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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

F-38

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Building a Strong Ontario
Together Act
(Budget Measures), 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 23 November 2023

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2023 visant à bâtir
un Ontario fort ensemble
(mesures budgétaires)

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 23 novembre 2023

Chair: Ernie Hardeman
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Président : Ernie Hardeman
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Thursday 23 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Jeudi 23 novembre 2023

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2.

**BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO
TOGETHER ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2023
LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR
UN ONTARIO FORT ENSEMBLE
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 146, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Good morning, everyone. I call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to order. We're meeting today for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 146, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

Julia Hood from legislative counsel is here to assist us with our work should you have any questions. We also have ministry staff joining us on Zoom from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

A copy of the amendments filed with the Clerk has been distributed electronically. A hard copy has also been provided to each committee member.

Before we begin with consideration of specific sections of the bill and accompanying schedules, I will allow members to make comments to the bill as a whole. Afterwards, debate will be limited to the specific amendment, section or schedule under consideration.

Committee members, pursuant to standing order 83, are there any comments or questions on the bill as a whole? MPP Kernaghan.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: In looking at this bill as a whole, we know that right now people across Ontario are in a cost-of-living crisis. It's concerning to us as members of the official opposition that there aren't enough measures to really address affordability across the province. Last year for pre-budget consultations, we heard from many folks who were receiving social assistance, people who were concerned about accessing vital health care. With this bill, there aren't any real measures that are addressing that. This government would pat itself on the back for the paltry increase to social assistance and the fact that they are

indexing it to inflation, which, while we will say it is a good measure, the fact that they have indexed social assistance below the deep poverty line is deeply concerning.

People are also really struggling with the rent that they pay. It comes as no secret that it was the last Liberal government that opened up vacancy decontrol and created this unwritten incentive for unethical corporate landlords to kick good people out so they could push the rents to whatever the market can withstand. That has really resulted in precarious housing for many, many individuals across Ontario.

I think of Cherryhill in my riding—and I really need members to listen to this carefully. When that development was first created, it was a wonderful, wonderful developer who had various community amenities: a pool, a clubhouse etc. There have been people living there for many decades. Unfortunately, that building has been sold twice now and ever since that has happened, each time, we now have seniors who are really scared. I think of Pauline in my riding, who said to me just recently that she doesn't know what's going to happen. She is concerned that she's going to end up potentially living in her car. That is something that should give this government pause.

We have legislation that has been brought forward by the official opposition to address this, to plug that hole of vacancy decontrol, something that the government could pass and should pass. It hasn't just been introduced in this Parliament alone, it has been introduced in the last Parliament and it is something that this government ought to implement. It's really frightening that we've seen legislation from this government that has reinforced a system of exploitation of renters.

When it comes to things like renovictions—and the fact that there are landlords who will simply put a lick of paint up and end up charging a ridiculous amount. I think of seniors who have basically paid for the building that they are in, and, when a new landlord comes by, they realize that there is an opportunity for them to make someone unhoused, to take away all of their security, to disregard and disrespect all of the years that they have spent within that place, just because they know that there is a financial incentive. Really, it is within this government's purview to make sure that seniors are housed, that they remain housed, because we know it is not only the human cost. To think there are people who are enjoying their golden years, their senior years, that they are living paycheque to paycheque, and they're scared—this government could answer that.

We could also implement rent control in between tenancies to make sure that a new renter will pay only what the last tenant paid, plugging that vacancy decontrol hole. But, also, to think that there is no rent control on buildings first occupied after November 2018—this government would pat itself on the back and claim that rental housing starts went up. Well, I wonder if that is because of legislation like that, which really tipped the balance in favour of profit, in favour of corporate interests, in favour of people who don't care about making sure that people are housed.

It's deeply concerning to us as the official opposition. We've heard in this House time and again, I think it was an individual from Toronto—St. Paul's, a 91-year-old—a 91-year-old—who was facing losing their housing. Can you imagine? Can any of us here in this committee imagine being at that age, having contributed towards society, having worked hard, having been a good person and being neglected so badly by this government? That should give us all pause. And yet we don't see measures like that within Bill 146, and they could easily be implemented.

We've heard from Nina Deeb, who is a realtor who has many years of experience seeing what has happened. We see the proliferation of real estate investment trusts, which are exploiting very large loopholes. This government also made an increase to the non-resident speculation tax—something that we supported as the official opposition—and yet left glaring holes within that implementation, making it so that if a building was purchased with, I believe, over five units, that would be exempted from the non-resident speculation tax, allowing these real estate investment trusts to gobble up housing and end up redeveloping purpose-built rental housing.

We believe, as the official opposition, that the government should restore or return to its historic responsibility for the creation of truly affordable housing. We brought forward the Homes Ontario plan because we saw, post-World War II, that the government understood its responsibility to make sure that people returning from active service in World War II had a home. It is the greatest generation; they deserved it. But, also, that gave rise to the baby boomer generation—you think about the economic prosperity that Ontario enjoyed through that generation and the amount of wealth that was created.

Affordable housing and housing is a human right. Housing is a social determinant of health. Housing is foundational. Housing is fundamental. Without housing, little else really, truly matters in life, because people need that solid base in order to raise a family and to keep themselves safe.

Oftentimes, there is this neo-liberal notion that if people just pulled up their socks and worked harder, they too would succeed, and I would say that in many cases that is indeed a myth. We know that there is great disparity in society, and there's a lot of judgment. Unfortunately, a lot of people will either turn away from folks who are homeless, or they will cast judgment. Oftentimes people will have this Victorian notion that it's somebody's fault for being homeless, that they must have chosen this, or this is what they desire, and I can tell you that is a ridiculous stereotype and really judgmental thinking.

0910

Oftentimes, too, people will claim that it is someone's mental health that has caused them to be homeless, when in actual point of fact, simply being homeless will greatly exacerbate people's mental health struggles. It does not necessarily follow that one has mental health struggles and then is homeless, but we do know from the evidence and from the research that when someone is homeless, they do end up having mental health struggles.

Can you imagine, each and every single day, wondering where you're going to have safe shelter, where you're going to find home? Hundreds of people turned away each day in Toronto from simply accessing a shelter bed, families—as we've heard, there are cities across Ontario that are actively setting up tent cities, different encampments. That's within this government's power to change.

We have left the development of affordable housing within this province up to the private market. In speaking with many private developers, they don't feel that they should have to go it alone. It is not really within their responsibility or within their purview to provide the affordable housing that the province really should.

Their mandate is to look after their shareholders, to return value, to make sure that they are looking after their corporate interests, and there's nothing wrong with that. That is their mandate, but I would say that it is within the province's mandate to make sure that people are safe.

We know full well that the cost of someone being homeless is actually greater because of their reliance on the health care system or their impact with the criminal justice system, and there are so many different ways. Really, it is an upstream investment, it is a cost benefit and it's quite surprising that we see this government blissfully ignoring the human struggles that people have across this province. So that is why we brought forward our plan, Homes Ontario, for the government to return to its historic responsibility to actually build those affordable units, non-market homes, really empowering co-ops and non-market housing providers to make sure that people have a safe place to call home, and yet this government seems keen to just simply never put its work boots on again. Quite frankly, I think that is an abdication of responsibility. It has let down the people across this province again and again and again.

I don't think that there is really a cause for celebration with this fall economic statement and with Bill 146. I think there are some measures in here which are acceptable, but I think there's just so many more that this government could have implemented.

Consider all of the children who are on wait-lists for autism services right now across the province. This government has made such a mess year after year after year. The longer the children wait for autism therapy—it's unconscionable. It's unacceptable. Early identification and early therapy is key. It will change lives. We're talking about children who could be productive members of society, who could, within a limited scope, look after themselves. But we're also talking about parents who want to be able to emotionally engage with their children, and this government has really shut the door on so many

families. We're talking about kids who are unable to make eye contact with their parents. Can you imagine? Can you imagine what that would feel like for a parent who wants to have that relationship with their child, and this government has denied that again and again and again by ignoring those kids who need that service now.

So it's deeply concerning that the government has heard these concerns year after year after year, for five years. We saw a government that had patted itself on the back, talking about clearing the wait-list and all they did was create yet another wait-list. Kids cannot wait. This government should have learned from the abysmal failures of the past Liberal government that would posit that autism ends at five.

Further, when we consider individuals who are living with disabilities, why is it that we still have the red tape of Passport funding, that parents of children with a developmental disability have to reapply for Passport funding once the child turns 18? How does that make any sense? I don't know of any examples of individuals aging out of a developmental disability. It simply does not happen. So why do we put that arbitrary red tape in place? Why is that allowed? Why is that acceptable?

Frequently, parents of children with developmental disabilities are assisted by school boards—special education teachers is the proper term in the school boards within my riding—they have that support. They have that support filling out forms, making sure everything is looked after and all the boxes are ticked, as it were. But as soon as someone turns 18, they no longer have that assistance from the school board, and this government makes them jump through hoops.

We've also provided the example of continuous glucose monitoring for individuals living with diabetes. Alberta, a rabidly Conservative government, actually provides continuous glucose monitoring to all individuals who either have type 1 or type 2 diabetes. I've brought forward examples in this House of an individual who was lucky enough to have that continuous glucose monitoring and it saved his life. It awakened him in the middle of the night; his partner was able to assist and make sure that his blood sugars were returned to normal. There are other folks. I spoke about a PhD student who had to endure a muscle biopsy simply to qualify for a limited time for a continuous glucose monitor to maintain their diabetes.

When you consider that folks could lose their sight, they could lose limbs, the quality of life, the productivity that someone could have—but also, I think there's a mental impact as well for individuals to know that the province cares for them, that the province has their back, that the province looks after them. And, yet, this government does not provide for folks. It's a very judgmental system. I applaud different—there has been some change and some movement, but across the board, continuous glucose monitors are not provided for people.

I want to hearken back to our pre-budget consultation from last year in which we heard from folks who are living on the Ontario Disability Support Program and how their economics are judged based on the person that they love. We still have a system whereby someone is financially re-

sponsible for their partner. That is the province of Ontario right now. If one partner is earning more, then the person who might be on social assistance is expected to be a burden to their partner.

It has impacted people in relationships. They might not be able to enter into a relationship with someone who has greater financial stability because, unfortunately, the government will expect that that person is going to look after them, as though they deserve less because, through luck of a relationship, they have the good fortune to have a partner who has greater finances than they do. That is very strange.

Why is it that the housing supplement for ODSP is so low? It is \$533, I believe. Where in this province can you find housing for \$500 a month? It is simply impossible.

This government could address these issues. These are long-standing issues. It is not new news. And, yet, we have wilful neglect, deliberate ignoring of the situations that people face across this province. I've got to say, I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed that this committee has heard all of these concerns that have been brought forward and yet seems very casual about not implementing them. We have this opportunity to address these issues, and I hope that this committee will consider doing so and change the lives of people across Ontario.

0920

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Any further debate? MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was only one week ago that we met to plan the consultation on Bill 146. In fact, that meeting was a late-called meeting, and I was astounded, at that meeting, when we outlined the public consultation component for Bill 146. The reason that we didn't get enough delegations, that we had to cancel our consultation on the fall economic statement for the entire afternoon yesterday, is because we gave less than 24 hours to the people of Ontario to actually register and come to this committee and share their concerns—or their support, for that matter, if they were supporting it. So this has been a rushed process. When governments of all stripes rush a process, they are often left with a subpar document and policy and/or legislation—which is what we have before us today.

I also moved a motion to extend the consultation and the clause-by-clause consideration and the timing for the amendments. Of course, the government voted that down.

We just got the amendments to this legislation last night, at 8 p.m. It's a farce of a process, to be quite honest with you, and it's indicative, I think, of how this government is treating our democracy here at Queen's Park. They certainly have enough time to call us for midnight sittings for the entire week, but they don't allow time for the people of this province to come here and share their experiences and potentially inform the process. We haven't been able to do the appropriate stakeholder consultation because of these timelines. So the fact that we just got these amendments last night, at 8 o'clock, that were just uploaded this morning is really indicative of the disrespect that this government has for the process of actually doing your due diligence with regard to the fall economic statement.

We were also not offered a briefing on Bill 146, which is a departure from previous governments, regardless of what you think about them. When I served with MPP Fedeli for years, as the finance critic, we would often go to those briefings together, share our notes, share our concerns. It was really a sign of the government of the day recognizing that the opposition serves a very important part of this democracy and occasionally can actually inform better, more responsive policy.

So that's where we are right now. We have limited amendments before us because there was so little time. The fact that so few stakeholders were able to appear before this committee really leaves us with more questions. Some of those outstanding questions have to do with the infrastructure bank of Ontario, which the official opposition has serious concerns about, as does the federal Conservative Party.

When you're looking at the assessment—and it's interesting to compare the two documents, the fall economic statement from the province of Ontario and the fall economic statement that was released on Tuesday from the federal government. By now, many Ontarians and Ontario budget watchers have learned to take provincial budget projections with a handful of salt. The deficit forecast, for starters, essentially has been called pure fiction. The current government typically spends less than what it earmarks in budgets, and the finance minister has taken a real shine to these unallocated contingency funds. Ontario has one of the largest contingency funds—unallocated—in the country, and those funds are not earmarked for anything. How is that even fiscally responsible? And also, it is definitely a workaround in a Westminster Parliament, whereby we as legislators have responsibility to oversee the funding in the province. So when it goes into this little squirrelled-away fund, sitting now at \$5.4 billion, there's a real lack of accountability with regard to that money. There was a time and a place where Conservatives cared about transparency and accountability with regard to finances.

Case in point: Back in March 2023, the budget included \$4 billion in contingency funds, and we thought that was outrageous. Two thirds of the way through the fiscal year, the province had only spent \$336 million of it, meaning the contingency fund remained at \$3.7 billion. But I think what you might want to know: Where did that \$336 million go? And then, when the fall economic statement was released—or the fall update—the minister added \$2.5 billion to the contingency fund, and now it's projected, as I said, at \$5.4 billion. This is separate from the \$1-billion surplus fund that the Ontario finance ministry has traditionally set aside to handle what is unexpected.

The reason why this is so significant, this \$5.4-billion unallocated contingency fund, is that there is such desperate need right now in the province for strategic and targeted investment in health care, in housing, in the autism file, in the post-secondary education file—where your own task force came forward and said that you must review the funding formula for post-secondary education. The University of Waterloo, as a small example, will be running a \$15-billion operational deficit in-year. So even when you

assign task forces and round tables and focus groups, like the Housing Affordability Task Force that started its work almost two and a half years ago, you don't listen to them. Perhaps there will be a shift with regard to the post-secondary education file, I'm not sure.

This is where we are right now. This means that the provincial deficit is pegged at \$5.6 billion for 2023-24, and many people believe that this is pure accounting fiction, because you actually have \$5.4 billion in another fund. I want to say that the deficit and the debt-to-GDP ratio and the percentage of revenues going to interest payments are right now all near 10-year lows. So the government is not under that kind of high interest-rate pressure on some of the operational debt that you have, but you are not investing in places that could actually save the government money—those upstream costs.

Keeping people housed saves money, saves the health care system money, the justice system, sometimes the education system. We heard yesterday that, in the course of one year, a homeless individual with various complex health issues who is living on the street costs the system \$1 million in social services. These are choices governments have to make, and we would contend that you are definitely making the wrong choices. Given the pressing needs of so many Ontarians, this is the time to invest and get ahead of some of those higher costs that will put additional pressure on the books of the government.

This fall economic statement builds on a pattern. Minister Bethlenfalvy is the third finance minister, and back when Minister Fedeli was the finance minister, they started making adjustments to the Ontario budget following the June 2018 provincial election. Since then, we've seen, actually, a very clear pattern in how the current government, through three finance ministers, views spending on public services and income supports. With the exception of the 5% for ODSP, this is the slow suffocation of public services.

At the same time, having a parallel system, particularly on health care—which is ending up costing the Treasury Board more money. When you're paying three to four times more for a health procedure than you would in the truly publicly funded system, that's fiscally responsible, one would say also, perhaps, ethically irresponsible.

0930

What we've seen over the last five years, which has led us to really raise the red flag—or the blue flag, whatever you wish. For the last five years, by major sector, the changes are adjusted for inflation and population growth, showing real per capita spending—because Conservatives used to believe that inflationary cost pressures were actually real. But how much the government is spending per person in Ontario in constant dollars compared to 2018: The results are really quite something. Real per capita spending on post-secondary education has dropped by 11% since 2018; in children and social services, it is down 12%; in education, it is down 11%; and in the justice sector, it is down by just over 2%. There is a small increase in the health care sector of 2.9%, but that is little comfort to people who are waiting for services.

I just had a staff member get admitted to the hallway at Grand River Hospital. She was admitted, but she just has one of those curtains around her in a hallway—but she has been admitted. I distinctly remember this government promising to get rid of hallway health care. Sometimes you can't even get the people into the hospital—they're stuck in the ambulance—because you've been so disrespectful to the nurses across Ontario.

In health and in all sectors, the slow suffocation of public services has gone on for too long. We feel it's time for this government to course-correct. It's not like you don't have the funding. In mid-year, you dropped \$2.5 billion into a slush fund, squirrelling it away into an unallocated piggy bank. You really do need to look at where your priorities are in this government. The 2% reduction in justice too is so appalling, given the backlog in our court system.

I did raise the issue of Emily who was—

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Crawford.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Yes, thank you. Point of order, Chair: I would just suggest that the member opposite be careful of her language and retract the comment she made.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The only person who can warn me—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Let's not have a debate here. Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Yes, a slush fund is a reserve fund used for illicit purposes, including political bribery.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): This is not a time to argue. Did you have a point of order? The member is speaking. So if you're going to take her time, we need to have a point of order of why you're doing that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to remind the member that the only person who can caution a member on their tone, or what they're saying, or on their language is the Chair. I look to the Chair for those comments. So thank you very much.

I'm going to finish on the justice reduction in funding, because I raised this story in the House. The backlog now in Ontario to access justice is leading to alleged criminals walking. This is tough-on-crime government here.

Emily, who—the CTV story was posted a week ago. Her alleged rapist—who the crown did tell her she believed that she was sexually assaulted—was released after 18 months because the court system was so backlogged. Think of the harm that underfunding the justice system is causing the people of Ontario.

I don't know what else we can say to try to get the government to be strategic in how you invest the money, but I can tell you, right now, when we see the need is so dire in the province of Ontario, we would not be squirrelling away money in an unallocated contingency fund.

With that, Chair, I will conclude my comments.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? MPP Bowman.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: My mother taught me, before I criticize somebody, to start with positives, so I'm going to start with the positive.

The vaping tax is a great measure. Certainly it has been called for by experts who know that that's one of the measures we can take as a government to discourage people

from starting and to encourage people to stop vaping. So I think that's a positive measure that will benefit the people of Ontario.

But I do have to say that the fall economic statement—I mean, that's a time to take stock and to look at what's going on around our province, and to think about how a government can better meet the needs of its citizens. In that regard, I have to say the fall economic statement was really a resounding disappointment.

As families struggle to keep up with the soaring cost of living and a record number of Ontarians are relying on food banks—I would like to think about that. When I think of food banks, I think of the Depression. While I wasn't around, I have seen pictures and archives and read stories of long lineups as people wait for food. While now we have a little more dignity around our food banks, which is, of course, a good thing—people can make appointments; they can go in and they can shop—we now have record numbers, more than during the Depression. And so, when I think about one in 10 Torontonians going to food banks, and I think about those people being working members of society, as well—so it's not just people who are unemployed or on disability or facing other mental health challenges, it is people who are working who are going to food banks.

We certainly heard about that in last year's pre-budget hearings. We heard about tutorial assistance at universities. Again, people with a good education who are working to get maybe a PhD: While they are doing that, they are teaching and advising undergraduate students, and yet they are going to food banks to put food on the table.

That also comes to housing, around affordability. A third of Ontarians rent. I'm sure everybody in this room, likely many of us—certainly I was a renter before I was able to afford to buy my first home. Some people rent as they prepare to buy their first home; other people choose to rent for many years, because they don't want to have the burden of owning a home and caring for it, and we want them to have that choice.

While rent control can be a controversial program—and I understand the challenges around making sure rental supply continues to get built, and that sometimes rent control can discourage that—there are models where you can put rent control in and allow the investors to recoup some of their investment over time, and then limit the amount of increases after that. So there are systems that can be put in place to help affordability, and again, this would have been an opportunity for the government to think about a kind of rent control, instead of what we see now with record-high rents.

I shared a story in the House about a veteran in my riding who called me. He is on disability, he is on a pension, and he said, "My rent is going up 12%, and my pension does not go up 12%. What am I going to do?" So there are many people who are facing those kinds of very stressful situations, trying to think about how they keep a roof over their head while they face rising rents.

We've talked a little bit about the infrastructure bank. I think about the bureaucracy of another infrastructure bank, and I know that we will add a big number of people who

are on the sunshine list through that. In fact, they will well exceed the salary cut-off of \$100,000 on the sunshine list.

I've talked about this bank. The \$3 billion that is going into that infrastructure bank will only attract private capital if we give greater returns than what investors can get through holding Ontario government bonds, and that means private enterprise. If you look at what pension funds—so the government has talked about attracting pension fund investors to invest in infrastructure in Ontario. Pension funds are investing in for-profit businesses because they get a greater return. They take a greater risk and they get a greater return because they are obligated to get returns for their members that would be in the range of 10%. They're trying to fund those members' pensions and retirement benefits, so they are looking for opportunities where they can make greater returns than what they would get in the bond market, and that will mean investing in private enterprise.

0940

While the Minister of Finance has been asked that question several times, he has yet to come out and declare his intention around what kind of investment opportunities the infrastructure bank will offer to private investors to attract them. I would certainly say that my view is that those will be private enterprises, whether that's more private enterprise in long-term care—we know long-term care that was private had the highest death rates during COVID—whether that's in transportation. We don't know exactly what that looks like. Maybe that's where this whole GO train situation is going—GO train stations where municipalities will have to pay for their GO train station, and maybe that will be an opportunity to say, "Hey, you can privatize that and own only 40% and the infrastructure bank can own 60% and we'll give a return to the shareholders." We don't know what that looks like yet, but that's an important gap in transparency around this fall economic statement that remains, and it needs to be closed.

We have a government that promised in 2018 to cut income taxes for middle-income households. They promised to do a 20% drop in income taxes, and that is a promise that they have yet to keep. That is something that is absolutely within their control. They could have included a measure to help those families, those households by doing that in this fall economic statement if they are serious about helping families with affordability. Instead of doing that, they've doubled down on building an underground parking lot at Ontario Place.

We know that the original bid from Therme did not have a requirement for an additional parking lot, and so you have to wonder why, why this government is spending—probably it will end up being half a billion dollars as construction costs continue to rise, and we know these kinds of projects typically go over budget. So they're doubling down on building an underground and underwater parking lot that is really not necessary. We have lots of parking there, we have transit being built to go there, and that's half a billion dollars. That's double the additional money that they put in the budget to spend on helping people suffering from mental health and addictions—more than double.

We also have families who are waiting for daycare spots, and while this government was the last to take the federal government up on their very smart move to come up with a \$10-a-day daycare system for families in this province, they are falling behind on getting it rolled out, and we hear that time and again from credible organizations in this space, like the YMCA. The YMCA, while they might have a building, don't have sufficient people to work in that building to allow families to have a reliable daycare situation so that one of those parents can go back to work. So instead, in two-parent households, we have one parent staying at home and not earning the income they could earn because they can't get daycare. That's because the government has restricted wages on those early childhood educator workers. And while they have finally allowed an increase, in the meantime, thousands of workers have left that profession, and attracting them back will be a challenge. It's a very demanding job.

I have a good friend who is an ECE worker, and while she has lots of love in her heart for all of the children in her care, it's a demanding job. She's tired at the end of the day after taking care of five or six little ones. Just think about that. I know one of the members has two sets of twins, and I'm sure he can try to imagine adding one more and spending all day in a room with five small children. It's pretty demanding. They deserve a fair wage, and they deserve to be paid well for their work.

We also have a government that promised to cut electricity prices by 12%. That's another unfulfilled promise. Again, if they were serious about helping families who are struggling during this affordability crisis—that's something within their control. That's something they could have done in this fall economic statement. Again, it's a broken promise. We'll see if they ever get around to fulfilling that promise.

I see in this fall economic statement a government that seems more like they're trying to wear workers and families down instead of giving them a hand up.

They talk about building houses for the people of Ontario, but they instead tried to hand out \$8.3 billion to their insider friends. We know how that turned out. We know that there was an Auditor General report, we know that there was an Integrity Commissioner report, and now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are investigating this government because of that greenbelt scandal. They remain behind on their own plan to build 1.5 million new homes. They've acknowledged that. Maybe that was partly because they were too focused on making sure that some of their rich friends who handed their staff brown envelopes at special dinners—

Interjection.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Yes, I can say it again. They handed brown envelopes—they took brown envelopes, to say, "This is the piece of land that we'd like you to take out of the greenbelt."

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Order.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: They might not like the facts, Chair, but those are the facts as we know them now.

So we know that this government has spent a lot of time thinking about those kinds of things. I certainly would encourage them to spend more time thinking about what they can do to remove the barriers to get more rental housing built and to help create supply so that the price of rental housing does come down, people can afford the apartments they're in and new renters can afford to find a home.

Let's also talk about education. A recent report came out from People for Education. They did a survey. They talked to principals in high schools. Principals and teachers talked about the challenges they're facing in the new de-streaming program. They recognize that to support those students who are now out of the old model, they need additional resources—they need training, they need supports—and that they're not getting them. So we would ask that, again, the government think about putting some of the funding required to make sure that there are sufficient support staff in those classrooms, and that teachers get the training they need so that they are enabled to deliver the kind of education that we want all of our high school students to get so that they can reach their full potential.

We know that in post-secondary education we have a number of our institutions facing significant deficits. I know that the minister recently talked about the need for universities to be efficient. Where is the help for them to do that? If that's the ask, then this government certainly should help them do that, if they really believe that there are inefficiencies within our system. They're calling for more funding. They come cap in hand, basically, to say to the government, "We need more funding. We need some new tools." And, yet, the government says, "Go find some efficiencies."

I was in Kitchener Centre recently, as there's a by-election coming up on November 30, and I was out door-knocking. MPP Fife mentioned the tent cities. Certainly, I drove right by one. I have to say what shocked me the most was that the people who were in those tents clearly were trying to make them almost be permanent, if you get what I'm saying. They were putting up plywood and boards because they know that they have no other options and that they could be there through a very cold winter, as the winter season approaches. So it struck me that this was not just a temporary—"I'm here for a few nights or even a couple of weeks." It really is becoming housing.

I have to say, having travelled in my work to countries that are much poorer than Canada, where you do see shanty towns—you see shanty towns in many parts of this world—it's very troubling and sad that it seems that Ontario, under this government, is going in that direction as well. So I would again urge them to loosen up the constraints that they've got around the over \$5 billion in contingency funds and think of what they could do now to help those people who are unhoused and potentially suffering from mental health challenges or opioid addictions and give them that wraparound care and treatment that they need to get back to living their best life.

0950

The other thing I will talk about is the capital markets. There is a Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce which

issued their report a couple of years ago. The government has made some progress on their recommendations, but there are still many more. One of my amendments relates to a potential productivity improvement or an opportunity to encourage innovation. We know that innovation is one of—not the only but one of—the drivers of enhancing and building our productivity. Again, I would encourage the members—I know I'll have further opportunity to talk about that—to think about how we encourage not just private companies but also public companies as well in the manufacturing space to invest and innovate because that drives productivity which drives improvements for all of us.

Speaker, I also want to talk about Metrolinx. I was in my riding last night for a residents' association meeting. As you know, the Eglinton Crosstown goes through Don Valley West. Residents said to me, "What are you doing? What is this government doing about the crosstown? What is happening? Why aren't we hearing more?" And I said, "That's a very good question. I'm asking those questions as well." What we're hearing from this government is crickets—we're hearing nothing.

We know that the project is \$1 billion—with a B—over budget, at least. As the clock keeps ticking, we know that that means money is being spent, because people are on the clock trying to fix the problems that are keeping the trains from rolling. Yet, we've had no clear direction from this government or from Metrolinx about what is happening, what they are doing to solve the problem. We have stations that are sitting there, waiting. People are anxious and keen to be able to take advantage of that investment that was, again, many years in the making, and yet we are still waiting.

Now, we have a new line that is being started. I'm not sure the government has learned from the mistakes from this current line because they haven't talked about that. They haven't shared. They haven't been accountable and transparent about what the issues are that are keeping the crosstown from getting people moving.

I would ask that, again, there could be measures in this bill that say we need accountability. We need to make sure there are sufficient inducements to get things done on time and sufficient punishments when they are not done on time. Those are things that are absolutely within the government's control.

We have highways, of course, mentioned—I forget how many times—many, many times in this document. Traffic experts all know that the more highways you build, the more cars you get on the roads—except the 407, because the 407, as we know, has significant tolls. It costs a small fortune to cross the GTA on the 407, and so it's underutilized. And, yet, we have a government that is going to spend billions—and again, they won't tell us how much—on the 413. That's not what I would call transparency or accountability. We have a highway that's underused. They forgave a billion dollars not just once but twice to the organization running it. And yet, they're now going to spend billions—billions—on building the 413, which certainly their own ministry says will save people seconds.

So we can talk about future planning and we can talk about growth in our province, but we certainly know that

the 407 is an underutilized asset and that's not fiscally responsible—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I think we will call your time up for 20 minutes for the break. Standing order 111 states, "Unless expressly provided by the standing orders or by unanimous consent, no member shall speak for more than 20 minutes at a time in any standing or select committee."

Any further debate?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Good morning to everyone. It really gives me great pleasure to be here, and I am listening to all of the members speak on issues with regard to Bill 146. I want to start off by sharing my immigrant story. I came to this country and I went to school and I worked hard. I grabbed every opportunity that there was in this country as an immigrant, just like all of us do, to move forward. I got married here, I had my children here—I have three: two boys and one daughter. They are all in university. I have my eldest that is now starting his PhD. That's a big move—a first for the family's generation. And I am the first in my family here in Canada, as well.

When I listened to this fall budget, as my colleague said, there are some positives in there, but I just want to drill down on what's really hurting me—and I'm new coming in—like, June 27. When I heard of the fall economic statement that was going to be coming out, I had hopes that some policies or amendments were going to be there to impact families' lives, young people's lives. That's what I didn't see.

I see no investment in our young people. I hear on the opposite side in the chamber that we are investing in young people and we're going to be able to get them out of their parents' basement. I can't see when my three kids are going to be out of my basement with the way the economy is at right now. I have never seen it gone so horribly wrong. I still believe the government has all the rights to fix this for our young people.

I want to touch a bit on rent control. I have been speaking to a lot of young people in Scarborough, in my riding. I'll give you an example: I saw a young man at the food bank. He just graduated—I think it's information technology, and he graduated from the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. He is at the food bank. He said to me, "MPP Hazell, I have to do this every week. The only job after graduating I could find is selling cellphones at the Eaton Centre." I wanted to cry, because I also have kids. I said to him, "I am going to connect you with a lot of people in the Scarborough community," because I am well connected in Scarborough and I do everything that I can to help young people that come to me. I hear their stories. And I want to share these stories with you, so you can understand and feel what is happening out there with our young people.

How can we be treating and ignoring our young people that are our leaders now and are going to be our leaders in the future? They are going to get ready to come in and lead this country forward. And that's a lot of what we're seeing in the food banks. As my colleague said, one in 10 people—we have to live in reality here. One in 10 people are at the

food banks. The food banks in Scarborough are running out of food. We have to have private people coming together and now giving food to the food banks.

1000

I want to talk about an affordability study that was done by RBC. I think this is important to share here. It's called Future Launch. It argues that in order for young people to break even in this city, they would need to isolate themselves and cut out costs for transport, dining out and entertainment. I really want to say this again: They've got to cut costs for transport, dining out and entertainment. What life are we showing to our young people in this country?

Affordability should not only be about the basic necessities for survival. The government is taking away the vibrancy of our young people that want to work, live and eventually raise a family in Ontario. I did not see anything about rent control in this fall economic statement, and I'm still asking why, because I believe the government has the right to correct our suffering and our beating up with pain—almost \$3,000 for a one-bedroom apartment. Young people have to share. I think right now in Scarborough, maybe about eight people or eight students are living in a one-bedroom apartment so they can afford it, so they can afford to buy food.

During my canvassing, I spoke to thousands of people in my riding. You've got young families that have their regular jobs, they've got young kids, and they also have to help their parents who are on fixed incomes, to help them to buy medication. Those families are cutting four jobs to survive, and I really want to stress that. This is causing a mental crisis as well.

So when I look at rent control—bringing back real rent control—it's also going to impact and decrease the mental experience that a lot of our families are experiencing out there. This is Canada. This was a dream country to many of us immigrants coming to this country, wanting to work hard, pay our taxes and build this home that we call Canada.

Today, my heart is bleeding as to where this country is going, knowing that we've got a government in place that can make these changes happen. So I am pleading to all of you sitting on the opposite side: Understand the hardships that Ontario's families are going through, the hardships they are going through to put food on their table. Why, in a country like Canada—I could see where I come from in the Caribbean that could happen. In a country like Canada, where families have to decide where to buy medication, starve my kids—"We're going to have limited food today, or this week or this month because we need medication, and we don't have the insurance to pay for medication."

I know one student who, because of the stress he's going through, is now diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. He wanted to afford a patch on the arm, but I don't think you guys understand what that type of medication is. I don't know the name of it, but it's a patch that you put on your arm and you could really test the level of your sugar throughout the day. That costs about \$200, and it lasts for six weeks. That's a prescription that his doctor was giving to him.

It's really difficult out there to take care of your health and buy food to feed your family. Let's go on your income. We all know how inflation is moving, but our income is not moving with inflation. How can we catch up? How could we have that balanced life? I have families from my country that live in Scarborough that said to me, "Andrea, we are getting ready to go back to our country because we cannot live here anymore."

So I want to leave you with this. Rent control: I would say—you know the crisis we had during the pandemic? Rent control tops that crisis, because we came through the pandemic, and now we are going through an affordability crisis. I would like to see a rent freeze. It can happen. It happened in—I think in 2020, that amendment was done; it was passed. In 2021, there was a rent freeze. What that did is it helped families to have real monies back in their pockets so they could afford to buy groceries. That was a good thing that the government did, and that is why I believe there is so much more that we can do, that we can take action on to make sure our young people can strive, can live, can mobilize in this great country that we call Canada and then in Ontario.

I would not like to see—and I know this will happen—my three children have to move away from me out of Ontario so that they can purchase their first home. That is what my first son is telling me. That's what he wants to do. I am holding him close to me as much as I can, and I don't know how long I can hold on to that. This is what the families of Ontario are facing. This is what they are feeling.

I visit—and I'm going to go back to the crisis of groceries and at the food banks—at least three food banks in Scarborough per week. I am volunteering to go in a kitchen with my staff next week, Friday, to cook a real big pot of soup, asking for donations. So I am not taking away from what the food banks have, but I am taking to the food banks.

These issues are very sensitive all across Canada, but I can speak for Scarborough because I am out on the road every day talking to seniors. Once I'm out of this chamber at a decent time, I go into Scarborough, and I speak to seniors. Seniors are more worried about their fixed income. And seniors—what I'm hearing from them and what I'm hearing from the families is they are one paycheque away from going into homelessness.

There are about three encampments right now in Scarborough. I am trying to find where they are located. Winter is coming. I have tents. Tents are in my basement. It's not for young people and their families and seniors to be living in. A senior visited me at my open house two weeks ago, and she lives in her car. She lives in her car. We packed her up with a lot of canned foods. We packed her up with food to last her the whole day. We got blankets for her.

1010

That's the crisis that is out there in our neighbourhoods. These are not people that are far from us; it's our neighbours. These are people that we are working with, beside us. We do not know how this affordability crisis is impacting them. The mental harshness that families are feeling right

now going through this affordability crisis is heart-wrenching to hear.

I don't know if you are not hearing these stories. I don't know if no one is sharing these stories with you. I don't know if you do not have any person in your network that is going through these stories, but I'm asking you to please take a deeper dive into this affordability crisis because it brings back the seriousness of what we all went through during the pandemic.

Rent control is a very serious issue in this country, in Canada. As I said, I was upbeat because I'm new. I was upbeat; I was positive. And I hear nothing much is going to be in there for families or for child care, even for funding for transit operations. I didn't see anything in there about that. I can go on and on.

As I said, there were positives in the fall economic statement. One thing I like is the vaping tax, because that is actually supporting the health of our young people. And I'm here today really to speak about young people and their hardships and the struggles that they're going through today. So the vaping tax is good.

Rent control: I think some amendments need to get done. I think that amendment for bringing back real rent control or put a rent freeze—because I like to give solutions. Get a rent freeze again for 2024, until we figure out this affordability crisis, because I don't think this government figured out the depth of the affordability crisis that is happening around Ontario.

Our families are feeling the burn. They're feeling the hardship. It's not that they are not working. They are working. They have two jobs. When I was at the doors canvassing, these same families that are struggling to pay their rent have to find a third and fourth job so they can buy food, so they can buy medication for their families.

I spoke to thousands of people on their doorsteps, and the people in Scarborough are not immune to the affordability crisis. Everybody whose income is not meeting the inflation measures that are happening right now, and the steep rent we are paying, they're all suffering from an affordability crisis.

I thank God that I came to this country and I found an amazing job. I stayed there for 30 years and I paid my taxes to this amazing country for 30 years. Then I opened my small business. So I am able to help my three children to bear the brunt of what's happening today with the affordability crisis. I just want to say thank you, and I'm leaving on that note.

I have 31 seconds left. I'm using my 31 seconds because this is very important—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): We'll recess until 1 o'clock. You can then have your 31 seconds.

The committee recessed from 1015 to 1301.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Welcome back. We will now resume clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 146.

Before we begin, I would like to remind all honourable members that their remarks should be kept relevant to the matter before the committee. Standing order 25(b)(i) states: "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker

if he or she directs his or her speech to matters other than the question under discussion.” With this in mind, I would ask all members to focus their comments on the matter currently before the committee, which is Bill 146.

When we recessed, MPP Hazell had the floor. I look to the member to continue.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Thank you, and thank you to everyone. I wanted to end by saying thank you to everyone for listening to my sensitive and emotional plea for help with our young people that are our future leaders for now and in the future, to make sure that when you are sitting and making these amendments and policies that you take that sector of sensitive lives that—they’re doing what we are asking them to do: They’re going to school, they’re getting educated, they’re finding jobs and now they’re all stuck. I just wanted to end by saying thank you for listening to me.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? Any further debate? No further debate? We will move on.

As you will notice, Bill 146 is comprised of three sections and 14 schedules. In order to deal with the bill in an orderly fashion, I suggest that we postpone the first three sections of the bill in order to dispose of the schedules first. This allows the committee to consider the contents of the schedules before dealing with the sections on the commencement and short title of the bill. We would return to the three sections after completing the consideration of the schedules. Is there unanimous consent to stand down the three sections of the bill and deal with the schedules first? Thank you very much. They are deferred.

Schedule 1: There are no amendments in schedule 1. Therefore, I propose that we bundle sections 1 to 12 in this. Is there agreement? Agreement for that.

Is there any debate on schedule 1, sections 1 to 12? No debate. Are the members prepared to vote All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 1? Are the members prepared to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

There are no amendments to schedule 2. I, therefore, propose that we bundle sections 1 to 3. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 2, sections 1 to 3? No debate. Are members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 2, sections 1 to 3, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 2? Is the committee ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? Schedule 2 carries.

There are no amendments to schedule 3. I, therefore, propose that we bundle sections 1 and 2. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 3, sections 1 and 2? If there’s no debate, is the committee ready to vote? Shall schedule 3, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 3? Are the members ready to vote? Shall schedule 3 carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 3 is carried.

There are no amendments to schedule 4. I, therefore, propose that we bundle sections 1 to 5. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 4, sections 1 to 5? If there’s no debate, are the members ready to vote? Shall schedule 4, sections 1 to 5, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 4? Are the members prepared to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 4 carries.

Schedule 5: There are no amendments to schedule 5. I, therefore, propose that we bundle sections 1 to 7. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 5, sections 1 to 7? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 5, sections 1 to 7, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 5? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 5 carry? All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Schedule 6: There are no amendments on schedule 6. I, therefore, propose that we bundle sections 1 and 2. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 6, sections 1 and 2? Shall schedule 6, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 6, sections 1 and 2, carry.

Is there any debate on schedule 6? Are the members prepared to vote? All those in favour of schedule 6? All those opposed? The motion is carried on schedule 6.

1310

Schedule 7: There are no amendments to schedule 7. Therefore, I propose that we bundle sections 1 to 3. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 7, sections 1 to 3? Are members prepared to vote? If they’re prepared to vote: Shall schedule 7, 1 to 3, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 7, sections 1 to 3, inclusive, carries.

Is there any debate on schedule 7? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 7 carry? All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Schedule 8: There are no amendments for schedule 8. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 3. Is there agreement? Are the members prepared to vote?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Recorded vote.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): A recorded vote has been requested.

Shall schedule 8, sections 1 to 3, inclusive, carry?

Ayes

Anand, Byers, Crawford, Dowie, David Smith.

Nays

Bowman, Hazell, Kernaghan.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The motion is carried.

There is an NDP notice. Is there any debate? MPP Kernaghan.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: To the committee members, I'd like to quote the words of the Western University Students' Council, who indicate that the average undergraduate student debt is \$28,000. In 2019, the federal government eliminated interest on student loans, and it's very strange to me that this government is deciding now to remove the notice for students who are in default. This makes no sense. We know that students are very busy. We know that, upon graduation, they are looking to find employment. There are a number of different reasons, so I really don't understand the logic as to why the government or this committee would choose to remove notice. This makes absolutely no sense. Sometimes people do require these in order to fulfill their obligations. They do need that reminder, and I'm just very surprised that this government would do so.

In addition, we know that the federal government eliminated interest on student loans altogether. That was good sense. That made logical sense because undergraduate student debt is the biggest debt that they have.

We know OREA has said that that remains the biggest barrier for people entering the housing market to find true financial stability. If you think about the number of years that also they will be impeded from entering the housing market and considering the rapid rise in housing prices, staying out of the market for a number of years because of this reason really adds to financial instability and adds to the greater cost, so I'm really surprised that the government would make this move at this time. It doesn't satisfy students' needs. It doesn't satisfy Ontarians' needs.

I really wonder why the committee would choose and why the government would choose to put this forward at this time. It's very strange that, during an affordability crisis, the government is removing the notice for students who are in default. So I urge the committee to reconsider, to remove this schedule entirely and really gather stakeholder input. We're going to be going for pre-budget consultations and we will be hearing at that time from university groups, so I really stress to the members: Please listen to students. Listen to their lived experience and what their financial futures are before removing this notice.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Just to respond to that, our government is committed to students and their affordability. We're the government that brought in a 10% tuition cut about four years ago and we've frozen tuition. I know one of the members here mentioned they have three children in university right now. Our government, in the term before you were here, did a 10% cut to tuition and we also froze tuition for the last four years—so we're committed.

Now, with respect to this particular schedule, I would suggest that the members opposite vote in support of us because by voting with this motion, they are going against the recommendations of the Auditor General. The Auditor General found there was about a billion dollars from loans that remained outstanding, and typically, many of these people could have been literally 10, 20 years ago—these might be 35- or 40-year-olds. Now they're no longer

students. These are people that are delinquent that may be able to pay their loans and many of them are multi-millionaires. They're just not paying.

So, again, this is fully in support of the Auditor General's recommendation. We're going to support the Auditor General in this case and oppose this motion put forward by the opposition. I hope the opposition reconsiders and votes against their motion after our discussion here.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? MPP Bowman.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'll just also remind the committee that under the Liberal government's tuition for low-income families, university was actually free. Certainly, we absolutely support students and want to make sure that they have the support they need. I think when you read through the current measures, there are certainly sufficient means and ways to collect the debt.

Certainly, I would absolutely support that debt, especially if it's been outstanding a long time and it's from a person who has the assets to pay, should be collected. However, in this time of an affordability crisis, when students are talking to us about having to hold down two and three jobs just to pay their tuition and keep the roof over their head in this high-rent environment when rent control has been removed—and, in fact, we know students are going to food banks, as well. So in that kind of situation, I think that removing a notice period, especially for current students—again, the schedule could have been amended to talk about people who are long-standing bad debtors, but we're talking about students here, or recent graduates who are still struggling, and that's why I think this is an untimely schedule and motion to be put forward.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? Is the committee ready to vote?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Recorded vote.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): A recorded vote on schedule 8 has been requested.

Ayes

Anand, Byers, Crawford, Dowie, David Smith.

Nays

Bowman, Hazell, Kernaghan.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Schedule 8 carries.

Schedule 9: There are no amendments to schedule 9. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 15. Is there agreement?

Debate on schedule 9, sections 1 to 15: Any debate? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour of schedule 9, sections 1 to 15, inclusive? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

1320

Is there any debate on schedule 9? No debate? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour of schedule 9? All those opposed? Schedule 9 carries.

Schedule 10: There are no amendments to schedule 10, sections 1 to 10. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 10. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 10, sections 1 to 10? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 10, sections 1 to 10, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

We're now on independent motion number 1. I look to the independents to move their motion. MPP Bowman.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I move that section 11 of schedule 10 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(4.1) Section 143 of the act is amended by adding the following subsections:

“Passport system rules

“(1.4) The commission is deemed to have rules adopting Multilateral Instrument 11-102–Passport System.

“Same

“(1.5) The rules deemed to have been made under subsection (1.4) are deemed to have been published in accordance with section 143.2 and to have been approved by the minister under section 143.3.

“Same

“(1.6) For greater certainty, the commission may subsequently amend or revoke the rules deemed to have been made under subsection (1.4).”

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): This amendment is beyond the scope of the bill. As Bosc and Gagnon note on page 770 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, “An amendment to a bill that was referred to committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.” I therefore rule the amendment out of order.

MPP Bowman?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'd just like to make a comment on this amendment. The Canadian securities administrator has recommended this harmonization of the passport system. Ontario is the only province that is not participating in the passport system—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): You can't debate the Chair's ruling.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Sorry, Chair. Could I ask for a motion to reconsider the Chair's ruling?

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): No. I can see—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Just to point out that the Chair's position—not explaining the position, but the research has been done as to whether it should or should not be in order, and the Chair is convinced that it should not be in order.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I'm told by the Clerk that you can ask the committee if they wish to refer the Chair's decision to the House.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I ask the Chair to refer the amendment to the House. I ask for unanimous consent—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): As Chair, I would ask the committee to—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): She wants to appeal the Chair's ruling.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Yes, I want to appeal the Chair's ruling and refer this matter to the House.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): As prescribed in standing order 124(a), no debate shall be permitted on the decision of the Chair.

Shall the Chair's ruling be appealed to the Speaker? All those in favour—

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Recorded vote.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That's the question. All that other debate—we didn't do that, because there's no debate on the Chair's ruling. And I put the question: Shall the Chair's ruling be appealed to the Speaker? All those in favour?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I asked for a recorded vote.

Ayes

Bowman, Hazell, Kernaghan.

Nays

Anand, Byers, Crawford, Dowie, David Smith.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I declare the motion lost, and the Chair's ruling stands.

Is there any debate on schedule 10, section 11? MPP Bowman.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would just like to point out that the Canadian securities administrator has recommended that the passport system be implemented in Ontario. Ontario is the only province that doesn't use this system. And for a government that talks a lot about reducing red tape—this is a very specific recommendation that every other province in the country has adopted to reduce and eliminate red tape for companies trying to access capital markets, so that is something that, again, this government could very easily address. That helps companies be more productive. They could add another who knows how many million to their claim to savings for businesses in the province. Certainly, businesses that want to list in multiple exchanges and access capital markets across the country—that would make their time better used in actually running their business, as opposed to filling out very similar paperwork.

So the idea is that if you decide to list in Ontario first, when you then want to go and access the capital markets in Alberta, Alberta lets you basically take all that “paperwork” and list in Alberta—no further work required.

Guess what Ontario does? If you've listed in Alberta or BC, you've gone through all the regulatory requirements, you get listed, then you want to come to Ontario, what does Ontario tell you? “Please do all that paperwork again.” That's what this government is forcing companies to do.

Again, I would just encourage the government—if not this time, very soon—to act on the recommendations of the Canadian securities administrator and implement the passport system for companies wishing to access capital here in Ontario. We know it's one of the best provinces to live in, and we would like to make things simpler. This government seems to be opposed to that for public companies trying to list here in Ontario. So I will continue to be speaking up and asking for this system to be implemented here in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Schedule 10, section 11: No further debate? Are the members prepared to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 10, section 11, carries.

There are no amendments to schedule 10, sections 12 to 14. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 12 to 14. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 10, sections 12 to 14? No debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 10, sections 12 to 14, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

1330

Is there any debate on schedule 10? Are the members prepared to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 10 carries.

Schedule 11: There are no amendments to schedule 11, sections 1 to 4. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 4. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 11, sections 1 to 4? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 11, sections 1 to 4, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 11? No debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 11 carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 11 carries.

Schedule 12: There are no amendments to schedule 12, sections 1 and 2. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 and 2. Is there agreement?

Debate on schedule 12, sections 1 and 2? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Shall schedule 12, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 12, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry.

We are now on independent motion number 2. I look for the independent to move their motion.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I move that section 3 of schedule 12 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“Same

“(2) The cost of the following may be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund or recognized as non-cash expenses under subsection (1):

“1. The breast cancer program expansion.

“2. Costs of the government of Ontario resulting from the removal of the harmonized sales tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.”

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The proposed amendment is out of order. Standing order 60 states: “Any bill, resolution, motion or address, the passage of which would impose a tax or specifically direct the allocation of public funds, shall not be passed by the House unless

recommended by a message from the Lieutenant Governor, and shall be proposed only by a minister of the crown.”

Therefore, as Bosc and Gagnon note on page 772 of the third edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, a motion is out of order if it infringes upon the financial initiative of the crown by imposing a charge on the public treasury. I therefore rule this amendment out of order.

Is there any debate on schedule 12, section 3? MPP Bowman.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would be quite happy if the minister had moved this motion. I thought maybe it was just something he forgot given that the government has talked about, at great length, the breast cancer program expansion, which, of course, we all support. It has been recommended by health professionals and advocacy groups. We all know that whatever we can do to catch cancer early and detect it early helps the outcomes and therefore the people of Ontario. It's interesting that the minister did not include that in his fall economic statement. I would urge him to reconsider that decision.

Regarding number 2, again, this government is spending hours—I wish I could count; it feels like endless hours—debating taxes on fuels related to home heating. We certainly have talked at length in the House about how this government actually has quite a bit of power. I'm sure they would acknowledge that. In fact, they have power to do exactly this, to make life more affordable. Instead of writing letters to the Prime Minister, they could take action in this bill, with this fall economic statement. They could remove the costs of the harmonized sales tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.

I hear the members talking about their concern for the residents of Ontario as winter approaches and the cost of home heating. We know that the Bank of Canada, just to reiterate, says 0.15% of inflation—so one twentieth of inflation—relates to carbon pricing. So while there would be a one-time adjustment of four times that, all the way up to 0.6%, if the carbon pricing were removed, that is not the biggest portion of what people are facing in terms of affordability. It's really about housing, with this government's removal of rent control and not being able to get housing built, not being able to meet their housing targets, spending more time helping their friends who have land in the greenbelt get richer. I think this is a clear indication that this government is just speaking about their concern about community members as they face winter instead of taking action.

Chair, this is a very clear measure within the control of the government to actually improve affordability, if that is their goal, for families and households as winter approaches. If they are really that committed to helping people as they prepare to start paying their heating bills, then I would urge them to reconsider writing letters and urge them to consider taking action and removing the harmonized sales tax from fuels and inputs for home heating.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? If there is no further debate, is the committee ready to vote?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Recorded vote, Chair.

Ayes

Anand, Byers, Crawford, Dowie, David Smith.

Nays

Bowman.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The motion is carried.

There are no amendments to schedule 12, sections 4 to 8. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 4 to 8. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 12, sections 4 to 8? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 12, sections 4 to 8, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? Motion is carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 12? No debate. Are members ready to vote? Shall schedule 12 carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 12 carries.

Schedule 13: There are no amendments to schedule 13, sections 1 to 4. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 4. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 13, sections 1 to 4? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 13, sections 1 to 4, inclusive, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 13, sections 1 to 4, inclusive, carries.

There is now independent motion 3. I look to the independent member to move the motion. MPP Bowman.

1340

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I move that schedule 13 to the bill be amended by adding the following section:

“4.1 Clause 97.2(3)(a) of the act is amended by adding ‘or a public corporation within the meaning of subsection 89(1) of the federal act’ after ‘Canadian-controlled private corporation’.”

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The proposed amendment is out of order because it seeks to amend the section of a parent act that is not before the committee. As Bosc and Gagnon note on page 771 of the third edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, “an amendment is inadmissible if it proposes to amend a statute that is not before the committee or a section of the parent act, unless the latter is specifically amended by a clause of the bill.”

There are no amendments to schedule 13, sections 5 and 6. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 5 and 6. Is there agreement?

Any debate on schedule 13, sections 5 and 6?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Sorry, just a question: We still have a chance to debate the schedule?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar): Yes. So we’re on sections 5 and 6 now, and then we’ll do schedule 13 as a whole.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Debate on sections 5 and 6 of schedule 13? There’s no debate. Is the committee ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 13, sections 5 and 6, inclusive, carries.

Is there any debate on schedule 13? MPP Bowman.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Certainly, I respect the rules of order and understand that there are precedents that govern these things. But in the spirit of collaboration, I’m certainly making these amendments to try to improve the bill and also, again, as I mentioned earlier, improve efficiency for companies wanting to access capital here in Ontario and become publicly listed companies.

This is another example, Chair, where we know that this manufacturing tax credit, which, again, is a good measure to incentivize companies to invest and get more efficient and innovate and be more productive—that’s all very good, but the government is excluding a significant portion of the companies who operate here in Ontario. The companies that are getting grants from this government as well as the federal government, if their head office is outside of the country, would not be eligible for the investment tax credit as it relates to this because they’re not a Canadian-controlled private corporation. Of course, those are very large companies, but there are also smaller companies, mid-sized companies, whose head office is outside this province and yet they bring jobs, they bring growth, they create innovation—they are a valuable part of our economy as well, and certainly I’ve heard this government talk about wanting to attract investment to Ontario. I absolutely share that view and want to attract investment to Ontario, and I want all those companies to have equal opportunity, I guess I would say, or incentives to invest here in Ontario, to drive innovation, to make their operations more efficient and productive.

So, again, with respect, I will ask the government to consider expanding this program to publicly traded corporations. That will benefit them. It will benefit Ontario’s economy and the people of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? If there is no further debate, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour of schedule 13? All those opposed? Schedule 13 carries.

Schedule 14: There are no amendments to schedule 14. Therefore, I propose we bundle sections 1 to 3. Is there agreement?

Is there any debate on schedule 14, sections 1 to 3? Seeing none, are members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 14, section 1 to 3, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 14? If not, is the committee ready to vote? Shall schedule 14 carry? All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

We’ll go back to the first: Any debate on section 1? If there’s no debate, is the committee ready to vote on section 1? All those in favour of section 1? All those opposed? Section 1 carries.

Any debate on section 2? No debate. Is the committee ready to vote? All those in favour of section 2? All those opposed? Section 2 carries.

Section 3, the short title: Any debate? No debate. Is the committee ready to vote? All those in favour of section 3? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Shall the title of the bill carry? Debate? If not, ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Shall Bill 146 carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? Bill 146 carries.

Shall I report the bill to the House? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

I think there's a page that says—I knew there was a page in here somewhere that says, "Thank you all." The committee now stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1348.

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