and it only just looks like this. All the evidence, all the bills that keep coming forward confirm this is not truly sorry; this is "Sorry, but if I hadn't got caught, where would we be?" If he hadn't got caught, where would we be? If we hadn't had an Integrity Commissioner's report, where would we be? If we hadn't had an Auditor General's report, where would we be? If we hadn't had excellent investigative journalism, where would we be?

If we hadn't had the Leader of the Opposition, Marit Stiles, who wrote to the Auditor General, who wrote to the Integrity Commissioner, who filed FOIs, all of this would have remained hidden. The government would be going on as business as usual, working not for the people of the province of Ontario, but working for their developer insiders, donors to the party, friends and family, guests of the Ford government, friends of the Ford government. That's what we would still be doing. And I submit that the bill that we've just passed, the Ontario Place bill, that's the same behaviour. That's the same behaviour. And the truth will out, as they say in Shakespeare. I believe that is the case.

Let me speak to this bill, Bill 150. This is the Planning Statute Law Amendment Act. Really, what this does is it reverses the harmful, unilaterally imposed urban boundary expansions that this government forced on municipalities in the past year. We have been saying this is the right thing to do, to reverse it, but we were also saying it was the wrong thing to do in the first place, that you've done this. But it did take an Auditor General's report, an Integrity Commissioner's report and, as I said, an RCMP investigation and extraordinary advocacy from the public to get the government to begin reversing its preferential treatment of favoured speculators.

And even after these extraordinary reversals that we're seeing here in these two bills, this bill still does not reverse many other planning policies that continue to make rich speculators richer and that harm the public interest and that still fail to deliver the housing that Ontarians need. Despite what the government does, despite what the minister of housing says, this does not come close to delivering the housing need in the province of Ontario. You've set us back, so far back when people are in such, such desperate need.

It's interesting; I would say that we were clear. Experts have been clear, and we've been saying that this government didn't need the greenbelt and they didn't need this forced urban boundary expansions to build the housing that we need. The government's own affordable housing task force said clearly shortage of land is not the cause of the housing crisis.

So really, honestly, again, why did this government waste a yearplus with greenbelt grabs and forced urban boundary expansions instead of implementing policies that might actually get homes built? Why didn't you

introduce inclusionary zoning? Why instead of investing in a luxury spa—sprawl, pardon me; I almost said “spa” again. We’ve been saying “spa” a lot, but I meant to say “luxury sprawl.” Instead of investing in that, why didn’t you invest in non-market housing that we’ve talked about? The solutions are there: co-op housing—

**Interjection:** Supportive housing.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:**—supportive housing. There are all kinds of solutions there. But you didn’t support any of those, the things that we’ve put forward.

Really, I can only conclude, if the government agrees that it was a mistake to give preferential treatment to speculator friends with the greenbelt grab and the forced urban boundary expansion—it agrees, obviously, that it was a mistake to give many of those speculators arbitrary MZOs who are now under investigation by the auditor. My question is, if they see this as a mistake, if they agree that it was wrong to give preferential treatment, if they agree with the Auditor General’s investigating these MZOs and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing clearly saying they will be looking at all of those MZOs that were issued, why are you giving a new minister the unilateral power—one minister, one person, the power to issue MZOs without public scrutiny? That’s the mess you got into in the first place, but you’re doing it again. It defies logic.

1720

So let’s just take a leap of faith now and say that the government has seen the error of their ways and that they’re reversing these MZOs and these forced urban boundaries because they see that that was not the direction to go in. But then, the question is, if you see that we don’t need the greenbelt land—you’re putting those back—and we don’t need those forced urban boundaries, do you now agree with your own housing task force recommendation that we don’t need these lands to build housing? Is this signalling that you now do not agree that we need to encroach on farmland, that we need to lose more prime agricultural farmland, that we need to build on heritage natural spaces to build the housing we need? I can only assume that’s what that means.

Going forward, we will be keeping an eye on you to see what changes you continue to make. As I said when we discussed the greenbelt reversal bill, there still is a provision in that bill that allows for the government to remove lands from the greenbelt. The minister was very clear and the assistant minister for housing was very clear to say that they reserve the right to use greenbelt land to build infrastructure. So this greenbelt land is not protected in perpetuity. This bill reverses some of the harmful decisions, but you’ve left loopholes in there that will allow the greenbelt and farmland and urban boundaries to be expanded at the signing of the pen of a minister.

The urban boundary expansion has been called “greenbelt scam 2.0,” because as we know, this unilateral grab of greenbelt lands was not put in the public sphere; people weren’t given the opportunity to consult on it. And then, when it came to forced urban boundary expansions—let’s be clear: This is a government that bigfooted municipi-

palities and regions all across the province. These are municipalities and regions that put forward official plans, and this government just overrode them, just unilaterally decided—“Thank you, councillors; thank you, local planners; thank you, local citizens, for all the effort you put into coming up with your reasoned, well-thought-out official plans, the ways that you were going to build your own communities. Thanks anyway, but we’re just going to take all of these and we’re going to override them. We’re going to rewrite them in the minister’s office.” That is an incredible, incredible, heavy-handed action on the part of this government. The regions that had this happen to them—they were mentioned before, but this government ignored councils in Waterloo, Barrie, Wellington. There were also significant changes made to Hamilton.

I want to talk a little bit about what happened in Hamilton. In Hamilton, on the same day that the government opened up greenbelt lands for development, the government also forced the expansion of Hamilton’s urban boundaries by 2,200 hectares of land—again, overriding city council and overriding the will of the people of the city of Hamilton. And I need to be clear: This is almost three times as much land with an urban boundary expansion as was lost during the greenbelt grab. Again, the people of Hamilton, who had been advocating for a frozen urban boundary, spoke up. I will say that, in Hamilton, we had a referendum, and something—90% of the people, I think; there was an extraordinary number of people who filled out their referendum and returned it to council. Of that, it was an overwhelming majority—I think it was perhaps 90% of the people who said they wanted a firm urban boundary; they didn’t want to expand. That was the will of the people of Hamilton. It was the decision of Hamilton city council, and it was the decision of Hamilton’s city planners. Despite this being submitted to the province, the previous minister, Mr. Clark, overrode it, just like that. He threatened that he would in an op-ed—an extraordinary, unusual op-ed that he wrote to the city of Hamilton in the *Hamilton Spectator*, saying that he would overturn it, and sure enough, he did.

This is a government that not only overrode democratically elected councils, but they abdicated their duty to consult with First Nations.

We know that so many of these deals happened in the back rooms. We also know that the vast majority of the developers that benefited from the urban boundary expansion were the same speculators that benefited from the greenbelt grab.

So we have, again, the Integrity Commissioner and the Auditor General to thank for some of the records that show what happened behind the scenes.

I think it needs to be made clear that in the Integrity Commissioner’s report, developers from Hamilton were invited by this government to a meeting where they were shown the changes that were going to be made to Hamilton’s official plan; they were shown before Hamilton city councillors were, before Hamilton planners were. These developers were in a meeting and said, “Are you comfortable with the changes we’re going to make to

the official plan?” These are developers and lobbyists. It turns out that they are one of the same developers that bought tickets for Doug Ford’s stag and doe. This is no way to conduct business. It’s shocking that insider developers would be given a heads-up on the changes that were going to be made to Hamilton’s official plan before Hamilton was. And if that isn’t evidence of preferential treatment, if that isn’t evidence of insider dealing, I don’t know what is.

I want to go on to say that there was a court challenge, as there always is with this government, and records were revealed. In these records that came directly from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, these records revealed—they were internal documents that showed that this government knew the decisions they were making around urban boundary expansions were not needed. The documents said clearly that in many municipalities, including in Hamilton, the Hamilton frozen boundary expansion would have been sufficient to build the houses that we need. It showed that there was no understanding of the cost that would be incurred by municipalities like Hamilton—which actually means Hamilton taxpayers. They didn’t take into consideration the cost that would be downloaded to taxpayers when this forced urban boundary expansion required the city of Hamilton to build infrastructure—roads, schools, fire stations, fire hydrants, sewer, waste water. All those costs are not on the developers; they’re on the city of Hamilton, also known as the taxpayers. The ministry’s own documents revealed that they didn’t know what those costs were going to be, and they still went ahead.

The ministry’s own internal documents said that they knew that this would impact prime agricultural land, which we all know—farms feed cities. We’re losing agricultural land at an unsustainable pace—that wasn’t a concern—and that the environmental impacts would be significant, but they weren’t taken into consideration. This is the information that the ministry used to make their decision when they went ahead with these forced urban boundaries. It’s unbelievable that that would be okay, that that’s part of the decision.

Again, was this about housing? I would just say that no one actually is buying the line that it was about housing—and the line is the point that I want to say, because Ryan Amato was quoted in these documents telling bureaucrats and telling assistant ministers, “Hold the line. It’s all about housing.” And that came when the heat was on. So they even said it was a line: “Hold the line. It’s all about housing.” That was their cover story. Ford’s hand-picked adviser was saying, “Hold the line.”

1730

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s own documents showed that the 77 individual changes that were proposed to Hamilton’s municipal plans were requested by unnamed parties, third parties. We don’t know who made these requests, so it’s like the province is governed by Mr. X and unnamed third parties who had direct influence in changing how land was used in the province and in Hamilton. So, absolutely, this was another

sketchy backroom deal that benefited well-connected speculators and, as we say, has done nothing to build homes for our community of Hamilton.

I would just want to make sure that you are aware that Hamilton is meeting the housing targets that we agreed on with the province—actually, we’re exceeding those within our existing urban boundaries. It’s proof positive that these lands, this greenbelt grab and this forced urban boundary expansion that made people rich was not needed to build the housing we need.

I also want to talk a little bit about the MZOs. Again, this extraordinary number of MZOs that have been issued in this province is like an albatross around the neck of this government. We know what you’ve been up to, because of the extraordinary number of MZOs that have been issued.

This is an insane fact: Guests at Doug Ford’s daughter’s wedding received 18 MZOs—more MZOs than the Liberal government issued in their time in office.

**Interjection:** And we thought they did a lot.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** A lot.

Our MPP from Oshawa has made clear—she just had a wedding, and she gave out bottles of maple syrup. So there is another way. Gifting MZOs, which is gifting land in the province, is not the way to go.

An Ancaster councillor, Craig Cassar, said it best: “It’s entirely undemocratic for the province to accommodate for-profit interests that are in complete contradiction to the public’s interest.”

We also know that many of these changes came directly, word for word, from speculators.

So it is well and good that the government is reversing this, because certainly it was a messy business indeed.

Again, the fact that we are here in this House, just having rammed through legislation and rushed legislation, giving the power to issue MZOs to a minister—it’s in stark contrast to what happened with issuing these MZOs and what happens when you shortchange a process, when you cut the public out, and when you don’t fulfill your duty to consult Indigenous First Nations. There are consequences. I’m standing here, right now, as a consequence of this, while you’re rolling back and revoking this bill.

I’m just going to talk about some of the stakeholders and some of the consequences of what you’ve done by rushing MZOs.

Let’s start with everybody’s favourite, if you will—an article from Colin D’Mello that says, “Ford Government Forced to Fix Rushed Zoning Order That Put Tower on Flight Path.” Well, how is that for a headline, Speaker?

“The Ford government was forced to scale back” an MZO “after the developer was given permission to build a skyscraper right in the middle of the flight path of Pearson International Airport ... after a rushed process...”

“The gaffe is likely to draw more scrutiny to the province’s use of ... MZOs a controversial tool that allows the province to overrule and replace ... decisions made by local councils...”

“Sources with knowledge of the provincial process told Global News the request for one building included in the zoning order—a 50-storey tower—come from the de-



veloper and was turned around by the Ford government in less than two weeks.

“The order to allow the building near Toronto Pearson airport came through the Premier’s Office and was given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing...”

They turned this MZO around in two weeks, put a tower in a flight path of Pearson airport—if that is not evidence of a rushed process that needs to be reversed, I don’t know what is.

Also, consequences in Hamilton: We know this government is under RCMP investigation, I would say justifiably. But Hamilton city council moved a motion to request the RCMP to investigate the province’s changes to the official plan and urban boundary. Hamilton city council is requesting that the RCMP investigate not only the province’s greenbelt land removal, but also its decision to expand the city’s urban boundary and make other surprise changes to its official plan.

As reported by CBC, Hamilton and the province “copied a developer’s exact request into the official plan so he could move forward with building condos in Ancaster. The developer’s representative had attended Premier Doug Ford’s daughter’s stag and doe in the summer of 2022.” Again, it’s a consequence of a process that is rushed.

That you are still continuing on with your Ontario Place shenanigans has consequences.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Did you talk about Kaleed at all?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** No, I didn’t talk about Kaleed. I’m so tired of talking about massages and Vegas, but I did not yet. But I could, to make my colleague the MPP from Hamilton Mountain—should I do a little?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Sure, go on.

**Interjection:** You have one minute.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** One minute—I’ve got one minute and 42 seconds.

I never in a million years thought that I would get elected to this esteemed House to represent the people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas and I would be talking about a developer and an MPP having couple massages in Vegas. I never thought that we would hear planning decisions made on massage tables in Vegas. It’s funny, but it is not funny. It’s a sad state of affairs.

Finally, what I want to say is that these things have consequences, and there are questions that remain. I mean, the minister—we want to know, was he going to abandon his plan to make lower-tier mayors responsible for his decisions? Will the minister confirm that no further changes to these official plans will be imposed? Will the minister promise not to slow down or complicate housing plans by allowing sprawl developers to appeal official plans themselves? And will the minister promise to maintain and respect the settlement boundary system and the ban on avoidable boundary expansions from now on? These are the questions that remain.

While this bill is here because of the community that saw through the actions of this government and rose up, and while it is important that we are reversing this here, I

hope that we all understand the importance of good planning, the importance of democratic processes and the importance of why we’re here as legislators, which is to do the right thing the first time, and not spend time reversing decisions that shouldn’t have ever been made in the first place.

And with that, Madam Speaker, I cede my time. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Flack has moved third reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Official Plan Adjustments Act, 2023 and to amend the Planning Act with respect to remedies. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion passed.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Orders of the Day? The government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Madam Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Are we in agreement to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

There being no private members’ public business designated for debate today, it is now time for the late show.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### DEFIBRILLATORS

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The member for Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for five minutes.

The member for Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I was indeed dissatisfied with the answer because my simple question was just for the government to enact a piece of legislation that will save lives, that’s been on the books for three and a half years. I simply asked the minister to commit to get that done before we came back this spring.

**1740**

Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, received royal assent in June of 2020, and it will be four years this June, if nothing happens, that we’ve gone without this registry, which does two things: It lets people know where defibrillators are if there’s an emergency. It helps paramedic services know that. So you can

imagine right now that if there's somebody who has a cardiac arrest—and 7,000 people a year have a cardiac arrest in Ontario—if they have that somewhere in Ontario—and you can imagine if it was a relative of yours and they had a cardiac arrest and there was a defibrillator in the elementary school or in an office nearby, but nobody knew.

The other piece of the bill was—and the member from Nickel Belt and myself wrote the same bill as the member from Eglinton–Lawrence; we just travelled that bill, and I'll explain how that happened in a little while. Inside that bill, it says if you have a defibrillator and it's registered, then you have to maintain it. It's not that much to maintain. It's multiples of years to replace pads and batteries so that it works in case of a cardiac arrest, because if you find a defibrillator and you go to apply it and it doesn't work, there's going to be a bad result. So it's a great bill; they were all great bills.

What happened is, the House leader at the time was a new House leader, and I spoke directly to the House leader and suggested that we debate the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's bill, because they were all the same, and she had a slot. We could debate it, get it to second reading, and I said, "Let's travel the bill," and the House leader, to his credit at the time, said, "Yes, we'll travel it. We'll get it done." It was travelled, and as I said, it passed third reading and received royal assent in June of 2020.

So it's three and a half years since we debated second reading here—four years actually, so three and a half years this law has been on the books, a law that will save lives. Defibrillators do save lives, and we know that if we get to people within three minutes, they're likely going to survive.

As I said in my question, the person sitting next to me in this chair is living proof that defibrillators work, and if they couldn't find it or it didn't work, he wouldn't be here. That's the purpose of the bill.

The reason that I'm annoyed at the answer that I got to the question is, two years ago this member talked about this bill and said we need to do something, two years ago this January, and nothing has happened, no regulations, nothing.

The government has an opportunity to enact a piece of legislation that will keep people safe, that will keep people alive, that will prevent families from having empty chairs. So what I would like to hear from the parliamentary assistant—and I very much appreciate the fact that you're here—is that somebody is going to do something, that you're going to get it done because it's been three and a half years. As I said in my question, three minutes saves a life, but it's three and a half years we're waiting. Three minutes, three and a half years—and 7,000 people a year.

I really sincerely hope that the government is working on getting this thing done before we come back here. It can be done. It's been three and a half years. It will almost be four if you don't get it done. It's a good thing; it's an opportunity. We put forward this bill, and it's been put forward in the past, and it didn't get done. If I hear in the response from the other side, "Well, you guys never did

it," fine, okay, sure, but you've had an opportunity for three and a half years with a law that's been on the books and an opportunity to do it, and irrespective of what happened 10 years ago or five years ago, you need to do it. It would be good for all Ontarians if this law became enacted as soon as possible.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** I'd like to thank the member for raising this important issue and giving us the opportunity to discuss how our government is enacting the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, DRPAA. Our government is currently working on the registry for the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act.

For those that don't know, defibrillation is a treatment for life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias, specifically ventricular fibrillation and non-perfusing ventricular tachycardia. A defibrillator delivers a dose of electric current to the heart. What we are really talking about is an AED, an automatic external defibrillator, which means that it automatically detects if someone is in a shockable rhythm and it speaks to the individual operating the device to tell them what to do. The usability of these devices by anyone is what makes these devices so valuable for saving lives.

We are all proud of the work of my colleague parliamentary assistant Robin Martin, MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence, whose leadership on defibrillators is making a difference for ours and future generations. Starting back in 2019, the MPP from Eglinton–Lawrence brought forward this important bill. After a lot of hard work, she was able to get all-party support for this important legislation and it passed in June of 2020.

The act imposes certain requirements respecting the installation, maintenance, testing and availability of defibrillators on designated premises or public premises. Although during the pandemic, our focus was on addressing the pressing issues of COVID-19, we are now well on our way to making this registry a reality. Our government is currently prioritizing the policy work and due diligence required to implement this act, with steady progress being made.

Although already, through extensive consultations, we have heard from more than 100 individual and organizational stakeholders from varied sectors. In addition, we sought supplementary feedback through a comprehensive online survey that received over 110 responses. Ensuring that this is done right is important with this legislation, as no one wants unintended consequences from rushed regulations or framework. We look forward to a program that will be welcomed by all parties, and that is why we are taking the time to get it right.

Let's be clear: We welcome opposition support for this bill. It is one of the things we can all agree upon. At the heart of our government's work is providing the people of Ontario with high-quality and responsive health care when and where they need it. We know that every second counts, and AEDs, when used in conjunction with CPR within three to five minutes after a cardiac arrest, can

double survival rates. We are immensely grateful to the businesses, organizations and communities that have installed AEDs in their public spaces.

The Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act would impose requirements on the installation, maintenance, testing and availability of AEDs on certain premises to ensure public access to these devices. It comes into force on a day to be named by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor. We are now analyzing this valuable input to shape options for the act's implementation.

We believe that defibrillators can save lives. That is why our government is dedicated to implementing the

DRPAA in a responsive and measured way, helping to connect more Ontarians to AEDs wherever they live, work or play.

A constituent of mine, Brian Patterson, the president and CEO of the Ontario Safety League, said to me, "Public access to defibrillators has proven to save lives and has become a key element in the community safety network. They are simple to use and provide instantaneous value."

Our government will continue to work to ensure that public access to defibrillators will be enacted, as per the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act.

*Report continues in volume B.*



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<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	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
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	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
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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	
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	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
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Vaugcois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	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	