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Mercredi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 February 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 février 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING ENERGY COSTS DOWN
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR
LA FACTURE ÉNERGÉTIQUE
À UN NIVEAU ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne certaines instances dont la Commission est saisie et des questions connexes.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to start off by being clear: We're in a climate crisis. We're heading toward an iceberg and we need to turn this ship, not crank up the gas. We don't have to wait for 2030. It's here now, it's getting worse faster, and it's our fault. We can't plug our ears and pretend we don't know. We have to be brave, and we have to be afraid a little bit. It's fear and courage that will help us do the right thing and save our way of life; whether it's for your kids, yourself, your business or a space you love, I beg us, please.

I am worried that this summer in Ontario we'll have an unprecedented fire season. Our province is going to burn. It will go up in smoke. This will devastate northern communities. We need to wake up and smell the smoke. Businesses will be impacted. Home building will be stalled. Kids will spend their time inside in the summer because it's not safe to go outside, because we can't breathe smoke. Smoke causes cancer. Ontarians will be at ERs because they're sick from the smoke. We shouldn't be doubling down. We should be preparing. We should prepare for extreme heat, the most deadly killer of climate impacts. BC lost 600 people to death when they had an extreme heat dome. This foreshadowing should not be ignored.

When everyone in Ontario turns on their energy-inefficient air conditioning, we have to watch out for our grid. We have to watch out for us—for seniors, for folks with respiratory issues, for babies.

Can we spend our time now in the Legislature discussing how to improve our energy grid? Can we discuss how to install more heat pumps that are three times more efficient to cool our homes? That will help us with these peaks. It will help us with blackouts. It will help prevent deaths, and it will help prevent ER visits.

We know that every dollar we spend on mitigation will save Ontarians \$7 to \$10. The Conservative government's own report says that for every dollar of adaptation we spend, we save \$13 to \$15. So if we care about affordability, this is a good investment. But get ready to adapt, spending our time in government working on how we can reduce the harm to our community, how to prepare for the devastation to come, instead of doubling down.

We are cooking Ontario, because Enbridge is cooking the facts. We know that they're afraid that people can save on connection fees by not connecting. The gravy train will stop. This \$16-billion company and the \$19-million man will not benefit from this gravy train. They're greenwashing right now. They're being challenged in court for that, because they say that gas is clean, that it's good for the planet and affordable. These claims have been proven untrue and unethical. They're also lobbying mayors, which is also unethical.

We need to do what we can to make right decisions for the people of Ontario so that they can make affordable decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We'll now have questions to the member for Kitchener Centre with regard to her presentation and then allow her a chance to respond.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I wasn't expecting to hear about emergency rooms in a speech relating to Bill 165, but since I did, I'll take the opportunity, as an ER nurse, to ask the member opposite if she knows how many new acute-care beds this government has built since we came into power in 2018.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Unfortunately, because we're not documenting heat-related health consequences in this province, we won't be prepared no matter how many beds we have.

How many beds do we have for slip-and-falls? In my community, when there was an icy day, we saw slip-and-fall visits to ERs explode. Not only did we have RSV explosion, but it doubled down because of climate impact, because of slip-and-falls.

So we're talking to insurance companies right now, workplace injuries—if we have HR concerns, climate is not going to make that better, because we're going to have smoky days in the summer, we're going to have slip-and-

fall days in the winter, and we're not collecting proper data to prepare our health system for these consequences.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question will come from the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House—but this morning, I was up very early. Actually, I was watching the debate last night, at about 1:30 in the morning. It's nice, how exciting my life is.

The reality is that this morning I heard that in Ontario, 50% of all people are living paycheque to paycheque.

And we know that Enbridge made billions of dollars in profit, approximately \$18 billion—I might be out by half a billion there. Their CEO made \$17 million in compensation.

My question to my colleague: Do you agree with the Conservatives that consumers who are living paycheque to paycheque should pay an extra \$500 on their gas bill because of Bill 165?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I took business, and what I studied is that subsidizing a monopoly that is gouging our customers is not a great way to create affordability. I know that having a fair and open market is the way that we create competition, the very competition that we are working towards in our financial sector. That's what brings prices down.

They're afraid to compete with the heat pump industry that's exploding all over the world. They want to save their monopoly, and they don't want to play nice in the sandbox. They're creating misleading information across our province, on radio, sending letters to mayors, because they're afraid—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the House for a second. Please stop the clock.

0910

There's a lot going on in the chamber at the moment. It's the obligation of the Chair to listen to the member for Kitchener Centre. I apologize, because I've had three people come up to talk to me in the last 30 seconds.

Start the clock.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think when we're talking about low-income folks, we really need to make good investments. This is a bad investment. I don't buy a car that I know is going to break down in five years, that's not going to last. We're saying this infrastructure is going to—we can pay it off in 40 years. If we can, let's balance it. Let's amortize heat pumps across 40 years, if you really want to be fair. Why are we not being fair in the marketplace? Why are we creating subsidies and barriers to a fair marketplace?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have time for one more brief question.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I really appreciate the member from Kitchener Centre's presentation.

I want to know from the member, how does it make sense that the government would overturn a decision—that by doing so is going to increase bills for gas customers by \$600, so Enbridge can install heating systems that are going to cost them 13% more? Why wouldn't we just go

with heat pumps? Can you explain the benefits of heat pumps?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think the numbers are finally showing that renewable energy and heat pumps are a more affordable choice than a hookup to gas. You have to buy an air conditioner, you have to buy a furnace, and you have to pay for that hookup. It is crippling our rural municipalities to pay for all this sprawl.

We know that the best way to save on a hookup is not to hook up. It doesn't make financial sense anymore. If we're going to give a fair market price to a new home, we have to make sure that it doesn't just mark this moment in time in an urban centre—that we're considering all the costs that go into connecting a house, and is it really worth it anymore?

Across the world, we're seeing hookups being banned, not because of a moral choice, but they should also be considered a financially reckless choice. The reason why we know heat pumps are better: They're more efficient—

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

Further debate? Further debate? If no one stands up, the debate collapses—just to remind the House—and then we vote. Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this Legislature and speak on bills that are very important to this province and important to the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Before I start on the bill, I just ask for the House's indulgence for a moment.

Currently, the Cochrane-Timiskaming branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association has locked out their workers. As a result, right now, their clients are not getting any service. We are in the middle of a mental health crisis. As with any labour dispute, there are two sides; we recognize that. But I urge the management and I urge the government to discuss with the management what the roadblocks are from their end. They're not that far apart, and we are facing a mental health crisis. Right now, the people who serve their clients are being locked out and not being able to serve the people who have some of the most dire needs in this province. I urge the government to reach out to management to see what roadblocks exist so that those residents in my riding and in other ridings can get the mental health services they need.

Thank you for that indulgence, Speaker.

The bill we're talking about—the working title is Keeping Energy Costs Down Act. This bill is more complicated than it seems. A lot of people, I think, would never think of how the energy system, particularly the natural gas system, is operated in Ontario. It's regulated. That means that there is a regulatory board, the Ontario Energy Board, that oversees the system so it's stable, so that people who are connected to gas or who want to connect to gas—if they do want to, and there are reasons why they may not want to—know that they're getting as fair a deal as possible.

The Ontario Energy Board made a ruling that new gas hookups in new subdivisions, in new builds, shouldn't be

amortized over 40 years because it's a very likely that that gas hookup won't be useful for 40 years, because, as we know, the world is in transition.

Last summer, I was in this House speaking, and I think you will remember that we could smell the smoke from the forest fires, in this House. I don't think that has happened in modern times.

Today, in Timiskaming–Cochrane, it was 8 degrees this morning, thunderstorms—in February. In Timiskaming–Cochrane, in February, it's usually minus 20, minus 25, snowmobilers are happy, ice fishermen—ice fisher-people, I guess—are happy. But that's not the case. People can say, “Oh, that's a one-off,” and, “No, no, that could happen”—I was standing here, and so were the rest of us, sitting here, when we smelled that smoke. That's not a one-off. Is that the only reason to look at this—what the government is trying to do here? It's a big reason, but not the only one. But we have to keep that in the back of our minds.

We have to look at transitioning away from fossil fuels. We're not the first people to do this. Most of my family comes from Europe. Right now in Holland, they're self-sufficient in natural gas. They do import, but they could be self-sufficient. Right now in Holland, if you build a new house—

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Put a heat pump.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, you don't have to put in a heat pump, but you cannot be hooked up to natural gas. I'm not saying we have to follow that—not at all—because there are uses that are very important for fossil fuels like natural gas. As a farmer, grain drying—right now the technology does not exist to dry grain at a sufficient capacity, fast enough, hot enough, to actually make it feasible without natural gas or propane. I don't think there's any argument about that. But that's not really what this bill is about.

This bill is about how the regulator said, “To keep the system stable, we can't take out 40-year amortization mortgages on new parts of the system that likely might not make sense today and likely won't make sense in five years.”

It was really interesting when the Minister of the Energy, who I respect, talked about how he had a heat pump with an electric backup and he was never cold. That tells me that, in large parts of this province, new houses could also have heat pumps with electric backup and cause much less impact to the environment than natural gas.

The financial part of what the government is doing—the Ontario Energy Board said, “No, no, it doesn't make sense to take a 40-year mortgage out to pay for something that actually might not make sense for people now; it certainly won't make sense in five years, because the rest of the world is transitioning already.” The government steps in and says, “No, no. The regulator? They don't know what they're talking about. We're going to make an informed decision. What we're going to do is, we're going to make all the other people who pay, who are already on the system—we're going to make them pay for the hookups that might not make sense. We're going to destabilize the system on their behalf.”

0920

If this government had a really good record of making forward-looking financial decisions, you could maybe give them the benefit of the doubt. It's very, very concerning that they are overruling a regulator. If they had a reasonable track record on their legislation—but this is the government that, with Bill 124, decided to change how negotiations were done with public sector workers, creating a huge issue in the health care sector. And guess what? They rescinded it. They rescinded another bill to go over the “notwithstanding” clause. The greenbelt? They rescinded it. Now they're saying, “We know more than the Ontario Energy Board.”

The government doesn't have a problem tacking the bill on infrastructure for 40 years that's likely not going to be worth it in five—“We'll make the people who are already on that infrastructure pay the difference.” They're willing to destabilize the system. They say it's because they want to make houses more affordable. We all want to make houses more affordable. But are you sure you're making the house more affordable when you're kind of forcing someone to put in natural gas because they're hooked up when, over years, they'd be much better off with something that was more efficient for heating and cooling and that would save them money in the long run? I question whether the government has thought that through.

I certainly don't think that this government has the track record to say that we, the province, should be very comfortable that we're overruling a regulator.

This is a big debate. We need to take this issue seriously. We are making decisions for people in the future—it's not just for today.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for talking about this issue. Of course, you have to recognize that all the farmers in this area all want natural gas for the grain dryers and for operations. Of course, it's a big priority, and he couldn't go without mentioning it.

My question is, when the member knocked on doors for the election, what was the message he got from the people of Ontario? I hope it's the same message we got. The one we got was about the cost of living, the lack of housing, the need for natural gas expansion and high-speed Internet. Our government did put money towards high-speed Internet, and I don't see anybody complaining about Bell Canada or Rogers getting some favours, because what we did is bring service to the people of Ontario. So I'm wondering if he agrees with me on this.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. You raised a lot of issues.

I knocked on a lot of doors—we all knock on a lot of doors—and I can guarantee you, Speaker, that not one person said, “Sign me up to pay \$500 extra so a new subdivision can get gas.”

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: But what's the priority?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, they talked about affordability. But not one person said, “Sign me up for that.” Not one person said, “The priority here is to get rid of regulation; get rid of the Ontario Energy Board’s decision-making.” In northern Ontario, where we have unregulated gas prices, we pay way more for gas than do you. So, yes, we face a lot of the same issues, but not one person that I knocked on the door of said, “We need to pay for other people’s natural gas hookups.” Not one person said that.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane’s statement.

We know that they’re overruling the Ontario Energy Board. I believe this has never happened before. Certainly, it sets a very dangerous precedent—an independent regulatory board.

We know that part of what’s going on is that Enbridge is afraid of having stranded assets, so they want to invest even more, but the public will have the stranded assets in the end. And we know that the public is going to be paying; current ratepayers are going to see their costs go way up.

My question is, do you see this as another example of fiscal irresponsibility on the part of the government?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much to my colleague for that question.

I see this as an attempt by the government to make a short-term political gain, not taking into account the long-term financial pain that it’s going to cause to everyone on the system. It’s a wake-up call that there are going to be stranded assets, things that we don’t use, and one of those is going to be large parts of the gas system.

You’ve got the Minister of Energy with a heat pump, supported by electricity. He’s going in the right direction. I don’t think he has access to natural gas. Everyone in this House is not going to subsidize a natural gas line to the Minister of Energy. He’s going to put in a heat pump, supported by electricity—which he did. So why does this government expect the rest of Ontarians need to do that?

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

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Of course, this member has been asked by all municipalities, by every constituent, by every farmer if he can work on getting natural gas in his riding, because we all did—every one of us was reached out to by constituents because they need natural gas, because it’s the best way to heat their home at a reasonable cost.

So I’m wondering, can the member tell us if some constituents, some farmers or some municipalities did reach out to him, trying to work to get natural gas in his riding?

Mr. John Vanthof: I’m really glad the member asked that question.

I’ve been here for a while. Years ago, municipalities were demanding and residents were demanding access to natural gas, but now, many are doing what the Minister of Energy himself did and are putting in heat pumps supported by electricity, even in northern Ontario, because the

price between natural gas and heat pumps is—the difference is no longer there like it was before. People are switching, and the government isn’t realizing that. The Minister of Energy realizes that, but his government doesn’t seem to.

Are there people wanting natural gas, needing it in particular for agriculture? Yes, 100%—but for heating their homes, not the case anymore, even in northern Ontario.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have to say I’m disappointed to hear the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell—the comment that you just made to this member, who does not do what you just said, ever. He comes to this House, and he presents an honest, true picture of what is going on in his riding. For you to question that is shameful. That’s on you.

0930

My question to the MPP for Timiskaming–Cochrane, a well-respected member of this House: Why, fundamentally, do you think the government would throw down so hard for a for-profit, basically regulated monopoly when the evidence continues to pile up that people need to get off fossil gas, to get off methane gas? Why do you think they’re desperately hanging on to this when people in the province of Ontario need affordability and they need to face the fact that climate change is real? This strange weather that we’re having is not a coincidence. Why do you think this government is throwing down so hard on the side of a huge monopoly?

Mr. John Vanthof: That’s a very good question.

I can’t speak on behalf of the government, because most of us don’t understand what this government is doing most of the time.

If they don’t do this, and people actually have to make a rational decision, not all of them are going to choose gas. Then, if not everyone chooses gas, all of a sudden, the gas lines won’t get built, because everyone has to be hooked up to make that worthwhile. So they’re kind of forcing—if you’re a new development and you’re going to get, basically, a free hookup because everyone else is paying for that hookup, the chances are you’re going to put in a gas furnace as opposed to the chances of putting in a heat pump with electric backup or with another backup, because you’ve already got the hookup for the gas. So they are helping Enbridge, and they are helping the developers, but they are creating stranded assets—they know that because the energy board told them, and they overruled. They know that we’re creating stranded assets.

At the end of the day, somebody is going to end up paying a lot of money for—it’s like taking out a car loan for 20 years when you know the car is going to last, maximum, eight, and you’re forcing everyone else to pay that car loan for 20 years. In eight years, that car is going to be in the recycling centre. That’s what—

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

Quick question, quick response.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Our government established the Electrification and Energy Transition

Panel to advise the government on the highest value, short, medium and long term—all the opportunities related to the energy sector—and of course to help us with Ontario's economy to prepare for electrification and energy transition.

All of that being said, does the member opposite agree that it's unfortunate that the board moved ahead without waiting for the panel's final report, considering that expert input should be critical to making any decisions like this?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane; that ran a little longer.

Further debate?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I'm proud to rise today in this chamber in support of Bill 165, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act. I have to say that the Minister of Energy's hard work on this file is truly commendable. Bill 165 focuses on lowering the price of newly built homes, and it shows how our government is tackling the housing crisis using a holistic approach. The housing file requires the collaboration of ministries to implement forward-thinking ideas so that Ontarians can achieve the dream of buying an affordable place to call home.

Madam Speaker, just this past week, the Premier awarded the mayors of Toronto and Brampton millions of dollars for their cities' incredible success in meeting provincial housing targets through the Building Faster Fund. That is what we like to see—our municipal partners working with us and meeting our targets.

One notable city that unfortunately did not meet their housing starts is my very own city of Mississauga. Let the record show that under Bonnie Crombie's leadership, our own city lagged behind in housing starts while others successfully met their targets. Last year, Mississauga only hit 39% of their targets. The Associate Minister of Housing mentioned that under Bonnie Crombie's leadership, Mississauga denied an application for 4,700 units because the buildings were too tall. Really?

First-time homebuyers, young Canadians, young professionals working hard should know that Bonnie Crombie does not have your back.

That brings me to Bill 165. Since day one, our government has taken action to lower energy costs. We extended the tax cut on gas and fuel until June 30 of this year, saving Ontarians at the gas pump an average of 5.7 cents per litre. We're saving families \$312 a year with the Ontario Electricity Rebate. We ended the disastrous cap-and-trade carbon tax imposed by the Wynne Liberals. And last week our government tabled the Get It Done Act, which will mandate a referendum if any future government wishes to establish a carbon tax, because Ontarians should have a say if a disastrous tax on everything is imposed on our lives. It is a necessary step when we have someone like the Liberal leader, Bonnie Crombie, the queen of the carbon tax, vying for power. During her federal time in politics, she was a champion of the carbon tax. Just this past week, she was asked by a journalist seven times on live TV if she supports a carbon tax, and she just kept on deflecting and deflecting. However, we and the voters already know the

answer. This past week, her own caucus voted against a motion from my colleague the member for Simcoe–Grey to eliminate the carbon tax on fuels used for the transportation of goods. Is that who we want as our next Premier?

Ontarians do not want to be taxed to death. Do the math. The same federal government we sued to exempt Ontario out of the carbon tax is the same federal government currently polled to lose the next election in a landslide.

Our government is using every tool at our disposal to keep costs down for people, especially those looking to buy their home.

When we see institutions like the Ontario Energy Board make decisions that are unnecessary and increase costs for homebuyers, we will take action, and we are taking action.

Bill 165 will give our government the authority to reverse the energy board's recent decision for customers to buy 100% of the cost for a new natural gas connection up front rather than over a 40-year period. The energy board strayed outside of their lane on this issue. It is a huge departure from the realities of our energy system and from historical precedent, that homeowners should pay for these costs like a mortgage over many years.

We will be appointing a new chair to the energy board with the expectation that the board will abide by our legislative requirements when reaching any decisions that support our commitment to an affordable, reliable and clean energy system.

Paying for a natural gas connection for a 40-year period lowers the average home price by about \$4,400, and tens of thousands of dollars for homes in rural areas of Ontario. As first-time homebuyers navigate through difficult obstacles such as high interest rates and inflation affecting the cost of building materials, it is important that we don't burden homebuyers with even more new energy costs.

The energy board's decision also raised concerns with how they incorporated public consultation. In this decision itself, the commissioner noted that it was reached without any input from Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator or from any stakeholders.

With this act, we are requiring the energy board to conduct broader engagement with stakeholders when conducting both natural gas and electricity hearings.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Ms. Kusendova-Bashta has moved that the question be now put. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being now required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

0940

REPORT, FINANCIAL
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled Ontario's Labour Market in 2023 from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

WORKING FOR WORKERS FOUR
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, QUATRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

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

MPP Jamie West: It's fortunate that I switched my House duty with my colleague today because last week, as you know, the government House leader gave us an update of what we're going to be debating this week, and Bill 149 wasn't on that list of things we would be debating. I found it odd because, on Thursday morning, they brought it for debate so the minister could have his hour lead, and then it collapsed because of question period. We couldn't proceed. They didn't call it back in the afternoon. This is a weird standard that they've set for these employment bills, because on second reading, they brought forward the debate at 5 p.m. on a Thursday—or a Wednesday; I apologize. They brought forward the debate at 5 p.m.—I believe it was on a Thursday—the minister had his hour lead, and then because of orders of the day, at 6 p.m. we went to different business, and then we didn't resume debate until 11:30 p.m.

If you want to have fulsome debate, you have to hear the criticisms of the bill. It isn't that this bill is a terrible bill—there are good parts to it; there are some terrible parts to it. Honestly, in this bill, there are some good parts, there's a really bad part, and there's a bunch of parts that really didn't have to be there because they are already existing laws.

The bill is Bill 149. Technically, it's called An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters. It has four schedules. It's an omnibus bill. Schedule 1 is the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act; I'm going to get to that in a minute. Schedule 2 is the Employment Standards Act. Schedule 3 is Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act. And schedule 4 is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I'm going to start with part of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act because that's the part of the bill, for the

most part, that is very positive. That's the part of the bill that was basically piggybacked from a private member's bill that my colleague from Niagara Centre had—

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: Yes, Jeff Burch—for Captain Craig Bowman. At third reading, Captain Craig Bowman's family was here in the gallery. I know that this is what people really want from us in Ontario—when we work together on things like this, when it isn't partisan, when it isn't poison pills. This is the right thing to do. They took a good idea from my colleague, they integrated it into a government bill, and moved it forward. Good conversations were had by the previous Minister of Labour, the current Minister of Labour, as well as colleagues of mine from the House who, I didn't know, are actually related to Captain Craig Bowman.

Knowing how the occupational disease affects people, from my background with health and safety working in the mining industry, I know that, like Captain Bowman, a lot of these people are really just hanging on to hear that there will be some good news for their family. They know the finish line is coming. They just want to hear something. They want to hear that their WSIB claim has been accepted, that there will be some compensation and recognition for what they're going through and what their family is going through. And I'm very happy to hear that Captain Bowman had heard that this bill was moving forward before.

Last week, I was able to go up and talk to the family and let them know that, although we do have issues with this bill—primarily the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, which is a bizarre name for something that's kneecapping digital workers—we would be supporting this bill because of the importance of what it's going to do for firefighters in our province. We'll have another way to work on this digital workers' section.

So that being said, that's the cornerstone of the bill. That's the solid part of the bill. There are some sort of wishy-washy things in the bill that are not really legislation that I'll get into afterwards.

I do want to talk about this Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act. This is one of those creative writing things. I've said often that a lot of these Conservative bills are basically for headlines. This sounds like a great thing. These are your gig workers—if you don't want to read through it—these are your Uber drivers, food delivery drivers; these are these app workers. It sounds like a fantastic thing, “digital platform workers' rights”—you're going to have some rights. We know these workers have been exploited and taken advantage of, but it really doesn't do anything for them. What it does is, it spells out that they can make a complaint, and the complaint can be investigated—and that sounds great—but it also enshrines that you're only paid for the time that you're active in service. If you think of this morning, for example—I think up to now there have been seven people who spoke. Some spoke for 10 minutes. Some spoke for maybe a minute and a half, to answer a question or to ask a question. You would only be paid for the time that you spoke. It doesn't matter that

you came to the Legislature. It didn't matter that you're on House duty for hours on end. It didn't matter that you're in committee—and I'm not taking cheap shots at anybody. We work hard here; I know it's a joke to say that politicians don't. We work hard, and there are a lot of hours in here. But if we were protected under this Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, I'd be getting paid right now, but nobody else would—not even you, Speaker; you'd probably get the least amount, because you just get up for a second to say, "Further debate?" or "I recognize the member." This is unfair in any workplace.

When I was a flash furnace operator, I was paid to fill the trains with slag, and I was paid when the trains were switching out. When I was waiting for new pots to come in, my pay didn't stop.

When I was a kid, working at Baskin-Robbins in the winter, when it was slow and we had fewer people, I wasn't paid just when people showed up to get ice cream. I was paid for the amount of time I was there ready, willing, waiting to work. That's what needs to happen for these app workers.

In this thing, when it says that you have a right to complain that your employer is paying you less than minimum wage per hour—but nothing will happen, because the Conservative government is enshrining the right for these companies to pay their workers less than minimum wage per hour. You're only paid for your engaged time. That means that, for example, if you stop by a grocery store or a pharmacy on the way home and you have to pick up soap, bread or something like that, the cashier would only be paid for the time that you got there, and when they scan your device, and while they did the transaction. Then, their pay stops. Think about a chess match. Every time they hit the clock—that's how these workers are paid.

There was a document—I know I can't hold it up, but I'm going to have it to read from. Legislated Poverty was from RideFair. This was presented to us the day before we went to committee on this: "Under current city and provincial regulations, Toronto's ride-hail drivers' median pay is an estimated \$6.37-\$10.60/hour, a collective annual loss of up to ~\$200 million/year."

This is about app delivery drivers. This is about ride-share companies, like Lyft and Uber. This is an amazing business plan. You come up with the app, and the workers provide all the equipment. The workers do all of the work. They pay for their vehicles. It doesn't matter if it's a car—you want to get an Uber Black, you get a high-end car, and you're paying a lease on it. You're doing food delivery, and you get on an e-bike that some people are renting or trying to pay off. And you hear about these rates of pay—because Uber is telling you that you make about 30 bucks an hour. That's 30 bucks an hour if you only count the time when you're working.

The Conservative government has created a law where—"Yes, we stand with Uber. We stand with the billionaires." This is sort of a familiar refrain from the Conservative government. They love billionaires, but they don't stand with regular working-class people.

A couple of quotes in here: "Toronto ride-hail drivers received an estimated median pay as low as \$6.37/hr"—that's before the deductions. That's before gas. That's before their lease. That's before they pay for the bike. That's out-of-pocket expenses.

Our minimum wage is \$16.55. I want you to compare that—and I'm going to say it again: \$16.55. What the Conservative government is saying is, "It's okay if a company pays their workers \$6.37 an hour instead." That is flabbergasting. In this economy, in this time of financial strife, when people are feeling the affordability pinch—middle-class people, higher-income people are thinking about what they're purchasing. They're putting things back on the shelves. People who can afford it are just saying, "This is ridiculous, the way we're being gouged."

You have a Conservative government saying, "I think it's great that this billionaire company is exploiting these workers. In fact, I'm going to write it into law so they can keep getting away with it." It's disgraceful.

Further, they did some analysis on this, and their estimate was that Uber's proposed—Uber says they make 120% of minimum wage for engaged time, but only while they're actually working. While they're waiting for an order to come in, and if Uber decides—they know how the app works. If Uber decides, "I'm going to keep sending it to this person and ignore this person"—it's only while they're going; you get zero while you're waiting.

0950

One of the deputants who spoke to us at clause-by-clause told us about being out in snowstorms—because you get more orders for food in snowstorms—and waiting in Toronto with his bike and making \$2.50 an hour, which, coincidentally, is what they estimate that works out to, actually, as an hourly minimum wage. It's a little bit of smoke and mirrors, because the engaged time pay is pretty good, but if Uber doesn't give you any deliveries, it's pretty bad.

Again, think of us all here: Right now, I'm getting paid because I'm engaged; none of you are. None of you deserve a cent for what you're doing. It makes no sense. It's completely unfair.

So Uber is telling people—they've got a thing called Uber math; I guess that's a trending thing. Basically, what they say is, you're making \$40.69 an hour—which is great, if you actually made that for the hour, but that's only when they add up your engaged time over a long period. So, your engaged time, seven hours and 24 minutes—do you know how long the worker has to work to have seven hours and 24 minutes of engaged time? It's 26 hours and 18 minutes. So to work an eight-hour shift for Uber, you have to work more than 24 hours a day. If you break it down to what they actually make per hour, in this instance, it's \$11.45.

I can go on and on about this, but there are other parts of the bill to get to. I'm spelling this out as clear as I can, though, because this is punishing for workers. We had several come who are Uber drivers and food delivery workers, and I asked one of them—I'll hear, often, when people hear of somebody who has a job that doesn't pay

well, “Just quit and get another job.” So I said, “Why don’t you just quit and get another job?” He said, “There are no other jobs. I have to put food on the table for my family, and so what I do is, I sit in my car and I wait. I don’t spend time with my family. I sit in my car for 16 to 18 hours a day, and then I collapse from exhaustion and sleep, and I sit in my car again.”

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: The member opposite is talking about these jobs that are existing, and I think it’s a good opportunity for me to transition to another thing we heard during the deputations and when we had amendments.

The number one thing we heard from people, from amendments—I talked earlier about WSIB and how it’s going to help the firefighters, but the number one thing we heard was to bring in an end to deeming.

Our member from Niagara Falls, Wayne Gates, has a deeming bill that he has tabled more than once. What this does is that, if you’re an injured worker—and a lot of people, if they’re not injured, think WSIB works well. The sad reality is, for a lot of workers, when you are injured, you are first in line to the poverty line. It is a sad reality for way too many workers. The Ontario Disability Support Program is made up of way too many workers who have been injured on the job.

There is a historic agreement that brought forward the Workmen’s Compensation Act, now WSIB, and the idea was that workers would give up the right to sue. In the States, you see these multi-million dollar lawsuits, when you’re injured on the job. Workers in Ontario gave up that right so they could have access to fair compensation. But what’s happening is, workers are not getting fair compensation.

That’s a whole other kettle of fish, the larger picture—but to rub their nose in it, to even thumb down harder on these workers, they have a process called deeming. So what you can do is, if you’re injured and you have restrictions—let’s say that you have a back injury and you can’t stand for long periods of time. Many times, a doctor who has never even seen you, never analyzed you, never met with you, just went through your case files, and this doctor can deem you able to do another job. The doctor can say, “Do you know what? You could be a parking lot attendant.” The reality is—I don’t know if you’ve been gone out to a lot of places—not a lot of parking lot attendants even exist anymore. It doesn’t matter if you live in a rural area where there aren’t even any parking lots—because places in Sudbury, like mine, outside of downtown, parking is free almost everywhere. It doesn’t matter if there are no jobs; they deem you able to do that job, and they bring your benefits down. You don’t have the job. You’ve got a phantom job.

The problem with this scenario is that it’s not like they say, “We think you can do this job,” and they send you out to do the job and they pay you for the job; they just say, “You could do this phantom job, and you can buy your groceries and pay your rent with the phantom cheques you’re going to get from it.” It is a broken, punishing system that is punishing people living with disabilities

they got from their workplace. It is punching down on the weakest people in our province.

The Conservative government voted against our amendment to end deeming. The Conservative government voted against the deeming bill. The Conservative government doesn’t want deeming to end. In a bill that is called Working for Workers, I cannot imagine anything more working against workers than not bringing in deeming. In fact, we tried to bring the amendment forward, and they said, “You can’t bring it forward; it’s out of order,” because they don’t talk about deeming in this bill. The standing orders say that, and that’s fair enough. My colleague the member from Niagara Falls asked for unanimous consent so we could debate the idea of even talking about it, so that we could even discuss the idea of having it. They still had the opportunity to vote it down at that point, but they didn’t want to talk about it because their mind is made up.

There is nothing this government loves more than to punch down on an injured worker. There is nothing they love more than putting their fingers in their ears when workers say, “This ability to deem me is punishing me and making my life more difficult.” There is nothing they like more than turning their back on injured workers and saying, “You’ve got it good enough.”

I know one of my colleagues from across the aisle is going to yell out about the 5% increase for ODSP, which a lot of these workers end up on. Basically, in the old days, we would have called this welfare. “ODSP,” I guess, has a better ring to it when you’re embarrassed about how you’re treating people who are living in poverty. But when you think of that 5% increase, I want you to imagine that there’s a waterline; this is the poverty line. This is where it was for people on ODSP, and that 5% increase brought you to here. You still can’t breathe. You’re still underwater. You still can’t pay your bills. But the good news is you got that 5%, so you should be thankful.

That’s the message the Conservative government gives to people: “We’re holding your head underwater. You’re not going to be able to survive.” Imagine the stress and the reality of that. “We cannot wait to do it. We’re going to pull you up 5%, but you’re not going to get to the surface. And not just that; we’re going to brag to people who don’t know enough about ODSP that we locked it in so as inflation rises, as the water goes up, you get to go up too, but never to the surface. We’re always going to keep you under the poverty line—and not a little under; far under. You can see the surface, but you can’t get to it.”

Imagine the ceiling, Speaker. It’s probably about 20, 30 feet above me. That’s where we’re holding these disabled workers. That’s where we’re holding these people, in poverty. That’s a government decision. The budget will come out probably at the end of next month or mid-month, and I’m going to predict “ODSP” won’t be a word in that budget. I’ll give you five bucks if it changes, but I’m telling you it’s not going to change.

Mr. Wayne Gates: “Deeming” is not going to be in it either.

MPP Jamie West: And “deeming” won’t be in it either.

Those are the bad parts of the bill, the main parts.

The other part of the bill that I want to talk about—I'm going to run out of time again because I'm not getting my full hour this morning. I think this is important too. When I was talking about the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act—this isn't just an opinion that these workers are getting ripped off. If you go to any Tim Hortons, people will tell you they're getting ripped off; they know they are.

It's not like the Conservative government is waiting for an expert to tell them that these workers are misclassified as independent contractors. They're not independent. They're reliant on the app company for the job. There has been the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and an Ontario Ministry of Labour employment standards officer both indicating these app workers have been misclassified as independent contractors. So it's not a handful of people talking about it. It's not a guy who does the job who's griping about it. These are authoritative figures. I know that there isn't a court case the Conservative government loves to lose enough, when you think of Bill 124 and all the other court cases they lost, but the Ontario Superior Court of Justice has said that these workers are misclassified. And the Minister of Labour—it's his bill. One of his employment standards officers has said they're misclassified.

The Ontario Superior Court of Justice has certified the landmark \$400-million class action lawsuit against Uber, filed on behalf of Uber drivers who have been misclassified as independent contractors by the ride-sharing giant. So what they do is, they look at the claim and they say, "Yes, I think you have a case." They're going to have to make a ruling on it. When there's a \$400-million class action lawsuit, they have a decent look at that before proceeding. They said, "I think it has merit to be heard." You are not an independent contractor if you don't control your hours and you don't control your pay.

1000

We also heard from nurses who said, "I'm not an independent contractor, and I have some flexibility in how I do my work as well."

So I think that these workers are going to win, in the same way that I thought the workers from Bill 124 were going to win, in the same way I thought the workers from Bill 28 were going to win. Those workers won too.

I think the government could save the province a ton of money if they listened to me once in a while, because they're getting it wrong again and again. Honestly, two days ago there was a motion to have night sittings, and the first thing I thought is, "Well, we need those night sittings because of the legislation they're going to have to walk back later." The majority of our time, basically, is walking back legislation from a Conservative government who loves nothing more than a "ready, fire, aim" philosophy of Legislature.

On February 22, 2022, Ministry of Labour employment standards officer Katherine Haire "found several violations of the Employment Standards Act—and employment lawyers and advocates say the ruling sends a clear message

on the issue of employment status that gig platform workers have long fought for.

"Haire ordered the company to pay Uber Eats courier Saurabh Sharma wages he argued were deducted without notice last August, along with wages to make up for missing public holiday pay and minimum wage discrepancies." This added up to \$919.37. "The ruling also dinged the company for not allowing required breaks during all of Sharma's shifts."

So there's a Ministry of Labour bill, and the Ministry of Labour inspector in 2022 said, "These are workers who are being violated by the Employment Standards Act." And instead of the Minister of Labour from the Conservative government saying, "I never realized this. What a travesty that these workers are being punished by this billion-dollar company. What I should do is stand up for these workers. I should be the voice of these workers"—remember the slogan, "For the Little Guy"? You don't hear it anymore, because nobody believes it—but that's what the Ministry of Labour should have done. It should have been there for the little guy. Instead, they passed this act, this section, the digital workers' rights protection act. They passed it so that those employees can no longer phone the employment standards agency inspector to have a complaint, because the employment standards agency won't apply to those workers anymore. That's the rights they have. The rights they have are that their rights were removed, and that's what the Conservative government is trying to tell you is great in this bill.

I talked earlier about workers who were making about \$6.50 an hour, a little over \$2 an hour after deductions.

I want to remind everybody here that Uber, which is the largest company that does this, is worth \$141.99 billion. I don't know what they're worth today, but that's what they were—I looked it up during amendments: \$141.99 billion. Do you know how they got rich that way? By paying people less than minimum wage. That is shameful.

I think we're going to get the Feed Ontario report very soon again, and I'm going to predict—because it has been since 2018, since the Conservative government was elected—that more and more working people will be going to food banks. That number will increase again, like it has every single year.

Honestly, in 2018, when I talked about this, I was very fair to the Conservative government. You were just elected—not your fault; the Liberals did this. The Liberals created this trend. But the thing was, when you were elected, people were counting on you to fix it, as a Conservative government. People who were working full-time and going to food banks, people bringing their kids to food banks while having a full-time job—I talked about charity in the past, having to bring your kids to the food bank to put food on the table; working full-time in a job from the government and going to food banks. But that wasn't fixed in 2018, or 2019, or 2020, or 2021, or 2022, or 2023—more than half a decade—and I have a feeling it's not going to be fixed in 2024 either, because they are not listening to this.

There are sections of this bill that last time I called “already law.” I keep looking over at the clock because I got into these “they were already a law” parts last time, when they tabled this at 11:30 p.m. for me to speak. But, honestly, any time you want to talk about workers, I’ll come running.

Three schedules to this bill—already a law. Wage theft is already a law—it’s already illegal. In fact, the Ministry of Labour and the previous Minister of Labour are aware of this. They’re aware of almost \$10 million that has been reported, that’s stolen from workers by bad employers. We heard during deputations, before amendments, that in fact the same employers do it all the time. It’s just not enforced. So they do it because they can get away with it. They know they will get away with it, because the Conservative government is aware of the \$10 million that was stolen from employees—no effort to get that back, no progress. It’s not like the number goes down to \$9 million, then \$8 million. They’re not doing anything about it—open season, man.

Do you know what they’re doing? They’re holding press conferences to say that they’re announcing a bill that will have wage theft protection. What they’re not saying—because they want their picture in the paper, “Look what we’re doing for workers”—is that this actually exists as part of the Employment Standards Act, and it has for decades. We’re not enforcing it, but we want the photo op so people think that we’re working for workers.

The second part is a similar form of wage theft. It’s about when you’re doing trial work, when you’re training—that you have to be paid. This has been part of the Employment Standards Act, as well, for more than a decade. It’s just that employers rip people off, and the Conservative government doesn’t enforce it. Going out and standing in front of people and telling them, “Look at these great laws we’re bringing forward,” and not saying, “Yes, they’re already existing laws that we don’t want to enforce and we don’t care about,” is deceitful. It’s a terrible thing to do to people—

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: I apologize. I didn’t mean to say that. It’s hurtful, Speaker. It is hurtful to these people.

We had people come to the deputations and talk about how excited they were for these laws, because they have been affected by them. Then, I had to break their heart and say, “Do you know these were already laws that they’re not enforcing?” They already exist as laws. In fact, we’re wasting time talking about this being a duplicate law.

With the resources the Conservative government has—actually, the resources that any government would have—in terms of manpower, institutional knowledge and lawyers, surely somebody in that party would have put up their hand and said, “You guys know this is already law. It’s already part of the Employment Standards Act.” I would imagine that happened, and the Minister of Labour said, “Yes, but I’ve got to get in the papers. I want to go around the province and pose for photos saying, ‘Look what I’m doing.’” But they’re not doing anything. In mining, we call that, all sizzle, no stink. It’s a pretend law.

The third one that was already a law is about requiring Canadian experience in job postings. This is already part of the 2013 Human Rights Code, so it’s more than a decade old. The reason that it’s not enforced is because first you have to know—a lot of these workers are immigrated workers, newcomers to Canada—the Human Rights Code of Ontario, then you have to file a complaint. You have to know how to file a complaint, and then you have to wait for the complaint to be heard. Right now, if you know, if you filed a complaint, if you’re able to wait for it, you’re going to wait between three to five years because there’s a backlog of over 9,000 cases. You would think there’s a backlog of 9,000 cases because there have been so many complaints and it hasn’t been enforced—and that could be part of it, but the reality is, most people don’t even know this exists.

In fact, the Conservative government got away with all kinds of press releases about doing this without people knowing about it. They had people come to the deputations, talking about how good this will be for them, because people they represented have been exploited this way and didn’t know it was part of the Ontario Human Rights Code from 2013. The people who did figure it out and filed the complaints have to wait three to five years. The reason they have to wait is because when the Conservative government came to power, they failed to reappoint and retain the experienced adjudicators. When those people phased out, they didn’t appoint new people. When they finally did appoint new staff, they appointed staff who weren’t qualified and didn’t understand what they were doing. They had no expertise in human rights law. So that learning curve becomes steep and slows things down even more.

This isn’t about helping workers. This is about helping Conservatives have press conferences to pretend they’re helping workers. This shouldn’t even be in here. Make it an announcement that you’re going to enforce these. Make it an announcement that you’re going to start collecting the almost \$10 million that has been stolen out of workers’ pockets. Make the announcement that you know there’s a backlog of 9,000 cases and you’re going to hire even more people to have this taken care of; you’re going to make sure everyone knows that these are already existing laws.

1010

You’re going to bring a campaign—the Super Bowl had an ad that taxpayers paid for that was all fluff. It was just an “Imagine Ontario” thing. You want to have an ad? Have an ad at the Super Bowl saying, “If you work in Ontario, we’re not allowing you to rip off our employees. We’re not allowing you to get away with wage theft; we’re not allowing you to not pay people for trial periods; we’re not going to allow you to ask for Canadian work experience, because those are illegal in our province and have been for more than a decade. We’re going to enforce the laws. We’re all for great employers, but if you’re not a great employer, we’re going to hold you to account the same way we would hold bad employees to account.” That’s what they should be doing. But that’s not the goal. The goal is to be in front of the camera, to have a photo and to

fool people to think that you're doing something for them, and that's disgraceful.

The next one is technically already almost a law; I didn't want to throw it in with the other three. This is about pay transparency. I got this from the Equal Pay Coalition. Pay transparency laws allow people to find more fairness in pay. Basically, there was a bill in 2018 that had passed in April that would require pay transparency to come forward. It's technically almost a law because it has never been dissolved; it just has never gone to have the LG read it into law. In 2018, Ontario's Pay Transparency Act came through, and it was never repealed; it was just blocked.

I want to move to the section here where they spell it out: "Doesn't Ontario already have a Pay Transparency Act?" Yes, it does. It passed in April 2018. It was scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2019, to give some ramp-up time, and then employers would have to do it in 2020. But after the 2018 provincial election, when the Conservative government came in to power in November 2018—it was one of the first things they did; they rushed this in as quickly as they could—they indefinitely suspended the Pay Transparency Act from coming into effect. They knew the blowback, if they actually repealed it, would be devastating, so they suspended it. You just tell people, "We're going to put it on a shelf and look at it later"—they're never going to look at it. So in schedule 32 of that Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act—they tabled that for a little while to wait on it. They didn't repeal it. They just blocked it from taking effect.

Then in this bill, they came forward and said, "We're going to have pay transparency." But all you really have to do to be in compliance with this new version of pay transparency—you literally can say, "I have a job posting, and you could make between minimum wage and a million dollars an hour." That's all you need to do. I don't think employers are going to do that, but it is not going to meet the moment of what is expected for this section of the act.

Pay transparency is a way for workers to understand what the average pay is where they work already. It's a way that, in workplaces where there's a gender wage gap, female employees can find out how much the male employees are making and can question why they're making less. We know that it's an ongoing issue. We know it's being addressed, but if you don't have the data, you can't move it forward. All this in this bill—again, another headline moment where you can say, "We're bringing forward pay transparency." All it really requires you to do is say there's a scope of pay. Previously, I think it's about 20% that women would make less than men—you could have that as your scope; you could do a 20% change. It gives no real data to anyone to measure anything. It just gives you the ability to say, "It's between here, \$0, and \$5 million," and then you're aligned with this bill.

Speaker, I think you're going to stand up and stop me.

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

It is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, I have more great news from the riding of Essex. This government has now embarked on the biggest expansion of nurse practitioner clinics in the history of the province of Ontario, and part of that expansion is happening in the county of Essex, right in the town of Kingsville.

In the town of Kingsville, they are creating an additional 1,200 spaces for people to be rostered with a nurse practitioner. Do you know what that means? That means an additional 1,200 people in the town of Kingsville and around the town of Kingsville will now have a dedicated primary care practitioner right in their own hometown. It means people are going to access primary care when and where they need it. But wait, there's more: They're also attracting a builder who is not only going to add to that clinic but build more medical services around the nurse practitioners.

Madam Speaker, the people of Kingsville are very happy with their additional 1,200 spaces of primary care, and they're going to get their services where and when they need it.

PAY EQUITY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, as we celebrate International Women's Day and the historic protest by women garment workers, things are not looking good in the fight for economic equality. The gender wage gap is stark in Ontario's caring economy, the health care and social services vital to our province. Ontario wildly underpays women and gender-diverse folks, newcomers and racialized people who work in these sectors.

A nurse is a nurse is a nurse. A PSW is a PSW is a PSW. ECEs—I could go on and on. The NDP fights for more for these workers, because they deserve fairness.

Do CEOs pay for their own work-related travel? Or would you be okay with lawyers getting paid by the case and not for the hours and days spent on it? Of course not. So why are governments so miserly when it comes to paying the caring professions? People's good hearts alone should not be what hold up these vital systems.

I remember Bill 115 attacking education and the public sector—and now Bill 124: yet another expensive, loser legal battle. What is wrong with Liberals and Conservatives, that once they get into power they want to keep money out of people's pockets?

When members of this chamber celebrate the many accomplishments of the women's movement, they should ask why their government continues to undervalue women's labour and starve people out of their preferred jobs.

The official opposition stands for wage parity across health care sectors, non-profits, developmental services, community support services, women's shelters, and mental health and addictions support.

Investing in people strengthens families and builds communities.

To the government: Do you stand with workers? Show it with wage parity in budget 2024 and pay people what they're worth.

POLLARD WINDOWS AND DOORS

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I rise this morning to recognize a business that is a cornerstone in my riding. Pollard Windows and Doors was founded in 1948 and recently celebrated 75 years in business. The Pollard formula for success has always been simple: Work hard, invest in new technology, and give customers more for their money. Today, Pollard is still a 100%-owned-and-operated family business manufacturing windows and doors in a state-of-the-art 300,000-square-foot-plus plant in Burlington.

Recognized as a leader in the window and door market, Pollard is known for developing innovative products that surpass even the most stringent building codes in Canada. Pollard's manufacturing plant is a top employer in Burlington, supporting our local economy and manufacturing Ontario-made products. They're known for their Energy Star ratings and for helping more Ontarians save on their energy bills. Pollard is committed to investing in the local economy and the development of skilled workers.

Thank you for your role in making Ontario's economy stronger.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Next Friday is International Women's Day, and I want to take a moment to recognize the contributions and leadership of women and girls who are making Ontario a better place to live, work and play.

And yet, this government, under Doug Ford has taken every step it can to systematically undermine women's rights and economic stability. In their first term, they cut funding to the Ontario college of midwives—a profession held largely by women; they clawed back raises for early childhood educators, leading to a staffing crisis across the sector; and they repealed the curriculum that adequately addresses consent.

1020

During the pandemic, this government left nurses and allied health staff—all predominantly female professions—feeling abandoned. When nurses needed this government the most, they were left with suppressed wages under Bill 124, short-staffed, and with unsafe working conditions.

Then, the Conservatives turned their sights on low-paid women education workers, with Bill 28.

This government is failing to support and protect women and girls—from mounting wait times to access basic reproductive care; deep cuts to legal aid funding; changes to social assistance programs; rape crisis centres at risk of closing; women's shelters over capacity because of lack of transitional, affordable and supportive housing;

and sexual assault cases being thrown out due to court backlogs.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of women and girls who are fighting for and building a fairer and more inclusive Ontario, I call on this government to support women instead of tearing them down, because women and girls in our communities deserve nothing less.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Nolan Quinn: It's great to be back at Queen's Park, and I'm excited to share this great news with everyone. On February 15, I was proud to stand alongside our local primary care teams to announce \$4,074,398 in funding for the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre; Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie; Glengarry Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic; and Rideau St. Lawrence Family Health Team. All four organizations are members of the Great River Ontario Health Team, who came together to collectively address the primary care needs of our area. Instead of each organization going alone and submitting individual proposals, they collaborated for the benefit of the whole region. This is excellent news for our community, my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. This will connect an estimated 19,340 people to a primary care doctor or nurse practitioner in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. This will connect children, parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours to care close to home.

This \$4-million investment is part of a larger investment of \$110 million to connect over 300,000 Ontarians with a primary health team.

Congratulations to these primary health teams, and thank you for all that you do.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Ottawa residents are desperately feeling the lack of primary care options. The Ontario Medical Association calculates that Ottawa needs at least 171 more family doctors in order to meet current demands. But we're also seeing family doctors closing up practice because the conditions have become unsustainable, and unfortunately, 40% of family doctors say they are considering retiring in the next five years.

My constituents are upset, and I get it. It is incredibly frustrating, but also scary, not to have a doctor or a nurse practitioner you can turn to when you're sick or have questions or just need a prescription renewed.

What's even more concerning is that we're seeing this shortage in the context of funding cuts for emergency care at the Queensway Carleton Hospital. The Queensway Carleton's emergency department is one of the busiest in the whole province. Patients are routinely waiting hours to be seen—sometimes even just to be triaged—and yet the government is cutting funding to the Queensway Carleton ER. By April, we will be down 10 physician hours every single day in the ER. So 150,000 Ottawa residents don't have a family doctor and have no option but to go to the

ER, and now they're going to have to sit and wait even longer to see a doctor there.

This is no way to run a health care system. It's time for the government to take the crisis seriously and make the investments needed to make sure that every Ontario resident gets the primary health care and the emergency health care they need when they need it.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: The one-fare initiative, which officially launched on Monday, February 26, is a pivotal change for all Ontarians, particularly those in my riding of Brampton West. This announcement provides constituents in my riding with a simpler pathway toward enhanced connectivity and provides a cheaper and convenient option for transit riders to commute to work, school, or for running errands. This transformative policy simplifies fare systems, ensuring seamless travel for residents within and beyond the city limits. By eliminating the need for multiple payments across different transit networks, it eliminates financial barriers and enhances accessibility to essential services, educational opportunities and employment centres for all Ontarians.

Speaker, the one-fare initiative aligns with the government of Ontario's commitment to affordability, incentivizing greater use of public transit. It promises to mitigate traffic congestion and put money back into the pockets of Ontarians. This showcases our commitment to saving commuters both time and money.

Whether individuals are heading to work, school, or social events, our government's significant investments in Ontario's public transportation system are simplifying travel, making it more convenient, efficient and affordable for everyone to reach their destinations.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

MPP Andrea Hazell: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to get up in this House and speak on what Black History Month means to me. I expect that every single one of you had an opportunity to attend a Black History Month event, to learn about our ancestors and our contributions to this country.

The first Black people in this country did not come here by choice. However, this country has become one of the most open, equitable and free societies in the world. Therefore, I have immigrated to this country, like many other people of all races, religions and cultures.

My place among you would not have been possible without the blood, sweat and tears shed by the Black members before me: Mary Anne Chambers, Margaret Best and Mitzie Hunter, my direct predecessors in my seat of Scarborough–Guildwood. They have counselled me on the difficulties of being a Black woman in this chamber.

Most of all, I would like to pay tribute to Dr. Alvin Curling, former minister and Speaker of this very chamber and longest-serving Black MPP. He's an inspiration to me and to so many community members, and he should be an

inspiration to every single member in this House. But he's more than that. He has the most honourable attribute a person can have, for he is a good friend and mentor.

With love to Dr. Alvin Curling on Black History Month, a celebration of excellence—"A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build."

LEO GROARKE

Mr. Dave Smith: For 10 years now, Trent University has had Dr. Leo Groarke at its helm. He joined Trent in 2014 and was reappointed in 2019. During his time at Trent, he has had six consecutive balanced budgets, and he has revitalized recruitment, student success and retention, research and career services. But I would say that the review of the college system and the reinstatement of the college affiliations will actually have the biggest impact on student life. This seemingly small aspect of Trent's unique experience brings both on-residence and off-residence students together to form a unique community within the greater Trent community, and it helps create connections with students of every academic discipline.

Leo also helped Trent form a partnership with peopleCare to build a 224-bed long-term-care facility. This will provide some of the most needed care homes for our seniors, but it also creates a wonderful learning opportunity for Trent's nursing students, Trent's centre for aging, as well as Sir Sandford Fleming College's nursing students, PSWs and culinary students.

Dr. Groarke is truly a unique and special individual. Perhaps it's in his DNA, because Dr. Leo is actually a triplet. That in of itself makes him somewhat unique. However, to add to the exceptional uniqueness, both of his brothers also have PhDs and are presidents of Canadian universities.

Leo, enjoy your retirement this June. And, yes, we will get out kayaking this summer.

WINTERDANCE DOGSLED TOURS

Ms. Laurie Scott: Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to experience the rush of dogsledding alongside the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport at Winterdance Dogsled Tours in Haliburton. The minister took the helm of the sled as I tested my filmmaking abilities, navigating the rugged wilderness and lakes of beautiful Haliburton Highlands and sharing in the thrill of dogsledding.

1030

Our guide, Hank, is an accomplished athlete who has competed in four Yukon Quests and two Iditarods, and continues to compete to this day. His wife, Tanya, is an equally accomplished speaker, author and entrepreneur. She has even taken the stage as a keynote speaker to Fortune 100 companies, sharing her story of leadership, team building, overcoming challenges and chasing dreams.

I would like to thank the couple and their children, Logan, Dustyn, Michaela and Jessica, and their team for their hospitality and sharing their passion with us, and

their love for dogs. Any day spent outdoors with dogs is a good day, as the minister said, but it was made more magical thanks to the couple's love and commitment to the huskies and adventure.

I encourage anyone who has never gone dogsledding to embrace the spirit of adventure and embark on an unforgettable experience, to head to Winterdance in the Haliburton Highlands before the end of the season.

And yes, the dogs were the true stars of this adventure. Their joy and eagerness for the trail was contagious. In short, they were all paws-atively amazing.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to say that we have with us in the public galleries high school students from across the province participating in the annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario Model Parliament program. I want to thank all members for their support and participation in this important project.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our future parliamentarians to the Legislature today.

Applause.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I would like to congratulate one of my constituents, Skye Baker, who is the page captain for today. I'd also like to give her family a warm welcome to Queen's Park: Lorna Coulter, Craig Baker, Juul Baker, Marie Coulter, Ken Coulter, and Natalie Coulter. Thank you for coming in today.

I'd also like to welcome and introduce some of my local non-profit organizations from Newmarket–Aurora that are visiting me today: the ABLE Network, Abuse Hurts, NewMakeIt, York Pride, Blue Door, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 426 in Newmarket, and Royal Canadian Legion Branch 385 in Aurora.

Welcome to your House.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today is Principals' Day at Queen's Park. The Ontario Principals' Council is here. I'll be meeting with Jeff Maharaj and Amy Johnson, and I want to welcome them to the House.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I want to give a warm welcome to the members of the Toronto Happy Ping Pong Club, who have joined us here today in the gallery upstairs.

I also want to welcome Kelly Wang from my riding of Don Valley North, who is here with the Ontario Model Parliament.

Enjoy your trip to Queen's Park.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I don't often get to do this, but Alexis Latter is here from Fort Frances with the Ontario Model Parliament. Thanks for coming all the way down here. I appreciate it.

Miss Monique Taylor: This morning, I had the privilege of meeting with the Ontario Principals' Council—Jeff Maharaj and Amy Johnson.

I also met with, from the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario, Erfan Azadehfar, Nawfal Sbaa, Suanny Aranguren, Thanu Subendran; and from Model Parlia-

ment, from my riding of Hamilton Mountain, Daunte Hillen, who is a former page. Welcome back, Daunte.

Ms. Laura Smith: It is my very great honour to welcome to the House some of our amazing not-for-profits. We've got Sheindl Belenky, who is the director of finance with Kayla's Children Centre; Rudy Barell, who is the chief development officer at DANI; and Morris Zbar, who is on the board of directors at the Bernard Betel Centre.

It is also my great pleasure to hopefully see and introduce myself to Matthew Carnide, a Thornhill student also participating in Model Parliament.

Welcome to your House. I can't wait to meet you, Matthew.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm proud to recognize Matias Biderman, who attends Saint-Frère-André in my riding of Davenport. He's one of our page captains today. His family is here, as well, with us: his father, Luke Biderman; his mother, Carmen Pena, his brother Milan Biderman, his grandmother Sylvie Biderman; and his grandfather Mel Zimmerman.

Welcome to your House.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today and welcome a number of folks who are here to support my private member's bill: Eric Lombardi from More Neighbours Toronto; Abdur Chatni, CEO and founder of CLIP Homes, specializing in multiplexes and mid-rise development; and Dillon Fraser, president of the Guelph and district realtors' association, as well as a number of his colleagues from GDAR. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's an absolute honour to welcome Gurbani Oberai, who is here for Model Parliament. Thank you for making Mississauga–Malton proud.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like to personally welcome one of our future legislators here from my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas: Araf Faruquzzaman.

Welcome to your House, and I certainly hope question period doesn't scare you away.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Nathan LaChapelle-Villimaire from Valley Heights Secondary School in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk.

Enjoy Model Parliament, Nathan, and welcome.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the Ontario Principals' Council, their president, Ralph, and many principals who are here. Thank you for meeting with me this morning.

I also want to welcome Julia Gadyatskaya, who is a Model Parliament participant from King–Vaughan. I want to welcome her and everyone to the House.

I encourage all legislators to attend the reception in the In Camera dining room this evening from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'd like to welcome two people who are here for Principals' Day: Hillary Howe, who is here from the Superior-Greenstone District School Board, and Greg Arkwright, who is here from the Trillium Lakelands District School Board.

Welcome to your House. I'm looking forward to meeting with you later today.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to introduce a brilliant and passionate city builder, clever Kristin Lillyman. She used to be part of my terrific team at Toronto city hall, and then she went on to bigger and better things.

Welcome, Kristin.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my pleasure to introduce a bright young fellow, Anthony Siracusa, who is here for Model Parliament today. Have an amazing day.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'd like to welcome the members of the Ontario Principals' Council who are here today: Greg Arkwright, Amy Johnson, Jeff Maharaj, Hillary Howe, Daisi Dina, Peggy Sweeney, Ralph Nigro, Nadine Trépanier-Bisson, and my neighbour in Ottawa Patsy Agard.

Welcome, and I apologize, on behalf of the members, for the challenges you faced in getting into your House today.

I'd also like to welcome, from Ottawa West-Nepean, Model Parliament participant Sophie Brin.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I want to welcome Evan Lecours to the Ontario Legislature today. Not only is he participating in Model Parliament, but he's from the great riding of Carleton, and he's actually one of my constituency staff. Welcome, Evan.

Mr. Rick Byers: It's my pleasure to welcome Trinity Ann Bechan from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to the Legislature today, participating in Model Parliament.

Thank you for coming. Have a great day with us all.

1040

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais vous présenter M. Yanick Proulx, qui fait partie du Parlement jeunesse. Il est de Hanmer dans mon comté de Nickel Belt. Bienvenue à Queen's Park, Yanick.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I want to invite two members of Barrie-Innisfil who are here for Model Parliament—Lucy Duncan and Yael-Eden Grinman.

Welcome to your House.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to give a very warm welcome to Kristin Lillyman, Lauren Mumford and Hillary Steele, visiting from Parkdale-High Park.

As well, I would like to welcome Zophine Saitua-Rippell, also participating in Model Parliament.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'd like to welcome all the non-profit organizations that have come to Queen's Park today.

Welcome to your House. After the question period, come to the grand staircase and let's take a photo together.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome Alec Tweddell, who attends Oakridge Secondary School in London West and is here for the Model Parliament.

Welcome to Queen's Park, Alec.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I welcome Lola Bullock-Castillo from the great riding of Durham, who is participating this week in the Model Parliament.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome my friend Ralph Nigro from the Ontario Principals' Council, and also Stuart Kinnear and Magdalena Kinnear, the proud parents of our page Jeremy.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I wanted to welcome a couple of young model parliamentarians: Coleson Lebrun, who is from Kingston and the Islands; Yanick Proulx from Nickel Belt; and a few others I have been meeting this morning.

Welcome to your Ontario Legislature, in which you'll be debating and using this chamber on Friday.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome, from the city of Brantford, His Worship Mayor Kevin Davis; chief of staff, Sasha Hill; CAO Brian Hutchings; and from Model Parliament, my daughter Ella Bouma.

Hon. Stan Cho: Straight from the centre of the universe, here for Model Parliament: Kaan Bektas. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome Arielle Soukantima from Brampton West, who is participating in the Model Parliament program. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Billy Pang: I would like to welcome Adrian Au and FeiXue YangYe, participating in the Model Parliament, from Markham-Unionville.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I want to welcome Mahreen Siddiqui, who is here from Brampton Centre for the Model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome Madeline Lovell from my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for the Model Parliament.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome a constituent of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill who is also a board member of My Women's Place Shelter, and all the non-profit organizations that are here today.

I look forward to seeing all of you at tonight's reception.

Hon. David Piccini: I would like to welcome constituents here for Model Parliament: Brodie Johnston, who may be replacing me here, but not too soon, who is here with his mom, Lisa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome Celia Ciufu and Tristan Kim. They were chosen to represent Huron-Bruce.

Have a great day. We'll see you on the stairs afterwards.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I would like to welcome Model Parliament participants from Eglinton-Lawrence: Leora Kasneci, Victoria Greenwood and Kevin Guo.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my great pleasure to welcome to the House some hard-working and dedicated people from our not-for-profit sector in Simcoe-Grey who do incredible work: Norine Baron from Beaver Valley Outreach; Lisa Ogbole from Imani's Place; Janice McGurran from My Sister's Place; Mary-Lou Osborne from Community Living Association of South Simcoe; Teresa Gal from Breaking Down Barriers—and for our Model Parliament today, Stefania Giampa.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce four model parliamentarians from Oxford: Angella Ortiz, Savrup Saran, Xin-En Tan, and Nathan Bean. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I would like to welcome to Parliament Feiyang Luo from Kitchener South-Hespeler as part of the Model Parliament.

I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to think about it.

QUESTION PERIOD

JUSTICE SYSTEM

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

Yesterday, the Premier tripled down, I guess, on his decision to interfere in our judicial appointments process. He described an epidemic of crime happening on his government's watch. His solution: appointing Conservative insiders to the committee that appoints judges.

Ontarians don't want an American-style partisan judiciary. They do not want judges picked because they are "like-minded" with a government that is under criminal investigation by the RCMP. They just want a system that works.

Will the Premier rescind these appointments and start reversing the damage that his neglect has had on access to justice in this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'm not going to double down, I'm not going to triple down; I'm going to quadruple down to make sure that we keep these violent criminals—that they go to jail.

We have the greatest police officers anywhere in the world right here in the province. They arrest criminals for doing heinous crimes, and guess what happens? The judges let them out on bail to do more heinous crimes the next day. They're kicking in doors in the middle of the night, putting guns to people's heads, scaring their children, scaring the families, scaring neighbourhoods. Where are the rights of the people of this province?

Why are you always supporting the criminals?

We know the Liberals and NDP aren't tough on crime. They want these criminals out.

Let me give you headlines:

—"Court Grants Bail to Alleged Gunman of Five Victims";

—"Teacher Charged with Sex Offences Released on Bail After Weekend in Jail";

—"Woman Charged with Manslaughter Released on Bail";

—"Southern Ontario Man Charged with Forcible Confinement, Drug Trafficking Granted Bail."

People breaking into homes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat.

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

Start the clock.

Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I've got a headline for them. How about: "RCMP Investigates Ontario Conservative Government"?

The newly appointed chair of the judicial appointments committee is a registered lobbyist who lobbied the government as recently as last week—among their clients, American gun manufacturers. Yesterday, the Attorney General seemed to say this was all business as usual, and I have to say, unfortunately, I don't disagree, because under this government, business as usual means that insiders, donors, people with access come first every single time.

Back to the Premier: Will he rescind these appointments now or do we have to wait another month for him to backpedal on this latest scandal?

1050

Hon. Doug Ford: We have a duty to protect the people. We have a duty to protect the students here, there, the people right in this Legislature. You ask them: Do they approve of letting these criminals out, after committing heinous crimes, terrorizing neighbourhoods, running around with guns like it's the Wild West? No, they don't support it. I'll guarantee you they don't support it. The students are so terrified they don't even want to stay at home without their parents because they're worried about these gun people coming in, shooting up the streets, kicking their doors in, putting guns to a woman's head, saying, "I'm going to blow your brains out if you don't give me the keys to your car." How do you think that feels? Or the child who was so scared they ran outside and jumped in the car when the criminals were taking it.

But guess what? The Liberals and the NDP are okay with these criminals—"Let them out. Let them keep committing crimes. Let them keep going."

You guys are so weak it makes me sick.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: This Premier refuses, again, to take accountability and responsibility for anything. Our court system is collapsing, and he is blaming the judges?

The government spent a billion dollars on a new Toronto courthouse—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This is going sideways fast. I would remind all members that the Speaker needs to hear the question. The Speaker needs to hear the response. Interjections are out of order. Members should make their comments through the Chair.

I had to interrupt the Leader of the Opposition; I apologize.

Start the clock.

The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Speaker. I'll start again.

Our court system is collapsing, and he is blaming judges?

The government spent a billion dollars on a new Toronto courthouse only to have it dubbed "a monument

to failure.” Courtrooms are forced to close every single day in this province because of understaffing. Their chronic underfunding means that people never get their day in court, and it means that victims will continue to be forced to watch their assailants walk free under this government.

Will the Premier finally take responsibility or will he continue to look for scapegoats for his own failures?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I hear the public sometimes say politicians are all the same. But here’s a stark contrast. If the Leader of the Opposition had clue one how the system worked, then she would understand that we don’t cherry-pick judges. There’s a committee that makes recommendations. There are judges who sit on the committee.

Never mind all that. They want to defund the police. They want to tie the hands of the judges with all sort of crazy notions that their federal cousins are [*inaudible*] Justin Trudeau, do what he’s doing. They run the Criminal Code. You want to talk about tough on crime? Their federal cousins could be helping us, but they won’t. They’re moving in the other direction.

We’re going to stand up for the average citizen.

I hope she asks me another question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There is an opportunity for another question. The next question.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ms. Marit Stiles: The scandals never end. Today we learned about yet another sole-source contract handed over to an international company by this government. PricewaterhouseCoopers received more than \$25 million to develop software for a digital tribunal system without competing with any software companies, let alone Ontario software companies. It seems the government hasn’t learned anything—or maybe it simply doesn’t care about fairness or transparency.

To the Premier: Why was a multinational accounting firm with little to no experience with software development handed this contract without having to compete?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I thought she didn’t know anything about the justice system. Now she doesn’t know anything about the IT system. The member doesn’t know anything about the IT world.

Back in April 2020—actually, before that—I sat down with the NDP government in British Columbia because their court digital system is renowned. I sat down with Minister Eby at the time—he’s now Premier Eby—and said, “I hear about this fantastic system,” and he said, “We would love to share it, and we will give it to you for nothing, as long as you adapt it to your market and then share the enhancements.” I’ve talked about this in speeches. I’ve talked about this in the House. But just like I said before, until somebody wrote about it in the paper—

they’re not paying attention. It’s in the estimates. It is in Hansard half a dozen times.

I’m happy to explain more, but I’m glad they are now joining the discussion.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: This sole-sourced contract with PwC was originally signed for less than \$1 million. But now, just three years later, the contract has ballooned to over \$26 million. This government has been unable to justify this massive increase—no competition, no transparency, again.

Despite what the government members say, ministry and tribunal staff say timelines and milestones are repeatedly delayed, and the costs just keep growing.

To the Premier: Can you explain why you’ve let the costs balloon to over \$26 million when they cannot seem to get the job done?

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, this is what happens when you do your fact-check through a newspaper report. They misread the estimates. It was never a million and a half dollars, ever. So I would love to see what it is you are relying on, unless it’s strictly the newspaper article that you read. Please share where that million and a half dollars came from. It’s categorically wrong.

What is true and what tribunals is saying is that we had a crisis because the Liberals left us a system that was failing. When we came in, we had this failing system. That is why we looked around the country. We went to BC and had a conversation so that we can have something that works for the people of Ontario.

I’m happy to send over a letter—this is not a prop; I will send it to the Leader of the Opposition—wherein Minister Eby says exactly what I was saying, that they would share it for free. Minister Eby says, “You have to pass—you can go with PwC, which we recommend; it will be faster, or you can go the longer way around?”—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response.

Hon. Doug Downey—because they have success in BC.

So what is the choice? Let the system fail? Let Ontarians fail, or go with the proven track record?

Interjections.

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

It’s the Speaker who decides what is a prop and what isn’t, and you used that as a prop. Please don’t do so again.

I would remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock.

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The long way around—like having a fair process or giving Ontario companies a shot at a contract?

People are not getting justice at the Landlord and Tenant Board. They have been plagued with delays since this government came into office six long years ago. There are now more than 38,000 people waiting for their cases to be heard. People are waiting months and sometimes years for their hearing to be even scheduled.

And while Ontarians are stuck in this chaos, this government's solution is to hand out more multi-million dollar contracts to their insider friends and giant corporations.

So one more time to the Premier—and I'm going to make it simple: Why was only one company considered for this contract, and why is it 26 times more expensive today than it was when it was signed?

Hon. Doug Downey: This false narrative about an increase is nonsense, so I won't go into that anymore.

I'm not going to take business lessons—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the Attorney General to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Hon. Doug Downey: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Conclude the answer.

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Hon. Doug Downey: I will not take any lessons from the NDP in terms of how business is run.

This is not a company with two men in the basement of a cottage. This is a company that has been in Canada over 100 years. They have an entire justice division within the company, and they have a track record by building the BC product.

So this disingenuous, if I could use that word—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You can't use that word. You're going to have to withdraw it.

Hon. Doug Downey: I withdraw. It's frustrating, Mr. Speaker, trying to use words that the NDP will understand.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the Attorney General.

I'm going to move on to the next question.

INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, jurisdiction of health care for First Nations people doesn't end when you step off a reserve.

On January 24, leadership of Nishnawbe Aski Nation held an emergency meeting on mental health and addictions. All levels of government were invited, and the leadership from NAN were very disappointed when none of the Ontario ministers showed up for the meeting.

Can this government let the people know why they didn't show up for the emergency meeting?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the Minister of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: In subsequent conversations with the grand chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, we have reaffirmed our commitment in a couple of important categories to address the mental health crisis both in isolated communities and for students attending high school in Thunder Bay. Those resources focus on NAN Hope, a program run by Keewaytinook Okimakanak, an organization widely accepted and thought of as the right organization to deliver services to students on-reserve and transitioning to the big city, as well as mental health resources on the ground in Thunder Bay—additional new

funding—to support the challenges that they face. That was the right action to take. It dealt on point with the kinds of things that the NAN leadership was asking to be addressed. We were there for those communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, I would like to thank the government for that funding, but it was peanuts.

This government has an opportunity to listen to First Nations on health transformation, to be true treaty partners in health. We cannot continue to operate in crisis.

And we don't need to continue to lose our children to preventable deaths by suicide. It's not normal to attend funerals for 11-year-olds who have died by suicide.

Will this government start taking this Nishnawbe Aski Nation health state of emergency seriously?

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: We do take very seriously the work that we are doing with First Nations throughout the province of Ontario, especially in the north and in the rural communities.

In fact, I was present for the announcement in Thunder Bay just two weeks ago, and it wasn't the end of the work we're doing; it's the beginning and a continuation of the collaboration that we've had for a long time.

In fact, under the leadership of Premier Ford, this government and the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, we're working collaboratively with all First Nations across the province of Ontario. We're making investments in all the communities as well as utilizing the Addictions Recovery Fund to put 56% of all the beds we've opened in the province in northern Ontario.

Specific investments: \$7 million to support land-and-water-based healing—Batchewana First Nation, Mushkegowuk, Kashechewan, Kettle and Stony Point—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: —TTN and the First Nations Horizons treatment centre.

Mr. Speaker, we're also working to provide supports to the youth, with—

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is to the Associate Minister of Small Business.

Our government was elected with a strong mandate to serve the people of this province. We know the carbon tax adversely affects businesses and the economy and makes life more expensive for Ontarians. That's why our Premier recently introduced legislation that, if passed, guarantees that no provincial government can force a carbon tax on the people of Ontario without their say.

Small businesses in my community of Richmond Hill were thrilled to hear our government stand up for Ontarians and prioritize keeping costs down for families and businesses. They want to continue to lead by example and fight the carbon tax.

Can the associate minister tell us what this legislation will mean for small businesses?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member for Richmond Hill for the question and for her great advocacy for the businesses in her riding.

Since day one, this Premier and our government have fought back against the carbon tax. It's because we know that for so many households, more tax means less money to spend at their local small businesses. And for so many entrepreneurs, more tax means less money to invest in their businesses or to hire staff.

Speaker, while the Ontario Liberals and NDP have stayed silent as their friends in Ottawa plan to increase the carbon tax by over 37 cents per litre, our government is working to guarantee that no provincial government can force a costly carbon tax on the people of Ontario without ensuring their voices are heard loud and clear.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the associate minister for that response.

The costly carbon tax has taken a toll on families and small businesses in Richmond Hill and across the province.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, by 2030, Ontarians will experience a decline in their quality of life due to additional costs resulting from the carbon tax. With an estimated financial cost of \$2,000 per household, individuals and families who are already struggling to make ends meet will experience further hardship.

While the NDP and the Liberals continue to believe that increasing taxes is a solution, our government knows that the carbon tax is unfair to hard-working Ontarians.

Speaker, through you, to the associate minister: What are small businesses saying about the impact of the carbon tax on their businesses and their communities?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you again to the member for the question.

Speaker, let me tell you what I'm hearing from businesses around the province—and this is a quote from a small manufacturer: “The carbon tax increasing each year is crippling our ability to do business outside of our local area. We used to have a large province-wide presence with some of our product in a major retailer and online delivery but now shopping costs are too high to make a profit doing that.”

I've stood in this House and raised the fact that the federal government still hasn't returned the millions of dollars owed to small businesses in rebates. So, once again, we're calling on the opposition NDP and Liberals to pick up the phone, call their federal counterparts and start supporting and advocating for their businesses and job creators in their ridings.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

The Conservatives came up with a definition of affordable housing in order to spur the construction of

affordable homes 18 months ago. But 18 months later, the law is still not in force, the government still can't make up their mind on what exact definition of affordable housing they're going to use, and not a single home has been built under this new initiative.

Ontario is in a homelessness crisis and a housing affordability crisis. Given that, why is this government taking so long to get this affordable housing initiative off the ground?

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

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Hon. Paul Calandra: The member, of course, will know that her party was supportive—in fact, the House unanimously supported the definition of “affordable housing” that was passed by this government.

At the same time, we're seeing a tremendous growth across the province when it comes to purpose-built rentals. We are at the highest level in the history of the province.

We had the unfortunate thing yesterday, of course, where the NDP doubled down on wanting us to tax those very same homes that the member across is wanting us to build. They want us to put back a development charge on those.

We heard from Habitat for Humanity and we've heard from a lot of other affordable housing builders across the province of Ontario that the removal of taxes is what is spurring on the development of affordable housing across the province of Ontario.

We want to build all types of housing, because the dream of home ownership is something that not only should just be a dream, but it is something that should be a reality for the people of the province of Ontario. Because of the policies of this government, that is the reality for hundreds of thousands of people. We're going to continue to do that hard work.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: It's like “affordable housing” is a little bit too hard, so let's try “attainable housing.”

Speaker, 18 months ago, the Conservatives said they would come up with an exact definition of “attainable housing” in order to further construction of attainable homes. It's 18 months later, and the law is still not enforced. The government still cannot decide what the definition of “attainable” is going to be, and not one home has been built under this new program either.

Why on earth is it taking the government so long to get these programs off the ground?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's just the opposite actually. We're seeing the largest number of homes being built across the province of Ontario. Year after year, we're seeing those numbers increasing—more purpose-built rentals, more shovels in the ground than at any other time

in the province's history. So I would invite the member to look at the stats.

But I'm more encouraged by one thing—I just want to stray for a second, if I can, colleagues, and I want to thank Colin D'Mello for his incredible reporting. I'm going to quote directly from Colin D'Mello—and I want to thank the member opposite for her support. We're seeing that, in Ottawa, 1,200 new long-term-care homes were built; in Markham, 320 new homes; 256 in Burlington; 192 new long-term-care homes in Ajax; 256 in Peterborough; 288 new homes in Belleville; 224 in Clarington; 416 in Stouffville, my hometown; 160 in North Bay; 160 in Sarnia. Do you know who's against that? The leader of the Liberal Party, who said they're not homes. That's shameful.

We'll continue to build homes for all Ontarians.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

The previous Liberal government was a disaster for Ontario's economy. Their agenda of high taxes and burdensome red tape shuttered businesses—we saw our most talented workers flee south of the border—and blocked new job-creating investments. Thankfully, the days of Liberals neglecting our economy are over.

Our government has created the conditions for businesses to succeed and, as a result, good-paying jobs are being created across Ontario.

Can the minister provide us with an update on any recent developments that are helping to create good-paying jobs for the hard-working people of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Of course, I am going to start off with the fact that I have been starting off with almost every day: that in 2023, Ontario created more manufacturing jobs than all 50 US states combined. We cannot say that enough in this Legislature. That is a sign that our auto plan is working.

Think about when we attracted NextStar from Korea into Windsor. They're currently building a \$5-billion battery plant. At that time, we said there would be a lot of follow-on investment. Well, here's one: A company, Bobaek, has invested \$35 million in a brand new plant across the street in Windsor that does battery insulation panels and other parts for electric vehicles. They are putting 144 people to work there, and Bobaek is already planning their phase 2, which is a twin building next door. It's because we lowered the cost of doing business by \$8 billion.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that answer. It's great to hear about Bobaek's new facility, which will create good-paying jobs for my constituents in the county of Essex.

When the Liberals were in office, they were content with seeing new auto investments land in foreign jurisdictions while Ontario's auto sector stagnated. They

didn't believe Ontario auto workers and firms had what it takes to compete in the global economy. Unlike them, we believe in the hard-working men and women who power our economy and the firms who continue to provide Ontario with a competitive advantage.

The contrast between our approach to economic development and the Liberals' failed approach could not be clearer.

Can the minister highlight how, by fostering the conditions for businesses to succeed, our government has enabled the revitalization of our auto sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, it's always important to remember where we were.

To the students who are here: Under the previous government, we lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Since Premier Ford was elected, we have seen 700,000 men and women go back to work.

It was only a few years ago that Reuters announced there would be \$300 billion spent on electric vehicles across the world and zero of it was coming to Canada. Now, here we are, three years later; \$28 billion in electric vehicles has landed in our province, putting men and women to work every single day. Bloomberg has now said that Canada is the number one jurisdiction around the world for electric vehicle parts. That is where we are. We have dethroned China from the number one position for the very first time. That's what's happening in the province—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. On Eglinton Avenue East in Scarborough, 10 to 12 sections of brand new sidewalk were just dug up because of deficiencies in the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. This happened a year after the Sloane station on this platform's project was jackhammered and carried away in pieces. We're going into the 13th year of this project—three years late, \$1 billion over budget. That is the record of Metrolinx and Phil Verster, its million-dollar CEO. They don't build transit; they break it. They don't finish projects; they extend them.

To the Premier: When will this government hold Mr. Verster and Metrolinx accountable?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, we're making the largest investment in public transit in the entire world—\$70 billion-plus over the next 10 years.

Let's look at the record of the previous Liberal government and the NDP—voting against every single one of these investments—

Hon. Doug Downey: Upside-down bridges.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —building upside-down bridges and stopping highways from being built, stopping governments from investing in public transit.

Mr. Speaker, that member has voted against every measure this government has taken to improve public transit in this province. Not only does he support the largest carbon tax in Ontario—over 35 cents—he doesn't want anybody to ride on public transit. He's voting against projects like the Ontario Line. He's voting against projects like the Scarborough subway extension.

Our government will continue to commit to building the largest expansion of public transit in the world.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, back to the minister, I suppose: The people of Scarborough just got their answer today. They can see with their own eyes, on Eglinton Avenue, pieces of brand new sidewalk being carried away in dump trucks, just like the people living near Sloane station saw the platform carried away in dump trucks again.

Under this government's watch—they can't blame anybody else—in 2020, the Auditor General told them that the Eglinton Crosstown LRT was being built "at risk." Metrolinx, Phil Verster and their P3 buddies carried on despite that risk, and now we have at least 260 deficiencies in this project that this government will not answer for.

1120

When will this government do what a competent government would do and fire Phil Verster? Signal that you demand change for the hard-working taxpayers of this province. Tell the people of Scarborough, tell the people of Toronto that a new day is coming; that we're going to build and not break public transit.

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

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, with the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, Scarborough was a forgotten part of the city of Toronto.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, after 30 years of inaction, we are building the Scarborough subway. Shovels are in the ground for the Ontario Line. Shovels are in the ground for the Scarborough subway.

Premier Ford made one fare possible. The NDP and Liberals voted against one fare not just once; they voted against one fare—\$1,600 in savings—twice.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

MPP Andrea Hazell: My question is to the Premier.

Why did you appoint a gun lobbyist to chair the panel that chooses our judges?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, we appointed a very accomplished individual with a deep knowledge of how government works, with a deep knowledge of how various sectors work. We also appointed an individual who has complied with all of the rules and regulations with the Integrity Commissioner, somebody who plays above board. That's the kind of person we appointed. And he

happens to be registered with a particular company. It's not because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals laugh. Do you know what I laugh at? Their feigned indignation. It is unbelievable, given their track record, that they even comment on this stuff.

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: Back to the Premier: I take this to heart. I'm coming from a community in Scarborough that is deeply impacted by gun violence. Don't we matter? In my campaigning, I went to apartment buildings—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government side will come to order.

MPP Andrea Hazell: —and I spoke to parents who have suffered because they have lost their 19-year-old, their 18-year-old, their 17-year-old. There are students who have been impacted in their schools over gun violence.

To the Premier: Don't the people of Scarborough matter to you?

My question to you, again: Why did you appoint a lobbyist to chair the panel that chooses our judges? We matter.

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

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I agree; everyone matters.

Why don't you support us on making sure we appoint tough judges to keep these criminals in jail?

Tell the young people that I've been out to Scarborough 1,000 times—not 100; 1,000 times—supporting your community. And do you know what the mothers say? "Throw these criminals in jail." That's what the mothers are telling me. They're telling me the same thing in Scarborough as they're telling me in Etobicoke North. They want to make sure their kids can walk to school peacefully. They want to make sure their kids can go to the park, even at nighttime, without getting a gun pointed to their head.

And the judge lets them out the next day—that same criminal is in the park, dealing drugs, putting guns to people's heads, robbing people. And guess what? He gets bail again. He doesn't get bail once; he doesn't get bail twice—he has been out on bail eight times.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Ontario's population is growing rapidly. As we continue to build our province, the transportation infrastructure also needs to expand.

Constituents in my riding of Markham–Thornhill want more transit, highways and roads, because, thanks to 15

years of Liberal inaction, communities are in an infrastructure deficit. The Liberals failed to build vital transportation networks to keep up with our growing population and expanding business needs.

Our government must continue to implement solutions that would improve transportation for families and businesses.

Can the minister please tell this House how our government is ensuring we build infrastructure faster to strengthen our transit network?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member for highlighting such an important issue.

For 15 years, the previous Liberal government did absolutely nothing. They didn't build highways, didn't build transit. In fact, they built upside-down bridges. And then, what did they do? Their current leader led the charge against building Highway 413, an important project that this province needs. And what happened two weeks ago? The federal Minister of the Environment—her friend—said they're not going to invest in any more roads and bridges across this province. They are so out of touch.

Thanks to advocacy from members like that member from Markham–Thornhill, we're going to make sure we invest in communities like Markham. We're going to make sure we build transit. We're going to make sure we invest in highways like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, because that is what the people of this province elected us to do. It's about making sure we save 30 minutes each trip on the 413 so you can spend more time with your families at home instead of being in gridlock.

It's about time the Liberals and the NDP wake up and look at the challenges people are facing in their—

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the minister for that great response.

It is really encouraging to see Ontario lead the country on infrastructure investments. We are sending a clear message that transit infrastructure is a priority for this government.

Our Premier once said there's no better place in the world to invest and raise a family than here in Ontario. To ensure we remain the best place in the world for families, we must continue to keep costs down. The people of our province expect that their government will continue to look for ways to make life easier and more affordable.

Can the minister please explain how the Get It Done Act will deliver true affordability and put more money back into people's pockets?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Our government has been working since day one to make sure we keep life affordable for the residents of this province and their families.

The previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, raised taxes, tolls and licence fees on the hard-working people of this province.

Our government has been committed to making sure that we reduce tolls, that we take the tolls off highways, that we freeze licence fees.

No one will be able to implement a carbon tax in this province unless they take it to the people.

I gave the example of a truck driver yesterday—\$15,000 to \$20,000 the carbon tax cost the trucker's family. The Liberals have supported the carbon tax every step of the way. That's \$15,000 that could be going toward their own family.

The carbon tax has increased costs on absolutely everything in this province.

We, as a government, will continue to fight for the hard-working people of this province, keep costs low—

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

Interjection.

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

The next question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Families from Ola Daycare in my riding are in the House today. They are facing a \$800-to-\$900-per-child increase in the cost of their child care, because the operator had to withdraw from the \$10-a-day child care program due to this Conservative government's poor implementation. It has been two years since the agreement was signed with the federal government, and Ontario still does not have a funding formula in place. Child care centres simply cannot operate with this kind of unpredictability.

Where is the funding formula you promised?

1130

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: First of all, this is the government that cut child care fees for those families by 50%, saving them \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year—for context, under the former Liberals, child care increased by 400%, and under Liberal leadership, the city of Toronto was a child care desert.

We have a commitment to build 19,000 net new spaces between now and the year 2026, and we are on track to do it.

You raised a serious concern about the federal program—a concern we share. The difference is, when it came to voting in this House to stand up for for-profit operators like those in your riding, you opted to side with the federal Liberal government to preclude a third of our parents, who are here today, who want government on their side and off their back.

Instead of trying to speak from both sides of your mouth, vote for choice. Respect—

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

I'll remind the members once again to please make your comments through the Chair.

Secondly, I'm going to ask the Minister of Education to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I withdraw.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The general operating funding to child care programs, which is a provincial responsibility, is lower this year than it was in 2018, even before adjusting for record-high inflation.

Without dependable operating funding that increases with the cost of living, and without immediate action, more families like the ones with us today will be without affordable child care.

Families from Ola Daycare have been left scrambling. Their choice is to pay hundreds of dollars more each month or lose their child care spots.

Will the minister commit to, at the very least, increased funding to keep pace with inflation so operators don't leave the program?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The position of the Liberal Party and that of the New Democrats is to omit all for-profit child care, overwhelmingly operated by small business women. You would have literally removed the choice of government to provide support and a 50% reduction to those families.

We are the only political party in this House that did what the Liberals could never have done, which is to cut fees, increase spaces and stand up for the choices of all families in this province. Those are the facts.

While we increase wages for workers, we're going to continue cutting fees for working families.

What we're not going to do is to allow ideology to triumph over the right of all families to have choice and affordable child care—because the Liberals and New Democrats would have precluded them all.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to remain focused on affordability during this national crisis by cutting fees, creating more spaces and supporting all families in all regions of this province.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Ted Hsu: The Premier boasted last week that the funding for post-secondary education announced on Monday would be “fabulous.” It's not fabulous; it's famine. The funding just proposed is less than half of what the government's own blue-ribbon panel recommended. In turn, that recommendation, under a mandate to be fiscally responsible, only partly restored what this government has allowed to erode away with inflation.

On Monday, the minister was repeatedly asked how her “fabulous” announcement was even an adequate response to her own blue-ribbon panel. The minister fell back on blaming Ottawa for her government's mismanagement. And then we learned yesterday that they did not attend meetings with their federal counterparts.

Mr. Speaker, when will they get it done right and deliver adequate funding for Ontario colleges and universities?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I will take no advice from that member of the Liberal Party on post-secondary education in this province.

In fact, under the leadership of the Liberal government, tuition rose to the highest in Canada.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we decreased tuition by 10%, and it remained frozen—we announced it just the other day—and we are continuing to freeze tuition in this province. We are making post-secondary affordable for students in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I announced a historic investment, \$1.3 billion, the largest investment in post-secondary education in more than a decade. We will ensure that our institutions have stability and predictability, and not on the backs of Ontario students.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, this Premier likes to say he's for the people. We know he's for his friends.

Recently, we learned that the PCs and the Minister of Colleges and Universities have been hosting, over the last few years, fundraisers attended by many officials of for-profit private career colleges that have boomed under this government.

Only after the federal government took the drastic step of capping international student visas, a month ago, did this government put a moratorium on new public-private partnerships and begin a review of international student programs.

Why did the Conservative government hold back and let the situation get so completely out of hand?

When they're under criminal investigation by the RCMP for the greenbelt scandal, how can we take seriously the Premier's words at a news conference—“No one can influence our government; no one can influence any minister at all”?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: This government is for the people and for the students, and we have proven that.

While this Premier freezes tuition, the leader of the Liberal Party wants to hike tuition.

We are ensuring that tuition is affordable for every student in this province. There's an affordability crisis—the price to heat, to eat, to rent. We are going to ensure that every student has access to affordable post-secondary education in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we made a historic announcement—\$1.3 billion to ensure sustainability and predictability for our institutions in this province.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Ontario is experiencing a generational labour shortage that if left unaddressed will result in billions of dollars in lost productivity.

According to the latest Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, there are an estimated 237,000 unfilled positions in the province. That's exactly why we must continue to demonstrate leadership and help get more people into rewarding careers. Our government must remain steadfast in its

commitment to positioning Ontario as the premier destination for both workers and businesses to thrive.

Can the minister outline what steps our government is taking to alleviate the labour shortage and propel Ontario to reach its full economic potential?

Hon. David Piccini: Today, I was at Centennial College for the Jill of all Trades event with the Premier and a number of my colleagues. A trades teacher approached me and said, “Do you know what, David? I’m really motivated to train the next generation.” Do you know why? Because he was symbolic of the challenge we’re facing. One in three tradesmen and tradeswomen are 55 or older. To build the hospitals, the schools, the highways we so desperately need, it’s going to require men and women in the trades.

We were empowered with that room full of inspiring young women—women like Carmen, who works for the TTC. Carmen was told by a big, burly guy, “You’re too small to work as a mechanic.” Well, guess what? She is one today. She’s kicking ass. And guess what that guy said to her? He now asked her, “How do I get into the trades?”

Well, thanks to our government, we’re breaking down barriers, getting more youth into the trades so we can build—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to caution the minister on his choice of words.

The supplementary question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

Our government understands that each missed paycheque not only impacts individual workers, but also represents a lost opportunity for families to improve their quality of life. To ensure Ontario remains the best place to live, work and, yes, raise a family, it’s critical for our government to support employers in finding the skilled workers they need to grow their businesses and our economy. We must also continue our ongoing efforts to attract, support and protect workers so that they can reach their full potential in the workplace.

1140

Can the minister please tell the House how our government is securing better jobs with bigger paycheques for hard-working workers and those who are seeking employment opportunities in our great province?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I’m proud to rise to talk about a fund—a fund that, sadly, the opposition voted against: the Skills Development Fund. It’s over a billion dollars, and it has helped train half a million Ontarians.

Let me tell you two quick stories—one, Shanika. I met her at the newcomers’ centre in downtown Toronto. She talked about purpose-driven careers, thanks to work this government is doing supporting Sara Asalya and the team there with the Skills Development Fund investment. Thanks to that, she has gotten out of dead-end jobs; she has now got purpose in her life, because we’re lifting her up—something the opposition would never do.

Another story: Phil Fournier, Ironworkers 759—again, working dead-end cash jobs, not paying taxes; now a contributing member of the north. He’s inspiring. He’s

training the next generation of ironworkers. He has joined the union up there, again, thanks to the Skills Development Fund.

This government is going to continue investing in the skilled trades because we’re actually building things. After decades of neglect, we’re getting it done for highways, roads, bridges—you name it. We’re getting it done and training—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Health.

The region of Durham is one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada. New neighbours are joining us every single day, and we need the health care infrastructure to support them. Durham needs a new hospital and we are ready to go, with the proposed site in Whitby selected by an expert panel two years ago. For two years, families have been left waiting for hours at our overburdened care centres.

Seven MPPs represent the Durham region; six of them are government members. I support a new Durham hospital.

Minister, do you agree that Durham needs a new hospital?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I’m pleased to hear that the member in the opposition is actually talking about investments in our health care system. It is disappointing to suggest that the 50-plus hospital capital builds that we already have in the system have been voted against consistently—every time we have a budget, every time we have estimates, the member opposite votes against those.

So I would hope that, as the process continues with the new Whitby hospital—and I have to say, there is not a day that the member from Whitby does not talk about and give me an update on what is happening in his community.

And the other Durham members know, as all of us are, that we are very excited about the capital builds that are happening in our hospital systems across Ontario.

I am very seized with the Whitby hospital, in particular, and I know that, with the support of the members’ opposite—I hope that you vote for it when it comes forward.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Durham region needs a new hospital. The proposed site is in Whitby, and their new hospital campaign is catching like wildfire—understandably. A new Durham hospital means less stress on the rest of our health care system and on the Oshawa hospital, and it means better care across Durham.

In the last couple of budgets, we have not seen planning grants.

Minister, all we need to get started is a planning grant. Will it be approved, and when can we expect it?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, \$50 billion has been set aside for over 50 hospital capital—new, expansion and renovation projects in the province of Ontario. We understand the need.

As Ontario's population ages, as Ontario's population increases, we are there as a government—whether it is expanding health human resources or seats in colleges and universities, whether it is directing and making sure the people who want to practise in the province of Ontario have a seamless pathway to do that, or whether it is an expansion of the North Durham Family Health Team that we announced two weeks ago.

I trust that, while the member advocates for her region, she keeps in mind that every time she votes against these projects, she is suggesting to her community that they are not worthy.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

All seniors in Ontario deserve access to the care and support they need when they need it.

Despite numerous calls from experts and advocates, the previous Liberal government failed to acknowledge the critical importance of investing in long-term-care facilities and services.

In contrast, our government has made record investments in building and rebuilding long-term-care homes across this great province.

Speaker, with Ontario seniors entering long-term-care homes later than ever before, and often with more medically complex care needs, we must ensure that all residents receive safe, quality care.

Can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to support long-term-care homes and connect long-term-care residents to more convenient care?

Hon. Stan Cho: I'm sure that hard-working member will agree with me when I say that we don't always see eye to eye with the NDP and the Green Party over there, but I was glad to hear over the weekend that the NDP and Green Party agree that long-term-care homes are indeed homes.

Well, Speaker, that just leaves one party in this Legislature that doesn't seem to get that picture. And I guess it's no surprise, right? The Liberals, when they were in power for the better part of two decades, made a goal. They said they were going to build 35,000 long-term-care spaces, an admirable goal; I think that was in 2007. But do you know what happened when they exited government in 2018? They had built a net new 611. So it's no wonder, I suppose, that the Liberals don't want to consider these homes homes, because they failed miserably to actually build them.

This Premier is getting it done with a record investment in capital and the health human—

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for his response. It is great to hear about our government's continued effort in delivering safe, quality care for our elderly loved ones.

People with cognitive conditions like dementia often require more specialized care in long-term-care homes. They often face more challenges in being connected to long-term-care services.

Our government must do all that we can to provide people with complex needs the care they need and deserve in the comfort of a home instead of a hospital.

Can the minister please tell this House what other steps our government is taking to ensure seniors get the care they need in order to live comfortably and with dignity?

Hon. Stan Cho: There's a lot to list here. I wish I had an extra 19 seconds just to list those.

Speaking of behavioural specialized units—a \$5.5-million investment announced just recently for three BSUs in homes in Brampton, Timmins and Etobicoke.

This is the game-changing investment that we need for our seniors. It's not just about capital, which we are investing to record levels; it's not just about health human resources, which we are investing to record levels—it is about targeted approaches to making sure our seniors get the right care in the right place.

Let's contrast that. We talked about the past record of the Liberal government. Today, they have a leader in Bonnie Crombie, somebody who promises to build but fails to deliver and doesn't even consider a long-term-care home a home for its residents.

I challenge the Leader of the Liberal Party and every single one of those Liberal members to walk with me into their ridings, into those homes and tell those hard-working seniors who built our communities, who gave us our lives as we know it, that they are not living in a home. This government disagrees. We're going to continue to invest into those who took care of us—

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

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier.

Due to a lack of mental health supports in Windsor for children and youth with complex needs, parents are surrendering their children to the children's aid society, hoping much-needed help will finally be given. In some cases, the families are being forced to send their kids up the 401 to London or Ailsa Craig where they get put on a wait-list for supports.

With no foster families to support their complex needs, kids, some as young as six years old, are put in unlicensed placements—a hotel, Speaker. Some kids will age out before they ever get the help they need, some kids are being trafficked and some are being targeted by drug dealers.

Speaker, this is a very dire situation in my community and communities around the province. We should not have

to send children from Windsor to London or Ailsa Craig or anywhere outside our community to get the supports and services they need. It is absolutely despicable.

When will the Premier act to ensure that children and youth with complex needs in Windsor have the mental health supports they need in Windsor?

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member opposite for that important question.

If she has had an opportunity to read the Roadmap to Wellness, she'll see that we're building a plan for the province of Ontario focused on children and youth, focused on adults and focused on seniors. In the process of doing that, we've invested \$525 million annually, and we'll continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we're focused on children and youth. We know how important it is to invest in children and youth to ensure that they have the supports they need so that, as adults, they could live their lives the way everyone else does—and those investments are being made, whether it be through the pediatric fund that was created and was just announced by the Premier and the Minister of Health, whether it be through the nearly \$500 million that was invested and we continue to invest in children and youth.

There's a lot of work to be done, but we are making progress and we are building a system that is making a difference in the lives of everyone and providing services in each of the areas where people live throughout the province.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

KEEPING ENERGY COSTS DOWN ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR LA FACTURE ÉNERGÉTIQUE À UN NIVEAU ABORDABLE

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

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne certaines instances dont la Commission est saisie et des questions connexes.

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

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.

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

On February 26, 2024, Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, moved second reading of Bill 165, An Act to amend the

Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters.

On February 28, 2024, Ms. Kusendova-Bashta moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Ms. Kusendova-Bashta's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerks.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Rickford, Greg
Barnes, Patrice	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Kanpathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Michael D.	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalia	
Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to Ms. Kusendova-Bashta's motion, please rise and be recognized by the Clerks.

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 73; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The ayes being 73 and the nays being 36, I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved second reading of Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."
All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1203.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On February 26, 2024, Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, moved second reading of Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters.

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	Pirie, George
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Mulrone, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Michael D.	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalia	

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 74; the nays are 35.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no.

Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It is being referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I have two wonderful students from our riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill participating in the Model Parliament here: Tina Li Yuan Jia and Ethan Yuefan Xu. Enjoy the experience. I look forward to meeting with both of you later on today.

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

The House recessed from 1208 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

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

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

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): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

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

PETITIONS

SUBVENTIONS AUX RÉSIDENTS DU NORD POUR FRAIS DE TRANSPORT À DES FINS MÉDICALES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Alexandre et Henriette Sauvé de Chelmsford dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Réparons les subventions aux résident(e)s du Nord ... pour frais de transport à des fins médicales... »

« Alors que les gens du Nord n'ont pas le même accès aux soins de santé en raison du coût élevé des déplacements et de l'hébergement; »

« Alors qu'en refusant d'augmenter les taux des subventions aux résidents et résidentes du nord de l'Ontario pour les frais de transport à des fins médicales ... »

le gouvernement Ford impose un lourd fardeau aux Ontariens et Ontariennes du Nord qui sont malades;

« Alors que le prix de l'essence est plus élevé dans le nord de l'Ontario; »

Ils et elles demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de créer un comité ayant pour mandat de corriger et d'améliorer » le programme. « Ce comité consultatif ... réunirait des fournisseurs de soins de santé du Nord ainsi que des bénéficiaires ... pour faire des recommandations à la ministre de la Santé qui amélioreraient l'accès aux soins de santé dans le nord de l'Ontario grâce au remboursement adéquat des frais de déplacement. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je l'envoie à la table des greffiers avec ma page Mercy.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

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

“Whereas employment in the manufacturing sector increased by 23,500 jobs for the first nine months of 2023, more than the rest of Canada and the entire US combined; and

“Whereas government continues to help build a strong and resilient manufacturing sector by attracting investments that will increase production, improve the province's competitiveness and create good-paying jobs across all of Ontario; and

“Whereas working to attract and encourage the business investment needed to create jobs in the province's manufacturing sector. As part of this plan, the government introduced the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit in the 2023 budget. This 10% refundable corporate income tax credit provides up to \$2 million per year to qualifying Canadian-controlled ... corporations that make eligible investments in buildings, machinery or equipment used in manufacturing or processing in the province; and

“Whereas strengthening Ontario's position as a global leader across the electric vehicle (EV) supply chain. Ontario is becoming a North American hub for building the cars of the future by attracting more than \$27 billion over the last three years in transformative automotive and EV battery-related investments from global automakers, parts suppliers, and EV battery and material manufacturers; and

“Whereas to increase the competitiveness of Ontario's auto sector. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North America to have five major global automotive assemblers—Ford, General Motors, Honda, Stellantis and Toyota;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to attract and encourage the business investments needed to create jobs in the province's manufacturing sector.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Mesapé.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to thank the people of Kitchener-Waterloo for sending this petition to legalize missing-middle and mid-rise housing in Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is facing a housing crisis; and

“Whereas the government has a goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031; and

“Whereas sprawl development has been shown to be more expensive and more environmentally destructive than infill development within existing urban boundaries; and

“Whereas current provincial zoning laws prohibit the construction of most missing-middle and mid-rise housing developments; and

“Whereas we can address both the housing and climate crises by building missing-middle and mid-rise housing in existing neighbourhoods;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Planning Act to allow for fourplexes and four-storey buildings province-wide and mid-rise housing ranging from six to 11 storeys on main streets and transit corridors as of right.”

I support this petition, I will sign it and ask Jeremy to bring it to the table.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas to support students and their families, Ontario is extending the tuition fee freeze for publicly assisted colleges and universities for at least three more years. While increasing tuition for out-of-province domestic students;

“Whereas colleges and universities will have policies in place relating to mental health and wellness supports and services. Every college and university is required to have policies and rules to address and combat racism and hate, including but not limited to anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; and

“Whereas providing information about ancillary fees and including costs for textbooks and other learning materials. This could include ensuring that fees are published by institutions in a consistent manner the province will also engage with colleges and universities to create tuition fee transparency to help students and their families better understand how tuition fees are used; and

“Whereas to help more students find jobs, the province intends to allow colleges to offer applied master's degrees in areas of study that will help students graduate with in-demand skills, expertise and credentials. This approach will also provide employers access to more industry-ready employees that meet labour market needs in specialized fields such as advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and animation; and

“Whereas introducing measures to protect students and improve the integrity of career colleges. The province will better integrate enforcement efforts across ministries to strengthen oversight of career colleges and will ensure timely responses to concerns and complaints by improving data management, documentation processes and the efficacy of compliance investigations; and

“Whereas launching a career portal to help students understand labour market needs and make informed decisions on post-secondary education. This will consolidate various sources of information to help students and newcomers access education and careers in Ontario;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take on a responsible approach to allow flexibility amid a challenging financial climate, while protecting students and parents from additional costs.”

1510

Speaker, I am happy to sign my name to this petition and hand it to Mesapé.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto Stop the Cuts campaign.

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

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

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

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

—immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;

—fix the inadequate education funding formula;

—provide schools the funding to ensure the supports necessary to address the impacts of the pandemic on our students” which continues to this day; and

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

Thank you for this petition. I will be giving it to page Sarah.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition from Yes in My Backyard advocates from around the province to legalize missing-middle and mid-rise housing in Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario is facing a housing crisis; and

“Whereas the government has a goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031; and

“Whereas sprawl development has been shown to be more expensive and more environmentally destructive than infill development within existing urban boundaries; and

“Whereas current provincial zoning laws prohibit the construction of most missing-middle and mid-rise housing developments; and

“Whereas we can address both the housing and climate crises by building missing-middle and mid-rise housing in existing neighbourhoods;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Planning Act to allow for fourplexes and four-storey buildings province-wide and mid-rise housing ranging from six to 11 storeys on main streets and transit corridors as of right.”

I support this petition, will sign it and ask page Jeremy to bring it to the table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Deepak Anand: I am a big advocate for Alzheimer’s and this petition is on supporting Bill 121, the Improving Dementia Care in Ontario Act, 2023. The petition says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease affects over 250,000 people in the province of Ontario;

“Whereas it is estimated that approximately 400,000 individuals will be diagnosed with dementia by 2030;

“Whereas by the year 2050, more than 1.7 million Canadians are expected to be living with dementia, with an average of 685 individuals diagnosed each day;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is not a normal part of aging and is irreversible;

“Whereas 69% of LTC residents are living with dementia;

“Whereas 45% of care partners providing care to people living with dementia exhibit symptoms of distress. This is almost twice the rate compared to care partners of older adults with health conditions other than dementia, which is only 26%;

“Whereas caregivers of those living with dementia decrease their participation in the economy;

“Whereas upstream investments in dementia, prevention, and care are needed to reduce the strain on capacity and resources;

“Whereas strategies to mitigate stigma and combat ageism should be at the heart of the strategy;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to build on the progress this government has made on building a patient-centred home and community care system.”

I fully support this petition, and I’ll give it to page Charles.

TUITION

Mr. Chris Glover: I’m proud to read this petition on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas since 1980, whilst accounting for inflation, the average domestic undergraduate tuition has increased by 215%, and the average domestic graduate tuition by 247%; and

“Whereas upon graduation, 50% of students will have a median debt of around \$17,500, which takes an average of 9.5 years to repay; and

“Whereas the average undergraduate tuition for international students has increased by 192% between 2011 and 2021, and in colleges, they pay an average of \$14,306 annually compared to the average domestic fee of \$3,228; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario made changes to OSAP and student financial assistance in 2018-19, resulting in over a \$1-billion cut in assistance to students; and

“Whereas the so-called Student Choice Initiative was defeated in the courts, students need legislation to protect their right to organize and funding for students’ groups;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario’s call and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to (1) free and accessible education for all, (2) grants, not loans, and (3) legislate students’ right to organize.”

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

TUITION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s my honour to present the following petition on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas since 1980, whilst accounting for inflation, the average domestic undergraduate tuition has increased by 215%, and the average domestic graduate tuition by 247%; and

“Whereas upon graduation, 50% of students will have a median debt of around \$17,500, which takes an average of 9.5 years to repay; and

“Whereas the average undergraduate tuition for international students has increased by 192% between 2011 and 2021, and in colleges, they pay an average of \$14,306 annually compared to the average domestic fee of \$3,228; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario made changes to OSAP and student financial assistance in 2018-19, resulting in over a \$1-billion cut in assistance to students; and

“Whereas the so-called Student Choice Initiative was defeated in the courts, students need legislation to protect their right to organize and funding for students’ groups;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario’s call and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to (1) free and accessible education for all, (2) grants, not loans, and (3) legislate students’ right to organize.”

I completely support this petition, will affix my signature, and deliver it with page Pharoah to the Clerks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our petitions for this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GET IT DONE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR PASSER À L’ACTION

Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to enact the Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act, 2024 and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 162, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur la protection contre les taxes sur le carbone et modifiant diverses lois.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Transportation; the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; and also the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Mr. Speaker, our government has the most ambitious infrastructure plan in the province’s history. In fact, it’s the most ambitious plan in North America. We are making historic investments, including \$100 billion over the next decade to build the roads, highways, public transit our growing province desperately needs. This includes \$28 billion to renew, build and expand our highway infrastructure in every corner of this province.

1520

We need to act quickly to get these projects built. But as we all know too well, that is often easier said than done. For us to meet the needs of the families and businesses of tomorrow, we need to act today. That means accelerating the construction of the transit and housing infrastructure needed to support future generations, and it means making life more affordable for families and businesses now and for years to come.

Fortunately, our government has a plan. The Get It Done Act, if passed, will make it easier to get the infrastructure Ontario needs to support growing communities while helping families keep costs lower, more of their hard-earned money in their pockets right where it belongs. Since our government has taken office, we have made it a priority to get things done for the people of Ontario. This act will allow us to plan, approve and build projects faster than ever before. We can’t let red tape stand in the way of

getting shovels in the ground on roads, highways and public transit that our province so desperately needs or from getting work under way on critical mining projects in northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is one of the fastest-growing areas in the entire country—in fact, in North America actually. It will grow by over five million people in the next 10 years. The greater Golden Horseshoe itself is expected to grow by a million people every five years, reaching almost 15 million people by the year 2031. We have a responsibility to build Ontario for the next generation of families, young people and businesses.

Unfortunately, the current gridlock that commuters face each and every day on our roads, on our highways costs us more than \$11 billion a year in lost productivity. Gridlock not only increases the cost of the things we buy but also reduces the access to good jobs and forces too many Ontarians to sacrifice time doing things they love just to get to and from work. I experience this almost every single day when I drive to Queen's Park.

That is why our government needs to build highways like Highway 413, like the Bradford Bypass, because we know they will save families 30 minutes each way. It's that single mother who can get home to their family that much quicker, to instead spend time with their children making memories rather than being stuck behind the wheel. Because the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, failed to make these necessary investments.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to building transportation infrastructure we need to keep up with our growing population—time is of the essence. Under previous governments, building new infrastructure in Ontario has been a slow and overly complicated process, resulting in unnecessary delays and increased costs for taxpayers. That is why we are building generational projects like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413, both which will be toll-free and bring much-needed relief to some of the most congested traffic corridors in North America. As I said before, these will shorten travel times by over 30 minutes each way.

I understand these frustrations of gridlock first-hand, whether it be commuting into Queen's Park, whether it be going to events in my own riding in my community. Each minute spent in the car, bus or train means another minute not spent with family, friends and loved ones doing the things that we need to do. That's why I'm focused on investing in highways and transit that will take time off your commute and improve the quality of life.

The Bradford Bypass will make that dream a reality for so many people, providing better connections to housing and jobs, and making York region more attractive for businesses and residents alike. This project will not only ease gridlock for the people of York region, but connect more men and women to life-changing careers in road building and the skilled trades.

The fact is, the previous government refused to invest in new highway infrastructure and failed to plan for our population growth. As gridlock gets worse, the opposition

wants us to stick to the status quo. I believe Ontarians want and deserve solutions.

Despite what some parties want people to believe, you cannot simply fight gridlock without building new highways. Highway 401 is already one of the most congested highways in North America, and with other major highways quickly reaching the breaking point, doing nothing is just simply not an option. That's why we have widened an 18-kilometre stretch of the 401 west of Toronto, among the slowest sections of the 400 series highways in the province. This stretch now has new lanes running in each direction, from the Credit River in Mississauga to Regional Road 25 in Milton. This expansion will help more than 250,000 drivers spend less time in gridlock and more time with their families each night.

We've also made improvements to the 401 in western Ontario, in Cambridge. We added 8 kilometres of new lanes, including HOV lanes, to Highway 401 from Highway 8 to Townline Road. In eastern Ontario, we have plans in motion to improve the 401 by adding new lanes and repairing and replacing existing bridges. Whether you're travelling through western, central or eastern Ontario, taking the 401 is becoming easier than ever.

Madam Speaker, just two weeks ago I had the opportunity to stand with two of my great colleagues, MPP Harris and MPP Dixon, to announce we're one-step closer to making the new Highway 7 a reality for the millions of people travelling through the greater Golden Horseshoe. The tri-city region of Waterloo is Canada's third-fastest growing community. As any driver knows, more people means more traffic, and Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph is among already the busiest two-lane highways in Ontario, with 26,000 vehicles travelling on it every day.

After promising to build Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph in 2007, the previous Liberal government shelved this project for over a decade, wasting millions of taxpayer dollars in the process. The people of Kitchener and Waterloo have waited too long for Highway 7, which will be a game-changer to reduce gridlock in the community.

That's why, starting today, we're inviting contractors to submit proposals for the replacement of the Frederick Street Bridge in Kitchener, to accommodate the future widening of the new Highway 7. The bridge will need to be lengthened to ensure that traffic can flow in both directions, with sidewalks and bicycle lanes accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

Once complete, the future Highway 7 will include seven interchanges between Kitchener and Guelph. It will have a multi-level connection to Highway 85, a new crossing over the Grand River and local road improvements to keep communities in the region connected. The new Highway 7 is another step to fight gridlock, keeping goods and people moving across the fastest-growing regions of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph.

Unlike governments of the past, we're not just talking about transforming our transportation network; we are getting it done. The case for building Ontario has never been stronger, Madam Speaker. I hope the members opposite, especially those who represent areas like

Kitchener-Waterloo and the tri-city region, support this piece of legislation, because the people—

Interjection.

1530

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: When I was there in Kitchener and Waterloo, I heard loud and clear how much they wanted Highway 7 and how important it was and, in fact, their disappointment with the members from Kitchener-Waterloo from the NDP who haven't supported our budgets that have made the necessary investments to ensure that we could get to this point and continue to build Highway 7. So I hope the member from Waterloo supports and listens to her constituents in building Highway 7 for the people of Waterloo, Guelph and Cambridge because it's important for that.

See, I've actually spent time in that area as well, Speaker, whether I used to live there and work there, went to school there, and I recognize how important this project is for those people. So I hope the NDP come to their senses on this. Listen to the people, reduce gridlock and actually support investments into areas like Waterloo and Kitchener—

Interjection.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The member for Waterloo, I know—well, I have a good feeling on this—will support this piece of legislation and Highway 7 to make sure the people of Waterloo and Kitchener have that investment in highways that they deserve. I look forward to seeing the support from the member from Waterloo.

Speaker, that's also why we're investing over \$80 billion in the next decade to transform public transit in our province. In 2020, our government brought forward the Building Transit Faster Act—

Interjections.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Speaker, I hear the opposition laughing. This is no laughing matter—\$80 billion. I don't think it's funny to laugh at \$80 billion of investment in public transit. I know one thing: the NDP members opposite, they don't want to support highways. They don't want to support the Building Transit Faster Act.

But, look, we're building one of the largest public transit expansions in the world right here in Ontario. The Kitchener GO line is a prime example of that. We're extending GO service into Bowmanville. We're extending GO rail into the Niagara region. I'm looking just across the aisle here at the members from the NDP and I see the GO rail transit and investments we're making into some of their areas, so I do hope they support this piece of legislation that is actually going to get services even better for their areas to get commuters to and from where they need to get to in a quicker manner. I think it's really important that they do that, because it would be very disappointing, I think, if they went back and knocked on doors and their residents heard that they voted against more service on the Kitchener GO line, that they voted against new transit stations in Bowmanville. I really hope they don't do that.

I actually really hope that they support this piece of legislation, the Get It Done Act, so we can get shovels in

the ground quicker. But you know what? I've seen them vote against building transit acts in this Legislature before that actually allowed us to get shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line much quicker. It helped us streamline and accelerate the construction of critical transit projects.

But I'm also proud that, in this piece of legislation, we're declaring the Hazel McCallion Line extensions into the Mississauga loop and downtown Brampton a priority transit project. This will allow us to expand this critical project as quickly as possible, because the people of Brampton and Mississauga need better transit and this government is going to deliver on that. They are also two of Canada's quickest-growing cities—with faster, more frequent and reliable services that this LRT will deliver.

We have already designated the Ontario Line, the Yonge North subway extension, the Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension and Hamilton LRT as priority transit projects under the building faster acts, and this Hazel McCallion LRT will be another part of it, if passed, in this piece of legislation. I hope the members opposite appreciate how important it is to build transit fast for residents across Ontario and get their support on this.

We're actually also calling on the federal government to agree to a cost-sharing partnership to help deliver better two-way, all-day GO rail service along the Milton GO rail corridor, one of the busiest lines on the GO network. This would mean more trains, less waiting and faster service across our GO network. We are focused on practical solutions that put money back in the pocket of transit riders and also help us support better options for people commuting across Ontario.

Madam Speaker, unlike previous governments, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're getting shovels in the ground and getting it done faster than ever before, building a world-class transit network that will better connect communities across the greater Golden Horseshoe for generations to come.

Putting the Building Transit Faster Act to use is just one example of how our government is taking action to build priority projects faster. We are also committed to building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031, but we can't achieve that goal without giving our municipal partners the support they need to build a stronger Ontario for everyone. We need to work together collectively, and that's exactly what our government is doing. As part of the Get It Done Act, our government is proposing changes that will allow us to get shovels in the ground faster on new housing projects for cities across this province.

Speaking of the future, make no mistake: The future is electric in Ontario. In the past three years, Ontario has attracted over \$28 billion in new investments in vehicle manufacturing and the EV supply chain. These investments are creating thousands of well-paying jobs that fuel our economy, connecting the next generation of people to good jobs, six-figure salaries and a better life, not to mention the impact the transition to electric will have in slashing our carbon emissions.

Madam Speaker, as more drivers go electric, the critical minerals in northern Ontario have never been more

valuable. That is why our government is ensuring Ontario's mining sector remains competitive and attractive to investors. As part of the Get It Done Act, we'll explore options for improving permitting processes for mine development and operations in Ontario—

Hon. Greg Rickford: And the roads to get to them.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: And the roads to get to them, and I hope the NDP support that as well, and the Liberals and the Greens.

We're putting an end to inefficiencies to make Ontario a world leader in the mining sector. Just as we can't have millions of people stuck in gridlock, we can't have multi-million dollar investments in our mining sector caught up in red tape. Identifying and eliminating regulatory duplication and delays will ensure that the mining sector is positioned to thrive in Ontario for years to come. This will revitalize our mining sector, building on the incredible work done by our Minister of Mines, and create thousands more well-paying jobs. With the Get It Done Act, we'll cement our position as a world leader in the mining and electric vehicle sectors. By taking these steps, we're making Ontario more attractive to investors, giving our economy a much-needed boost and getting it done for the people of this province, particularly northern Ontario.

Since day one, our government has made affordability our number one priority for the people of Ontario. Now more than ever, we need policies that help Ontario families keep more of their hard-earned money and give them the confidence they need to keep their money. That is why the Get It Done Act would amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to ban any new provincial tolls on highways. This would not only apply to the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway once both highways are upgraded to the province, but also to the province's 400-series highways.

Any future government would be required to conduct public consultations before enacting new tolls, because the public has a right to know if the government is going to enact tolls that can cost up to \$5,000 a year, as we are seeing in many other jurisdictions. Madam Speaker, we know Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals, as well as the opposition, love nothing more than new taxes.

It's not only the families that benefit from fewer tolls; tolls add to the price of commercial goods, and that cost is then reflected in the prices that we see on store shelves. Hard-working Ontario families deserve better than that, Madam Speaker.

Preventing new tolls on provincial highways will connect communities across our province, making jobs more accessible and driving our economy.

We know from experience that making highways toll-free provides significant savings for Ontarians. In April 2022, we eliminated tolls on Highway 412 and Highway 418, a move that will save drivers \$68 million between 2022 and 2027. By introducing this piece of legislation to ban any new tolls on provincial highways, we're going a step further to make sure life stays affordable. Our government will always put taxpayers first.

1540

With the Get It Done Act, we're introducing legislation that will make the current freeze on driver's licence and Ontario photo card fees permanent. Our freeze has saved Ontarians \$22 million since 2019 and will save drivers \$66 million more this decade. Any future fee increases would require a legislative amendment. By making it more difficult to hike fees in the future, we're protecting people's wallets today and keeping costs down for years to come.

Our focus is not just on saving drivers more of their hard-earned money. In 2022, our government announced we are eliminating the licence plate renewal fees, saving vehicle owners up to \$120 per year on a car or truck. If passed, starting this summer, we will be automating the licence plate renewal process, which will help save vehicle owners more than 900,000 hours each year.

Automatic renewals will only be available to drivers in good standing who are insured and do not have outstanding tickets or penalties, and municipalities will still be able to use the renewal process to collect outstanding fees and fines. Those not considered in good standing will be notified 90 days before their licence plate expires to ensure they have time to comply. Automated plate renewals will apply to cars and passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds, and will save more than eight million Ontario drivers time every single year.

We're also taking action to protect Ontarians by making it more difficult for provincial governments to introduce new carbon pricing measures. If passed, the Get It Done Act would require a referendum to be held before any new carbon pricing regime could be introduced in Ontario. This would not only cover carbon taxes, but other forms of carbon pricing such as the cap-and-trade system that we got rid of. As many Ontarians struggle to make ends meet, now is not the time for the government to raid people's wallets by putting a price on carbon. This is why the Premier and the Minister of Finance will continue to call on the government of Canada to remove the federal carbon tax.

I shared a story earlier talking about some of the truck drivers. For long-haul truck drivers, the carbon tax costs them close to \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year. This act will help protect our hard-working truck drivers from inducing additional costs of taxes.

We know that carbon taxes impact families and impact the bottom line for many in this province. We know that more taxes on their heating and more taxes at the pumps are detrimental to the success of those in this province. Our government will always help people keep more of their hard-earned money, and we will continue to introduce measures that will give them the confidence to do just that.

I also want to speak about the ability to accelerate construction for key infrastructure investments, to get shovels in the ground sooner and save taxpayer dollars. Not only are we making life more affordable for millions of Ontarians by removing unnecessary fees and preventing new tolls on provincial highways; we are helping alleviate gridlock. We are supporting economic growth, keeping goods and people moving as we build new highways,

transit, roads and bridges across this province, and it will help us achieve our plan to build at least 1.5 million new homes across the province by 2031.

Now more than ever we need to cut red tape so we can prepare for Ontario's growing population. We need to help families keep their money so they can deal with the cost of living and make ends meet. It's proof of our government's commitment to always get it done, and I hope the members opposite—the Liberals, NDP and Green—support this piece of legislation.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would now like to pass it over to my colleague and good friend the Associate Minister of Transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to Minister Sarkaria for his leadership on this file.

As we get ready to welcome millions of newcomers to our province this year, the need to build new infrastructure has never been more urgent. At a time when many families feel they are struggling to get ahead, we need to take action to make life more affordable for people and, of course, for businesses. The Get It Done Act gives us the tools to build quicker while keeping more Ontarians' hard-earned money in their pockets where it belongs. It's time to get it done for the people of Ontario, and that's exactly what this act, the Get It Done Act, will do.

That's why our government plans to use the Building Transit Faster Act to designate the Hazel McCallion Line extension as a priority transit project. This will allow us to build these much-needed extensions into downtown Mississauga, as well as downtown Brampton much faster, connecting communities throughout the GTA area and expanding access to jobs and other opportunities throughout the region.

But that's not all we are doing. To transform public transit fully in our province, we are investing \$80 billion over next 10 years to build a world-class transit network for all Ontarians, and this starts with making transit more accessible and also, Madam Speaker, more affordable.

Our government is on a mission to keep costs down for the hard-working people of Ontario. We just launched one fare this Monday with a new program fully funded by our government. Commuters will only need to pay once when they're transferring between GO Transit, the TTC and other transit agencies across the GTHA. At a time when people across this province feel like they're struggling to get ahead, putting money back into people's pockets is the right thing to do, and that's exactly what our government is doing, Madam Speaker. One fare will save commuters an average of \$1,600 a year.

Interjections.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you.

We know that more than 500,000 post-secondary students in the GTA use public transit for daily travel with many spending upwards of \$400 a month. A student should not have to skip a class because they can't afford a bus pass. People should not have to miss out on big

appointments or any big moment or the next job interview because of the price of the transit that they're taking every single day. That's why one fare is a game-changer for anyone who takes transit in the GTHA. That's part of our plan to make life more affordable.

Madam Speaker, right after my graduation, one of my first jobs was in Mississauga. I had been commuting from Scarborough to Mississauga every single day, from Kennedy to Kipling, and from Kipling, I would take the TTC to Mississauga, get off and get onto MiWay and pay an extra fare. I understand the struggle, and Minister Sarkaria understands the struggle. The Premier and this caucus understand the struggle.

That's why our government is fully funding the one-fare program so that we can enable affordable transportation—not just for students, for workers, for daily commuters, as well as seniors. With one fare, our government is saving people time and money and making life easier for transit riders, and we will continue to do just that with this bill that we are debating today. The Get It Done Act will make it easier to get shovels in the ground on priority projects and build transit-oriented communities for the future.

1550

We are working each and every day to make transit better and more accessible. Of course, by having this infrastructure and affordability, we are giving transit riders more choice, breaking down financial and accessibility barriers to take trains, to take buses and streetcars. That's what we have done with one fare, and that's exactly what we are trying to do with this act, Madam Speaker.

That is why we're launching open payment. Moving forward, people can pay for public transit not just through Presto, but also through debit cards and credit cards, on GO Transit, on UP Express and TTC. If they forgot their Presto card, not a problem at all. If they forgot their card at home, if they forgot to load their funds on the card, they don't have to worry. They can just tap on the credit card or debit card they have. And riders can now tap on their smart watch and mobile wallet as well, Madam Speaker. As I mentioned, we are providing more options and more choices, and our transit network will only get better if this act, the Get It Done Act, passes.

It's no secret that our province is growing exponentially each year, with more than 500,000 newcomers landing here every single year, Madam Speaker. They come here for a better life and to contribute to our economy, but they're often met with gridlock every single day. That's why our government is investing in transit infrastructure in every corner of our province, because we know transit keeps people moving and is a key driver for economic growth.

Madam Speaker, we are not only connecting people to jobs but also connecting them to their family, friends, medical appointments, school and so much more. As our population continues to grow, we need to keep our transit system on check and also to keep it at the same pace as possible. That is why we are using every tool in our tool box to prioritize transit projects and build them as quickly

as possible, and that's why this act, the Get It Done Act, will be very crucial for giving Ontarians the transit network they need and they deserve for generations to come.

In fact, shovels are already in the ground to build new subways; for example, the Ontario Line. This is a monumental project, Madam Speaker. With 15 new subway stations, the Ontario Line will accommodate up to 40 trains per hour, nearly 400,000 new riders per day. That is a massive impact on people's life every single day right here in Ontario. And wait times for a train will be as short as 90 seconds. We are putting thousands more Toronto residents within walking distance of public transit and expanding people's access to jobs and other life-changing opportunities. And we are reducing crowds at some of the TTC's busiest stations in the nation. Contracts have already been given and awarded for building the southern portion of this project, the Ontario Line project, and the Pape tunnel and underground stations—also, the elevated guideway and station contracts has awarded to date. Our government recognizes the importance of building transit that will connect communities and create new travel options for people across the greater Toronto area. That's why we aren't wasting any time getting the Ontario Line built, and that's why we are looking to accelerate the construction on the critical transit projects with the Get It Done Act.

Madam Speaker, we are working on the Yonge North subway extension, which will extend the TTC's Line 1 subway by approximately eight kilometres into Richmond Hill. The Yonge North subway extension will accommodate more than 94,000 daily trips, offering commuters convenient and accessible connections to local transit services and GO Transit. The extension will put 26,000 more people within walking distance of public transit and save commuters at least 40 minutes a day. They can spend that time with their loved ones rather than sitting in the car in gridlock, Madam Speaker. We are well on our way to reducing that congestion, that gridlock, connecting people to more jobs and making travel between York region and Toronto easier than ever before. And we aren't stopping there.

Commuters in Scarborough deserve the same access to fast and reliable public transit as commuters here in downtown Toronto. That's why our government is building the Scarborough subway extension, which will add three stops and almost eight kilometres of track to the TTC's Line 2 subway. The Scarborough subway extension will offer commuters connections to GO Transit and Durham Region Transit as part of our plan to make the GTA one of the most integrated transit networks in North America. And that is not all; we have other priority transit projects on the go, including the Eglinton Crosstown west extension and the Hamilton LRT project.

Our government is serious about building transit and we are serious about expanding transit projects for commuters in Mississauga, Brampton, Milton and across the province as quickly as possible. The Get It Done Act will help us do just that, and we are getting shovels in the ground quicker than ever before in history, and which we'll now be able

to do for the new Hazel McCallion Line extensions, as well.

I'm sure everyone in this room can relate to the frustration of gridlock. It prevents people from getting to work and other priorities on time, draining our productivity. It leaves commercial goods stuck in transit, which makes prices rise even higher for families. Madam Speaker, the solution to these problems is twofold: We need to take immediate action to build the infrastructure we need to support our growing population before the gridlock gets even worse, and we need to do everything in our power to make life more affordable when so many Ontarians are struggling. The Get It Done Act is the answer to solving these problems, and it's the only way we will achieve our goals of building a stronger Ontario for everyone.

It's critical we get shovels in the ground to build the new public transit and the highways, roads and bridges that will fuel our economy for generations to come. We need to put money back in families' pockets by freezing fee increases and making sure no new tolls are added on provincial highways. We need to streamline our environmental assessment process so priority projects are not derailed by red tape. Madam Speaker, we need to start this work today.

Since we took office, our government has collaborated and co-operated with our municipal partners and our federal counterparts, as well. The Get It Done Act shows that we have heard our municipalities loud and clear: You want to build, and we want to help you.

As you will hear from the Minister of the Environment right after this, our government is streamlining the approval process for building critical infrastructure, and we will do it without compromising any of the rigorous environmental oversights or consultations we have in place today. We are proposing to amend the official plans of our fastest-growing municipalities, responding to their concerns while continuing to pursue our government's ambitious goal of building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031. If you're a municipality, we will always have your back.

All the progress we have made since our government took office is proof of our commitment to building world-class transit and highway infrastructure for the people of Ontario. It's proof of our commitment to support municipalities preparing to receive millions of new Ontarians in the years ahead.

Madam Speaker, all the points I've made show one thing: We are serious about putting money back in families' pockets, which is exactly where it belongs. It shows that, no matter where you live in the province, no matter how you travel, our government is here for you and won't leave those transit riders or other people in Ontario behind.

1600

Now I will defer my time to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the second reading of the Get It Done Act. It really shows you, this act, how Ontario is growing at a rate not seen in half a century. If you use the latest figures from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, our province's population grew by nearly 465,000 residents. To put it in perspective, that's almost half a million people in 12 months. In addition, that's like adding the entire city of London, Ontario, as well as the town of Innisfil from my riding, in one year. It's like adding Thunder Bay in the north, Sarnia in the southwest, Kingston in the east and my hometown of Barrie all within one year. And they all have something in common: They want to make life in Ontario better.

Perhaps some of them came here, those who live in those parts of Ontario, with an idea and wanting to create a new company after having heard all the great things our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has said about the investments not only that we're making in Ontario but the amount of red tape we're cutting and the amount we have cut over the last six years. That's not only making this province more competitive, it's actually making it the best place to start a business and to thrive.

I'm sure more than a few of you have heard about Ontario's natural beauty, our great parks we're building and the green spaces we're increasing, but also how we're creating healthier communities and economic prosperity through protecting our air, land and water. They're not mutually exclusive; we can do them hand in hand.

This population growth will help to boost Ontario's economic growth, it will help boost the folks who go into our provincial parks, it will help boost our employment activity, it will help boost the amount of people who use our local transit and it will provide the required steps to ensure that we have the economic growth that we need.

This means, though, building the necessary infrastructure for this growing population. That includes our transit, it includes our roads, it includes transmission lines, our provincial parks, our homes and all core infrastructure, because, over the next 20 years, Ontario's population is expected to grow by almost six million people—six million people. That's more than the current population of the entire province of British Columbia.

Our government is doing just that. This government is building the infrastructure we need for our communities to grow and prosper. We're making historic investments: \$98 billion over the next 10 years to build new roads, highways, public transit, including Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. As mentioned by our Minister of Transportation, this will unlock gridlock. It will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For those folks who can't take transit, it helps them embrace the electric vehicle economy, which we've been working so hard on in attracting the investments we have. To date, it's in fact \$28 billion in the EV economy that this government has attracted in as a short as three years—that's fast.

This shows you it's a real team effort by this government. Every ministry is doing their part, pulling

together. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has an important role to play. For many of these large infrastructure projects, my ministry's responsible for overseeing environmental assessments. When the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act was created back in 1975, it was the first of its kind in Canada. Unfortunately, while there have been some changes since that time, the framework of the act remains largely the same.

In the last 50 years, much has changed. Technology has changed, the way the environment department does assessments has changed and much of our information and knowledge-sharing has changed. What has worked before may not work anymore, not for a province growing at the rate that it is, not when so much needs to be done to meet the needs of the future generation. The world has become faster and more efficient, and it needs a government that keeps up with that.

My ministry has been working very hard to make changes, to make the processes more efficient while maintaining environmental oversight. Throughout this process, we've been consulting with the people of Ontario, with Indigenous communities, members of the public, municipalities, industry and not-for-profit organizations. I am pleased to say that after extensive consultations, we are now implementing our vision for a more modern environmental program.

I would like to highlight one particular regulatory change, which came into effect just last week. The current EA process is moving to what we call a "project list approach." What it does is it lists the type of infrastructure projects that still require the highest level of environmental assessment—these projects would include things like large landfills and electricity generating facilities—while specifying those who may follow a more streamlined process. This in itself will get shovels in the ground quicker on projects that matter most to Ontarians while continuing to maintain environment safeguards.

Let me give you just one example of how this new approach will help build Ontario's infrastructure faster: In 2019, my ministry approved the environmental assessment for the East-West Tie transmission project. This project is a 450-kilometre transmission line connecting Lakehead Transfer Station near Thunder Bay to Wawa transfer. It will also connect to the transformer station in Marathon. It provides the flexibility and capacity needed to build prosperous communities in the north, because, Speaker, our government believes in the north, maximizing its economic potential and its beauty, and we do not call it "no man's land," like members of the opposition.

But, Speaker, this is an example of how, even in the north, the growth—the growth in mining, the industrial sectors, the long-term reliability of the electricity system is so important to the sectors and the people looking to live there.

The comprehensive EA process for this project, though, took more than five years to complete. To put that in perspective: The CN Tower was built in 26 months. Maple Leaf Gardens, for those Leafs fans out there, was built in five months and two weeks. But this project that I just

talked about, up north—more than five years, Madam Speaker, just to complete an environmental assessment for the project, which is very routine.

I think we can all agree that five years is simply too long to wait to get started on infrastructure that is critical to the economic future of our province. Five years is too long to wait to get started on infrastructure that will help Ontario families get to work, get to school and get home at the end of the day to see their families. And five years is simply too long to wait to get started on infrastructure needed to accommodate the 500,000 new Ontarians coming to our province every year.

With the changes this government enacted last week, a similar project could follow a streamlined environment process that can be completed within two years, while still undergoing a mandatory consultation process and continuing strong environment oversight. Some of the time savings are a result of the streamlined processes not requiring what's called a "terms of reference" for a project, which can take up to two years, as the streamlined process already builds on these requirements and sets out these requirements.

In fact, all highways, railway and electric transmission lines will now be able to follow streamlined EA process and save up to four years. This is a massive improvement that saves both time and money while still protecting the integrity of our environment.

Using a project list approach brings Ontario in line with other similar jurisdictions, including the federal government, Quebec and British Columbia. Certain projects—typically more complex ones, such as large landfills and very large water-power facilities—will continue to require the highest level of environmental assessment called the comprehensive EA.

I can assure you, Speaker, that whatever level of EA is required for proposed projects, we'll continue uphold our world-class environment standards.

Our work continues on modernizing and improving an environmental assessment process with the Get It Done Act. To help municipalities, provincial ministries and other provincial government agencies when planning for infrastructure development, we are proposing a minor change to the Environmental Assessment Act. This proposed change would clarify that expropriation is one of the ways property can be acquired for a project before an EA process is complete.

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I should point out that acquiring property for a project is already allowed under the EA Act before a proponent is authorized to proceed with the project. This clarity will provide greater certainty to municipalities and other proponents as they plan for future projects.

Let me assure you, Madam Speaker, that project proponents will continue to have to comply with other applicable legislation for expropriating land, such as the Expropriations Act, and agreements will still be the preferred method for land acquisitions for the province.

I want to thank everyone for allowing me the time today to highlight some of the changes to the environmental

assessment process we have made, changes needed to streamline and improve upon a 50-year-old system to help build infrastructure necessary for the six million additional Ontarians who will reside here in the next 20 years.

I thank the House for allowing me to explain the changes we are proposing for the Environmental Assessment Act as part of the Get It Done Act. I'm asking all members of the Legislature to support the bill to help infrastructure projects begin sooner to help build a stronger Ontario while maintaining strong environmental practices.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It is an honour to rise to participate in the conclusion of the government leadoff with respect to second reading debate for Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, 2024. I have been greatly informed by my colleagues who participated in this leadoff: the Minister of Transportation, the Associate Minister of Transportation and, of course, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

On behalf of my ministry, the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, I'm here to highlight details of the proposed Get It Done Act, 2024, which, if passed, will impact every corner of Ontario, providing relief to millions of drivers, vehicle owners and users of Ontario photo cards.

Today, as I close the government leadoff in this debate, I wish to focus my remarks on two aspects of this important piece of legislation: relief for Ontarians from unnecessary increases in the costs of drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards, and also reducing the elimination of the burden associated with licence plate renewals.

Since first forming government in 2018 and given a second mandate by the Ontario population in 2022, our government and my ministry have been focusing our efforts on delivering customer-centred services to the hard-working people and the businesses of our province. And we continue to do just that through ServiceOntario, our hub for service delivery for the province and the public face of government.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is making real, meaningful changes for Ontarians through this signature omnibus bill. The less time Ontarians spend renewing vehicle licence plates means more time to do the things that matter most to them, and in doing so, we are strengthening trust in their government to act in their best interests. At a time when people are struggling to make ends meet, and are busier than ever with work, family and social obligations, our government has taken the initiative to help them keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets—where it belongs—and save them time by making government services simpler, faster and better.

With the cost of living continually rising, individuals and businesses alike are burdened with various financial obligations. That is why our Ontario Progressive Conservative government is leading the fight to ensure affordability and to reduce costs and burdens. It has become more essential than ever to explore ways in which

we can unburden Ontarians and help alleviate some of these pressures.

By eliminating or freezing certain government fees, we can put money back in the pockets of our fellow citizens and residents, while stimulating economic growth. We understand that these fees, such as those for permits and licences, as well as taxes and fines, contribute to the overall cost of living for individuals and for the operational expenses of businesses. One of the key benefits of eliminating or freezing government fees is the potential for increased consumer spending. When individuals have more disposable income, they are likely to spend it more on goods and services, thereby boosting local businesses and contributing to overall economic prosperity.

As a government, we strive to bring forward policies that can lead to job creation and more robust and thriving communities across our great province.

Allow me to explain more about an initiative in Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, 2024, that my ministry is particularly proud to work with the Ministry of Transportation on bringing forward, and that is the introduction of automatic licence plate renewals. We are building on our government's decision just two years ago, in 2022, to eliminate licence plate renewal fees for passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds, enabling vehicle owners to save \$120 a year in southern Ontario and \$60 a year in northern Ontario. The elimination of these sticker fees was overwhelmingly endorsed in the election of 2022 by the people of this province.

With our latest proposed changes to the Highway Traffic Act, we are paving the way for the transition to the automatic renewal of licence plates because it is essential, notwithstanding the elimination of sticker fees and the use of stickers, to ensure that licence plates are renewed. It is very important to note that this automatic renewal process will be available only to drivers in good standing; this means drivers who do not have outstanding fines, tolls or tickets and have up-to-date automobile insurance. Starting this summer 2024, this new process will begin to save drivers time by automating the licence plate renewal process, resulting in saving more than 900,000 hours each year for vehicle owners.

In the meantime, before the automatic renewal process begins in summer 2024, vehicle owners will still need to renew their licence plates at no cost. This can be done online or in person at a ServiceOntario outlet. Additionally, the Get It Done Act, 2024, will legislate the current freeze on driver's licence and Ontario photo card fees, which has resulted in savings for people totalling \$22 million since 2019. It is anticipated it will help save an additional \$66 million overall for the remainder of this decade.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are reducing burden on Ontarians and saving their valuable time and money by streamlining and improving government services, continuing to freeze fees and strengthening protections against rising costs. The introduction of the Get It Done Act, 2024, is evidence of our government's commitment to let the people and businesses of this province keep

more of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets while modernizing the services we all rely upon.

This legislation is a catalyst for positive change, one ensuring that our citizens and residents are respected and saved from the financial obligation of increasing fees when paying to renew their drivers' licences and when obtaining an Ontario photo card. If passed, this bill will play a valuable role in empowering the citizens and businesses of Ontario by giving them a leg-up and making ends meet more easily. I'm proud to stand here and say that we are well on the path to achieving this with the introduction of this bill.

A growing number of passenger vehicles are on the roads. This multi-faceted piece of legislation promises to be a game-changer for the millions of vehicle owners who call Ontario home. The Get It Done Act, 2024, has garnered significant support from all stakeholders across the board. The president of the Ontario Motor Coach Association has commended our government's efforts and our actions with this proposed legislation. His Worship, the mayor of Pickering, Kevin Ashe, whose father served in this House and served in my ministry four decades ago, applauded this proposed legislation as a common-sense approach and responsible governance.

We are grateful for all the support and feedback we have received across the province from ordinary citizens and stakeholders. My colleagues and I look forward to continuing debate on this key piece of legislation, as I'm sure many will have valuable feedback on this proposed bill.

Again, we are streamlining and improving government services, freezing unnecessary fees and strengthening protections against increasing costs. Rest assured, Speaker, your government continues to work for you to improve the daily lives of Ontarians.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Transportation, who said in his remarks that they would give our municipal partners what they need. So in that spirit, today, the region of Durham council passed a resolution requesting the permanent removal of tolls on the provincially owned portion of Highway 407. They say:

"Whereas Highway 407 from Brock Road ... in Pickering to Highway 35/115 is provincially owned and tolls are set by the province;

"And whereas the province introduced legislation that if passed would ban tolls from provincially owned highways including all 400-series highways except for Highway 407 which is located almost exclusively in Durham region"—they go on to make other important points, but they ultimately resolve to request "that the province of Ontario include the provincially owned portion of Highway 407 in any legislation banning tolls on provincially owned highways...."

My question to the Minister of Transportation is, will he indeed give our municipal partners what they need and meet this request?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This government has always been focused on reducing the cost of living for families across this province. It's why we took off the tolls on the 412 and 418. In fact, that member voted against that very measure for this government when we put that in our budget—

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was her bill. Pay attention, Prab.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: No—the facts are the facts, Madam Speaker. You look at the budget that we tabled, and you can see very clearly who voted for and who voted against the interests of their constituents and residents. And I can say that that member voted against removing tolls off the 412 and Highway 418. We will continue to put more money back into their pockets, just like that.

The opposition voted against removing 10 cents a litre, and they have voted against our motions to ask the federal government to remove the carbon tax. This government will always be focused on putting more money back into the pockets of hard-working families across Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It was the member for Oshawa's private member's bill—I just want to put that on the record.

But since we're talking about tolls, we heard these big stories, these huge stories: "Ontario is banning tolls." I was on the 407 a little while ago—actually, both parts: the one that we don't own, that you sold, and our part—and there are still tolls. But you're banning tolls. So it's this story that sounds like you're saving people money, and not one plug nickel is going into anybody's pocket. And you can be guaranteed that at least on the big part of the 407, those rates are going to go up.

So that wasn't really an affordability issue, but let's get on to referendums. Since we're on the topic of referendums, why didn't we have a referendum about taking the 407 that we own and making it not a toll road? That would be a great idea. What do you think about that, Minister?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The Liberals are so out of touch with what Ontarians need. Let's take a look. Just two weeks ago, his friend Minister Steven Guilbeault, the federal Minister of the Environment, said he would not fund any more roads in Canada—they would not build any more roads. It was actually their current party leader, Bonnie Crombie, who led the fight against the 413 in Peel region, one of the fastest-growing areas in the entire country, Madam Speaker.

The Liberal Party is out of touch. They don't appreciate and they cannot—they don't appreciate the struggles of families who drive every single day on the 410, the 427, on highways all across this province. They don't want to invest in roads as we increase our population by over a million in the next two years. This government will always be committed to building infrastructure. We're always going to be supporting lower taxes, like getting rid of the carbon tax. I wish that member could pick up the phone and call his friend—

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

Further questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I want to thank all ministers for that wonderful presentation.

Madam Speaker, for 13 years as a councillor of Markham, they talked about the Yonge North subway extension for decades and decades. Too many photo-ops—it never materialized. But it's only under the leadership of Premier Ford and the hard work of our Minister of Transportation that we got it done. I would also like to thank the minister for coming up to Markham to announce that very important project.

Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation, how do the proposed changes to the Get It Done Act make commuting more affordable for not only my constituents but across Ontario?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member from Markham–Thornhill for his incredible advocacy on the Yonge North subway extension. I remember when we were there just about two or three months ago, probably a bit more than that. It was his advocacy as a municipal councillor to bring a subway to his community, and we were very excited to be there to then be able to announce the RFQ and the next step in the progress to get that subway built.

It's because of people like him that we're building these subways. The previous Liberal government did absolutely nothing to build subways and public transit. They were supported by the opposition NDP in doing absolutely nothing. We've committed \$70 billion over the next 10 years to build the Yonge North subway and many other projects across this province.

We've introduced pieces of legislation so we can get shovels in the ground because we know, because of the advocacy like the member from Markham–Thornhill, that shovels need to go in the ground right now. We're experiencing explosive population growth. Let's get that transit built. But unfortunately the Liberals and NDP don't want to support getting shovels in the ground—

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

Further questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm happy to ask a question of the Minister of Transportation. Shortly after the 2018 election, I ran back to this House and tabled that private member's bill to ask government to remove the tolls from Highways 412 and 418. It took four years, but we got there, and members across Durham region, when they drive on those now toll-free highways, have a sense of connection to that movement because, really, it was advocacy across the region.

That advocacy continues. I have here a request from the town of Whitby. On January 31, Durham region council said, "Whereas the temporary removal of tolls on Highway 407 during Winchester Road construction work would improve overall travel times and alleviate the traffic impacts on surrounding regional and local municipal roads." They asked this government to temporarily remove those

tolls during that period of the Winchester Road construction work.

And would you believe it, Speaker? February 6, the Ministry of Transportation says it “is not considering subsidizing or removing tolls for use of Hwy. 407 at this time.” Then, two minutes later, we have this bill. So when a community asked for no tolls, how come you’re telling them, “Too bad”?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, here are the facts. Every step of the way, this government has made life easier for drivers, whether it’s reducing the gas tax by over 10 cents a litre, which that member voted against for the people in her area and the constituents that she represents, whether it’s the tolls on 412 and 418. Let’s take a look at the record. It’s a public record, Madam Speaker. Look at the budget. Where did that member vote when we put it to this Legislature on removing the tolls on the 412 and the 418? I think the record is very clear that that member voted against dropping those tolls, Madam Speaker.

Not only that, but when we talk about building highways, when we talk about ensuring that the highways that will absorb even from the city of Toronto—the DVP, the Gardiner Expressway—we won’t toll those. I know their friends at city hall, some of the councillors have been asking for tolls on that highway for a long time, but this legislation will make sure that we keep costs low and that we do not impose the taxes, the tolls on the people of this province.

I hope that both these members, the NDP and the Liberals, vote in support of this bill so we can ensure that no future government puts tolls on highways.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question will be to the Minister of Public Business and Service Delivery. Speaker, I know in my riding, my constituents are always talking about the cost of living and how expensive things have become. They talk specifically about the carbon tax.

I have to say that it is great to hear what our government is doing, because we’re taking action to protect Ontarians from higher taxes. My question to the minister: Could you please just explain how this new legislation will do exactly that?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I want to thank the great member from Newmarket–Aurora. You know, the carbon tax, the Liberal carbon tax from Ottawa, is a ruinous tax. It raises the price of everything. It is responsible for high inflation and high interest rates. We’ve called upon that government and the counterparts to the official opposition here to repeal the tax. But we do what we can in this House as a government, and we are freezing taxes, freezing fees, reducing the cost of living, doing what we—

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the Minister for Public and Business Service Delivery.

Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just want to, before I begin, acknowledge that February 28 is Pink Shirt Day, and you will notice my colleagues and members of the House are all wearing pink today. This is an important day to raise awareness for bullying with our kids and our children. At a time when one in five kids is affected by bullying and struggling with mental health, raising awareness by wearing pink shirts on one day will help all of us work to create safe environments, to create kind and inclusive environments for our kids and our youth in Ontario and across the world. They deserve that, absolutely, so thank you.

I also would like to acknowledge, as have other members in my caucus—the member from Oshawa and the member from Ottawa Centre, particularly, who spoke so eloquently in describing and acknowledging the passing of Ed Broadbent. He meant so much to us in this NDP family. He represented a lifelong commitment to social justice, to inclusion and just human decency, something we need more of.

I also wanted to talk about the fifth anniversary of the passing of another exemplary legislator, Dr. Richard Allen. Dr. Allen was elected as the NDP MPP for Hamilton West in 1982. He went on to serve in the 32nd, the 33rd, the 34th and the 35th Parliaments, and under Bob Rae, he served as a cabinet minister. I had the privilege of being the next NDP in the same riding, following along Dr. Richard Allen.

He was a remarkable historian; he was a fearless politician and universally described as a wise, caring, compassionate person. Richard was the son of a United Church minister, and this influenced his life’s work, which was dedicated to social justice. His first book was *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada*. Richard described his belief that there is an essential connection between our faith and social action, and this was at the heart—the guiding principle in his political career. That is a tradition that goes back through the NDP to important CCF figures like J.S. Woodsworth and Tommy Douglas.

Richard was always a really busy guy, and he published his last book in his 90th year, just before his death. That book was entitled *Beyond the Noise of Solemn Assemblies: The Protestant Ethic and the Quest for Social Justice in Canada*.

I was lucky to have had Dr. Allen as a mentor. When I was first elected, it was a difficult time, and I confided in Richard that I was feeling a little despondent in the changes that this government was making and my ability to help the people in my riding. So he sent me a note, and I think this is inspirational advice that we could all use. It comes from a script from John Wesley. I’ll just read it here: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” I want to thank you, Richard, for that piece of inspiration.

Now turning to the bill, Speaker, I just want to set the tone or the theme, if you will, the motif for my debate

today on this bill, and I want to set it in the light of the Premier's recent remarkable comments in this Legislature. They weren't the comments about his political interference in the judicial system; those were remarkable enough. But these were the comments that he made in response to a question from our finance critic, the excellent MPP for Waterloo.

Interjection: All-star.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Absolutely—all-star. She was rightfully outraged that the Auditor General's report revealed that this Conservative government spent about \$25 million on partisan ads and, of course, untold millions of dollars on Super Bowl ads. So she shared her outrage—I would say all of our outrage, Speaker—that \$25 million was spent on ads while Ontario experienced 203 emergency department closures; \$25 million on ads while 2.3 million Ontarians did not have a family physician; and \$25 million on ads while regions across northern Ontario declared a health state of emergency.

Did the Premier address any of MPP Fife's concerns for the struggles of Ontarians? No, he did not. Instead, he told the Legislature that we need a lesson in marketing and sales. Imagine. And that's when I really understood—that's when the penny really dropped, Speaker—that this isn't a Premier that wants to govern in the best interest of the people. He's not governing; he's selling.

I don't know if anybody has seen the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Has anyone seen that excellent movie? The line in that is, "Always be closing. A, B, C." And I would say that is very telling of the pattern of this Premier.

This bill, the Get It Done Act, Bill 162, really is the Premier's lesson to us in marketing and sales. It just exposes his *modus operandi* when it comes to addressing the people of the province of Ontario.

So is this a bill? It's really, actually, a bill of goods. I mean, if I could rephrase it: The Premier is marketing, I would say, an empty promise and he hopes that the buyers of this empty promise will be all of us, the people of Ontario. But after what we've been through with this Premier—the greenbelt scandal, the land grab, the RCMP investigation—people don't have faith in this government, so I'm pretty sure nobody is buying what he is selling with this bill.

Now I will admit—I don't know; maybe I need a lesson in sales and marketing. I'm not quite that slick. But I don't know, colleagues, maybe it's just me, but I don't think it's a fantastic strategy to give bills titles that just beg to be mocked. I mean, you can't help it. Let's do it together: "Get 'er done." We tried—

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: "Get it undone"—thank you. "Won't get it done." "Can't get it done." Any I've missed?

Mr. John Fraser: Stick a fork in it; it's done.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: "Stick a fork in it; it's done." I like that one. These puns, they just write themselves, and even if you're trying to not, you cannot help but riff on the "Get 'er done" bill.

Let's be clear that people see through this. They're tired of the theatre. They're tired of hearing sales pitches in the

Legislature. They're tired of the Premier actually just paraphrasing the ads that go on ad nauseam on our TV.

The media, they got into the fun. The Star said, "It's not unreasonable to say that Ontarians might have gleaned a better understanding of the contents of this unholy mish-mash had the province named it the crazy clown car act, or the empty political gestures act, or, as a political historian once joked, the poke the opposition in the eye act.

"In the era of constant campaigning, it appears governments now see even the simple act of titling bills as just another opportunity for partisan messaging.

"But there's more to the matter than mere mischievous wordplay. At core in this bill, the Ford government is again flaunting its ... disregard for transparency and accountability."

I can't help but quote the TVO article that says, about this bill, "In the meantime, we're left with the irksome elements of the so-called Get It Done Act. We could call it a stunt, but stunts are usually captivating or entertaining. This bill is a dull retread of an idea that was bad the first time. And if it does anything at all, it will be to make the electorate even more ill-informed about governance than it already is. In a better world, the government would never have introduced it. In the world we actually have, we can perhaps just pass it speedily and never speak of it again."

So while this is kind of funny, I have to actually say that none of this is actually funny at all. It's not funny. It's deadly serious because people in the province of Ontario, as you all know, are struggling. We know. It seems to be that there's a cone of silence on the other side. They don't seem to understand that people can't pay their bills, that people don't have access to primary health care. People don't have adequate housing. People are going to food banks to feed their children in this province. That's what's deadly serious in this province.

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But what we see again and again is a PC government that only gets it done for their friends and their donors and their insiders. This continues to be an insiders-first agenda that we have seen from day one from this government. So, let's just say, what can they get done? Well, they can get it done by overriding democracy, by stacking the courts with their like-minded politically appointed judges, but apparently they can't fix the system that they've broken so that that it works for people seeking justice. They can get it done for a for-profit corporation, giving them a 99-year lease on Ontario Place public lands, destroying parkland, thousands of trees and natural habitat, and they can pony up millions of tax dollars for Therme's luxury spa, but they can't provide the taxpayers of the province of Ontario with the details of this sketchy deal.

They can get it done, as we are seeing over and over again, for private, for-profit health care operators by destroying our public health system in order to privatize it, but they can't get it done for the 300,000 people who are currently waiting for a mammogram in Ontario that will give them the life-saving care that they need.

Who can this government get it done for? They can get it done for Enbridge. They can get it done for Staples. They can get it done for Walmart. They can get it done for Loblaws. Who have I missed, folks? They can get it done for Metrolinx.

Can they get it done for the people of Ontario? I would say, and this bill is proof positive, no, they can't.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: They won't.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly; exactly. I think that's the point. Can they not get it done, or is it that they won't get it done? That's the question that rings through everyone's head.

We saw it even this morning when we asked questions in the House this morning about appointing political insider ex-staffers and lobbyists of the Premier to a panel that would appoint judges. They're clearly showing that they can get it done for lobbyists, but they can't get it done for Ontarians who can't afford a lobbyist or don't have a million-dollar CEO or a \$19-million CEO, in the case of Enbridge who seems to have unlimited opportunity to whisper in the Premier's ear. As the member from Oshawa said, the real question is, is it that they can't get it done for us or that they just won't?

I contend, Speaker, that as we move through the schedules in this bill, you will see who this government is working for. It's clear that this bill will lay out, in all its glory, again, the unfolding motivation of this government to get it done for their friends and for insiders.

Let's start by turning to schedule 1 of the bill. I mean, it needs to be said that while this bill is mostly performative and doesn't get much done, it certainly does have serious implications, particularly when it comes to the environment.

I just have to say, as the environment critic for the province of Ontario, oh, my God, the poor environment. It has been treated with such disregard by this government. The Environmental Assessment Act, the Environmental Bill of Rights—this bill has been prodded, poked, molested. It has been debased. There's everything this government has done to make sure that the things that protect the environment and the laws that we have to protect the environment are toothless, if you will, despite the fact that this is a 50-year-old history, a proud history, of being one of the first in the country to have a bill and to have laws that protected the environment. This government seems really hell-bent on dismantling all of that.

And so we see here in schedule 1—I'll just describe what schedule 1 does. It essentially amends the Environmental Assessment Act with the effect of confirming that expropriation may proceed prior to the completion of an environmental assessment. The minister is describing this as a minor tweak, a small thing, but I would argue that nothing about the way this government has moved when it comes to the environment is minor at all, particularly when we pretty much understand that this schedule—again, further watering down the Environmental Assessment Act—is most likely serving the Premier's desire to ram through and bulldoze Highway 413.

In doing that, they are content to water down environmental protections and expropriate private land, without evidence that they need it, that it's appropriate and how much they need. It's kind of clear that this schedule in the bill is a way to legally prevent, I would say, landowners who aren't in on the government's plans to be able to hold on to their property.

Let's just talk about the 413, because it's heralded time and time again as something that is going to save time, when that is a debunked myth. We know that the 413 is only going to save 30 seconds, but it is a \$10-billion—at a minimum—boondoggle that is going to be paid for by the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. And what will be at risk? Not only is it going to cost us tens of billions of dollars—and I'll go on to say how it's going to cost us important farmland in the province—let's just say what Highway 413 plans to do. It's going to pave over 2,000 acres of class 1 and class 2 farmland. It paves over 400 acres of protected green land. It crosses over 85 rivers, streams and wetlands. I would like to add that only 5% of Canada's land mass is class 1, 2 and 3 farmland, and this highway severely impacts that.

The construction of the 413 and its maintenance will produce 113,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, at a time when we're not meeting our targets and we're going in the wrong direction when it comes to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change. This estimated cost to build the highway doesn't take into account the estimated cost that it will cost almost \$1.5 billion to address the health issues and the damage that Highway 413 will cost to local ecologies.

It has been said many times before in this House: Not only is this an ecological disaster, it's most likely going to be a financial disaster that this government won't pay for, but the people and the taxpayers of the province will pay for, for years to come.

I think it's shocking when I hear the Minister of the Environment describe the changes to environmental assessment as minor. When this government talks about modernizing and streamlining, does that give anybody confidence in this House? Because when you hear that, you know that they're doing this not in the interests of us, but in the interests of who they work for.

And so I really want to say that it was shocking to hear the minister, in the Legislature the other day, in her question-and-answer. The member from Newmarket–Aurora said, “Thank you to the minister for her response. It is great to see our government bring forward changes that will protect world-class environmental standards while helping get shovels in the ground”—is there anybody left in the province of Ontario, except on the other side, who thinks that we have world-class environmental standards anymore? We used to, but now, those have been—there's been a fire sale on the things that we cherish so much in this province.

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She went on to say, “Can the minister please elaborate on how our government is protecting strong environmental oversight and making it faster to build in Ontario?” Does

that seem like—what is that expression? The Progressive Conservative, the forward-backward—what is that expression? Really, you're going to protect strong oversight and make it faster to build in the greenbelt? That's just ironic, I guess, is the word I'm looking for.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Isn't it ironic?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. I'm not going to sing today.

The Minister of the Environment went on to say, "Such projects as highways, railways and transmission lines ... are going to be subject to streamlined assessments. These will allow us to focus our resources on projects that have a greater potential for environmental impact."

Honestly, when I hear this, I think, "What could have greater environmental impact than a highway through the greenbelt?" But apparently, according to this government, this is a low-risk project. We can streamline. We can water down the environmental protections to make this happen. Again, I would remind you that this government keeps talking about spending \$98 billion on highways and infrastructure. At the same time, they are dismantling any protections for the environment. So I don't take anything that this Minister of the Environment says at face value, and I don't think the people of the province of Ontario do anymore at all.

As I said, not only does this schedule continue its assault on environmental protections in the province; it makes it easier, it's designed to prevent landowners who aren't in on the Highway 413 scheme—you know, those people, private landowners that aren't developers and connected donors of the Premier. It's designed to prevent them from legally challenging the seizure of this land. We know the government is moving quickly to destroy habitats, waterways, I guess Indigenous sites also, but this bill very specifically targets individual landowners along that route. So, what I want to focus on is who would be some of those landowners connected to the loss of farmland in this province?

The people that are most upset and concerned about this schedule are farmers—farmers that farm on the greenbelt, that are along the proposed route of the 413. They know what's up. They can see the writing on the wall. This government is getting ready to seize their farms, to pave, to build a highway, to perhaps have an ONroute, to put a Walmart or a Staples on land that used to grow vegetables in the province of Ontario. Farmers know what the score is.

There was an Ontario farmer that says "he fears he could lose his family farm if the Doug Ford government goes forward with the proposal to build Highway 413, which would cut through ... a quarter of his land."

He's saying that it doesn't "sound like a huge amount to a lot of people. It's only 25%, but a lot of the margins for grain growing are really slim." The 25% he's prepared to lose will make it impossible for him to grow because it will bisect his property.

Farmers are now fighting back. They have an ad campaign that says, "Farmers against the 413."

They advocate that "the money earmarked for the highway"—this billions of dollars—"could instead be used to

preserve farmland, adopt climate change strategies, and improve rail and public transportation."

Well, there's an idea. Rather than pave over our food source, rather than ruin our environment and spend billions to do it, why wouldn't you use that money to come up with climate change strategy or improve public transportation? There's an idea.

The David Suzuki Foundation's Gideon Forman said, "The research we've looked at suggests that thousands of acres of prime ... farmland will be paved by this highway." That estimate is growing.

I think that it's really important to know that, given the information and the research that's coming out, these farmers believe that there's absolutely no good reason for Highway 413 to go forward. It's a bankrupt notion. It continues to be debunked. It doesn't save the time in travel that they purport. They talk about a single mom who can get home faster to their family, but I put it to you that that single mom is going to have to be working longer hours to pay her taxes that are going to be the financial impact of this boondoggle that this government is putting forward. So don't pretend to me that you're on the side of a single mom trying to get home to her family when none of your policies have shown that that's anything that's in your policies or that is in your realm of concern.

I also want to say that I had the pleasure of meeting with farmers in my riding, the Loewith family. They have a farm called the Summit Station Dairy farm. They really spent time with me to explain how important it is not only to protect farmland but to understand that if you bisect farm land, if you make it impossible for large farm equipment to move around, you really are reducing their ability to have productive land.

If you're ever in the neighbourhood, I highly suggest you visit Summit Station Dairy. They've been in business for 75 years. In 1947, Joe Loewith purchased 100 acres, and it was known as "Summit" because it was the highest point along the railway line between the cities of Brantford and Hamilton. They started with 15 cows, and now they have a fully fledged operation, and they, since then, have spent much money in a streamlined and modernized operation.

They also have a really, really lovely storefront where you can buy milk right off the farm. They have strawberry milk, chocolate milk. They're working on a coffee-flavoured milk. This is the kind of product and this is the kind of thing that we should be proud of, this kind of homegrown, generational family farm that this government is putting at significant risk to build a highway that benefits simply their friends.

While we'll talk more about highways when we get to the notion of taking tolls or taking phantom tolls off phantom highways, I think we just need to understand that this government will move heaven and earth to get things out of the way. We hear the Minister of Housing say, "We're going to get all the obstacles out of the way to build housing. Nothing's going to stop us." And this bill, this actual schedule in this bill, says yes, nothing's going to stop them: not farmers who want to preserve their land,

not expropriations of land when people don't want to sell it, not loss of farmland. And I'm here to say what's also not going to stop them is, again, the environment.

I just want to talk a little bit about a fish, a minnow, because it's sort of—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, it's a lovely little fish called the redbreast dace. It may not mean much to anyone, but it's an important part of the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and the surrounding areas. And what has this government done? They cut protections for this tiny, endangered fish. Why? Because it was found along the route of Highway 413.

This fish, even though it's little, plays a significant role in the ecosystem. They are very sensitive to changes in environment like those wrought by the climate crisis or urban development. For that reason, they're seen as indicators of larger problems in a watershed. If they start dying, it's a sign that other species might soon be in trouble, too.

The Ontario government's last assessment of the species in 2020 concluded it was at imminent risk of being wiped out in the province. That wasn't good enough. The government now has taken the time to remove this little fish from the Species at Risk Act because, again, they do not want anything to get in their way of building this Highway 413. In fact, I would say that if they could actually expropriate this little fish's waterways, they would do that. But instead, what they're going to do is make sure that it is not protected so that they do not have to take that into consideration when they bulldoze, pave and otherwise destroy the habitat of this little fish. And that's just one little fish. There are so many species at risk along that route.

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It's shameful to preside in a Legislature where the government will allow our species at risk to die off; that, by their actions, we will see more of the things that we cherish when it comes to our biodiversity and natural spaces—the government doesn't care. They truly don't care.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The species at risk need a lobbyist.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The species at risk—exactly. They need a lobbyist, or they need a \$19-million-a-year CEO to whisper in the ear of the Premier to say, “Move the highway somewhere else,” because we know the route got moved. We don't know why. My suggestion is that somebody else made a little whisper in the Premier's ear about why they moved the route of the highway. It would be nice if they could move the route of the highway to protect this little minnow fish, but I don't think that's happening.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It would be—actually, thank you. You've corrected me. I appreciate that. Cancel it. That's what we're calling for. It's unnecessary. Don't build it. Don't spend all our money on it. Tell your developer friends, “Sorry, you're out of luck. You're going to have to find someone else to do your bidding.”

I think, also, that it's really shocking to see this government that talks about that they're for the people, that they don't want to interfere, that they are supposed to be not about big government—but this is a government that is nothing but about heavy-handed, big-footed actions on the part of the government. They consolidate power in the Premier's office. They give a minister, one minister, the power to issue MZO's, despite the mess that they got themselves in with MZO's.

Interjection: Two ministers.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Two ministers, yes. So this is a government that doesn't respect the rule of law. If they don't like the rule, they change the law. We see this is a government that broke the law and changed the law retroactively so that they could get what they wanted done. And most certainly, we know that they do not respect or take into consideration Indigenous communities in our province. We hear about it every single day. And so, these land expropriations that will be expedited by this bill include Indigenous lands as well.

I would just like to read what the Regional Chief Glen Hare had to say about this. He said, “We don't have that word, expropriation [in Anishnaabemowin]. It's time for these elected leaders, the ones we put into office to stop flying around on their jets while people, we are dying in this place, from drugs, from suicide, from unclean water. And these are issues that are affecting people no matter the colour of their skin. It's time for Indigenous leadership to be respected.”

I just find it so heartwarming—the concept of expropriating land is something that's not in their culture. But at the same time, they had to face, every day, a government who's prepared to bulldoze over their land and their rights, who's prepared to bulldoze over their traditional territory, and certainly is not prepared to engage in meaningful consultation when it comes to such important things as the loss of lands that are important to them.

Now, again, this “Get 'er done” bill—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Won't get it done.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —won't get it done, can't get it done, should get it done—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Get it done wrong.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —get it done wrong, get it undone.

Schedule 3 of this bill should have a particular title, which should be the official flip-flop schedule in the bill, because it talks specifically about, yet again, this government's meddling in official plans of regions and municipalities across the province. This is the third kick at the can in two years for this government when it comes to meddling with regional and official plans.

Bear with me here. So the government forced urban boundary expansions on municipalities and regions that they didn't want. They issued MZO's that, including the urban boundary expansions—this is all part of the greenbelt scandal—were seen to have been given preferential treatment that came directly from lobbyists into the minister's official plans, and we know that resulted in what? It was described by the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner as what can only be described as

a corrupted, unfair process. It gave preferential treatment to insiders. It led to an RCMP investigation and so, really, this whole thing was a mess. You would think that this minister and this government wouldn't want to kick this hornet's nest again, but no, here they are.

This schedule is reversing reversals from a previous reversal to regions' official plans. Confused yet?

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Confused yet? You know what, so are regions and municipalities across Ontario. Like, what, in fact, is this government doing when it comes to official plans?

The minister himself, I would say, inherited this mess, if I could be so bold to say that, and the minister was really clear that this process was less than adequate. In fact, at the time it's reported that municipal Progressive Conservatives told the Star that Calandra was taken aback by the mess he has inherited. Calandra also said that when "reviewing how decisions were made regarding official plans, it is ... clear that they failed to meet this test." And that's the test of appropriate procedure—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I caution the member to refer to the Minister of Housing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Pardon me. Yes, no problem. Thank you. Speaker.

The minister is quoted as having said he has been "reviewing past decisions of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure they were made in a 'manner that maintains and reinforces public trust.'

"He said 'it is clear' the changes made to urban boundaries 'failed to meet that test.'" And there was "'too much involvement from the minister's office, too much involvement from individuals in the minister's office' in those decisions."

I would say that what we have here with schedule 3, when we're talking about the official amendment act or the official amendment flip-flop act, we're doing the same thing all over again. I mean, it's not clear where these requests to reinstate changes that were removed—where did these requests come from? There's no clear evidence that we know where they came from. It's been said that they came at a request of municipalities. Did they write a letter? Did they make a phone call? Did they have any kind of municipal process that made clear that this pushback was something that wasn't just a mayor of a lower-tier municipality getting on the phone to the Premier?

I say we have not learned our lesson. We're still making changes to official plans or reinstating changes to official plans that were based on a flawed—which is an understatement—process in the first place. Have we learned nothing? We've learned, but has this government learned nothing? I would suggest what they have learned is basically not to get caught, to do it in a more oblique way than they have been doing it in the past.

The Trillium reported that this Get It Done Act to rezone land was requested by PC donors, but we don't know who made these requests. We don't know where this information is coming from.

Again, who is this government getting it done for? Is it municipalities? Is it lower-tier municipalities? Is it regions? I would suggest that, given the significant impact this has on our regions and the regions' ability to get on with it—I mean, they're confused. They keep getting conflicted messages and provincial planning in this province is an absolute mess, and it's a mess because of your government's bungling and constant interference. So I will just say that all across the province this is the case, but I want to talk about Waterloo because by all standards, Waterloo is exemplary community when it comes to planning.

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But a constituent had this to say, and it's long so I'll read it quickly: "It's all red flags. Every red arrow is problematic. How the province can force open and destroy thousands of acres of farmland without any data, rationale, or justification when the region has spent five years and million of dollars on planning, land needs assessment studies, consultant reports and come up with a plan so broadly endorsed by our community of municipalities, passing almost unanimously with none of these additional lands is astounding."

It goes on to say, "Both Waterloo region and Halton region are being decimated by the province here and our official plans are destroyed." And I mean, honestly, that's so much time and so much money, the resources, the effort, the lost opportunity, all because this government cannot get it right, can't help themselves from meddling on behalf of Mr. X and third parties.

I miss Mr. X. Do we all miss Mr. X a little bit? Have we forgotten about him?

Mr. Chris Glover: I miss him.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I miss him. Come on, bring him back.

So don't be fooled, right? Back to what I said about what this government is peddling: Don't be fooled by the tag line. Don't be fooled by the marketing. These changes? They're not minor. These are major changes that this government is making, and they're going to have significant impact on regions and planning and our ability to build housing.

We know we need housing, 1.5 million homes. Where are those homes? How are regions and municipalities supposed to build those homes when their official plans have holes in them, are riddled and are a mess because of this government?

I heard the Minister of the Environment say that six million people are going to be coming to Ontario. Well, you don't even have homes for 1.5 million. So stop with this interference. Stop with this working for insiders, and actually make good science-based, evidence-based decisions when it comes to planning in the province of Ontario. It's really way past time.

Okay, now, this is—I see, sadly, I'm having more fun than I thought I would.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, that's right. And, you know, I'm just kind of getting to the good stuff, I believe, which

is schedule 5, which is the Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act, which is this government's schedule to require a referendum prior to the introduction of a bill establishing a new carbon-pricing program, and it establishes rules for such a referendum.

So I just have to say, news flash to the government, news flash to the people of the province of Ontario: This government has a carbon tax, and I don't remember a referendum. Do you remember having been asked what we should do? Why does this government have a referendum? I really don't understand why this government would be braying about a referendum when it just points out to the fact that they have already a carbon tax in this province.

Let's go back, shall we. Ontarians were exempt from paying the federal levy until this Premier cancelled the previous cap-and-trade alliance that we had with Quebec and California. That cost us \$2 billion annually, and I have heard that we still owe California money, that they still want us to pay up.

So cancelling that cap-and-trade cost us \$2 billion annually. That's money right out of the coffers, right out of the Treasury Board at a time when this government is running a record debt and deficit. This government is in more debt than any province in Canada with the exception of Newfoundland. You could have used that \$2 billion not only to address climate change, but to pay for nurses, to pay for health care. That would have been some good money that we could use.

Just like the Premier advises that we need some sales and marketing lessons, I agree that part of sales and marketing is caveat emptor, buyer beware. And I can't think of a more appropriate clause that this government has said that they're going to introduce a carbon tax referendum that, number one, won't bind any future government at all. It's just completely performative. And the second part of all this is that this government—like any sales pitch, you have to read the fine print, like those drug ads when you have to listen to the disclaimers that they read really quickly. The fast-talking fine print in those ads is so that advertisers don't run afoul of false advertising laws.

I would say that the biggest disclaimer that's not mentioned in this schedule is that the PC government already has a carbon tax in Ontario. They launched a new carbon-pricing system on January 1, 2020—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It was 2022.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —2022; thank you—with no referendum, that they now say is needed before other tax hikes. If you want to have a referendum on a carbon tax, I would say you might want to check in with the people of the province of Ontario to see how they feel about your current carbon tax strategy, where you are scheduled to collect billions of dollars. We have asked the Minister of Energy, “What are you doing with that money that you're collecting? Are you spending it on green energy, clean energy? Are you going to rebate the people of the province of Ontario?” Because we also think that they should save money, the people of the province of Ontario, but you've

got their money, so it's up to you to rebate it before you launch an expensive and useless referendum.

I think it's also really interesting to note that in committee, one of the members—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Social policy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —the social policy committee; thanks to the member from Oshawa—one of the members on the government side was talking about referendums—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Referenda.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Referenda; thank you. Thank you, Jen.

M^{me} France Gélinas: She's a teacher.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The plural of “referendum” is “referenda.”

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, not “referen-dums.” Does that make me “dum” if I said that?

They cost money, and the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston agreed in committee. He said, “The government is made up of elected officials. They're elected to make decisions on behalf and in the best interest of the public. Referendums”—sic—“cost money.... That's why we have debates. That's why we have committees. That's why we have debates within the chamber.” Shockingly, I can't imagine that I agree with the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, but apparently he's at odds with what his Premier thinks is important for us to do in the province.

I can see that I'm running out of time, Speaker. I think that I'm going to just cut to the most ludicrous of all, if I have to say; the most—how do I want to say it?—Orwellian schedule. The title of the schedule is Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. Have I got that right?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This, really, is a schedule that is going to take tolls off highways that don't have tolls, but not take tolls off highways that do. Are you confused? I mean, it is confusing, but I think the idea to baffle with this schedule is intentional, really—I mean, honestly. The very fact that this government wants to say that they're going to take tolls off highways, but they're not going to take tolls off Highway 407, is just ridiculous. It's just complete foolhardiness. People can't afford to ride on the 407. Have you taken the 407 lately? It costs, like, \$50 end to end or some crazy amount. People can't afford to use the 407, and at times it's virtually unused. It's empty. In fact, it's so empty that a plane landed on it in midday because there's no traffic.

So we have this asset. We have it here. Take the tolls off it. Certainly you could take the tolls off for truckers, so that that would relieve congestion and make roads safer for the people of the province, and perhaps you don't need to build your Highway 413, that big boondoggle that's going to cut through the greenbelt.

Now, in addition, why is this government so beholden to this—let's be clear: You have the power to take the tolls off the part that we still own; the part that you didn't sell, that the people of the province, the taxpayers, paid for, that you sold. You have the power to do that, but you're just

refusing to do that. You're refusing to do that. Also, we saw an instance where this government forgave—was it a billion dollars? And was it twice? I think it was a billion dollars twice. They forgave this for-profit corporation a billion dollars in penalties.

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Ms. Jennifer K. French: Congestion penalties.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Congestion penalties—which basically means because this highway was so underutilized, based on the contract, they were required to pay a penalty of a billion dollars, and that was forgiven. Like, “Oh, don't worry; a billion bucks between friends. What's the deal? Buy you a coffee. That should settle it, right?” And so—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Pay for golf next time.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: “Pay for golf.” So, as funny as this is, it's not.

If you took the tolls off Highway 407, you would not need to burden the taxpayers with your giant boondoggle of a highway, and you would remove gridlock on the 400 series that you're talking about. The evidence is quite clear. The evidence is in that—actually, there's good consultants that provided really extensive reports, consultants that were contracted by this government that said, “You want to solve congestion? You don't need to build another highway. You need to take a serious look at the 407,” because that is a way—particularly for drivers in Brampton, who do deserve faster and cheaper commutes, 100%. But you could do it. You could do it. You could reduce gridlock. You could ease commute times. And you could save taxpayers all kinds of money.

So having this schedule that says you're going to remove tolls on highways but not on the Highway 407, I have to say, people don't even need to read the fine print to see what a hollow promise this is. People that don't even pay attention to politics—God love them—they just hear this and they know that it's complete bunk. They know it. I don't know who this government thinks that they're fooling, but they're not fooling the people of the province of Ontario when it comes to their Highway 407.

Let me spend the time that I have left talking about why this bill—not only is it a failure to meet the moment, not only does it not address the critical concerns that people are facing in the province, it's like an out-and-out insult. Do you think the people of the province of Ontario are buying what you're selling anymore? I say they do not buy it. They're not buying it. They know what you're up to. They've seen it time and time again. And they're all waiting with bated breath to see what the RCMP investigation will reveal. Because I think that the investigation will just confirm the baked-in belief, the baked-in conviction that Ontarians have that this government is not working for them. This government is working for insiders. This government is working for their donors. This government is driven by profit, not what's in the public interest, what's in the best interest of the people of the province of Ontario. There have been so many troubling things that have happened under this government's watch, but even particularly just in the last session, in the last few months.

I want to start by saying I am shocked that this government has not learned from the greenbelt scandal, has not learned from an RCMP investigation and hasn't learned from the fact that the people of the province of Ontario don't any longer take what you say at face value. My suggestion is, it's not that you haven't learned—or it's not that you feel that you actually are a government that's supposed to be looking out for the people of the province of Ontario. It's not that you've learned that the people of the province of Ontario cherish the greenbelt. It's not that you learned that a loss to our environment is not only a loss for the future generations and our responsibility to steward the province—it's not only those two losses, but it's a loss, a substantial loss, in people's faith and trust in this government.

I don't believe that you've learned that. I think what you have learned is that you're just going to go at it another way. You're just going to come in the back door with these cute, clever bills that still get the same thing done. You've masked them. The cover story is, “These are going to save people in the province of Ontario money,” but the fact of the matter is that there's more to lose here than what you ever are going to give them by saving them \$7 every six months on a licence fee. It's not a lot.

I sit here a lot, and I happened to notice this carving right above my head. It's Latin, and it's “gubernatio bona fructumparit.” I looked it up, and it means, “Good government bears fruit.” But what I have to say, and I don't mean to be funny, is that this government's actions have been fruitless for the people of Ontario who need your help. Let's just start with the fact that you have wasted so much time in this House—staff time; taxpayer dollars—putting forward half-baked bills, putting forward bills that have to be rescinded because they don't rise to the level of integrity and honesty that the bills in the province of Ontario should.

It used to be that bills and statutes in the province garnered a certain level of respect; that you would be very careful before you threw them out there; that it would reflect on your government as a government, as we say, that knows how to govern wisely and well. But instead, we've seen a government that has flip-flopped and has had to rescind and repeal so much legislation.

In fact, we've estimated that this government has spent a total of about 19 days and counting—because we're still working on this bill that is just a rescindment of bills—undoing things that you put forward. You had to withdraw Bill 124. You had to reverse the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, like Bill 150 and Bill 136, which were the reversal of the greenbelt grab and the reversal of the urban boundary expansion, which was greenbelt grab number two. We spent time debating them, but not as much time as we should have because you used your time allocation, which means you rammed it through. Shockingly, on Bill 150, people weren't even allowed to come to depute on that.

So we are now here again with another bill reversing the changes that you had to reverse. Basically, my head boggles, but you're wasting time with your incompetent,

poorly thought-out bills that are not intended to do what they say they're intended to do. They have some other purpose and people see through that.

Let me just close by saying that this House has been seized for hours and hours with these reversals at a time, as we have said—as we've all been saying—when the people need your help and they need your help urgently. Instead, what do we see? We see a minister who spends time closing ServiceOntario centres where people access the things that they need—which are small businesses—unilaterally, without notice, closing those and giving those contracts to Walmart and Staples. And if that wasn't enough, these small business owners that spent their own money to renovate their storefronts did it on their own dime; Walmart and Staples are getting their spaces renovated on your dime, on your tax dollars' dime.

I also want to say that this government's move to stack the courts is completely chilling and shocking. I mean, the Premier said he's quadrupling down on this. Appointments for insiders and friends and an RCMP investigation aren't enough; he says they want to appoint "like-minded judges." But what we want is fair-minded judges. Isn't that what we want? Don't we want a justice system that delivers impartial justice?

Again, this government is eroding any trust that the people in the province of Ontario have in systems that they used to be able to count on. There is nothing that this government won't meddle with. There is no level of respect for fundamental law and order, for justice in this province. You see it all as a sales and marketing job. It's all just sales and marketing, that the Premier, to get re-elected, would talk about the courts like it's just another way for him to build his popularity, when it should be about a fundamental commitment to justice in this province.

1730

I just want to close by saying this government—a quote by Margaret Atwood, who said, "Here comes tyranny: Rubber stamping judges are a litmus test for #Totalitarianism." And Margaret Atwood is the author of *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is about a totalitarian state. So when an international icon of Canadian literature like Margaret Atwood calls this government totalitarian, you can believe other people think that, too.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Madam Speaker, I find that the members opposite do love to pick the pockets of Ontario's families, whether it be a tax or a toll. I would like to bring to the attention of the member schedule 6, Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. The first section states, "No toll may be charged for travel on a highway where the road—"

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. I know you're asking a question. Stop the clock. Sorry, we're going to give you back your time. I would like you to withdraw your unparliamentary comment.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Withdraw.

I'd like to bring to the attention of the member the wording in schedule 6, Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act, section 1: "No toll may be charged for travel on a highway where the road authority is the crown, unless the toll is authorized by an act."

So my question to the member opposite—I'd like to ask them if they believe that it's appropriate to charge a family more to use public roads for them to get to work or school.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I feel like this is this Bizarro World, because that's a question I'd like to ask you. Do you feel it's appropriate that the people of the province of Ontario have to pay tolls on a highway, the 407, that they already paid for with their taxpayer dollars? The Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris sold it for a song, and now they have to dig into their pockets to pay. They paid once, they paid twice, and they continue to pay.

So absolutely, if you want to help people to be able to afford groceries, take the tolls off the highway. Take the tolls off the highway. If you want to expropriate farms, expropriate the 407 back. That's what I suggest to you.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate that the member just spent an hour breaking down this bill for us, which—the bill really was already fairly broken anyway.

Schedule 6 is the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and, as you've already said, it prohibits tolls on provincial highways unless the toll is authorized by an act, and that this schedule would prohibit tolls on highways that already have no tolls, except for the toll highway, the only one that exists. And earlier today, I asked the Minister of Transportation—read a resolution from the region of Durham, from their council, calling on the government to remove the tolls from the 407 east which, for the folks at home, is the part that's still owned by the province. I got a bunch of malarkey. But basically, it would be interesting to see, because they've already refused one request to temporarily remove it when we've got major construction in the area.

So when they're refusing a municipal ask for this kind of alleviated pressure with the toll removal, why are they braying about taking the tolls off when they actually aren't?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's really hard to make sense of this. You'd have to get into the mind of this government, which—God, I do not want to do that; I can't even imagine. But the point is, it's just absolute insanity that they are asking questions like this about why we would like people to pay tolls when we don't want them to pay tolls; we want you to take the tolls off. You own Highway 407 east. Municipalities are asking for help, municipalities that can't afford the infrastructure, the roads because of the downloading costs of this government. So don't point fingers. Don't pretend that you're helping people with taking tolls off highways that don't have tolls. It's not helpful. It's insulting.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I listened to the tirade from the member opposite—a whole lot of insulting language, which is common coming from the members opposite. They think that passes for debate and ideas.

But I'm really proud of our government for taking on the carbon tax and for trying to keep life more affordable for people. I wanted to ask the member opposite if she is in favour of a carbon tax and if she would support our legislation, which is trying to make sure that we get rid of a carbon tax by requesting a referendum in the future, because I'm worried that the members opposite would vote to take money away from hard-working families who are already struggling to make ends meet.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know, a basic lack of understanding of governance is not unusual in this government. I also would like to point out that I went through an hour-long speech and didn't have to withdraw one single time, so you can say what you want, but I think that the facts and the truth seem to hurt this government.

But the whole point of this is that you cannot have a referendum that binds future governments. All they will do is undo it with legislation, so it's completely performative. It's completely performative. It is a sales and marketing pitch, a ploy that is perfectly fitting for a Premier who sees this province as something that is all about selling and profiting.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her presentation this morning. As I listened to her presentation, I thought of the journalist John Michael McGrath. I'd like to quote him. He said that Bill 162 is a “profoundly silly” act that doesn't accomplish “anything concrete.” McGrath goes on to say, “We could call it a stunt, but stunts are usually captivating or entertaining,” and that this act itself is “performative nonsense.”

The member talked about how the Conservatives chose to implement the Conservative carbon tax on Ontario, but I wanted to ask the member what needs to happen to Bill 162 to make it more than simple performative nonsense.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, yes. I mean I would say let's start with withdrawing it. The government seems to have no compunctions withdrawing things, rescinding things, so rescind this and bring it back with things that matter to the people. There's nothing in here that addresses health care; there's nothing in here that addresses housing.

This complete gimmick of a referendum that not only will cost taxpayers untold tens of millions of dollars to hold—a member of the PC Party spoke against referendums, and what will it accomplish? Nothing, so stop wasting our time, the people of the province of Ontario's time, with these performative bills that John Michael McGrath said are nothing more than the power of a “damp Kleenex.”

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

Mr. Billy Pang: With the track record of the NDP, they love to put more burden on Ontarians' shoulders, so I'm

very proud to put it to a vote for families in Ontario to decide whether a carbon tax fits their needs. They don't like it. When they're talking about democracy, they don't like it when we ask for Ontarians' opinion. If this bill passes, we are giving Ontarians more freedom to control their finances and preventing Liberal and NDP governments from overtaxing hard-working families.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite how they would vote in a carbon tax referendum. Would the member vote to take money away from the hard-working Ontarians or learn from us and put money into Ontarians' pockets?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, I have learned from this government, who have done nothing since they took office but take money away from taxpayers in the province. What was your first thing? You cancelled a minimum wage increase that costs \$7,000 a year out of people's pockets. That was the first thing you did. Guess what? Bill 124: You froze the wages of health care workers during COVID—unbelievable. What has this government done, truly, to help the people of the province of Ontario? The list is really small.

1740

So, yes, I have learned from this government that they seem to have no compunction to charge Ontarians, to increase taxes and to take away people's entitlements, all at the expense of your insiders, your donors and your corporate lobbyists.

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

We don't have time for another back and forth. We're going to move to further debate.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to rise in my place and debate Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, or the so-called Get It Done Act, and I'm able to stand here as the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways.

This bill, despite its catchy title, is mostly performative, and it actually doesn't get much done. It certainly doesn't get anything done to fix health care or build housing or make life more affordable.

What we have seen in the last stretch of time is a government that has had to backtrack on many major policy decisions. I'm starting to look at bills now that they've tabled and think that each time a new bill hits the table, we've entered that pre-repeal time in a bill's life in this House, because so many have had to be reversed. But this government is—I'm going to assume; I won't impute motive, but I would image that they're quite desperate to distract from their never-ending scandals, and I don't think they love it when we remind about the RCMP investigation etc.

This is a bill called the Get It Done Act, and they can't get it done on the biggest issues facing Ontario. We have a strained health care system, worsening housing crisis and the skyrocketing cost of living—although, like I had discussed with my colleague, can't get it done or won't get it done? I mean, this is a government that has now been in power, been in charge for coming up on six years. So this

is not first day on the job. They could be doing better, and to see a skimpy little performative piece hit the table here in this bill—I'd say it's a missed opportunity.

People across the province are struggling. They're not interested in symbolic gestures. They're interested in meaningful, serious solutions. I would say we have been focused on delivering real solutions for housing, health care and the rising cost of living.

This government—we have talked in this House about Super Bowl ads, about this government's fascination with advertising, how much money and investment they're making into getting their message out to folks. So they are probably wondering what the audience response is to this particular piece of legislation, and I would say that people don't believe the hype, nor are they excited about this nothing bill. In fact, I'd like to share from a TVO opinion piece entitled "Doug Ford's Omnibus Bill Is Bad Policy That Will Accomplish Nothing." This has been written by John Michael McGrath. I'll read:

"MPPs returned to the Legislature for the spring sitting on Tuesday, and the government's first priority is a beefy new omnibus bill dubbed the 'Get It Done Act.' Much of the bill had been previewed last week in press conferences by" the Premier, "who announced that the government would introduce new legislation that would prohibit the use of road tolls on provincial highways and that, in a separate section, would prohibit the province from introducing a carbon tax without first submitting it to a referendum."

He goes on to say, "They are profoundly silly acts to put before the Legislature: They don't accomplish anything concrete, they can't do what they claim to, and they can't be changed into anything meaningful without committing a form of constitutional vandalism. And that's before we get to the part where they're also bad policy."

There's a section that I'll come back to that is quite interesting about their carbon tax referendum piece, but as he frames it, "That's the reality of governing, though: doing meaningful things usually costs money, while performative nonsense is free..."

"In the meantime, we're left with the irksome elements of the so-called Get It Done Act. We could call it a stunt, but stunts are usually captivating or entertaining. This bill is a dull retreat of an idea that was bad the first time. And if it does anything at all, it will be to make the electorate even more ill-informed about governance than it already is. In a better world, the government would never have introduced it."

That's some of the audience reaction to this piece of legislation.

Because we've had an hour from our critic responsible for the environmental pieces, I'm going to stay in my lane—pun intended—as the critic for transportation, highways and also infrastructure.

Looking at the schedule 2 changes, there are changes to the Highway Traffic Act, and it sets a statutory driver's licence fee of \$7.50 for each six-month period equal to the—wait for it, Speaker—"existing" fee, which is set by regulation.

Schedule 4 is the Photo Card Act, and it sets a statutory photo card fee of \$3.50 for each six-month period equal to the "existing" fee, which is set by minister's orders.

Why I highlight the word "existing" is because this is not a change in the experience of Ontarians—drivers or those getting their photo card. These prices, these fees, these costs have already been determined in regulation. What this bill does, or barely does, is now put it into statute, into actual law and out of regulation. It's a nothing burger. It's the status quo. There's no change. We're not saving anybody anything. It's the same as what they've been paying as determined by regulation.

Another part that is accomplished by schedule 2 is, it establishes a framework enabling an automatic licence plate renewal system, with details to be determined by regulation.

Speaker, while we're here, and since the government has brought it up, let's talk about licence plates, because that's what they brought us here to do. I'm a little out of practice, though. It was an everyday thing, that I got to stand in this House and talk about licence plates—but it has been four years since the absurd mess of their PC vanity plates that can't be read.

I would like to remind us, with a recent piece—because folks haven't forgotten. This is a piece by Allison Jones of the Canadian Press from February 14:

"As of this month there are 124,000 blue licence plates on the road..."

The Premier's "government has a plan to get its blue licence plates off the road, four years after discovering they are barely visible at night—and that plan is to sit back and wait.

"The blue licence plates are set to simply disappear through attrition..."

"That approach has been in place since November 2022, according to a senior government official not authorized to speak publicly about the matter."

This is from a press secretary for the public and business service delivery minister: "After carefully considering potential options for implementing a dedicated collections program, the Ontario government has decided to naturally phase out existing blue licence plates."

Speaker, it's interesting, because every year around this time, mid-February, marks the anniversary of these blue licence plates, and every year the media tries to figure out what the government's plan is, after they had committed to getting those licence plates off the road. And now the plan—and there is a plan; it was actually decided in 2022—wasn't communicated. In fact, various FOIs were unsuccessful based on the grounds that the government wasn't ready to announce it yet. It turns out what they weren't ready to announce but had decided was, "Shh, let it go away"—as they put it, decided to naturally phase out existing blue licence plates. Sure.

But here's the thing—and this is my question to this government, since they've brought up licence plates. It has been four years, and still we're talking about the Premier's blue licence plates. There's still 125,000 or so left driving around on the roads, and each one of them is that true-blue

reminder of the epic fail that this whole mess has been. The government promised that they would get them off our roads. It has come to light, as I just read, that the new plan is a passive phase-out. Ontarians know and, Speaker, you may remember—the folks at home certainly remember—these plates disappear in bright sun. They disappear at night. They disappear when being scanned at the US border. They disappear in heavy rain. And now this Premier wants them to disappear from our memories. So, the PC Party blue vanity plates, while impossible to read, are impossible to forget.

1750

So, I guess I have an ongoing question: Why can't they just fix this? Why won't they just "get it done" when it comes to licence plates? And look, the Premier had said the other day that we needed to learn about—I don't even remember—marketing and branding and stuff like that. But here we have physical, tangible, visible reminders of an epic and ongoing fail, of ineptitude or a rush job or—I don't know, but people look at them and yes, it's a safety problem. I mean, they're appropriate for a getaway car, sure, but other than that, people see them, and except for those who are a bit sentimental and are keeping them as collectors' plates, I think folks every time they see them think, "Oh, yes, man, they sure can get it done, can they?" So, if you want to talk about branding and you want to talk about marketing, maybe that's a case study for the Premier.

But, Speaker, I will continue. Speaker, schedule 6—I will continue with that one. I'm going to skip a few of the others because, as the critic for transportation, I'm going to stay focused on what the government has given me and that is Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act, schedule 6. It prohibits tolls on provincial highways unless the toll is authorized by an act. Schedule 6 would prohibit tolls on highways that already have no tolls—so we're prohibiting tolls from where they aren't and don't exist—but would not prohibit tolls on the one Ontario highway that does have true tolls, Highway 407.

And remember that the Highway 407—people may think of it as one long stretch, but there are two sections: privately owned, the Highway 407 ETR—that's the part that got sold for a song and all of us are still mad about it and paying for it—and then there's Highway 407 east. The 407 east and the 412 and 418, those highways are still owned by the province, okay? They haven't yet sold them to some foreign consortium—still ours.

So only one highway in Ontario has true tolls, and the tolls are authorized by the Highway 407 Act and the Highway 407 East Act, and those are untouched by this nonsense piece of legislation in front of us. The fact that the government keeps choosing not to rein in the high tolls on the 407—the government is missing an opportunity to make better use of the underutilized highway. They could be reducing or removing tolls for transport trucks; the NDP has proposed that. They've been hearing that across various stakeholder groups.

Also, in 2021, the Ford government inexplicably waived a billion dollars in congestion penalties that was

owed by the private 407 ETR operator for setting tolls too high and allowing traffic to fall below minimum volumes required under the agreement with this government. So, legitimately, they didn't meet their obligations, even though during that time—because you may remember it was around COVID time—the other 400-series highways were congested. People were on the roads. Highway 407 was so underused that a plane was able to land on it in the middle of the day with no problem.

We have called on the government to go after the 407 ETR for those congestion penalties, but this government—and I won't put words in their mouth, but what's a billion dollars? They waived it. It legitimately was owed that and chose to waive it.

Speaker, Bill 162 would prohibit tolls on provincial highways unless the toll is authorized under an act. The funny thing is, as the Auditor General noted in her 2022 report on highway planning, "The ministry does not have authority under the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to implement tolls on provincial highways." Literally, the provincial government doesn't have the authority to implement tolls on provincial highways.

So here in this bill, they're like, "We're going to ban tolls." They don't actually have the authority to implement them—fun fact. They don't have the authority without a highway-specific act, which brings us back to the Highway 407 Act and the Highway 407 East Act, which are unchanged by this schedule.

Speaker, earlier today I took the opportunity to ask the Minister of Transportation directly about a resolution that was passed today by the region of Durham, by their council. It was a motion requesting the permanent removal of tolls on the provincially owned portion of Highway 407, between Brock Road in Pickering and Highway 35/115. I won't read the whole thing, but I will set it up for folks at home:

"Whereas Highway 407 from Brock Road ... in Pickering to Highway 35/115 is provincially owned and tolls are set by the province;

"And whereas the province introduced legislation that if passed would ban tolls from provincially owned highways including all 400-series highways except for Highway 407 which is located almost exclusively in Durham region;

"And whereas if excluded from the proposed ban on tolls, Highway 407 would become the only tolled provincially owned highway in Ontario, resulting in unfair economic impacts to Durham region residents and businesses;

"And whereas"—I am reading more of it than I was planning, but they say good stuff—"the province of Ontario has previously removed tolls on Highways 412 and 418 located within Durham, demonstrating the willingness to removing existing unfair tolls on provincially owned highways and should therefore include the provincial 407 as part of the proposed legislation; ...

"Be it resolved" that they request "that the province of Ontario include the provincially owned portion of High-

way 407 in any legislation banning tolls on provincially owned highways.”

Speaker, the minister said—not in response to me, but in his remarks—something about “give our municipal partners what they need.” Well, I will reiterate to the Minister of Transportation and the folks at home that we have here a municipal partner asking to have this section of a provincial highway included in this act so that the toll could be taken off the provincial portion, the 407 east. I won’t hold my breath, but it’s a legit ask. I’ll tell you why I don’t hold my breath, Speaker: Because the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.

On January 31, in echo to the town of Whitby’s resolution on January 16, the Durham region resolved:

“Whereas the temporary removal of tolls on Highway 407 during Winchester Road construction work would improve overall travel times and alleviate the traffic impacts on surrounding regional and local municipal roads.

“Be it ... resolved that:

“The province be requested to temporarily remove tolls on Highway 407 in Durham during the duration of the planned Winchester Road construction work.”

Speaker, they asked this. They sent it to the province, and that was January 31. By February 6, the answer was no—a resounding, definite no. It says here, as was reported in the paper, “An effort by Durham regional councillors to press the province to temporarily remove tolls on the Durham section of Highway 407 has received a quick curt response: ‘No.’”

The quote here is the response from the Ministry of Transportation six days later: “The ministry (of transportation) is not considering subsidizing or removing tolls for use of Highway 407 at this time.” And then, how many minutes later, and we’re dealing with Bill 162, which, with all of its fanfare—“We are going to be prohibiting tolls from provincial roads, except where they already are.” I obviously take exception to that, because why is Durham the exception? And this is a provincial government that says, “We’re not going to toll folks.” Well, you know what? Their behaviour is taking a very detrimental toll on the people in Durham region.

Speaker, unsurprisingly, I’ve used up my time, but I want to say that there are actual things this government could choose to do to help Ontarians. There’s a lot in this bill that’s kind of lip service and nothing burgers and really doesn’t change things or advance things, and that’s a missed opportunity. Where are the interventions to make people’s experience with our health care system better? Where are real affordability measures? How are we housing people because of this bill?

1800

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Unfortunately, there’s no time for questions.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): It is 6 o’clock. There is no private members’ public business designated for debate today, so we can move straight to the late show. Pursuant to standing order 36, the question

that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): And on to the late show: The member for Ottawa West–Nepean has given notice of dissatisfaction for the answer to a question given to the Minister of Education. The member will have five minutes to debate the matter and then the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We’re here for this late show debate tonight because this government just won’t take seriously the conditions in our provincial schools. Students, parents, alumni, teachers and advocates have been raising concerns for years. They’ve been trying to get meetings with the minister or the deputy minister but have been stonewalled. Journalists have reached out to get answers and have gotten the blow-off from the ministry.

So earlier this week, I asked the minister what it’s going to take for him to act. Sadly, Speaker, the students, the families, the teachers who are waiting for answers still did not get any. These schools serve children who are deaf, blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. These are some of our most vulnerable students in Ontario. They deserve more attention and care, not less. But these kids are being forced to learn in horrendous conditions, conditions that no parent in Ontario would find acceptable for their children, and these schools are under the direct control of the Minister of Education. He could change things today if he wanted to.

The minister said he needed to introduce Bill 98 because school boards weren’t doing a good enough job so he needed to have more say on how schools are run in Ontario. Well, here are the schools that he oversees personally, and look what kind of shape they’re in: serious allegations of abuse, discrimination and neglect; severe teacher shortages—in fact, 17% of the teaching workforce—crumbling and unsafe buildings and children not getting access to the facilities and services they need to learn life skills safely; safety plans that are so absurd that when I tell people about them they think I’m joking because they can’t believe that any serious school in Ontario would do this. That’s the minister’s record.

Let’s look more closely at what’s happening in these schools on the minister’s watch. Students are travelling up to an hour and a half to school by bus, but because supervision doesn’t begin until the school day starts, they’re left waiting outside for half an hour when they arrive. They don’t have access to a bathroom, so some students have had to resort to urinating outside. Because they communicate with their hands, they have no option but to take their gloves off even when it’s minus 15 outside. Once they’re allowed in the building, students are being forced into large classes that exceed safety

regulations because the teaching workforce has been reduced by 25% over recent years and there are not enough occasional teachers to fill gaps when teachers are sick or on leave. In fact, there are so many staff shortages that students are frequently arriving at their classroom to find a note on the door stating there is no teacher for the day and they're to go to the library instead. Teachers who provide specific support, such as the special education resource teacher or the oral language teacher, are being pulled from their assignments to cover classrooms instead. If there's an emergency during the day, a hearing teacher needs to be alerted because there is no way for a non-hearing teacher to call for help, and many of these teachers are non-hearing teachers.

At Ernest C. Drury, such emergencies were initially dealt with by requiring the classroom teacher to leave the room in the middle of an emergency and find another teacher or student to hand a card to. After this system was criticized as ineffective by an inspector from the Ministry of Labour, the school implemented a new system which requires classroom teachers to ring a cowbell, which obviously no deaf or hard-of-hearing student or teacher can hear.

Following a violent incident at one of the schools in December 2022, the Ministry of Labour flagged that student safety plans had not been updated for years. One of the reasons they weren't being updated was because the special education resource teacher was being called upon repeatedly to fill in for classroom teachers.

Students are also not getting assessments. When the chief psychologist resigned in 2022, he stated in his resignation letter that senior management had removed all of his clinical duties and prevented him from explaining to parents why their children weren't getting assessments. He further said he was forced by senior management to prioritize care to children whose parents had hired a lawyer or complained to their MPP.

I could go on, Speaker, with another five minutes of disturbing stories about what's happening in these schools. But let me just conclude with a question. Why, if the minister thinks things are so great in these schools, is the government facing three new lawsuits only a couple of years after the province paid out \$23 million to settle two class action lawsuits? Does the minister think that a lawsuit is a sign of success?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. I will now turn to the parliamentary assistant for a response.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I stand today to speak about the provincial and demonstration schools. Thank you to the member opposite for bringing the matter forward.

Speaker, from day one, our government has been and remains committed to the provincial and demonstration schools in the province of Ontario. These are schools that lodge the most vulnerable students in our province. These students receive an individualized education to fully participate in a full school experience, including music, sports and leadership opportunities.

Speaker, before anything, being a mom with one child that has graduated and another in the public system that enjoys the benefits of a modernized curriculum, I, like other parents, worry about my child as all parents will, and I can't imagine a parent, especially as they grow and navigate life, would not worry, especially about getting well-paid job offers and living a life to be successful in society.

So the topic of provincial and demonstration schools resonates with me because whether it's my kids or others', our government's priority remains to ensure all kids have a full, safe and educational experience in our public schools.

Speaker, we are proud to be the only province in Canada to maintain provincial schools with lodgings for students with exceptionalities, and we remain steadfast in continuing to support and promote provincial and demonstration schools in providing quality opportunities for students who attend these schools. We remain committed in unlocking the potential within all our learners and serve effective educational practices for students who are deaf, blind and have learning disabilities. And we see results, Speaker.

When we talk about student success, in the spring of 2023, E.C. Drury School for the Deaf participated in the math competition finals at the Rochester Institute of Technology for the deaf in Rochester, New York. The students competed along with the other top 15 teams from across North America and the result was a seventh place finish. This is an outstanding result in a pool of 40 teams.

Speaker, our government funds an average of \$125,000 per student per year. In the 2023-24 school year, there are 520 students enrolled in the provincial and demonstration schools with a total of 610 full-time and seasonal staff. This, to provide students a sense of belonging where their unique learning needs are met to actualize their potential.

Speaker, we have planned and approved capital projects over the next three years, with several new projects initiated to optimize school and student lodging conditions. It was under our government that a permanent executive director was hired to oversee the day-to-day operations, including all issues related to educators, students and staff. It was under our government that annual inspectors were appointed to ensure yearly inspections of provincial and demonstration schools.

Contrary to the opposition's rhetoric, Speaker, in the 2022-23 school year, each lodging program had an overwhelming compliance rate over 85%, which affirms a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for students in lodging. We heard from inspectors who applauded this work and the dedication of provincial and demonstration schools in providing a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for students.

It was our government that invested more than \$250,000 in the first blind and low-vision program for francophone students in Ontario. This groundbreaking initiative for this provincial school ensures that francophone students who are blind or have limited vision get the quality education they deserve in French.

It is our government that has invested in transportation to provide reliable transportation for the students in these schools.

It was under our government that new policies and procedures were introduced to support provincial schools and demonstration schools.

All of this to say that it's our government that continues to work to better enhance our schools—all our schools, including provincial and demonstration schools—to en-

sure that the most vulnerable students continue to be set up for a path to success. We can accept nothing less, especially for our most vulnerable.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): There being no further matters to debate, pursuant to standing order 36(c), I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House will stand adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday, February 29.

The House adjourned at 1811.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

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