

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 146A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 146A

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Tuesday
16 April 2024

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mardi
16 avril 2024

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 April 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 avril 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING RED TAPE TO BUILD MORE HOMES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES AFIN DE CONSTRUIRE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

Hon. Nina Tangri: It really is my pleasure to rise today to speak in strong support of our proposed Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of Ontario's economy. From family-run shops on main streets across the province to dynamic start-ups pioneering new technologies and business models, our small companies represent the very spirit of entrepreneurship that drives economic growth and job creation.

Ontario is home to almost 500,000 small businesses, accounting for over 97% of all businesses in this province. They employ well over two million hard-working people and contribute billions annually to our economic output. When small businesses succeed, our communities and our province succeeds. That is why with the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, that is before us today, our government is taking direct aim at the bureaucratic barriers, regulatory burdens and institutional inertia that too often hold back small businesses back from reaching their full potential.

I want to be clear: This proposed legislation is not just about building more homes, although that is certainly our key priority. It's about dismantling the regulatory obstacles that make it harder for small businesses across multiple sectors to compete, to innovate, to grow and create opportunities for workers.

Small residential construction companies, skilled trades contractors, and local builders and renovators will be some of the biggest beneficiaries of the measures in this act to streamline approvals and cut through the bureaucratic red

tape that has constrained housing development for far too long.

Think about it: How many electricians, plumbers, drywallers, framers, roofers and other skilled tradespeople have been forced to turn down work or delay projects because of the painfully slow pace of approvals for new home construction? By removing these impediments and getting more housing projects unblocked, we're creating more opportunities for these small businesses to thrive. The same dynamic holds true for the manufacturers of basic building components and materials like windows, doors, cabinets, roof trusses and prefab components. When residential construction has been artificially suppressed, it limits demand for their offerings and makes it harder for them to invest, grow and hire more workers.

With this legislation, we are supporting innovative construction technologies and new business models that have been stifled by inflexibility, regulations and approval processes designed for a different era. Factory-built modular housing is a prime example. By enabling standardized designs and embracing modern methods like mass-timber construction, we can clear the way for small modular manufacturers to scale up production.

For small developers, builders and contractors focused on affordable housing, laneway homes, basement apartments and other forms of missing-middle housing, this act removes the unnecessary burden of minimum parking requirements that have made too many smart-density projects financially unfeasible. No longer will they face exorbitant costs just to provide parking spots that go unused in areas well served by transit. This small change brings even more customers to small businesses in these areas.

This legislation will also create new opportunities for small landlords and property managers by streamlining approvals for student housing projects near universities and colleges. With more affordable housing options clustered around campuses, a prime market opens up for small businesses in this space.

And let's not forget the countless small retailers, restaurants, trades and professional service firms that have struggled to attract and retain talent because their employees can't find reasonable, affordable places to live within a decent commuting radius.

A lack of housing supply isn't just a social issue; it undermines businesses of all sizes in their ability to compete for workers. From residential construction and manufacturing to property management and local services, this act directly tackles the bureaucratic challenges that have constrained growth and opportunity in these sectors dominated by small business owners.

It goes further, because small businesses across Ontario have been loud and clear in their opposition to excessive red tape, duplicative regulations, unexpected fees and endless approval delays that make it harder for them to invest, grow and create jobs. We've heard from them. And we're acting with this legislation.

We are eliminating nuisance fees that serve to only nickel and dime small entrepreneurs, like the ridiculous \$6,300 daily fee for filming at the provincial Archives of Ontario. That's the kind of arbitrary charge that makes it harder for new artists, filmmakers and creative professionals to chase their dreams and start small businesses.

We're introducing service standards that will finally force the bureaucracy to be transparent about the timeliness of approving permits and licences that businesses so desperately need. No longer will small companies be left in limbo, waiting indefinitely for the government to get around to green-lighting their ability to get on with their business.

As a former small business owner myself, I know first-hand that regulatory predictability matters.

We're cutting the red tape around relocating utilities and other infrastructure to get municipal construction projects under way faster, because every delay puts more financial strain on small contractors who have already priced their work.

We're modernizing the approvals regime to provide more flexibility and options to innovative small businesses working in Ontario's producer-responsibility recycling system.

Smart regulation works with businesses, not against them.

Perhaps most significantly, this legislation takes steps to provide municipalities with more tools to compete for major investment projects by offering incentives. Just think about the transformative impacts a single game-changing investment can have for small and rural municipalities—thousands of new construction jobs created to build a new facility in the short term; hundreds or even thousands more permanent roles once it's operational, from skilled trades to management to support services; and a full ecosystem of small, local suppliers, companies and entrepreneurial spinoffs able to form around that investment over time.

That's the power of making smart legislative changes to attract major capital and investment to Ontario. And with the right tools in this legislation, cities across our province can roll out the red carpet and hit prime job-creating investments out of the park, creating a ripple effect of opportunities for small businesses.

This is more than just economic growth. Small businesses are always going to be nimbler and more innovative. They embrace new technologies and business models at a blistering pace and drive our innovative economy. It's something I've witnessed first-hand when talking to entrepreneurs right across this province at our universities and our regional innovation centres. They lead the cutting edge of economic development.

0910

Excessive red tape prevents Ontario from unleashing the full creative potential for our entrepreneurs and change-makers pushing into new frontiers. The Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act helps unshackle that ingenuity, because we can't afford to be complacent. We live in a world where the only constant is accelerating change, disruption and creative destruction of old systems by upstart innovators.

Ontario needs to be fertile ground where innovative ideas take root and where people feel empowered to take risks and challenge the status quo. By cutting unnecessary regulations, this legislation represents a down payment on the entrepreneurial environment we need to cultivate. It signals Ontario's openness to working with, not against, the ambition and vision of small businesses charting new paths.

So while the housing provisions are crucial in their own right, this act has far broader implications for the competitiveness of our small business sector as job creators, as community builders and as the spark of Ontario's economic dynamism. We need to nurture that culture because it is the foundation that grows small businesses into the next multinational giants.

Ontario has all the ingredients for a booming entrepreneurial ecosystem: a diverse, well-educated population; world-class universities and colleges; access to capital; and a proud history of innovation. But we can only maintain that ecosystem if we as a government continue our mission of breaking down the regulatory barriers that make it harder for entrepreneurs and small business owners to expend their ambition, creativity and effort on actually growing their operations instead of dealing with bureaucratic hurdles.

This proposed legislation provides one more crucial ingredient: a welcoming regulatory environment that is open for business. The Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, accelerates that vital work. It recognizes that small businesses are not a cost to be managed but an asset to be unleashed as drivers of broadly shared prosperity for workers and families in every community across Ontario.

I'm thankful that our government, Minister Calandra and Premier Ford have continued leading the charge to untangle the mess of regulations that have been holding back opportunities in Ontario. But it's not just about cutting red tape.

We're dramatically reducing the cost of operating a business in Ontario through over \$3.7 billion in relief measures to help companies and small businesses withstand economic pressures.

The Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit lowers costs for local makers investing in their operations.

Temporary gas and fuel tax cuts provide relief at the pumps.

WSIB premium rate reductions slash payroll expenses.

We've raised the employer health tax exemption to \$1 million, delivering a massive tax cut for our job creators.

Business education tax rates have also been lowered to save employers \$450 million annually across our province.

And we've enhanced small business competitiveness by reducing the corporate tax rate to 3.2% while broadening access to this lower rate.

This multi-pronged approach is how our government continues to reshape Ontario as a competitive, business-friendly jurisdiction driving growth and prosperity. This is in stark contrast to the outdated, bureaucratic processes and burdens that accumulated over decades of poor policies that prioritized bureaucracy over private sector success, spearheaded by the Ontario Liberals and championed by the NDP.

As I begin to wrap up, I just want to share something that I've been working on alongside with many of our colleagues. For the past months, I've had the pleasure of interviewing many of my caucus colleagues on their past roles as entrepreneurs and small business owners. One recurring theme they shared is the dedication that's needed to keep going even when the going gets tough; to take the setbacks in stride and keep moving forward. That conviction has been at the heart of our work as a government to cut back the layers of unnecessary red tape choking off opportunity across the province.

Let me tell you, Speaker, we're making meaningful strides, earning recognition like the strong A grade Ontario received in the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' 2024 red tape report card, and an 8.7 out of 10 score that ranks us as a national leader in smart, effective regulation. That is really something that we should all be proud of as a government.

Having said that, there's more to do to unleash Ontario's full potential. That's why the new Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, features major reforms to speed up approvals, streamline processes and reduce burdens for our hard-working small businesses.

For residential builders and skilled trades, this legislation will be a game-changer. It mandates firm timelines for municipalities to provide clear, transparent approval decisions on construction projects. No more endless limbo, waiting months or years with no answers from city planners.

It will also harmonize the dizzying patchwork of rules, interpretations and document requirements that vary wildly between municipalities. Now, consistent provincial standards will finally bring uniformity and certainty to the approvals processes. This streamlining extends to smaller residential renovations as well. By clearly defining the scope of projects excluded from needing permits, homeowners and contractors can tackle more minor upgrades without needless paperwork and bureaucracy.

For innovative companies pioneering new technology, products or services, this legislation cuts the arduous approval runaround. We will use a sensible approach that nurtures entrepreneurship, instead of drowning innovation with process.

And for all businesses, there are long-overdue reforms to rein in outrageous fees and charges that nickel and dime at every turn.

We've heard the frustrations loud and clear. From restaurants dealing with conflicting health and safety rules, manufacturers struggling with repairs and maintenance approvals, and professional service providers drowning in duplicative licensing processes across different municipalities, this legislation is a direct response to that feedback, overhauling outdated policies and systems to finally make government a streamlined process working for the people instead of obstructing their success and their prosperity.

For these reasons, I encourage all members of this House to support this legislation as part of our tireless efforts to make Ontario the best place possible to start and grow a business.

As I travel this province, as we're performing and having these great round tables, speaking with small businesses, speaking with unions and speaking with different industry leaders—it's an opportunity for all members of this House to have a say on how our government can make timelines and processes easier so that they can do what they do best: selling their products, their services to their customers, and continuing to attract more business investment here in Ontario.

Thank you to everyone in the House for giving me this time today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your presentation.

I have a question that has come in from staff at the city of Peel and the city of Toronto. They're very worried about the COHB payments that go out to people who live in private market housing who get a rent top-up so that they can afford the rent. It's a very effective way to keep low-income and moderate-income people housed. They're worried that the spat between Minister Calandra and Minister Fraser, and the refusal of this government to make a deal with the federal government to ensure money flows from the federal government, will put all these families at risk.

Can you tell us if municipalities are going to get their COHB funding when it expires in May?

0920

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for the question. It's a good question.

In my previous role as the Associate Minister of Housing and when we worked with many municipalities throughout AMO, the COHB funding was very, very important—even through to the Homelessness Prevention Program, which we actually provided an additional \$202 million to, to help support municipalities through their service managers and service providers, to work with those people who needed that top-up. We made that funding very flexible so it allowed them to support more people to get into housing. There was a massive gap. There was a gap between shelter, transitional, supportive housing

for individuals, housing for families. It's an area where we need to do more work.

This bill actually has streamlined the processes, and we've worked with providers to get more rental housing built so there's more supply. When there's more supply, there's more affordable housing for everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to thank my colleague for her presentation.

Periodically, I meet with my Whitby Chamber of Commerce, and when I do, they point out that there's a continuing need to eliminate red tape on the close to 1,000 businesses in Whitby. They want to do that because they want to continue to grow and provide jobs in our local economy in Whitby.

I'd like the minister to take a few moments to talk about how our actions that we've taken thus far and this legislation will help us to continue to deliver results for hard-working local businesses.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the member from Whitby for his incredible hard work. I've met with his chamber in the past, and I'm meeting with them in coming weeks as well.

We heard loud and clear from his chamber and chambers right across this province, BIAs, boards of trade on how we as a government have made it much more easy for them to do business, but they're also telling us about the challenges that they've faced in the past. They've come to us, through these red tape reduction packages, to let us know how difficult it has been for them to really just do what they need to do best: streamlining licensing and permits, maybe making singular dates for those renewals of those licences and holding on the fees. Every year, the fees were going up exponentially.

This government has made permits and licence fees stagnant instead of increasing them. That has helped businesses.

And let's just face it: Every single person in this province, most businesses also, single sole proprietors, may own their vehicle. We have now cut having to renew the licence plate sticker. That \$120 a year for each individual across this province has made a massive impact, and that's something that our government is very proud of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I recently spoke to 200 seniors who are being evicted from Chartwell Heritage Glen. This retirement home is in your riding. I'm very concerned that these seniors are being renoevicted.

Two days ago, we spoke to them, and they said that the member opposite has not met with them yet—two days ago.

So these are my two questions: Have you met with them and can you meet with them? And what is your plan to ensure that they are not renoevicted?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you for that question, because I actually want to tell you what I have been doing on this.

When it first came to my attention about two and a half weeks ago, I came back, I immediately spoke to—I had a

few of the individual family members reach out to our office, who we immediately got back to and started up casework, because we need their permission to talk on their behalf, and you know that; I also spoke to Chartwell and heard from both sides what was happening.

Chartwell has sold that building. It blindsided all of us. Nobody wants to see anybody evicted, let alone our seniors. I heard from them that they've sold the building to another company, and they've issued notices for the seniors to move. They're assisting with these seniors. I just spoke to them again yesterday.

I actually met with seniors on Friday, with some of the families, and so we had a conversation. I've got all the details that they've received.

I've got the details from Chartwell—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's great to be debating this legislation here this morning.

Recently, it has come to light that there are some 48 members of the Premier's office on the sunshine list, and his gravy train is getting bigger and bigger and bigger as every year goes by.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain to the House how many Ontarians who are not on the Premier's gravy train sunshine list, making over \$100,000 a year, which is more than the average family in Ontario—how many Ontarians who aren't on the Premier's gravy train will actually be able to afford to buy a home as a result of this legislation?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you for the question. It's really not related to this bill at all.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the record of the previous Liberal government, the biggest bloated bureaucracy we've ever seen. They would use their unemployment numbers by increasing their bureaucracy as opposed to helping businesses come to Ontario. They drove away over 300,000 jobs from Ontario. This government—Premier Ford and all of us collectively here—worked and took massive steps to encourage investment. We reduced red tape through a number of packages to help bring that investment. And it's working—more than 700,000 people wake up to a job today than they did when they left in 2018. That is something that our government is extremely proud of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the minister. She travels across Ontario to hear first-hand what businesses are hearing.

I had the honour of hosting her in my community to meet with a lot of small business owners, and one of the great business owners that she came to visit was Great Bear Products. They were a small, mighty team, family-operated. They have a daughter who is a proud graduate of Georgian College—go, Grizzlies. And they're expanding. The reason they could expand is thanks to burden reduction and this government that believes in working with business, not against business.

I'm going to ask the minister: What else is she hearing across the province on how we are alleviating these small businesses that are still on the brink of recovery, to really help them expand and really break down those walls and break down those barriers so they can grow their business?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the Minister of the Environment for the question.

Yes, when I visited her riding a couple of years ago and met with that company, it was actually very heartwarming to see their creativity. This was something they built from scratch—such beautiful Ontario-made products, something that we should encourage more of across this province.

And to really welcome, congratulate and support the success of our small businesses is critical to a government—to create that environment, to help them not just start a business but to grow. I think that's where we see one of the areas where our government—where we can create that environment to help more businesses grow.

Through this package, by eliminating processes, by making fees more affordable, by making sure that everybody has the ability to say, "I want to grow. How do I do that?"—having their backs to do that is so critical and something, again, that our government is very proud of.

Thank you for the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we do not have time for further questions, but we do have time for further debate.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: There are things in this bill that I think are useful. There is some elimination of red tape. There are also some extremely difficult problems that have been left behind and a loophole that has also been introduced through the provincial policy statement that's very worrying.

We have actually seen some rolling back of some bad legislation that the government forced through with great fanfare a year ago: Bill 23. At that time, AMO was not provided an opportunity to present to the Legislature's standing committee on heritage and culture during the review of Bill 23. It was pretty shocking that AMO was not allowed to speak to a bill, and they were very, very concerned. Their submission outlined key areas of concern and recommended that a number of provisions should be removed, including those that shifted the costs of growth to property taxpayers, those that undermined good planning practices and community livability, and those that increased risks to human and environmental health. We haven't seen any improvements to looking after human and environmental health, but we are seeing some of these issues addressed, and we see that the money is coming back—development money is coming back to municipalities. So that's very good thing. It's a rollback of a bill that was passed with tremendous enthusiasm and fanfare. Fortunately, that has been basically rolled back.

0930

What's also interesting to me is that municipalities are now being consulted in terms of having fourplexes by right, so instead of bringing in fourplexes by right, we're leaving it up to municipalities. That's respectful of the

municipalities. It's just interesting how there can be such a flip-flop between all these arguments about how irresponsible municipalities are and they spend too much money—I believe it was the Premier who expounded tremendously on municipalities not being trustworthy with money. But today, we like municipalities, and that's probably appropriate.

Backtracking on the dissolution of Peel—that's interesting, too, since we spent a lot of time on that.

There are some good things. Making changes to the building code to allow 18-storey mass timber buildings—I'm very supportive of this development. Developers no longer required to build parking in developments near transit—we're good with that; a use-it-or-lose-it law that gives municipalities more power to motivate a developer to build a development one they've been given the approvals, and so on. Providing standardized, pre-approved home designs—this could be very helpful, and we like the proposal because it will help Ontario build more homes more quickly.

But this is the part that's very, very worrying: the provincial policy statement. This wipes out settlement area boundaries and municipal comprehensive review processes so new development on nearby farmland can be approved at any time. Let's be clear about that. We're talking about easy approvals for expanding onto farmland that needs to be preserved as farmland to produce food. Developers can appeal any municipal refusal to the lands tribunal to amend a municipal boundary and approval—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, but pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the associate government House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Speaker. Please resume debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Just to recap, the rules work like this: If a municipality allows sprawl, people cannot appeal; if a municipality denies sprawl, a developer can appeal. So who are the rules set up for? They're set up for the developers. Sprawl means fewer homes being built. There's no minimum at all built into the policy statement.

Previously, if you were destroying farmland to create housing, you needed to build 80 homes per hectare; then, that 80 was reduced to 50; and under the new plan, there's no requirement whatsoever. So you can have a home per hectare of land, and nothing anybody says within the municipality can stop it from happening. That is appalling. This is like the greenbelt all over again; not just greenbelt 2.0, which the member from Waterloo has been telling us about, where farmers—I think it's 650 acres, hectares, of farmland. A lot of farmland is now going up for develop-

ment. So she has been raising the alarm about that. I think of this as the greenbelt to the power of N—“N” as in “no limits.” If a developer wants to build on farmland, they get to do whatever they want, with no restrictions and no ability for anyone to stop them. What is this? This is a shocking loophole. No, I’m not going to call it a loophole; it’s planned.

Then we have issues with rent control. The rent control system, over the last decade, has helped landlords hike average rent by three times the amount allowed in the guideline. Rents are going up. According to Ricardo Tranjan from the CCPA, you could drive a very large truck through the loopholes in our rent control system. I imagine a large Hummer blasting its way through rent controls.

Rent control guidelines do not apply to units added to the market since 2018. That’s something the Conservatives brought in. Vacant units are exempt from guidelines, so that when tenants move out, landlords can charge new tenants whatever they want.

Above-guideline increases, an application process through which rents can be raised dramatically for renovations, allow landlords to recover more than they spend. We’ve seen very large corporations that are publicly traded—we know their financial state—and they apply for above-guideline increases consistently.

Consumers are being exploited, taken advantage of. The market isn’t functioning properly, because landlords are taking advantage of a scarce resource: rental units. The state has to step in and do something.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is claiming that they’ve undertaken historic measures to support tenants, but we’re actually not seeing that happening. We’re seeing renoviction after renoviction after renoviction. The fines are minimal to landlords. And, frankly, it’s a war zone out there in terms of getting housing.

What we’re actually seeing is that tenants are organizing rent strikes, and that’s a pretty dramatic development. It’s not like people don’t have very busy lives and things to do, but they’re organizing rent strikes because of the abuses of landlords and the fact that if they lose the place where they’re living, they’re not going to get into a place that’s more affordable; it will be less affordable.

We’re also seeing this, of course, with seniors. We talked about this a little bit already this morning. That Chartwell home that has been sold out from under 200 seniors—what we’re dealing with is real estate corporations that exist to make money. It’s not about housing. It’s not about looking after people’s needs. It’s about making a lot of money.

This is where the NDP is different, because we think of housing as something that people need. It needs to be affordable. It needs to be built in a responsible way, looking after people’s needs, not generating profits.

We know also that the people in Mississauga who are losing their homes are seniors. They’re 90 years old. They’ve been there for 25 years—paying \$1,600 a month in rent right now. There’s absolutely no way they are going to find equivalent housing anywhere at that rate. And while the corporation is saying, “We’re going to help

house you,” and so on, where are they going to house them? In another Chartwell, at \$5,000 or \$6,000 a month? There’s nothing there to support these people, as much as the corporation wants to say that. Chartwell certainly does not have a reputation as being there for people. The rules were changed. In this case, it’s an apartment complex. In the other cases, they have owned long-term care and it has been enormously profitable. We know that the Premier at the time, Mike Harris—whatever happened legislatively, it became possible to buy up all kinds of long-term-care homes and make them for-profit.

We see the consequences of this. It’s incredibly expensive to live anywhere in a retirement home, and seniors don’t have affordable places to go. The profits keep going up, so somebody is happy; just not people who need to find a space to live.

Now I want to talk a little bit about short-term rentals and what that’s doing to affordable housing.

In Thunder Bay, right now, there are about 221 full-home units available on Airbnb, with about 154 of them being in the cores, where housing is most affordable. So what’s happening is that—we’ve got blocks of apartments where people have been living for many years, and it’s affordable housing. What’s happening is that those owners are gradually kicking everybody out, often without notice. We know that because they come to our office, and then we say, “Actually, it’s not legal to kick them out without notice.” But people don’t always know that. As soon as they can get the tenants out, they’re converting them into Airbnbs or Vrbos—I’ll just call them short-term rentals to be clear. Again, it’s a money-making operation, and with tourism and so on they’re able to make quite a lot of money on these. But now there’s no housing for people, and people are winding up homeless or couch-surfing or whatever it is they have to do to keep a roof over their head.

0940

I’m going to quote the city of Thunder Bay. I’d like to acknowledge Shelby Ch’ng, a member of city council. She has been working with council to create a motion, and that motion will say things such as:

“Short-term rentals reduce the supply of available long-term housing options, as property owners may choose to rent units to tourists instead of local residents....

“Local residents are priced out of their neighbourhoods, as property values and rents increase due to the demand from tourists....

“Short-term renters may not have the same investment in the community as long-term residents, leading to issues such as noise, partying, and other disruptive behaviour, which negatively impacts the quality of life for local residents.”

Talking about this is important, because certain municipalities have created rules to try to address the situation with short-term rentals. Right now, as it stands, short-term rentals do not pay commercial levels of tax; they’re just paying residential tax. That’s basically wrong, and it’s depriving those municipalities of revenues that they should have. They also don’t pay the MAT, which is, when you’re a guest in the city, when you stay at a hotel—that

tax also goes to the city. Some municipalities have dealt with this, but what we really need is the province to take a position and lay down those rules so that it's not so easy for these short-term rentals to boot people out, not pay their share of taxes and basically use up—take away—affordable housing in hundreds of units, leaving people with nowhere to go. We can do that at the provincial level, and I think it's very important that the government take this on.

We've also seen, in Thunder Bay, the direct consequences of the battle between the province and the federal government over funding. On this side of the House, we have been issuing warnings for quite a while that the province was going to lose out on federal funding, and that has happened. The Thunder Bay district social services board looks after all subsidized housing, rent-geared-to-income housing in the city. They are now short \$4.2 million. This means that they are not able to do maintenance—there's all kinds of things. They were supposed to be building new units; they're not going to be able to do that. I hope this is not the end of that story. I hope very much that there's going to be a negotiation and people will get the money that they were expecting. It's also last minute, so the DSSAB has had no way to prepare for this—again, it's going to be the people with the least ability to find other places to live. We actually know that a lot of the places have been—I don't want to call it “neglected”; it is neglect, but the money hasn't been there to do the repairs. The maintenance has not been done for a long time, and a lot of the places are really not great to live in at all at this point. I know that the DSSAB was very focused on making those improvements. I actually know that the province did provide money to improve things at the DSSAB, but now we've got another problem and they're missing an enormous amount of money. It really needs to be addressed.

We had a seniors' proposal in my riding that I've talked about, pretty much since the day I've been elected, called Suomi Koti. They have been trying to get funding to build a second residence for seniors. It would house 60 seniors and would open up quite a few houses in our region. It's all run by volunteers. They've raised the money themselves. They own the property; there's already a building on that property. It has been there for 30 years. I've toured the building. It's in fantastic shape. It has really been a labour of love. Initially, it was designed to house seniors from the Finnish community, but it is open to everyone. It has a wait-list of six years. I think, “Well, six years. Should I put myself on that list?” It's an affordable, nice place to live. They would like to put a second building up. They haven't been able to access enough support. The province has provided support for a seniors' complex in Thunder Bay—Atikokan. I would like to see something happening in Thunder Bay—Superior North. It has now been six years that they've been trying to get funding and haven't been able to push this over the finish line.

I would like to talk about what we would like to see happen. In Thunder Bay, we have two very successful co-op housing projects. They've been there for a long time.

They have a range of incomes, people living in them—it's mixed-income. We also have social housing, which really functions, unfortunately, as poverty ghettos. It's very difficult for people in those situations, especially as things are now, with gangs coming in. We have home invasions happening, we have vulnerable people—actually, I have a niece living in that area—and they're frightened, often, because of the gang activity and so on. They're the kinds of places that are under-policed. Many Indigenous people are over-policed when they're out of that area and on the streets, but they're under-policed where they actually need support.

I also know that people, when they've been able to move out of those social housing areas and into the co-op housing—they still have subsidized rent, but now they're in a mixed-income neighbourhood and it's a community, it's safe, and people feel so much more hopeful about their lives. And they're not frightened about who is coming into their neighbourhood. At one time, these social housing projects—perhaps they were a model that made sense at that time. They really don't make sense now. What we need is mixed neighbourhoods.

I would love to see more co-op housing in our city. I'd like to see the NDP's proposal of a new public agency, Homes Ontario, to actually be there to help support the financing of that kind of housing.

When people say, “Well, where is the money going to come from?”, I ask myself, “Well, where is the money going now?” This government is looking at breaking up the LCBO. That will take \$2.5 billion out of the public purse. Why on earth would a government remove \$2.5 billion from where it can be used to support housing, affordable housing, to support health care, to support education? It doesn't make sense.

We are also seeing million of dollars spent on self-serving advertising. When the government was in opposition, the government actually introduced a bill to stop that kind of advertising, but now it's taking place with this government.

And then we have the issue of health care dollars, where private, for-profit health care agencies are receiving higher rates of pay for the same services, for OHIP services, and the incredible amount of money that is being spent on nursing agencies. That is still an after-effect of Bill 124, which did so much to push senior health care workers out of the profession.

So there is money. Always, when a government has power, there are choices about how money is going to be spent. We think it needs to be spent to support affordable housing, fully public health care, and fully public, well-supported education.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

0950

Mr. Lorne Coe: Recently, at the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, we heard from numerous local governments' representatives from across Ontario that a use-it-or-lose-it policy would help

build homes in their communities. We had representatives from all parts of Ontario at the standing committee.

Speaker, through you: Does the member opposite agree with these locally elected officials?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member for the question.

Yes, I do agree. We know that municipalities were asking for this before, and we know that this proposal has also come from this side of the House. Use-it-or-lose-it is absolutely essential.

Again, there are other things that need to be addressed in the bill that aren't there to support affordable housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Thunder Bay–Superior North for a very good presentation.

Every region of Ontario is very different when it comes to the housing crisis. They have things in common, but certainly Thunder Bay is a unique part of the province.

I'm wondering, in your riding, what could have been in this bill that you would hope might be in a bill in the future, that would most help the residents and homeowners in Thunder Bay?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you for the question.

Rent control is critical, and limitations on selling out people's apartments and turning them into short-term rentals, and support for seniors' housing. Access to affordable financing, which is not there, is really needed. This is why the seniors' complex has not been able to be built. There is no access to affordable financing.

There are many other problems in our region. For example, you can't build down the road. There are 11 municipalities in my riding, and in many of them we can't get housing built, because it's too expensive to bring in material and bring in the workers. At this point, in Terrace Bay, if you could convince a contractor to come, it would be a \$750,000 home, but nobody in Terrace Bay could afford to have a home at that level, so the homes don't get built. So we have a problem in the region of actually not enough housing to bring in professional workers.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, the previous Liberal Party leader and current mayor of Vaughan recently admitted that the housing affordability crisis actually started while he was in office, while the provincial Liberals were in power. As a municipal member for the last 22 years, I certainly witnessed all of that kind of challenge, and that the Liberal government, supported by the NDP at the time, took zero action on the housing crisis.

Can the member opposite speak to—if you're so impassioned about moving forward and addressing the housing crisis, why didn't you push the previous government to act sooner?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Sir, I wasn't here, but frankly, this government has been in power now—it's coming up to six years—and how much time did we spend on the greenbelt? An enormous amount of time. That has been rolled back. What is happening now with farming land—

well, it looks like developers have free rein, and we're getting another version of the greenbelt scandal or greenbelt scam. I'm not sure what to call it.

Given my knowledge of what has been happening over the last six years, I would like to see—there are so many things that this government could have done and can still do differently to help people get affordable housing. That's where I think our energy needs to be.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for her excellent comments. I was particularly taken by her comments on supportive housing.

I'd like to quote Sister Joan Atkinson of the Sisters of St. Joseph, in the Office for Systemic Justice, who wrote to me and said that for the supportive housing model to work—if it is not fully funded, “it will collapse and homelessness with all the other problems that accompany this will escalate....

“We believe there is inadequate funding for these critical human resources that are required to both prevent homelessness and transition people out of the chaos of homelessness, encampments and emergency shelters.”

To the member: I'd like to know, should the government have addressed the critical plight of homelessness and the lack of funding for supportive housing within Bill 185?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much for the question.

Yes, I wish that this bill did support, did recognize the need for supportive housing, to adequately fund it, to adequately fund—obviously, this is a housing bill, so it's not talking about all of those wraparound services, but we have a tremendous need in our city; we have amongst the highest rates of any part of the province, with addictions.

People are working around the clock in their basically very underpaid jobs trying to support people trying to find transitional homes. They really are having an extremely difficult time doing this because the funding is not adequate. It's critically important.

As I say, all of these things snowball. If the short-term rentals are taking up affordable housing, then that also snowballs and there are no other places for transitional housing because everything has been kind of knocked down along the way.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: My friend from Thunder Bay–Superior North talked a lot about the struggles of people in Thunder Bay dealing with rent, and she talked about rent control.

What are some of the other issues that we're seeing in Thunder Bay around people not being able to afford their rent due to the skyrocketing costs, and what is the best solution, moving forward, to deal with that?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much to the member from Niagara Centre for the question.

We know we need rent controls. We know we need affordable housing. We also know that the people on ODSF and on OW don't have enough money to keep a roof over their heads, and if, God forbid, they live with someone, then their money is going to be clawed back so that they have even less.

We need to be building affordable housing that is not built for profit, not built for the betterment of investors; it's built for the betterment of our communities so that people have safe, affordable, quality places to live.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Ric Bresee: To the member opposite: As a part of our plan to build new homes, we have introduced the idea of rewarding municipalities for meeting those housing targets, through the Building Faster Fund. I will ask if the member supports this initiative to build desperately needed homes by encouraging our municipalities.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Sure. The city of Thunder Bay has received some of that money. It's not a lot of money; it's about \$850,000. As I understand it, it will go towards infrastructure to support new housing builds. So I don't really see a problem with that per se, except that—it has encouraged a little bit of building—it's not addressing the affordability problem that we're facing. It's not addressing the issue of supplying affordable, quality housing for the people who need it.

We know that there is so much homelessness, particularly in our area—it's desperate, really. So I need the provincial government to sort out whatever its issue is with the federal government, whatever it is that's not being provided, so that the federal government sends that money to the province that can then go to the municipality, to the—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We've run out of time for questions and answers.

It's time for further debate.

1000

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise. I have a feeling I'm one of the last people who will be debating this, as we're nearing the end of our time.

I want to commend my seatmate from University-Rosedale, who has done a great job as our housing critic, not only in addressing this bill and many others, but in fighting, especially, for tenant rights in Toronto and across the province.

We know that the government obviously has a majority, so this will end up in committee. I know we're all going to work hard to improve this bill when we get to committee.

The last six years, watching the government attempt to address the housing crisis, have certainly been interesting. I think we know that it has not been very successful. We saw a 7% drop in housing starts last year. The government likes to say that they're making great gains, but actually, when you look at the numbers, that's not really the case. We've talked a lot about the fact that we believe that's because we need to have a proactive approach to the housing crisis, not a reactive approach. We've talked many

times about the need for the government to get back into the business of housing.

I've heard, throughout this debate and in question period, Conservatives talking about the former Liberal government as the government under which the housing crisis started. I would suggest that's not really true. I'm not going to defend the Liberals' record—certainly, their most recent record in creating housing. But I've been around politics for a long time. I was a city councillor prior to coming to this place. I was also involved in federal and provincial politics since the mid-1990s. I actually ran for provincial government in 1995—a long time ago. I was still in university at the time. I can remember, in the late 1990s, when that Conservative government got elected, the massive downloading that happened from the province to municipalities. Housing is certainly one of the things that suffered most from that downloading. There's lots of blame to go around. There was a downloading of the federal responsibilities from the then Liberal federal government to the provinces. But certainly, the provinces had a choice, and Ontario, under that Conservative government, decided to engage in a massive downloading to the municipalities. That's really when the crisis began, in my opinion, and certainly in the opinion of many people who look at this problem.

So municipalities already have this massive issue with funding housing. For our regional housing in Niagara, I can tell you there's an 18- to 20-year wait. You might as well not even be on the list for regional housing. That's a problem that has built up over many, many years.

You're going to hear us talk about a proactive approach to housing, which is the government getting back into the business of housing, making sure that we have affordable housing, that we cut down on speculation, that we look at things like social housing, co-ops, and that the government gets back into the business of actually working with municipalities to directly build housing. Many experts across Canada are calling for that solution and, of course, for governments to work together.

The other thing I want to talk about briefly in the time that I have is the governance review committee—the standing committee that travelled. My friend across the way was there. I was at most of those meetings, in places like Barrie and Vaughan and Kitchener and Niagara. We heard a lot from those municipalities. I have to say, while our criticism of this bill is certainly that it's not the proactive approach that the province needs, at least municipalities and the complaints that were brought forward to that committee are reflected in this bill.

We see a number of things that we heard over and over and over again as we travelled across the seven regions. The first thing that we heard, actually, that I should mention is that there is no appetite for any kind of significant restructuring of those municipalities. People have said loud and clear, from city to city and region to region, that they are interested in addressing the housing crisis directly and working with the provincial government to bring things forward; not in engaging in some kind of navel-gazing exercise, where we're forcing municipalities to

amalgamate and those kinds of issues. So that came through loud and clear. They wanted to focus on housing.

The results of the committee—there were a number of things that came through. One of them, of course, was—and we’ve talked quite a bit about the use-it-or-lose-it policy, something that we have been pushing on this side of the House for quite some time. The government, in Bill 109, I believe it was, came forward with measures that—municipalities had to process planning applications in a certain period of time, and that created a lot of issues for municipalities that were already struggling with capacity. We said that if the government is going to force municipalities to process those applications—and that’s not a bad measure, if we have reasonable time limits, if there were some developments that had been out there for many years. It’s also fair for developers and builders to have restrictions placed on them, so that when they use the resources of the planning process, they get shovels in the ground in an appropriate time period. There was a lot of resistance from the government. They are pretty captured with developers—a lot of the policies of this government have been that they listen only to developers and have come forward with the intent of making life as easy as possible for developers; certainly not for municipalities. So it’s good to see that the government has finally listened. We heard, I think in every single region and pretty much every presentation that was made, the need for some kind of measure to get developers to get shovels in the ground because of the amount of speculation that was happening right across the province, and because it’s only fair, if municipalities have to process those applications, that developers have to get shovels in the ground.

Also, with Bill 23, there was a loss of revenue to municipalities of upwards of \$4 billion, according to AMO, and that had to do with development charges, of course. When the province came forward with their building communities fund, which was about a \$1.2-billion fund—of course, that is only a fraction of the revenue that municipalities lost. One of the biggest problems for municipalities that applied for that fund is that the criteria for getting money was shovels in the ground, and of course municipalities have no control over shovels in the ground. With interest rates and inflation, it became less and less economic for developers to actually start their developments, so those started to stall even more. When you have the speculation that was happening and then you have those developments not moving forward—that was creating a real logjam. The Ontario Big City Mayors, for example, and AMO all came forward and said, “There are hundreds of thousands of homes in the pipeline. We have to get those moving. There’s far too much speculation, far too many developers sitting on developments.” I had one in Port Colborne, in my riding, that was there since the 1980s. These are builders and developers that took up municipal time and resources to put those through.

It is good to see measures. We’re going to watch very carefully how those come out in committee.

A use-it-or-lose-it law that gives municipalities more power to motivate a developer to build a development,

once they’ve been given the approvals to do so, is something that we’re certainly supportive of, and we’re happy the government has come forward with that.

1010

I’ve mentioned already the money lost in Bill 23 through the development charge issue. We see that AMO, in response to this bill, is still not completely satisfied with what the government has done here. They’ve made some move to help municipalities recover some of those funds, but there’s still an awfully big funding gap, and there are many municipalities that don’t qualify for the money.

I can tell you, in my area, in Niagara Centre—I represent a small part of St. Catharines, but most of my riding is Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne. Of the 12 municipalities in Niagara, as the governance review committee heard when they were in Niagara, in St. Catharines—they heard very clearly from Thorold, which is the city where I live, with less than 50,000 people, so they don’t qualify for that money, to get that money they lost through the DC changes back. They don’t qualify simply because they have less than 50,000 population. But they built more housing than any other municipality in Niagara, and so they’re actually asking the government for a housing target because they know they will far, far exceed it and they could use that money.

So there’s certainly an inequity from municipality to municipality in having some arbitrary cut-off like 50,000 population, and all of these municipalities, especially smaller ones, are not qualifying. That’s exacerbated because a lot of the small municipalities, of course, are in rural areas. And in rural areas, what’s the biggest problem that we heard over and over and over in the governance review committee? It’s water and sewer infrastructure. You can’t build homes unless you have that water and sewer infrastructure. Yes, it’s good that the government has finally come forward with a fund where those municipalities can apply, but there is an inequity there for municipalities that are working really hard and are actually asking for housing targets so that they can qualify for that funding.

We’re also pleased to see some changes with respect to MZO—we believe very similarly to what AMO believes. AMO just came out with their analysis of this bill. In their analysis, they very clearly state that they believe MZO should only be used in emergencies and in areas of the north, for example, where there is not a planning regimen there and so the intervention of the minister is appropriate. So we’re not satisfied; we still believe that MZO are not something that should be used other than when they’re actually needed. But we’re certainly happy to see that there is a more transparent and accountable process for them now, and we’re looking forward to looking at that in committee and possibly putting forward some amendments to that.

I see I’m almost out of time, but I would be remiss if I didn’t touch on the Peel dissolution issue. As we travelled around from region to region, certainly we brought up what was happening with Peel at the time. The government moved forward without doing their homework,

without doing their research, and created a situation in Peel where there were, at one time, 350 staff per week leaving Peel region—just on the rumour or on the legislation that was about to move forward. They don't need to stay somewhere they're not wanted or where they're not going to be able to keep their jobs, so they were leaving in droves. It created a great deal of—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member for Niagara Centre, but it is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIVE HORIZONS TREATMENT CENTRE

Mr. Will Bouma: I am pleased to rise today to speak about the grand reopening of the Native Horizons Treatment Centre that will be taking place tomorrow in Brantford–Brant, where I will be joined by the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

In December 2018, I was deeply saddened to learn that Native Horizons, located on the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, had burnt to the ground in a devastating fire.

Over the last few years, Native Horizons has undergone a transformation of its own and has been rebuilt bigger and better than before. The new facility boasts rebuilt portions of the building, including the addition of multi-purpose and spiritual rooms, and the construction of spaces for trauma-informed programming and cultural-based activities.

Some staff at Native Horizons have compared the journey of the facility to that of a phoenix rising from the ashes. I think that is a perfect analogy, as in many ways, Native Horizons' rebuild symbolizes the change that it has on its clients, by empowering countless Indigenous individuals to reclaim control over their lives and rise to overcome mental health and addictions obstacles.

Native Horizons' story is one of resilience and hope, and I am proud of the work that they have done to rebuild and the work that they continue to do in the community.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Mr. Joel Harden: We enjoy great privileges in being elected officials, and one of them is when the community reaches out to us and touches us personally.

I want to thank the students from Hopewell public school and their teacher Ms. Vorobej, who are hopefully watching this right now—hello, everybody—for touching my heart about an issue I was unaware of before your leadership, and that is the health of Ontario's boreal caribou.

These students at Hopewell public school did a module last semester where they talked about the fact that of the 51 populations of boreal caribou in Canada, 37 of those

populations are deemed not self-sustaining. What it means for our pristine and beautiful north is that the species of the boreal caribou, an iconic species for Ontario, are literally poised, potentially, for extinction. I note that Ministers of the Environment in this current government and previous have made this a priority, and I note that the federal government has said that Ontario needs to have the strategy that they deem to be acceptable by this month, April 2024.

I want to thank the students from Hopewell public school who wrote me personal notes and who helped collaborate with me in a letter to Minister Andrea Khanjin that I will be hand-delivering this morning, because that is what citizenship actually is. Citizenship is when you use your voice to speak out to people in our profession, to send a message, to care about someone you've never met.

Bless you, students at Hopewell public school. Thank you for your leadership. Let's work together to protect the boreal caribou.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to share with my colleagues news about additional funding that strengthens the safety and security of hard-working families in Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham.

Our government, with the leadership of Premier Ford and the Solicitor General, has provided \$900,000 over three years to support the hard-working officers of the Durham Regional Police Service in their efforts to combat and prevent auto thefts. This funding is part of our government's groundbreaking Preventing Auto Thefts Grant Program focused on prevention, detection, analysis and enforcement. A total investment of \$18 million over three years is being allocated to 21 police projects to collectively tackle the rising issue of auto theft. This funding equips our police services, like the Durham Regional Police Service, with the tools necessary to enhance prevention, improve investigations, and gather evidence to put criminals where they belong—in jail.

Since 2018, approximately \$15 million has been provided by our government to the Durham Regional Police Service.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I rise to celebrate National Volunteer Week 2024, a week to pause, reflect and give thanks to the many individuals who give tirelessly every day in our communities. As we honour this year's theme of "Every Moment Matters," it is important to truly recognize every volunteer who adds value to those words.

A volunteer is defined by many adjectives and actions, often including words like "dedicated," "consistent," "loving" and "welcoming". They bring hope, joy, strength and support to all of those they engage with.

1020

In Hamilton Mountain, volunteers support school nutrition programs, classroom activities, food banks, literacy groups, community gardens, co-ops, long-term-care facilities, hospitals, hospices, cancer assistance programs, community sports, neighbourhood associations, events, festivals, and so many other amazing activities.

Volunteers are from neighbourhoods, organizations and groups spanning many diverse interests. They're working together to support one another, sharing common visions and goals, and inspiring future generations to continue this important and much-needed work.

To all volunteers, I sincerely say thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your commitment to helping others. Thank you for making a difference in people's lives. Thank you for continuing to show up and lend a hand, a smile and a moment that matters.

Many sayings and expressions have been shared over the years about volunteers and volunteerism. To quote Elizabeth Andrew: "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they have the heart."

Happy National Volunteer Week.

**MEMBER FOR KITCHENER
SOUTH-HESPELER**

Ms. Jess Dixon: I wanted to use this slot to express my personal gratitude to a few people who will be known to many on this side of the House.

When I was a crown attorney, I had, I think, a very direct impact on many people's lives in a positive fashion. And in coming to office, I made the decision to leave the crown in the hopes that, as a politician, I would be able to make a greater impact than I could as a crown.

As we all know, government is a large and unwieldy beast, challenging to navigate and subject to many whims, and it can be very challenging to feel, as an individual, that you are progressing.

I've had several projects recently—all crime prevention-related, for the most part—that I've achieved some significant success on. While I was the originator behind them, I never would have been able to get them where they are without the unbelievable help and support of several key staff members in various ministries, and I want to name them at this point. From the Ministry of Education, we have Justin Saunders and Kennan Benjamins, who have been incredibly patient with me. From MTCS, we have Mauro Barone. From MCCSS, we have Kimiya Zamani; from Sol Gen, Creed Atkinson; and from the Premier's office, Shawn Beckett.

Thank you all so much. I would not be doing what I'm doing without you. I'm incredibly grateful, and I will be forever.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you and other members of the House are well aware, this government wants people

to pay more to Enbridge. They want to increase their gas bills.

In December, the Ontario Energy Board, the body that regulates utilities in this province, decided that consumers needed to be protected; that they should not be subsidizing Enbridge's expansion; that, in fact, those customers needed to be protected today and for decades to come.

Unfortunately, the government has decided that instead of protecting consumers, they will be protecting Enbridge.

This morning, in committee, we debated amendments to Bill 165. Every amendment meant to protect consumers, to protect them from higher prices, was defeated by the government. The government is determined to ensure that, at the price of consumers, Enbridge's investors will be protected down the line. This is not a defensible position on the part of the government, not one that will be appreciated by consumers when they get their gas bills in the next few months, and one that, over the decades to come, will mean much higher bills than people otherwise would have been paying.

The government needs to reverse course. They need to reject this bill that they brought forward.

MIGRANT WORKERS

Mr. Trevor Jones: On Sunday, April 14, the Leamington Roma Club hosted over 20 health service, business and support organizations to connect with more than 500 international agriculture workers from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and the Caribbean who work in Leamington and surrounding areas.

Hosted by staff and volunteers from the Migrant Worker Community Program, the annual health and information fair brings barrier-free, culturally aligned resources in several languages to provide information and assist workers to book health exams. It included on-site blood pressure testing; blood glucose screening; mental health supports; dental checks; bicycle, road and farm safety info; income tax and insurance information; health card services; and direct contacts with local police, fire and EMS personnel to raise awareness and build trust. The atmosphere was festive, with the smells of fresh food in the air and the sounds of live Latino music on stage.

I appreciate the many people who travelled great distances to support their families while supporting all the good things grown in Ontario. They're our colleagues, our friends, and an important part of our community.

I was most proud of my friend and neighbour the member from Essex, who very boldly addressed the entire crowd in Spanish. As the new parliamentary assistant to Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, he made a great impact.

Together, it was a successful event.

Have a great day.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Adil Shamji: Today I rise to express the disappointment of my constituents in Don Valley East

about this government's unacceptable lack of progress on public transit.

Mr. Speaker, the still-under-construction Eglinton Crosstown will serve my riding from six stations. My constituents see this construction and feel all of its problems and delays. This government has shared no details about the progress and its estimated completion date. My constituents deserve answers about the status of the line, the problems it faces, what's left to be done and when the government expects it to be open. And they want to know why half of all Metrolinx employees are on the sunshine list, despite the complete lack of accountability and progress.

Also in my riding are two stations on the Ontario Line. Metrolinx has promised consultation about the transit-oriented communities being built around them. However, they've been less than forthcoming about what sort of community benefits will be made available, how businesses will be protected, and they have yet to see any real evidence of employment opportunities apart from job fairs advertising entry-level and junior positions.

It's important to have housing, especially near the Eglinton Crosstown and the Ontario Line. But under the chaotic and unpredictable housing environment created by this government, my constituents are seeing rampant demovictions, unacceptable above-guideline rent increases, and appalling wait times for the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We need to make sure all the infrastructure that makes communities feel like home—schools, parks, libraries and more—are an integral part of that development.

The government must take action and provide the people of Don Valley East information about the progress of both the Eglinton Crosstown and the Ontario Line.

CAMP QUALITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is National Volunteer Week. The motto, of course, is "Every Moment Matters." If you ask my guests here today—Fiona Fisher, the executive director; Manal Al Halabi from finance; and Lauren Burke, the senior director of strategy and program for Camp Quality—they will probably say, "Yes, every moment matters." But for those of us who volunteered for Camp Quality, a free pediatric oncology camp, we would say that every moment that was given to us by the children and the other volunteers at Camp Quality mattered more than anything we could ever dream of.

A year and a half ago, I found myself numb, dealing with a new diagnosis of bipolar disorder and trying to find a path forward for myself in what would be my expected new life. Going to Camp Quality was one of the things that allowed me to really see what true happiness could be. Children who were dealing with a cancer diagnosis, and some who may not have had much time left to live, reminded each of us at that camp that life is worth living, that life is important to share, no matter how many cards are stacked against you. Every single day, those children get up and they live life with a massive smile on their

face—children, seven years old, being teachers to those of us much older.

Every moment does matter. When we talk about Camp Quality and the work that Fiona and her team do—it brings dignity; it brings a smile to the faces not just of those children and not just of their families, but those of us they've chosen to spend some time volunteering for them.

1030

BRAMPTON STEELHEADS HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Graham McGregor: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to highlight very exciting news for Brampton. Just in time for the 2024-25 Ontario Hockey League season, I'm proud to announce that Brampton will be getting our own OHL team when the Steelheads come to town. That's right; after more than a decade since the Battalion left, OHL hockey is coming back to Brampton. This is great news, not just for my constituents, but for hockey fans across Brampton.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, Brampton is a hockey town. Brampton is proud to have developed some of the best talent the game has seen, including Cassie Campbell, Sean Monahan, Rick Nash and Tyler Seguin, just to name a few. More recently, our city was proud to host Hockey Night in Brampton last August, where Brampton's passionate hockey fan base came together to raise over \$1 million for our second hospital.

This move represents why Brampton is the place to be. With our vibrant and diverse population and our passion for developing the next generation of sports talent, Brampton is quickly becoming the breeding ground for sports excellence nationwide. Not only will this move give Brampton youth a chance to play for their hometown, but it will give our city front-row seats to watch them grow into the next generation of hockey stars.

I can't wait to don a Brampton Steelheads jersey and cheer on our boys this fall.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Oleh Nikolenko, the consul general of Ukraine in Toronto. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislative Assembly today.

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: J'aimerais accueillir nos amis de l'ACÉPO, l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, aujourd'hui, y compris leur président, Denis Labelle; leur vice-présidente, Samia Ouled Ali, qui habite dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean; la directrice générale, Isabelle Girard; aussi d'Ottawa, Christian-Charle Bouchard; et tous les conseillers scolaires et les directeurs d'éducation qui nous rejoignent ce matin. Bienvenue.

I would also like to welcome, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Teresa Van Raay, Andrea McCoy-

Naperstkw, Clint Cameron and Jonathan Miller. I'm looking forward to our meeting this afternoon.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I want to take the opportunity to welcome, from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, my good friend Bill Groenheide, who's here with the OFA today.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait plaisir de vous présenter et souhaiter la bienvenue à Denis Labelle, président, et Jeannette Labrèche, deux représentants du Nord pour l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario. Bienvenue à Queen's Park. Encore, ça m'a fait plaisir de vous voir ce matin au déjeuner.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a couple of people to introduce—one is the charming communications branch from the Ministry of the Solicitor General. I ran into them in the hallway, and they're here. Welcome.

I also have energetic Eldon Mascoll to introduce. He's an iconic cultural hero and the producer of Canadian Black History Experience, which is an immersive touring show celebrating Black Canadian trailblazers.

Welcome to your House, Eldon.

Mr. Rick Byers: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome Paul Vickers to the Legislature this morning. He's an active farmer in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and he's here for the meetings of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

I'd also like to recognize today's page captain from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Bella-Sitara Singh Soares. She'll do a great job today.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the official opposition, I would like to welcome the OFA board and their staff here today and several young agricultural leaders they've brought with them. We had a great meeting with them this morning, and I hope they have many more great meetings today.

Thank you for growing our food.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I'd like to welcome to the House Dave Buchanan and Kunal Thukral, here from HCLTech. They're hosting a reception today in 228.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'd like to introduce Alexandre Beaudin, project lead, development of collective intelligence at ACÉPO, the association of French-language public school boards.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's a special day in our house. I'd like to wish my daughter Gemma a happy eighth birthday. I know she's at school, but we'll send her the clip a little later on today.

MPP Jamie West: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à mes électeurs de l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario : Francine Vaillancourt, vice-présidente, Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord, et Sébastien Fontaine, directeur de l'éducation, Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I, too, would like to introduce one of my local farmers from Lafontaine. He's also a director with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: Paul Maurice. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome individuals from First Work, Ontario's workforce development and youth employment network.

They will be hosting a networking reception from 5 until 7 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230. I hope all members can join us.

L'hon. Stephen Lecce: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais présenter à Queen's Park l'ACÉPO. Merci pour votre leadership et votre collaboration.

We want to welcome the amazing French public school board trustees and leaders from across Ontario. Thank you for your leadership in Ontario.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce Michel Laverdière, director of education for Viamonde, and Sylvie Gervais from ACÉPO. Welcome to our House.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Visiting Queen's Park for, I believe, the first time are the mayor of Orangeville, Lisa Post; councillor of Orangeville Todd Taylor, who also happened to serve as s Dufferin county councillor; and the CAO for the county of Dufferin, Sonya Pritchard. Welcome to the House.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à Anne-Marie Gélineault, Francine Vaillancourt, Sébastien Fontaine et Catherine Chereau-Sharp du Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord. Bienvenue.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to wish a happy birthday to my colleague Sarah Jama and our wonderful Trevor. Happy birthday.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I'd like to welcome to the House Drew Spoelstra, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He's here with his provincial directors, but more importantly, a number of young farmers from across Ontario. I'd like to welcome Vanessa Renaud, Angela Cammaert, Julie McIntosh, Derek Van De Walle, Jonathan Miller, Brad Snobelen and Matt Chapple.

I'd like to invite everyone to the OFA reception later this afternoon in the dining room.

I'd also like to give a warm welcome to Stephanie, who's with me today, a student from York University.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'd also like to welcome, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Bill Groenheide and Angela Cammaert. I'm looking forward to meeting with you later.

1040

Hon. Graydon Smith: I want to introduce Bruce Cazabon, vice-president, and Yves Laliberté, director of education, from le Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: J'aimerais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux membres du Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario. Les membres du CEPEO sont ici à Queen's Park avec d'autres membres de l'ACÉPO, l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario. C'était un plaisir de les rencontrer, ces gens-là, pour déjeuner ce matin. On a eu de belles discussions.

Je voulais juste dire que je me joindrai aux membres du CEPEO jeudi soir au centre Shenkman à Orléans pour prendre part aux célébrations en l'honneur du 25^e anniversaire du Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario.

Merci d'être parmi nous aujourd'hui. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

QUESTION PERIOD

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Today marks Equal Pay Day. It's the day when we mark how far into the next year women have to work to catch up to what most men had earned the previous year. When you're racialized, Indigenous, a member of the LGBTQ community, the wait for equal pay day is even longer. Women of all age groups, across the board, earn less than men.

So my question to the Premier is, will he commit to ensuring that every woman worker earns as much as her male counterparts?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: In short, yes, we'll continue to work to ensure that across Ontario.

I would say, to date, we've done a number of important things as a government to ensure women have equal opportunities to men and are paid equally. We have a pay equity commissioner we've been working very closely with: Kadie Ward.

Speaker, we've also taken a number of bold steps. To think that up until this Premier was elected, we virtually ignored 50% of the workforce in building the critical infrastructure we need—the hospitals, the schools, the bridges, everything we need in this province. Statistically, it's working. We now see a 30% increase in women registration in apprenticeships; we see a 116% increase in the building trades.

We're going to keep working to ensure that every young girl across Ontario achieves their full potential.

In the supplementary, I'll turn it over to my colleague.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, for more than 30 years, pay equity has been the law in Ontario—it was hard-fought and it was won by the activism of women from across this province. But for over a decade now, the gender wage ratio hasn't improved; women still make 87 cents on the dollar.

Closing the gender pay gap and supporting women and gender-diverse peoples' economic equality is a government responsibility.

Women frequently work in jobs taking care of people and the community—from the doctors, nurses and PSWs who keep our health care system going to the ECEs in our child care centres who care for our children while we're at work.

Will the Premier commit to properly funding the strong public services that support women's economic equality?

Interjections.

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

The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Speaker, our government will always stand up for pay equity in the workplace and for a woman's right to be paid fairly for the work that she does.

Employers cannot pay women less based on their gender. And we will continue to hold bad actors accountable, which is why we have the pay equity commission, which has been working with us very closely to ensure we close that gap.

Let's be real, Mr. Speaker. We can't go back to the failed policies of the Liberals, supported by the NDP, that chased away thousands of jobs. Do you know what that did? It forced many women to be the sole income earner for homes. It forced many women on social assistance, forcing the government to have to take care of them.

This is why we changed the name of our ministry to "women's social and economic opportunity"—because we believe in empowering women, because we believe that women can do the jobs that any man can do. That's why we've invested billions in the skills development program, the invest in women program and the Women's Economic Security Program. We've done historic changes to our child care program. We've closed the gap. We've seen more women working today than we have before. And we're going continue to do this work.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, they say they stand up for it, but women still only make 87 cents on the dollar.

If we don't have strong public services like affordable child care and health care and education, women will be left behind. If child care is so out of reach, you're not going to be able to climb the corporate ladder. If you're at home taking care of your aging parents, you can't log those extra hours to get that promotion.

Here's what I've been thinking about lately: our mothers and our grandmothers who fought so hard for these rights and services so that we and our daughters—my daughters—our granddaughters, all of us women in this chamber can have a chance. In an increasingly hostile environment for women, we cannot take those rights and services for granted.

What is the Premier's plan to protect the rights and services that women have fought so hard for?

Interjections.

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

Again, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I agree. There's so much work that has been done to see women progress. I appreciate the passion, and we share the same passion.

That's why if a woman chooses to go to work, we want to make sure we have the infrastructure in place to support that choice. That's also why we've been able to secure the largest portion of funding from the federal government out of any province in Canada, through our Minister of Education, to ensure that the portion of families who need

child care from a for-profit child care service provider can still get the child care they deserve. We've seen that this has made an impact. More women with children aged zero to five are working—the first time we've had an increase since 1976.

These are things to celebrate, and these are the things that we're doing in our government to make sure that we're bringing back our economy, through our Minister of Economic Development, attracting many businesses back to Canada and Ontario so that women are able to be at the forefront of these beneficiaries.

PAY EQUITY ÉQUITÉ SALARIALE

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to put my question back to the Premier. It's very simple.

We believe people doing the same work should be paid the same regardless of their gender; workers in the health care system expect the same. That's why front-line health care workers belonging to SEIU and the Ontario Nurses' Association have spent over a decade fighting for a gender-neutral wage under the Pay Equity Act. The Premier calls these working women heroes—he loves to call them heroes—but he has done nothing to improve their wages or work with them on the Pay Equity Act. Instead, he has repeatedly taken them to court.

Why is the Premier repeatedly taking hard-working women to court instead of giving them what they're owed?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: There's always more that we can do in Ontario, but I have to say we are doing quite a bit—like we heard, a 30% increase of women in the trades; that's a 110% increase of women in construction alone.

The OECD global report on pay transparency and pay equity stated that Ontario's Pay Equity Act punches well above the global legislative weight, having one of the most rigorous applications. Ontario was one of the first governments, globally, to articulate and legislate pay equity based on the foundational concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

Mr. Speaker, we are working to correct the historical undervaluation of jobs typically held by women, and we're going to continue to do that, and also ensure that women can choose to enter any sector they want, like STEM, like the skilled trades. We're getting it done. We're getting more women working in jobs that pay well so that they can take care of their family and keep themselves and their families safe.

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

1050

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister is right; there always is something more we could do. We could stop trying to take them to court every five minutes.

I'm going to go back to the Premier again. The vast majority of long-term-care workers and home care workers in this province are women—but the CEOs of the three largest nursing home corporations? All men. Extendicare, Chartwell, Sienna—linked hand in glove with this government—are massive corporations, spending millions of dollars to take these women, their employees and members of SEIU and ONA to court to deny them pay equity. At the same time, those three companies alone are running a gravy train that has rolled out millions in executive compensation and over \$500 million in shareholder profits—and I want to say, that was just since the pandemic—all while these women are struggling to pay rent.

On Equal Pay Day, whose side is this government on? The millionaire fat cats who profit from government contracts or the working women who simply want equal pay for equal work?

Interjections.

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

The associate minister.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: We are on the side of women—women being in the driver's seat of their economic future, women who can have the choice to be in the C-suite or to work the front line. I am so proud of what we're doing to ensure that we are fighting to see that women have any area that they want to get into.

I have been able to go down 10,000 feet in a mine, and guess who I found down there? I found women working down there. In a sector that has traditionally been male-dominated, we are seeing more women taking on the brave step to say, "I can be down in those mines. I can be working in Women in Wood," which is another group that I have been able to meet with.

Do you know what else, Mr. Speaker? We're ensuring that women have the opportunity to be in the leadership positions. We want to ensure that men will support women and give them the opportunity to take on these leadership positions.

We know that we're going to see more women in these leadership positions that the—

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

M^{me} Marit Stiles: Ma question est au premier ministre encore. Il faut vous le répéter : vos amis, Extendicare, Sienna, Chartwell, dépensent des millions de dollars pour amener des femmes sous-payées en cour pour assurer qu'elles restent sous-payées. Pendant que leurs salaires ne reflètent pas l'importance de leur travail, ces compagnies donnent plus de 500 millions de dividendes à leurs actionnaires.

Monsieur le Premier Ministre, aujourd'hui, c'est la journée de l'équité salariale. Trouvez-vous sincèrement que ces femmes reçoivent leur juste part pour le fruit de leur travail ?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I've been so privileged to be able to meet with so many strong women across Ontario. All women are saying the same things—"We can

do these jobs; we can see ourselves in the leadership positions”—especially when I meet with the amazing women who are in the care industry, who are taking care of those when many of us are having to do other jobs.

I think the support and the fellowship that we have with women in every single sector, especially our front-line workers, is paramount.

I want to talk about the number of women on boards. I think our government has done some major things to ensure that we are seeing equal representation on boards. We want to keep encouraging this trend. More women are sitting on boards than ever before—and when you have more women at the head, you have a 75% increase of the rest of the company having gender equity.

These are the things that we're doing. And we're working in these sectors to ensure that we are putting women in these leadership positions everywhere in the province.

PAY EQUITY

MPP Jill Andrew: Today is Equal Pay Day, yet the gender pay gap continues to average at 32%; for Black and Indigenous women, the gap is 42%. Arab women are the lowest-paid women in Ontario's labour market, with a shocking 47% wage gap—that's 53 cents for every dollar a man makes.

Ontario's public child care, education, social and community service providers are mostly women, mainly racialized women. They're overworked, they're underpaid, and they're undervalued.

Since 2018, this government has cut spending to community and social services by 12.1%. Since 2022, Ontario has spent the least amount on social and community services than any province in our nation.

My question is to the Premier. Is this Conservative government okay with shortchanging women?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: It surprises me that the member opposite is saying that because, in fact, we've increased the budget \$1.6 billion—and then another \$600 million again this year. A part of that is also ensuring—and actually at the forefront is ensuring that we provide supports to see that women are getting training in job readiness and to see that women have the opportunity to get skills development in different sectors that pay very well. That is what the whole fifth pillar of Ontario-STANDS focuses on: ensuring that women are able to be in the driver's seat of their economic future. That is our commitment—economic development, social and economic opportunities for women.

That's why a quote from the chamber of commerce release said, “The good news is that women's wages have grown faster than men's in recent decades....” That's because of the work we're doing in our government to make sure that we're building Ontario's economy.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Speaker, Ontario pay equity legislation passed over 30 years ago, yet it still remains a drop of water in a desert for many women. We need it fully actualized today.

Instead, the Conservatives are preoccupied with funding cuts and privatization schemes, which we know will only further the gender wage gap.

While this government's Bill 149 requires some employers to publicly post pay ranges, it did nothing to ensure these ranges are actually realistic and aren't simply perpetuating the gender pay gap.

The government continues to block the Pay Transparency Act, 2018.

Back to the Premier: Today is Equal Pay Day. Will the Premier finally implement the Pay Transparency Act, 2018, to help narrow the gender wage gap and increase women's economic liberation?

Interjections.

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

Again, to reply, the associate minister.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I'm actually quite baffled by the question from the member opposite.

If we understand the economics, a poor economy means women suffer. And if we actually look at what's happening today—we saw the federal Liberals, supported by the Liberals in this House, increase the carbon tax. Do you know who that impacts? That impacts women.

Right now, we have so many women who have to choose whether or not they're going to put their child in swimming lessons or pay their hydro bill.

Mr. Speaker, we know a poor economy is what really impacts women. We saw, when jobs were being chased away, women had to become the sole income earners for homes. That's terrible.

That's why we've made the steps. Our Minister of Economic Development has attracted billions of dollars of new industry investments in Ontario, and women are going to be the beneficiaries of that.

Supporting women and supporting our economy means making sure that women are kept safe.

We're going to continue to move forward and do what we're doing to build Ontario's economy, and women are at the forefront of that.

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

The Liberal carbon tax is one of the worst taxes this country has ever seen. It punishes families and small businesses, and it hurts Ontario's growth and economic progress. This regressive tax is unnecessarily increasing the cost of everything Ontarians need on a daily basis. We know that the people of Ontario deserve better.

That's why our government continues to remain laser-focused on fighting the carbon tax and keeping costs down. But the Liberal members across the aisle and the

carbon tax queen herself, Bonnie Crombie, are working against us. That is unacceptable.

1100

Can the minister please explain how the carbon tax is driving up the cost for everyday Ontarians?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the great member from Kitchener–Conestoga for the question. He's absolutely right; the carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything, including the food items we buy.

Let's just take a little ride with a loaf of bread—the loaf of bread that you get at the grocery store. The Grain Farmers of Ontario expect to pay \$2.7 billion in carbon tax by 2030, driving up the cost of grain. But it doesn't stop there. Businesses that mill the grain into flour and then turn that flour into bread pay a carbon tax on their operations, and then there are carbon taxes on the fuel to get it to the distribution centre and to the grocery store. And the grocery store pays carbon tax on their operations, including their heating and their cooling and everything else. It's a never-ending saga under these Liberals.

The fact is, if the federal government would understand the damage that they're doing to people all across Ontario, they would scrap the tax.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his response.

The parliamentary assistant is right; this tax is not working for the people. It is jacking up the price of everything and making life more difficult for hard-working Ontarians.

The same old Liberal story is happening all over again. Under the previous Liberal government, people in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga saw their electricity prices skyrocket, increasing by more than—get this, colleagues—\$1,000 a year. Now they are supporting their federal buddies' tax grabs.

Unlike the Liberals, our government has worked hard to make energy more affordable so that Ontario families don't have to choose between paying their electricity bill or putting food on the table.

Can the minister please tell this House how our government is delivering the support Ontarians need as we continue to fight this job-killing, regressive carbon tax?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thanks for the supplementary question from the member.

Energy is a great subject for us to be talking about; not so much by the Liberals, because they could never figure it out.

We're doing everything we can to make energy affordable here in the province of Ontario so families and businesses can survive and businesses can invest in their operations. We're ensuring affordable home heating through our Clean Home Heating Initiative and the natural gas expansion program. We're building the next genera-

tion of affordable nuclear energy in this province so we will have guaranteed energy for decades to come.

Speaker, they failed in energy policy. They're failing in their approach to the carbon tax.

We're going to continue to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

CHILD CARE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Early childhood workers are asking when they will receive the provincial minimum wage increase promised for January 2024. There has been no communication from the government about this delay. And now the Trillium is reporting that the increase won't take effect until June. This uncertainty has been incredibly difficult for workers to bear.

The government talks about empowering women, so why is the government shortchanging the lowest-paid workers in this women-dominated industry?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Indeed, we are committed to making life more affordable for mothers and for women across the economy—working with the minister and I.

This government has cut fees historically by 50% for working families, saving roughly \$8,000 to \$12,000 a year. We're also building 86,000 additional spaces in small towns and big cities to reduce the wait-lists, to make it more accessible for families.

With respect to the workers, we stand with them. It's why the government announced an over 19% increase in wages, which was opposed by members opposite. And notwithstanding that opposition, we're going to continue to lift wages every year. What we did in this deal is deliver wage parity with school board ECEs who were making more. We've now closed that gap.

We've delivered more access, increased the rate of wages. And we're reducing fees for Ontario families.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think workers would appreciate getting a date for the implementation of those wage increases.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Superior North, we are at risk of losing our only rural child care program because of a lack of qualified early childhood educators. People in my riding are desperate, especially those who live in rural areas but work in Thunder Bay. They have no idea how they will be able to keep their jobs if they can't find child care.

The government loves to talk about construction workers, but the reality is that female-dominated professions and the care of children continue to be disrespected and underfunded.

What is this government doing to raise pay rates? We've heard that they're going to raise them; tell us when,

so that people can look forward to an increase in their pay packages.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, our government increased wages by nearly 20% for ECEs. We appreciate their work. It's why we've increased the amount of spaces for them and roles for them, in addition to the salary. In addition to that, we'll increase wages by \$1 per hour per year, every year, over the course of this agreement. We have ensured wage parity—we've now moved from one of the lowest levels to the median average in the province, and we are now on par with school boards in Ontario. In addition to that, we're supporting career laddering to make sure that ECEs who want to move up to become educators can do that too, by providing fees within their college program.

Mr. Speaker, we've cut red tape for the operator. We've cut fees for the parent. We're increasing wages for the worker. We're doing all of this without the support of the members opposite.

TAXATION

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Minister of Finance.

The federal carbon tax is hurting people in my riding of Brampton West and across Ontario. It is driving up inflation and raising the price of everything, from groceries and gas to home heating. Everyone has had enough of the carbon tax, and everyone knows it is just another Liberal tax grab. Unlike the opposition NDP and independent Liberals, our government won't stop standing up for people of this province. We'll continue to call on the federal government to put an end to this regressive measure.

Can the minister please tell the House why the federal government must end this costly carbon tax?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member from Brampton West for that very fine question.

High inflation, interest rates and the newly high cost of the federal carbon tax have pushed up costs for people right across this great province.

We have heard from jurisdictions and leaders across the country and across the political spectrum that the carbon tax is making life more expensive. In fact, it seems the only ones left supporting this punitive tax are the federal Liberals and, of course, the queen of the carbon tax—yes, herself—Bonnie Crombie.

Mr. Speaker, today, the federal government releases their budget, so we renew our call one more time: It's time for all parties and all governments to come together. Let's scrap the tax and make life more affordable for the people of not just Ontario, but all of Canada.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the minister for his response.

The carbon tax is not only driving up our energy and gas bills, but also the cost of food, housing and more. Hiking this punitive and regressive tax is unacceptable to

each and every Ontario resident who is already seeing their hard-earned dollars stretched further than ever before.

We know the NDP and the independent Liberals won't stand up for the people of this province. They actually want to see the carbon tax triple by 2030.

That's exactly why our government will continue to protect Ontario workers and families from the high cost of the carbon tax, and we urge the federal government to do the same.

Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to keep costs down for Ontario families?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the hard-working member for his question.

When it comes to the carbon tax, we know that Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals have chosen to stand with the federal government over the hard-working Ontarians all across the province.

I was proud to stand beside the Premier to announce that we have extended the gas tax cut and are keeping costs down for the people of Ontario. This historic cut will save Ontario households \$320 and provide billions of savings across the province.

I think it's important that all members of this House join us in voting to make life more affordable for Ontarians. So I call on the Ontario Liberals to vote for our 2024 budget as we bring down costs for the people of Ontario.

1110

SKILLED TRADES

PAY EQUITY

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier.

Speaker, the trades provide lucrative and secure employment for millions of Ontarians. Historically, women have been under-represented in these industries. To close the gender wage gap, it's vital that we start early. We need to make dedicated efforts to recruit women into the trades, and this means ongoing hands-on opportunities throughout high school and post-secondary.

However, high schools and secondary schools have been consistently underfunded by successive Liberal and Conservative governments, which has led to a dramatic decrease in the number of available shops and an extreme shortage of qualified shop teachers.

How does the government expect to recruit women into the trades while neglecting and underfunding these programs?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'm utterly perplexed by that question from that member, who has voted against every measure that this government has put forward—measures to increase school funding, a massive capital increase which includes investments in the trades and shop class; voting against the Skills Development Fund, the largest skills development fund in North America. And what's that doing? That member and I had a conversation just the other day about SDF projects in his riding that are

working in partnership with school boards, that are making historic investments into the trades. Do you know who's benefiting? Indigenous youth, women. We've seen a 30% increase in apprenticeship registration among women—a historic increase. Stats matter—the largest increase in apprenticeship registration last year.

We'll take no lessons from the party opposite. In fact, we invite them to join us in making Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Premier: When male students and female students go to post-secondary education in Ontario, they pay the same tuition. But when they graduate and go into the labour market, the value of the credential for women is suddenly worth less. Graduate surveys two years after graduation show that female grads in Ontario earn less than male grads across all levels of education and all fields of study; after five years, the gap is even wider.

Why has this government done so little to close the gender pay gap for post-secondary graduates?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, again, I would point to a stat that my colleague mentioned—that the OECD's global report on pay transparency and pay equity stated that our act punches well above its global legislative weight.

And what are we doing in this province? Under the historic investments we've seen into Ontario, we've brought back manufacturing; in fact, we've created more jobs than all US states combined. Speaker, do you know who that benefits? Young women I've spoken to from Ontario Tech, from Trent, from Fleming, from Loyalist, all graduating into jobs—jobs in the nuclear sector providing the backbone power we need for the electric vehicles.

When I visit the north, I'm speaking to graduates from Queen's University working in our mining sector, unlocking the critical minerals; engineers that we need to support our massive automotive investments.

The key thing is that at every step along the way, the NDP has said no to critical minerals, no to mining, no to hospitals, no to those investments that are making Ontario—

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

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: This week, we found out once again how short-sighted this government is. They are putting rural communities at risk by proposing to eliminate free well water testing in Ontario and close more than half of Ontario's public health labs. You do not cut corners on water quality. It is a human right. And it is our job, as leaders, to protect Ontarians.

Hello, Walkerton. Do we need a trip down memory lane? We should all remember the horrible tragedy that sickened over 2,000 people and killed seven because of neglect. Surely the Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Affairs, who represents this beautiful town, would be fighting for the health and safety of her community and against this negligent proposal.

The government is willing to risk the lives of Ontarians to save a buck.

News flash to the penny-pinchers out there: Walkerton cost priceless, precious lives and \$155 million.

My question to the Premier: Do you understand the importance of providing safe, clean, accessible water to the people of Ontario?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Let me be as clear as I can possibly be: There is no one in the province of Ontario or in this Legislature who believes that putting well water testing at risk is on the table. I want to be very clear on that matter.

Of course, the Ministry of Health funds Public Health Ontario to provide testing services for individuals who rely on private drinking water systems to serve households. We all know that.

The ministry has not made any decisions about changes to the provincial well water testing program, including which laboratories conduct testing of water samples.

I want to be very clear: There have been no changes. People who want to get their well water tested—and there are thousands across rural Ontario, including in my own riding—take those tests to their public health unit. They get tested. They get those results. That continues.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, you can imagine that we don't have a lot of faith in this government. And your words don't match your actions. So we want to be proactive.

Does anyone here remember Roland Caldwell Harris, the supremely clever public works commissioner at the city of Toronto from 1912 to 1945? That genius had incredible foresight. The initial design for the iconic R.C. Harris water filtration plant down in the Beach was only half of its current length, but he made sure the whole operation was scalable, because he knew a growing city's consumption of water would invariably increase.

I urge this government to look ahead. Think of the three million Ontarians who rely on well water. There should be no financial barrier to clean and safe water, especially in an affordability crisis.

This Premier has no problem spending millions on doubling the size of his office, but he cannot spend the money on clean water.

My question to the Premier: How do you justify raising your office budget to \$6.9 million while cutting essential public health services like free well water testing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on her choice of language and words.

To reply, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Let's talk about action. Included in the budget, recently announced—\$1.8 billion for infrastructure across the province, \$825 million of which will go to water infrastructure projects across the province

of Ontario to help enable housing development, because we are in a housing crisis, but of course for health and safety purposes as well.

So if you want to talk action, why don't you preach what's in the budget?

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Energy.

Our government, as you know, has been standing up for Ontario families and businesses and fighting the federal carbon tax, but that can't be said for all members in this House. As we know, the Liberals, under the leadership of a woman who is now known as the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, continue to ignore constituents and stand behind their federal counterparts. The hard-working people of this province deserve so, so much better. They deserve to have more affordability, and they want more money in their pockets. And that's exactly what our government is doing.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to mitigate the negative impact of the Liberal carbon tax?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the great member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for that question.

Speaker, Chrystia Freeland is more interested in photo ops and getting a new pair of shoes than she is in helping the people of Canada and Ontario.

We're focused on relief for the people of Ontario. We are cutting the gas tax, cutting the tolls on the 412 and 418, and we're keeping electricity costs down. But the federal government continues to work against us. The whopping 23% increase in the carbon tax on April 1 raises the price of everything, including the prices in grocery and shoe stores, and heating bills.

I'm asking the Liberal members on the other side to join us in telling your federal counterparts the carbon tax is punitive and is hurting families all across this province. Stand up with us. Ask them to scrap the tax.

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

Supplementary question.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his very passionate response.

Speaker, too many people in Ontario are struggling with the rising cost of living. They can't pay their mortgage. They can't pay their rent. They're struggling to buy groceries, to heat their homes.

But the Liberal members in the Legislature—under the leadership of a woman who loves the carbon tax, Bonnie

Crombie—fail to acknowledge the devastating impact that this tax is having on so many people in Ontario. They would be happy to raise your taxes each and every year, just like Bonnie Crombie did.

Our government is making life more affordable. Our government is the only group in this House that are fighting the federal government's unjust and unfair tax hikes.

Can the parliamentary assistant please tell this House why it is time to scrap the carbon tax once and for all?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for the supplementary question.

Our government has been working hard to make Ontario the best place for business by cutting taxes, reducing red tape and expanding our use of clean energy.

Everything is getting more expensive here in the province of Ontario because of the carbon tax.

But there's an additional problem, Speaker. You see, in spite of what the federal government tells the people, their intended effect of the carbon tax isn't working; in fact, it's noted that the emissions are not going down as a result of that. So the carbon tax isn't even doing what the federal government said it was going to do.

So here you've got something that is not working, but it is succeeding in driving up the cost of everything in Ontario, hurting families, hurting businesses.

For goodness' sake, Speaker, do they not understand it is time to scrap the carbon tax?

HOME CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

Caregivers are holding our health care system together through their tireless and selfless efforts to serve the most vulnerable people in our community. The work is largely done by women. They are doing this at great personal and financial cost, and their workload only goes up as this government continues to underfund and privatize our health care system. The least we can do is provide a caregiver benefit, which will allow these heroes to get a bit of respite care, pay for the equipment they need, and provide some compensation for their time.

The Ontario NDP has long fought for a caregiver benefit and will be keeping this government's feet to the fire until we get caregivers what they deserve.

Will the government commit today to a caregiver benefit, or will I have to continue to stand up in this place to convince this government to do the right thing?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to continuously stand up in this place and talk about the investments that we have made in health care in the province of Ontario.

Just last month with our budget—some quick facts that I'm not sure the member opposite was paying attention to—\$2 billion over three years to assist in home care and community care. Why? Because we need a health care system that protects the entire system. We're making those

investments in capital infrastructure—over 50 capital builds in hospitals across Ontario, \$50 billion of capital.

Building the capital and the hospitals and the infrastructure is one piece. We also need to ensure that we have health human resources, which is why, of course, also in the announcement was York medical school in the province of Ontario, where 60% of those students will actually be studying to be primary care or family physicians.

Those are the types of system investments we are making after years of neglect under the NDP and the Liberal governments.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question was on caregivers.

Back to the Premier: We know the incredibly important role unpaid caregivers play in supporting our mums, our dads, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles, and those living with significant mental and physical disabilities in the province of Ontario. We know that more than half of the women in Canada—close to nine million women—perform caregiving work. But under this government, there are zero protections or benefits for unpaid caregivers, who make enormous personal and professional sacrifices to care for those in need and the ones we love.

When is this government going to do something to support unpaid caregivers in the province of Ontario? Please answer about caregivers.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps the member opposite doesn't understand the connection. When you expand home and community care, you are actually looking after the patient and their loved ones and their family members.

The finance minister made an investment in home care that was actually expedited in the fall economic statement and again, of course, in last month's budget—an additional \$2 billion. Where is that going to go? Those are investments that are going into community, that are assisting family members who want to care for their loved ones in their home. But they need that little bit of extra help. That's where those investments of home and community care are going to make an impact—in our communities across Ontario.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Health.

The government's budget last month came as a big disappointment to people across my riding and the 11 hospitals in northern Ontario and across Algoma-Manitoulin. There was hope that after months of advocacy by hospitals in northern Ontario, the government would come to the table with an increase to hospital budgets that reflects the realities they face. The increase that this government offered does not come close to meeting the financial needs of hospitals in small, rural and remote northern communities.

My question to the minister: Why does her government refuse to properly fund northern hospitals to meet their needs?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Respectfully, the premise of the question doesn't work, because if you look at the investments that we made in last year's fiscal, it was an average of 4% across the board in increases to annual operating dollars in our hospital sector—this year, in last month's budget, again, an average of a 4% increase in hospital annual operating.

But that's not the only piece that we need to do. We have actually encouraged hospitals, through things like an innovation fund—to ensure that when they have ideas that are going to impact and improve quality of care in their communities, they have access to additional funds. We have hospitals that have been able to utilize these particular programs to ensure that wait times for surgeries, wait times for diagnostics in their communities decrease.

We're going to make those investments, after years of neglect.

I would hope that the member opposite would look specifically at the investments that we are making in his community in primary care, in multidisciplinary teams, and see that there is change coming—

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, to the Minister of Health: This one-size-fits-all solution just doesn't work. We continue to see a health care crisis in northern Ontario. Hospitals serve geographically massive areas with limited access to resources and more complex delivery of care.

The Auditor General's report on northern health care recommended that the government implement a dedicated health care strategy for northern Ontario, but it's nowhere in this budget.

At a time when wait times are getting longer, emergency rooms are closing and more northerners are losing access to primary care, the government cannot sit on their hands and do nothing.

Minister, when will your government commit to a dedicated northern Ontario health care strategy and end inequitable access to health care in Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm going to give the member opposite some very specific examples, because I think it's important for him to have those conversations in his community.

We have had increases in internationally educated trained nurses. Thanks to our reforms, we've already seen results.

1130

The Learn and Stay grant program has now almost 5,000 students agreeing to work in underserved communities such as the north. A Learn and Stay program means that students who train in the north are far more likely to live and continue as clinicians in northern Ontario.

When we make expansions in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, it means that, again, as you train in northern Ontario, as you do your residency in northern

Ontario, you are far more likely to continue to serve northern Ontario.

Those are the concrete, specific examples that our government has been able to do, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to make sure that, after years of neglect, we finally get it done in northern Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business.

The federal Liberal government has been collecting billions of dollars in carbon tax from small businesses and has promised those same small businesses that they would receive rebates. With \$1.3 billion owed in rebates, we have yet to hear the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her Liberal Party call on their federal buddies for a plan to pay Ontario businesses back. But it's not surprising, considering her inaction during the recent carbon tax hike.

While the Prime Minister and the Ontario Liberals bizarrely claim this damaging tax hike will benefit future generations, our government knows what Ontarians really need is an end to this disastrous tax.

Can the associate minister explain how the carbon tax hike provides no environmental benefit but risks harming our economy? Will she tell us how it hurts future generations of Canadians?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member from Thornhill for such an important question facing our small businesses in Ontario.

Speaker, from the start, this Premier and our government have never been fooled by this carbon tax cash grab. This carbon tax is not only punishing consumers, but it's also punishing businesses that still haven't seen a penny in rebates. It's punishing our economy, as well. According to the Fraser Institute, this tax could shrink our economy by almost 2% and cause significant job losses.

I know the Ontario Liberals and NDP are fine with job losses. In fact, they sat back as 300,000 jobs fled this province.

But this Premier and our government have rebuilt our economy from the ground up so that small businesses, which make up 98% of all businesses, could see roaring growth and investment.

Unlike the opposition Liberals and NDP, we won't stand by as the carbon tax constantly—

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the associate minister for that response and for her positive work for businesses across Ontario.

Speaker, the Liberals in this Legislature could not be more out of touch with the struggles of everyday Ontario business owners. Despite estimates showing that every Ontario business is owed between \$2,600 and nearly \$7,000, the Liberals in this Legislature think they're "better off" with this carbon tax. And when their leader was asked if she would stand up for Ontario businesses to her federal counterparts, she said she was not going to "tell

the federal government how to do their job." That's not what Ontarians expect from their elected officials.

It's clear that the Ontario Liberals won't stand up for Ontarians.

So, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the associate minister: How is our government standing up for the job creators and the small businesses affected by this regressive carbon tax?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you, again, to the great member from Thornhill.

Our government will never stop standing up for Ontario's job creators and small businesses that are being crushed by this job-killing carbon tax.

The anti-business realities of the Liberals' carbon tax scheme are becoming clearer every single day.

We've learned three things that completely shatter the Liberals' hollow claims about their carbon tax:

(1) It has never actually been revenue-neutral for business.

(2) There is no mechanism to return carbon tax money to small businesses.

(3) As things stand, the vast majority of small businesses would still be excluded from rebates.

So much for them being better off, as the opposition Liberals constantly claim.

The hard truth is, the federal carbon tax has been an anti-small business nightmare from the very start.

While carbon tax Crombie and the Liberals arrogantly refuse to tell the federal government how to do their job while—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, we all know that access to affordable child care is a huge determinant of women's labour participation. Affordable child care in this province could add nearly 100,000 more women to Ontario's labour force. And yet, at every turn, this government has neglected and underfunded the rollout of affordable child care in this province. Every space that is unopened due to the government's lack of a funding formula or staff shortages due to low wage impacts a family, a mother looking to earn an equitable wage.

Will the Premier commit to properly funding child care so that women who can work will be able to access equal pay in the child care workforce?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: More women are working today as a consequence of our government's commitment to reduce child care fees, after they exploded by 500% under the former Liberals—\$50 a day; today, under our Progressive Conservative government, it's at \$23, on the way down to \$10 a day. That is an achievement that makes a difference to supporting women and mothers and supporting more of them in the economy. And we're going

to keep doing this. We're going to keep reducing fees, even if New Democrats oppose our historic reduction. We're going to keep increasing spaces, even if Liberals oppose our budgets, which commit to 86,000 more spaces for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to keep increasing wages—a 19% increase in year one; \$1 per hour per year, every year thereafter. That's a commitment to support our workers, our families, our economy.

Let's do this. Let's keep cutting fees for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question. The member for Windsor West.

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

In Ontario, caregiver jobs are predominantly filled by women in crucial sectors like health care, long-term care, education, developmental services and child care. Those women are often primary caregivers for their own families too. And yet, we see a disheartening lack of progress in closing the gender pay gap. In fact, the government brings in legislation like Bill 124 to suppress the wages of those workers. Frankly, women are tired of waiting.

This government's failure on affordable child care has resulted in limited spaces and long wait-lists, which we know further disproportionately impacts women in the workforce.

Speaker, when will this government get serious about closing the gender pay gap and begin building a child care system where workers are paid fairly and the system is accessible and affordable for all women?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, under the former Liberals, families had to choose between mortgages and going to work.

We cut fees, saving families \$10,000 to \$12,000 in Windsor, and the member opposite from the New Democrats had the gall to vote against a 50% reduction. This is a member who opposed a 19% increase in ECEs; this is a member who opposed 86,000 spaces, with thousands of net new spaces for Windsor-Essex families—taking one position in the House and another position in Windsor.

Why doesn't she stand up in her place and stand with affordable, accessible child care for the people of Ontario?

TAXATION

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

Across the world, governments have taken a more active role in trying to secure investments that will strengthen their economy for decades to come. Since we took office, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we've restored Ontario's competitiveness so that, once again, we can compete on that global stage.

But with the federal government's carbon tax, they're putting all of our progress at risk. Their tax is driving up costs across the board, at a time when workers and businesses are already grappling with inflationary pressures and higher interest rates. We've seen businesses and

workers come into our province in massive numbers, and now the federal Liberals want to push them out.

Can the minister explain how the federal Liberal carbon tax is putting the economic progress we've made as a government at risk?

1140

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we've been talking about this carbon tax, and what we've seen today is a fundamental difference between how Liberals and NDP raise revenue and how Conservatives raise revenue. To raise revenue, the Liberals and the NDP raise taxes. That's the only thing they know how to do. That is their go-to solution: raise taxes. But we have shown them that there is another way. We've shown them there is a right way to raise taxes—or to raise revenue.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We have lowered taxes by \$8 billion—

Interjections.

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

The opposition will come to order.

Interjection: They get all excited when we talk about raising taxes.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I need to be able to hear the minister answer the question.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's too much heckling in here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There is. Some members are worse than others.

Please start the clock.

Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

We have shown them the right way to raise revenue. We have lowered taxes by \$8 billion annually, creating 700,000 jobs. Revenue is up \$64 billion since we took office, and that is by decreasing taxes.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: The people of Ontario and, quite frankly, the people across our country have been loud and clear in their opposition to the carbon tax. It doesn't matter where we are in the province; everyone is telling us that the federal government needs to scrap the carbon tax. We know the members opposite are hearing the same things in their riding. And yet, like their counterparts, they're not moving forward to scrap the tax.

Bonnie Crombie, just like Justin Trudeau—they are all the same. They're out of touch. They're not listening to their constituents.

Minister, please tell the House why it's so important that the federal government scraps that tax.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, when businesses are choosing where they should set up shop, they look for jurisdictions with low costs. When talented workers are deciding where they should work and live and start their

families, they think about how much money they'll have in their pockets after tax. But with the carbon tax, the federal Liberals are making everything more expensive. The Liberals are jeopardizing the reputation Ontario has built as the best place to do business, and they are harming our ability to attract and retain the most talented workers who power our economy.

We are doing our part, by building homes, cutting the gas tax, creating the conditions for businesses and workers to succeed. We need the Liberals to do their part now.

Scrap this terrible tax today.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: I would like to introduce Judy and Rick from my great riding of Perth–Wellington, and Aunt Marilyn, as well, who is here from Toronto—it's an okay place.

I'd also like to recognize Judy. She has worked in the member for Wellington–Halton Hills's constituency office for 33 years, and I believe she is most likely the longest-serving staff to an MPP currently in Ontario.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I think you might be right about that.

The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, on a point of order.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: On a point of order, I would also like to welcome Brian Crews from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Beaches–East York has given notice of their dissatisfaction with the answer to their question given by the Minister of Health regarding free well water testing. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

Mr. Aris Babikian: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RIGHT TO REPAIR CONSUMER ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS, HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES, WHEELCHAIRS, MOTOR VEHICLES AND FARMING HEAVY EQUIPMENT ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE DROIT DE RÉPARER LES PRODUITS ÉLECTRONIQUES, APPAREILS MÉNAGERS, FAUTEUILS ROULANTS, VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES ET ÉQUIPEMENTS AGRICOLES LOURDS GRAND PUBLIC

Mr. Rakocevic moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 187, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2023 with respect to the right for consumers to repair consumer electronic products, household appliances, wheelchairs, motor vehicles and farming heavy equipment / Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2023 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui concerne le droit des consommateurs de réparer les produits électroniques, appareils ménagers, fauteuils roulants, véhicules automobiles et équipements agricoles lourds grand public.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to introduce legislation that protects consumers from corporate gouging when it comes to maintenance and repairs on heavy farming equipment, wheelchairs, motor vehicles, electronic products and household appliances. This legislation is better known as Right to Repair. This bill is co-sponsored by the MPPs from Timiskaming–Cochrane as well as Parkdale–High Park.

This legislation would require manufacturers of electronic products, household appliances, wheelchairs, motor vehicles and heavy farming equipment to make the following available to consumers and repair businesses: the most recent version of the repair manual; replacement

parts; software and tools used for diagnosing, maintaining or repairing their products; and tools for resetting an electronic security function if it is disabled during diagnosis, maintenance or repair.

The bill would enable our farmers to have access to repair manuals and parts for equipment that they have purchased. Furthermore, the manufacturer must also provide the repair manual at no charge or, if a paper version is requested, at a reasonable cost. It would require the manufacturer to provide the replacement parts, software and tools at a fair cost.

PETITIONS

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Recently, I had the opportunity to tour Ark Aid Street Mission's Cronyn-Warner site. I'd like to dedicate these petitions on behalf of Rob, who told us his story about finally having a place to be safe and to be warm. The petition is entitled "London's Urgent Homelessness Crisis."

In this petition, Speaker, it talks about how the shelters are running over 100% capacity on a daily basis, that there are almost 2,000 people on the homelessness registry and that there are over 300 Londoners experiencing chronic homelessness. What this petition calls for is this government to actually invest in affordable housing, supportive housing, those vital wraparound supports we hear a lot of talk about but less action upon from this government in particular to make sure that people have the supports that they require so that they can be safe, they can rebuild their lives and they can contribute to our community in the ways that they know that they can.

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

MISSING PERSONS

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to a petition being tabled today, titled "Vulnerable Persons Alert." This petition is calling on the government to push Bill 74 through the justice policy committee and back to the Legislature, which would ensure that people who are vulnerable and have gone missing in their communities make their way home safely to their families.

This bill is also hand in hand with the over 100,000 people who have signed online petitions, one calling for a "Draven Alert," which was due to the death of a young boy with autism; secondly, for a senior in my community of Hamilton. Her name was Shirley Love and she went missing, had dementia and was found days later, unfortunately, deceased. This bill would absolutely ensure that the community was aware that someone was missing in their local geographic area and hopefully bring them home safely.

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Simon to bring to the Clerk.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I had the opportunity to tour the province with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and we heard all around the province that children are struggling to access mental health supports. In my home community of London, we heard about six children that were abandoned into care with the children's aid society because they weren't able to access the mental health supports within the community. It's absolutely unconscionable.

This petition is entitled "Improve Ontario's Child and Youth Mental Health Services." What it calls for is this government to actually make significant investments to make sure that children and youth are able to access mental health care in a timely manner. We need to make sure that we're addressing the root causes of these things, not dealing with everything that comes afterwards.

This government has the opportunity to make sure that kids have the supports they need when and where they need them, not making people wait endlessly on a wait-list while problems compile and while situations get out of control. Let's think about those six kids that were reported at committee, which are actually now nine kids put into care who didn't actually need care but because they weren't able to get mental health supports.

I'm going to sign this petition on their behalf and deliver it with page Brayden to the Clerks.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I want to once again thank Dr. Sally Palmer for the thousands of petitions that she has sent to all members of this Legislature, ensuring that they hit this legislative floor.

The petition is to raise social assistance rates. We know that people who are on social assistance in the province of Ontario are living in legislated poverty. The lack of funds does not even cover the rent, and we are seeing so many people end up in food banks.

There were 230 organizations that signed a letter to the minister and to the Premier asking them to double social assistance rates. People on Ontario Works have not seen an increase in over a decade—\$733 a month, as we all know, is impossible to be able to rent safe, affordable housing, and people on ODSP are truly not much better at \$1,308 with minimal increases.

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Audrey to bring to the Clerk.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I've received many requests over the years, and in particular one group called Parent Finders of Canada. They reached out to me because they

wanted to express how important it is that adoptees who have biological parents who have deceased are able to access their heritage and their family lineage. Right now, the legislation doesn't allow for people to find that out, but our petition proposes that we give post-adoption birth information. That separates the immediate family members and prohibits the children of deceased adopted people from gaining access and knowledge of their identity and possibly their Indigenous heritage. So this petition allows them to do that when their biological parents or next of kin is deceased.

1510

I fully support this petition. I will give it to page Shylah to deliver to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This is a petition about raising the ODSP, and it comes from Dr. Sally Palmer, who has collected thousands and thousands of signatures.

In the petition, it points out that under current costs in this affordability crisis, if you're on ODSP or OW, it is almost impossible to live. It's almost impossible to pay your rents, impossible to pay your foods.

There has been a call to double ODSP for a long time, and marginal increases are just not enough. I certainly will be signing this petition and giving it to page Simon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING RED TAPE TO BUILD MORE HOMES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES AFIN DE CONSTRUIRE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Today, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa South—the amazing member for Ottawa South, actually.

Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act: The government is being a little sneaky because, yes, the Minister of Housing did put forward this bill, but it was under his role as Minister of Legislative Affairs, not as Minister of Housing. This is all they would let the minister get away with, I suppose, after what I hear were some intense cabinet meetings. And the thing is, it is literally so far from an actual housing bill that they cannot even call this a housing bill and propose it by the Minister of Housing. So that's telling. That is very telling.

The legacy of this government will be how it failed young people, families and newcomers by making the

dream of home ownership a nightmare. What a shame. What a wasted opportunity. When I'm out and about in my community, I hear from young people—I also have two young people I call my children—and they're so disheartened. They're just so disheartened; some of them leaving Ontario. Yesterday I heard prices of homes in Scotland are a third of what they are in Ontario. It's such a shame to lose our youth because we can't get it done.

The province is proposing to study the building code and the changes that would make four-storey buildings easier to build. That's great. Yet, they refuse to allow fourplexes as of right across Ontario. How does that even make sense? I think cutting red tape should mean skipping these extra steps and implementing provincial zoning standards, not relying on municipalities to do this for you. We've proposed to do this with the BUILD bill put forward by my colleague the member from Don Valley East, and what was the government's response? A bill that is not even enough about housing to be put forward by the Ministry of Housing. Where is the leadership?

Parking minimums in protected major transit station areas are to be prohibited, as well as in areas where minimum densities are required by official plans or provincial policies. So Bill 185 will eliminate parking minimums near major transit stations. Again, this is good. It's a good thing for densifying these areas. However, the Minister of Housing has still not approved the MTSAAs in Toronto. I think he's getting tired of me asking where these approvals are, but I will not be quiet about it until he approves them. What is the point of the elimination of parking minimums if these areas don't have approval yet to build? As I have said before: Tick tock, you need a clock, Minister.

Something Bill 185 does do right is to allow 18-storey mass timber construction, which is a step in the right direction, as it will help bring down construction costs and mass timber can store carbon for generations, keeping it out of the atmosphere—more of that, please, and more of removing the requirements to drywall over this cross-laminated timber.

However, changes to the rules around development charges are disappointing. Development charges in municipalities like Toronto have increased much more rapidly than property taxes, unfairly burdening newcomers and young people entering the housing market.

Limiting the rates of increases to these taxes is reasonable. It does not make sense to excessively tax construction of new housing during a housing shortage, yet the province is backtracking to allow this.

The government's proposed provincial planning statement, coupled with this bill, seems calculated to ensure that the greenbelt sprawl and real estate scandal—still under an RCMP criminal investigation, may I remind you—spreads and expands into a wave of suburban greenfield scandals. I think they could have called it the cutting environmental protections and building more sprawl act. That would be a much more accurate title.

Bill 185 would hinder efforts to speed up housing construction by promoting the wasteful, low-density sprawl that has already caused Ontario's housing shortage.

Why does the government continue to ignore the advice of experts? They refuse to follow the advice of their own Housing Affordability Task Force as well as this year's Blueprint for More and Better Housing, which was co-authored by former federal Conservative deputy leader Lisa Raitt.

Time and time again, we hear the same thing: Focus on new housing in cities and communities where there is existing infrastructure to cut housing costs, speed up construction times, reduce carbon pollution and prevent catastrophic loss due to climate threats like wildfire and flooding. Yet with Bill 185, they would effectively wipe out the protective settlement area boundaries and municipal comprehensive review processes that prevent low-density sprawl from destroying what remains of farmland and natural areas.

This government is refusing to take responsibility for building housing in Ontario. They're at risk of losing federal funding for housing and I don't think the non-housing housing Bill 185 is going to cut it. They want to pass the buck onto municipalities because they don't have the courage or foresight to be bold and build housing themselves.

The truth is many of these municipalities are made up of NIMBY councillors and groups. But hey, so is this government, so we really can't be surprised that they too refuse to act.

Here we are, six years later into this government reign, and we are no longer closer to solving the housing crisis. Bill 185 is not even a housing bill. It does not do enough. This government reverses so much, they seem to only be driving Ontario backwards.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 185. There are some good things in this bill: the use-it-or-lose-it, the reversal on the development charges. It's not too late to do the right thing, even when you've done the wrong thing, so it's good to see that.

One of the things, though, that—speaking of reversals—we may end up in a reversal on is the proposals for bonusing, allowing municipalities to bonus people who want to come to the city, usually large corporations who are looking for a corporate tax break. Of course, that wasn't allowed in Ontario because we didn't want to pit communities against each other—like Cornwall against Ottawa, or an even smaller place like Arnprior against Ottawa—that couldn't afford to bonus, that it would bankrupt them if they provided a great benefit to a corporation coming in.

And we can see that it's kind of a mug's game when it comes to—well, people call it “corporate welfare.” You have the Ford plant, which is going to have lay off workers for, I don't know, a couple of years because they're not going to get it done, but they got millions and millions and millions of taxpayer dollars.

These corporations, they're not anchored here. They change; they get sold. You get different leadership. So this bonusing is not the right thing to do, and I think what we'll

find out, once we go through this, is we'll be doing the same thing that we're doing on development charges. We'll go, “Oh, my gosh, we did this. It wasn't the right thing to do,” because we've got all these small municipalities who stuck their neck out to get a corporation that came to town, and they wanted to beat out somebody else or a bigger city, and they won't be able to afford it. And do you want to know who gets stuck with that bill? The province.

1520

So I don't understand why this is in this bill. It smells to me—feels to me like development charges—so this one we'll be driving in reverse again, which seems to be the favoured gear. R is not for race; it's for reverse. I can't support this bill for that reason, that reason alone.

I think it's a risky financial move for the province, not just municipalities. In the questions, I would like to hear why it's a good idea, why it hasn't been a good idea. Maybe it's actually just downloading the costs of attracting businesses on to municipalities and on to municipal taxpayers. It doesn't make sense.

Building more student housing is a good thing. Now, maybe the whole idea is going to try to create another income stream for universities, like foreign students, that will ensure that the government doesn't have to fund them better. I'm not sure. I think it's a good thing. I hope that's not it. But if I was going to say anything about this bill, it's that the idea of bonusing is a very risky one, financially. I think the long-term consequences of that will not be good for Ontario, for municipal taxpayers, for municipalities and, in the long run, for this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now we'll have questions to the members who presented.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll just ask on the bonusing part of it because the member is passionate about that. This House actually approved bonusing measures with respect to the Volkswagen deal, the St. Thomas deal, which was unanimously supported by the House.

What the legislation, of course, contemplates is putting that same type of measure into the authority of the cabinet. It does not give the municipalities the right to automatically bonus. It gives municipalities the right to come to cabinet and seek approval to provide that bonusing, in much the same way it was handled with St. Thomas.

So I'm wondering, with that explanation, if the member would be more inclined to supporting that part of the bill.

Mr. John Fraser: That gives me more comfort. There's no question about that. I just feel that it's a slippery slope. I guess we're going to find out how it works out with Volkswagen. This whole idea—and even when we were in government—of picking winners and losers, it's a mug's game, right? Sometimes you come up short. You spin the wheel.

So that gives me more comfort. I still think that there's risk in there. There will be a lot of pressure inside cabinet to do this, and you may get a lot more requests than you think because they're going to start to play that against us. More and more corporations are coming for our money—

taxpayers' money—and we have to be very wary about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question will be from the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: It's a privilege to stand on the behalf of the fine people from St. Paul's to speak on this bill with regard to building more housing. Affordable housing is what we'd hope it's building.

I'd like to ask the member if they feel, from their interpretation of this bill, that it's actually going to create the real, deep affordable housing that we need in our communities today.

I'd also like to ask the member to reflect on whether or not rent control is something that comes up at the doorstep, day after day, when they're knocking on or on the phone. It's certainly something that comes up in St. Paul's.

I'd also like to ask whether or not this bill addresses demovictions and illegal evictions, which are a couple of other things that folks in St. Paul's are quite disappointed about and are looking to this Conservative government to provide answers, leadership, accountability, so they can feel safe and secure in their homes and not have to worry about being pushed out of St. Paul's or any other community in Ontario.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the member for that question. On fourplexes, I'm perplexed because I understood the minister supported it and then the Premier had a different idea. It's not going to solve everything. It will be helpful. It's not going to happen overnight; it's not going to happen this week. That should have been there. I think it would have been good here.

On rent control, here's the reality: On anything built after 2018, or with an eviction or somebody leaving, rents are out of control, so there has to be some sort of throttle, and there's none.

I'll give you a story—I think I've told this story here before. I called my pharmacist to get a prescription and talked to a woman who I've known for 30 years. She's in tears on the phone, saying, "I don't know where I'm going to live. My landlord is raising my rent, and I can't afford to live there. I've lived there for a long time." Now, that's a different issue altogether, but that also involves the Landlord and Tenant Board. She can't wait a year.

It didn't cut red tape for tenants in any way, shape or form. It didn't help them. It didn't help them with affordability, and the member is perfectly right.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I have two universities in my riding: Ontario Tech and another, Trent Durham. The need for more student housing is very clear every time I go on campus, and after the introduction of our bill, I wasn't surprised to see a quote from the Council of Ontario Universities. I'm going to read it into the record, Speaker, with your permission:

"Exempting universities from provisions in the Planning Act and removing zoning barriers will help expedite the development and construction of much-needed

campus housing projects"—and that's the truth—"as well as help ensure student success."

Universities like Ontario Tech and Trent Durham are asking us to support these important measures; our bill does that. Can the member opposite from Ottawa South—and he has universities as well—tell us if they can answer the call and vote for this important legislation and help students succeed?

Mr. John Fraser: You know what? I did agree with you. I thought this idea was a good idea, as long as the idea wasn't being used as an income stream and saying to universities, "No, we don't have to give you that money because you're getting this money from doing this. We've given you this broad power that allows to you have an income stream."

I think it's fair for me to think that the government might do that. Maybe that's not the intention of the minister, but I could see it being the intention of the government at some point to say, "Guys, you don't have a problem. We gave you this power; use it. Make some money. Get some income." That's the way I see it, and I thank the member for his question.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for her presentation. I think it's important in this discussion, whenever we're discussing landlords, that we differentiate between those small landlords, those families who look after their tenants in a kind way. They're responsive, they treat them like a member of the family and they are fair, as opposed to those corporate, faceless landlords who really try to gouge people.

I believe it was the former Liberal government that brought in vacancy decontrol, which really incentivized these corporate landlords to kick good, long-term tenants out because they knew they could jack up the rent to whatever the market could withstand, and that this Conservative government has really continued that system of exploitation.

To the member from Beaches–East York: Do you have any thoughts about vacancy control?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the member from London North Centre. I was not here at that time. As you know, I came in in June 2022. I'm happy to consider anything I can to keep people housed—from an equity point of view, from an affordability point of view. We were just evicted from our constituency office. It's different than a home, but my whole team has experienced what that feels like now and have a lot more empathy in that situation.

But I'm really perplexed that the government isn't looking at bold and brave measures, as they have been told by their housing task force, as has been mentioned in this House a million times. Our own backyard is looking at provincial lands.

1530

Many cities like New York, Manhattan, they don't have downtown surface parking lots because they put the parking underneath and they build housing on those. So we are not looking at—I'm looking at the Minister of

Housing over there, when he's going to sign off on the MTSAs, things like that. There are many tools in the tool box we could be—

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I wanted to follow up on the question from the member from London because, as you know, the elimination of rent controls on new purpose-built rental housing actually was a policy of the NDP government back in 1991, when the current Leader of the Opposition was a staff member with the government.

The reason they did that was because the policies of the Liberal government, from 1985 to 1990, were so disastrous that nobody was building rental housing. So the then government, the NDP government, decided that the only way to get people back into building rental housing in the province of Ontario was to eliminate rent controls on new purpose-built housing after 1991. So I'm wondering if the member doesn't find it somewhat ironic that the NDP now are against their own policy there.

On the MTSAs, if she reads the provincial planning statement, she will see that it is very clear of what the expectations are around major transit station areas—in fact, larger than that. And you will know—it was before your time. The transit-oriented communities were passed before you were there.

But I wonder if she can comment on the irony of the NDP position now on a—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. John Fraser: Here's the thing I think we need to remember: People are getting gouged for their rent because there are no controls. It's been six years since that housing was built, and the reality is, it's too much for them—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member. It's now time for further debate.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm proud to rise this afternoon to speak on Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to thank him and his team, including the associate minister and the parliamentary assistants from Perth–Wellington and Etobicoke–Lakeshore, for all their work on this bill, which will help us towards our goal to build 1.5 million homes by 2031, including 120,000 in Mississauga.

Speaker, the former Liberal government doubled the number of provincial regulations, from 200,000 to 383,000. They added over 10,000 new regulations every year. That is an average of 30 new regulations every single day for 15 years. In 2018, our government inherited the largest red tape burden in Canada. Stakeholders like the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario warned that red tape was complicating the development process, leading to more delays, higher costs and less affordable housing.

As the other members have said, former Liberal leader Steven Del Duca admitted the housing crisis began eight years ago, under the former Liberal government. But the steps in Bill 185, combined with other actions we have

already taken, are expected to save people and businesses \$1.2 billion and over 1.5 million hours each year. I'd like to speak about just a few of these this afternoon, beginning with schedule 12, which would amend the Planning Act to help reduce the cost of new homes.

As the minister said, we're committed to working in partnership with municipalities, not micromanaging or taking a "Queen's Park knows best" approach. But we also have to recognize, as the Housing Affordability Task Force did, that some municipal leaders will always give in to NIMBY pressures to resist new housing. And no municipal leader in Ontario has resisted new housing more than former mayor Bonnie Crombie. From 2016 to 2021, the population of the GTA grew by about 270,000 people, or 5%, but in Mississauga, we lost about 1,000 people each year under Mayor Crombie.

Eric Lombardi from More Neighbours Toronto said that her record was absolutely ridiculous.

As Oliver Moore wrote in the *Globe and Mail*, Mississauga was "shrinking because of deliberate municipal policies."

Earlier this year, Steve Cornwell at the Mississauga News wrote that in 2023, Bonnie Crombie's last full year as mayor, Mississauga city council approved seven development applications, including 2,000 residential units, but they rejected at least 13 applications, which included about 17,000 units. In other words, under the leadership of Bonnie Crombie, Mississauga rejected about 90% of the housing units proposed last year. As a result, Mississauga hit only 39% of their target and failed to qualify for provincial funding through the Building Faster Fund.

Some of the developments the city rejected include new buildings near the Port Credit GO station, the future Port Credit LRT station and the Mississauga transit bus terminal. One of these was a proposal for a 17-storey building with 148 units of purpose-built rentals just a few hundred metres away from three transit lines, including higher-order transit. The local councillor said this proposal was "the most offensive." And Speaker, Bonnie Crombie agreed with this. She said it would add "way too much density," and she asked the builder to come back with a proposal that would "fit." The city planned for an area of a maximum of three storeys. Again, this is just south of a major interregional transit hub. Nearby, the city rejected a proposal for another 11-storey building with 42 units because, again, it was over three storeys and it included only 37 parking spaces where the city wanted 80.

So, Speaker, again, I want to thank the minister and his team for schedule 12, which would amend section 16 of the Planning Act to eliminate parking requirements for development near transit.

Home builders and homebuyers should be able to decide for themselves based on the market and how much parking is needed in major transit station areas. Minimum parking requirements don't take into account the personal choice of residents who might prefer to take transit and not own a car, especially right next door to the Hurontario LRT, a MiWay bus terminal and the Port Credit GO station.

I want to take a moment here to thank the Premier and the Minister of Transportation for their announcement yesterday on the historic expansion of GO Transit service on the Lakeshore line and Milton line. ONxpress is planning to run up to 18 trains per hour on the Lakeshore West line. That's an average of one train every three minutes. It's no wonder why some residents might not want to pay an extra \$100,000 for a parking spot. And Ontarians should be free to make their own choices. This is what Bill 185 would allow, and it could save up to \$50 million for a 500-unit development in some municipalities and make it easier to build and to buy new homes near transit. This was recommendation 12(c) of the Housing Affordability Task Force, which Bonnie Crombie opposed as mayor and now supports. In fact, she said that she now supports all recommendations, but as mayor, she supported only 30% of them.

Speaker, I'll give you another example: schedule 12 of Bill 185, which would amend section 35 of the Planning Act to eliminate municipal restrictions, like limits on the number of bedrooms allowed, to help add new homes, including basement apartments and laneway homes.

But some of the changes in Bill 185 also reflect the advice of the municipal partners, including Mississauga. In particular, I'm glad to see changes to sections 41 and 70 of the Planning Act, which would introduce a new use-it-or-lose-it policy. As the parliamentary assistant said, seven municipalities have reported that work on over 70,000 planned housing units has not been used over the last two years. The changes of schedule 12 will help us get shovels in the ground faster on developments that are ready to proceed.

1540

Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about schedule 7, which would refocus the Peel Region Transition Board on building homes and making local government more effective, including the transforming of services like land use planning and regional roads from Peel region to lower-tier municipalities. As the minister said, we originally thought dissolution was the best approach, but it's now clear it would have cost us more taxes in the city of Mississauga. That's why we are going back to the Peel region.

Speaker, Bonnie Crombie might be okay with that, but it will not help the people of Mississauga. It will increase their taxes.

I want to note that the government is also proposing to update the provincial planning statement to encourage density around transit and through the redevelopment of plazas and shopping malls. Some members will recall that a year ago, a local NIMBY group presented a video at the Mississauga PDC meeting that suggested plaza redevelopment would attract sex traffickers as tenants and become an actual threat to children. Speaker, Bonnie Crombie said that that was a wonderful video.

I want to urge everyone to read our proposal. It is available online at the Environmental Registry. Your submissions have to be in by May 12.

Once again, I just want to thank the minister and his team for this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

MPP Jill Andrew: I understand that in Bill 185, the government's bill around building more homes, developers are no longer required to build parking in a development near transit. I can understand theoretically where that would be a decent thing. In fact, we didn't necessarily mind that feature of Bill 185.

But listening to some constituents yesterday—or was it yesterday or the day before? When the housing critic, the MPP for University–Rosedale, hosted a bit of a conversation to get feedback from constituents and community members on this bill, we heard folks who said that there may be an ableist lens in that part of the bill. A lot of tenants, a lot of folks who live in apartments, even if they're near transit, need a PSW to come to their home, and there is no parking, or they need a vehicle in order to get groceries, or they need a vehicle so that family can visit when they come over.

I'm wondering, will there be any minimum at all of parking for these new developments to ensure that folks who need those with cars to support them can have that?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. I look at my area of Port Credit and Mississauga–Lakeshore. We have the Clarkson GO train station; we have the Port Credit GO station. Projects have been refused because they weren't building enough parking for those buildings. By removing that, that will let the market dictate.

Especially today, when we look at people trying to buy homes in our community, you can save \$50,000 to \$100,000 for a parking spot. We can help these young families buy into these communities and be able to take transit.

If we believe in protecting the environment, like we say we do, getting cars off the road would be your prime issue here. So that's what we're trying to do, get more vehicles off the road and get them into transit. That's why we're spending \$71 billion into transit to get people into transit right across Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I wanted to thank my colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore for his presentation.

When I talk to some of my constituents about what is proposed in this legislation, they have questions about what to expect in this legislation, because it's an expansive legislative piece. It covers a lot of areas, land use planning in particular. I know my colleague has a lot of experience in this particular area.

But my question, through you, Speaker, is this: Why is the government consulting and updating the provincial planning statement, and what are the key changes that my constituents and others can expect to see?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: We have to build 1.5 million homes in the province of Ontario. We had last year 800,000 people arriving here in Ontario. We're going to

have 500,000 people each year for the next 10 years coming to Ontario. We have to build homes for these people and for these families that are coming here. So we have to do whatever is possible to build homes and not listen to a lot of our community NIMBYs that are always against any type of development in our neighbourhoods. We have to build.

I look at my own riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore. We had the Lakeview Generating Station. It's 177 acres of land. It was a brownfield—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Mississauga–Lakeshore for the presentation. I have a question that was given to me by Architectural Conservancy Ontario. In particular, they've noted that, because of this government's legislation, 36,000 heritage properties will be at risk. They'll actually lose their status and protection on January 1, 2025. I wanted to know if the member has any thoughts about the protection of heritage-designated properties and what this government is going to do to help protect their status.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. To be honest, my family home is considered a heritage home in Port Credit—an aluminum-sided bungalow. Sometimes, the heritage home designation is not exactly what we're looking for. But I agree that we have to keep heritage alive in the city of Mississauga and across the province of Ontario.

To be honest, to the member: I saved the Credit River bridge, which was a heritage bridge. We've twinned the bridge right now. And I'll tell you the truth: You do not see the heritage bridge anymore because there's a bridge in front of it. So, we have to keep heritage, I agree—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you. It is now time for further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am proud to stand here on behalf of my constituents of London–Fanshawe and give some stories about what they're facing when it comes to housing in the London–Fanshawe riding. I'm sure everyone has stories, but I want to bring life to the bill, about how affordability in housing is affecting the people that I represent.

Under this bill, there is not a real commitment to affordability. When that's not in the bill, things like, for an example, when people are living in an apartment, they're renting an apartment—I have a lot of tenants who are facing relentless pressures from their landlords to move. That could be motivated by many things. Corporate landlords may want that person to move so they can increase the rent. And there is no rent control in this bill.

But landlords are seemingly willing to file whatever it takes under the Landlord and Tenant Board. I've seen those tactics. They've done tactics such as false non-payment of rent claims against Gerry, who is one of my constituents. Or they're trying to evict people on fixed incomes because sometimes they're late; they don't always get the payment right on time, and that would be John's situation. And then there's claims about behaviour,

and that's Laura. Back years ago, landlords, corporate landlords, were a little more willing to tolerate and work with tenants, but now, with this housing market and how they can just kick anyone out and increase rents, they're attacking and really putting the most vulnerable tenants at risk.

When these tenants have to move out of these buildings because they can rent for a higher cost, what happens to them? Our office is linked to an organization, and they send us, every month, affordable places for people to rent. But do you know what that list entails, what's called affordable? It's always rooms to rent. There are not affordable rental units out there, so if you're living in a place, you're forced to find a room somewhere.

In one of the ads that we get—and these are on Kijiji, and we can't guarantee any of the information because we don't know what the landlord is like, what the safety concerns are and the quality of accommodations, quite frankly. But one of the ads is about sharing a bedroom. So you can have a single room, or you can share a bedroom with someone. Now, I don't know the set-up. If there's maybe double, single beds—I don't know. But how is it that we've come to this point that people, when they're kicked out of their rental units—and sometimes it's legitimate and sometimes it's not, but in this case, these corporate landlords, I know for a fact that these people are being harassed, quite frankly. Their option is to share a room with someone to try to make ends meet, because the lowest room that I found in a single in this ad was \$600 and the highest was \$900. So it's not a good situation out there when it comes to affordability, when it comes to housing.

Quite frankly, the Landlord and Tenant Board is broken. There are wait-lists for getting hearings over a year. The corporate landlords can absorb those finances—you know, if someone stops paying rent. But the small landlord, who has perhaps another unit in their home and someone stops paying, and then their mortgage comes due and their interest rates go up, they can't wait a year. So you're really putting people who are trying to invest perhaps in their retirement, trying to make ends meet—because maybe they got a job, they're trying to supplement their retirement fund. But here we are really hamstringing them, because the Landlord and Tenant Board isn't streamlined to deal with small landlords, when there is truly a situation they need to get out of.

1550

It's the same thing with corporations, right? They need to have the streamline for tenants who are being pushed out by corporate landlords, and so that they get their fair share in court.

Part of the problem as well when we're talking about the Landlord and Tenant Board—and there are no solutions in here about rentals. We're creating rentals. Under Bill 23, the government wants to build triplexes, but under this bill, people have to attend hearings now on Zoom. If you can imagine being on Zoom if you have a hearing issue or a visual, if you're wearing glasses, if you're not technically inclined—and even trying to get legal aid.

Legal aid in London–Fanshawe—I don't know about everywhere else in this province, but it is overwhelmed, and the people who need it the most can't access those services.

So here we are with this bill, which isn't addressing true affordability. There's nothing about affordability in there. It's talking about building houses—and no one is arguing that we need to build homes, affordable homes—but affordability isn't in this bill.

The other part that's not in the bill is homelessness. My colleague and I did a tour of a homeless shelter, one of them in London, Ark Aid Street Mission. They were making a really compelling case that having a home isn't always just about owning and renting. People need shelter, and not just during the winter months when the weather is intolerable. It's all year. They told us that as of May 31, the city will fund zero day-or-night drop-in spaces in our city unless there's interim funding from the provincial and the federal government.

They're saying that what happens is, if they have to shut down the facility, they have to lay off 100 employees. Those employees don't stick around for the next season, when the weather is intolerable and they have to open up the shelter beds again. It causes all kinds of red tape, so to speak. We need to keep our shelters open 365 days a year, all throughout this province, until we get the housing crisis under control, where people can actually afford homes to transition to.

Not everybody has a job. Many people are on fixed incomes, and we need to make sure that they're not on the street. These are solutions that we need to be building into our housing plan.

The other piece of that is supportive housing. I have constituents, the Rodgers family—I've talked about them many times in this Legislature. They have two adult sons that have developmental issues, and they're in their late thirties, early forties. The parents, however, are in their mid-sixties, pushing 70. One of their sons finally was placed, and they had to wait like 35 years to get some supportive housing for one of their sons. They still have one son that they're pushing and trying so hard, whether it's Participation House, whether it's Community Living, to try to get their son placed in a supportive home.

And that's not in here. I think we need to rethink the kind of definitions about housing. Absolutely, home ownership and rental needs to be in there. Affordable homes geared to income need to be in here. Co-operative homes, co-ops, need to be in here and supportive housing, like Community Living. We need to integrate them into our housing plan, so that the Rodgers family—the parents that are aging—can have some peace and comfort, knowing that both their sons are in homes that are safe and they're getting quality services, quality care. But this is not what's happening in the province of Ontario, and I think we forget this.

As much as there are some good things in this bill, like development charges are being somewhat clawed back—that's a good thing—like building minimum parking spaces when they're building apartment buildings—but as

the member from St. Paul's pointed out, and I think the member debating at the time didn't quite understand what the information she was relaying was, we need minimal parking for people who need their vehicles because they have disabilities. If you need to have someone come or you're a PSW and you need to go to that person's apartment and you have a vehicle, you need a place to park. It just makes it easier to access the client. If you're somebody who has a mobile device like a scooter or wheelchair—yes, it's great to build those public transit hubs and have apartments there, but they might need their vehicle to get around. That was the point that the member from St. Paul's was making.

I think we need, again—maybe in committee is when the discussion will happen, when we can make sure that we tailor these bills. There have been many bills we've had to reverse. Because of poor judgment on the government's side, we've had to reverse those things. It's good that they're reversing them, but there's so much more that I think we need to do when it comes to housing.

This housing piece is needed, absolutely: multiplexes, high-rises, single-family homes, a mix of it all. But we have to include, for the most vulnerable, shelters, geared-to-income housing, co-operative complexes and supportive housing for our most vulnerable citizens in this province of Ontario.

I hope that in committee, we will get a plan to actually incorporate and integrate those things, because we don't want to leave those people behind. We don't want to leave people like that behind because it just creates more havoc.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Mr. Ric Bresee: After 20 years of municipal experience, one of the things that my municipal government, and I know a number of other municipal governments, had approached this body about was fixing the Line Fences Act. After all these years, we are finally getting to fixing the Line Fences Act, dealing with that outdated, burdensome piece of legislation.

Can the member opposite please explain why the previous Liberal and NDP government didn't do any of that, and if they are going to actually object to modernizing this and prevent improving the tools that the municipalities need to continue their services?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm really glad the member brought that up, because there's always property disputes everywhere, especially, I think, in rural and northern Ontario, where these issues really don't make good neighbours and they clog up the court system. Yes, putting that language forthwith—I'm going to pat the government on the back for that, but that's not really—this Line Fences Act absolutely will affect certain people in our province, that they're going to find relief on that, but you don't live in fences; you live in houses. You build fences maybe on your front lawn—it just depends.

That's fine, but we don't live in fences. We need to really focus on, as I was talking about, the most vulnerable population to incorporate into these bills that we bring forward on how to address housing.

Yes, I'm glad you guys caught that and you're fixing it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for an excellent presentation on Bill 185 about the government's building new homes.

I'm still stuck on that piece around a person looking on Kijiji to rent a bed in a room—multiple folks, strangers, living together because they cannot afford a one-bedroom or even a bedroom, theoretically.

To the member for London–Fanshawe: Can you express to me how important it is, how important housing is, to someone's ability to find work, attend school, have a fulsome life? Can you express in this Legislature if you think any one of us as elected MPPs would be able to do this job if we were bunking in a 200-square-foot room or less with a stranger, possibly not even with access to our own toilet seat?

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Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I thank the member for St. Paul's. This is what's really happening out there when we're talking about affordability.

I'm going to quickly talk about international students, who are living, literally—if you watch, I think, the Fifth Estate, there were five on the main floor and then six on the lower floor. In some cases, they actually rotate. They shift. So you share a room with someone else, and the person works nights and you work days. Literally, that's what is happening because it's so precarious when it comes to housing.

Now, imagine, if you didn't have a home, all those basics that the members talked about. But one of the things that London has actually pointed out—very important; very smart—is that health care needs to be tied to housing, because if you don't have housing, your health care also suffers, along with your economic ability to get a job or go to school. So health care and housing are two things that are so important in this province, and we're not doing a great job if we don't include housing that's affordable for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much for the debate, my colleague, and the questions from both sides. I just have a question: When we talk about housing, there is one portion of that, affordable housing, which is the government subsidizing to offer the people who don't have a specific level of income. But when we talk about housing in general—we are in a crisis—we are talking about all kinds of houses. We are talking about middle-class houses. We are talking about condos. We are talking about townhomes. We are talking about all kinds of houses.

When we have houses, there will be more percentage of affordable houses of that amount. So can you tell me why are we getting into—if those people don't have the income, this is not a housing issue; it's a social issue. It needs covering from the government, but not in the housing bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think I take a different approach, and I think I look at it differently. Housing has multiple facets: people who are working and can afford to purchase, people who are working and can afford to rent, and, yes, social benefits.

However, when people are on social benefits or people are on fixed income like CPP, they may never be getting off social benefits. So as far as I'm concerned, over the years, governments should have always been in the business to be building housing that's truly affordable and geared to income, because we wouldn't have the homeless situation that we're facing now. We wouldn't have this kind of sharing a shift in a room to get a sleeping bed. It's really happening.

I think what happens is that sometimes, when you're not in that situation, you can't see yourself in that position. We have to listen to the people who are telling us what's really going on. Absolutely, I want my kids to afford a home. I want your kids, everybody's kids, to afford a home. But I don't want people sleeping on the street. I want shelters. I want affordable housing—when it comes, geared to income—and I want to make sure we have supportive housing for the most vulnerable in our society.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for her very passionate debate this afternoon. I also have heard from parents who have adult children with developmental disabilities who are living in supportive housing, and we're now seeing those homes being privatized. The pay, the fees, the way that's being delivered is changing, and parents are terrified. They have worked their entire lives and advocated their entire lives to be able to get their children in this supportive housing, and are now seeing a government that has failed to provide the necessary funding to ensure that these homes can stay open.

So maybe the member could just expand on her thoughts when it comes to these families who are so desperate and being left completely out of all legislation.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I remember back when the Liberals talked about different families getting together and purchasing a home together. That was one of their solutions.

Miss Monique Taylor: The Golden Girls Act, wasn't it?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, that would be for seniors, but this was actually for people who had adult children with developmental disabilities. They would buy their own house and they were going to buy it together, and then they would hire personal support workers and DSWs, developmental social workers, to look after. That really didn't take off, and I think that there's a reason why: because you need to make sure that these policies are built into every housing plan that we have.

If you had an adult child with a developmental disability and you were 70 years old, you would want to make sure that your adult child had a place to be that was safe and was being looked after. That's just a basic thing I think

we all would want. So it needs to be fixed. Supportive housing needs to be fixed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments. My question to her really is this: Recently, the former Ontario Liberal leader, Steven Del Duca stated, “Frankly, this housing affordability crisis began when I was still sitting at the provincial cabinet table. The first inklings, the first hints that we were going to have this challenge spiralling out of control began in 2016. That was eight years ago, and we were in a low-interest rate environment at that point in time, but the challenge was already beginning, and why? Because we have a fundamental supply problem.”

My question to the member opposite is quite simple. With a Liberal Party in power for 15 years, supported by the NDP, why did they sit on their hands and do nothing until we started this discussion in the last election?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, I don’t necessarily agree with that summary of what the member said, but he has a right to his opinion.

But I can tell you this: When I first got elected, one of the things that I presented, and that was over 12 years ago, was a bill asking the Liberal government at the time—and I would have done it with the Conservatives as well if you were in power at that point. It was to make sure that we actually funded housing stock that was already in place, which was rent-gear-to-income, and make sure it was still viable, because all of it was not being looked after. It was built 25 or 30 years ago and it was falling apart.

So that’s another piece in legislation. If we’re going to be building all this housing, we shouldn’t let the stock that we have now deteriorate. It needs to be maintained so that we can get ahead of the problem, and that’s part of the issue. We’ve got to stop worrying about the politics and we’ve got to get ahead of the problem.

Back then, people didn’t look to the future. They were so comfortable because interest rates were low and things were affordable. No one thought about how we keep this going. How do we mitigate affordability in our province?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much. It’s great to actually be here. Before I kick off my speech, I just started thinking to myself, we all stand here on behalf of our constituents and we all do, I believe, a very good job. Regardless of what side of the ideology or the side of this assembly, everyone is here, I believe, for the right reason. But I got thinking to myself—and it would be interesting, if you all got to thinking to yourselves as well—when you deal with government, is it easy or is it difficult? The Minister of Labour just had a little laugh—because it isn’t easy. It’s never easy trying to figure it out. Regardless of if it’s a corporation, if it’s our kid’s high school or if it is with any level of government, it’s never easy. That’s why we’re here. We’re here to make it better and to streamline it.

My colleague who is the former crown attorney in Kitchener will often remind us that some of the things we

think are super easy, an immediate crackdown on this—and she will say, “Well, you know, from the court’s perspective, I don’t know if this will work.”

So what I like about this piece of legislation, and especially when we talk about red tape reduction—for years, I always thought it was the most boring thing to debate, but it is one of the most important things for us to debate because we’re able to litigate here on the floor of the assembly what we see is working, not just as members but as citizens and as people who interface with our own government that we work within from day to day. I think that’s really important, and it’s great that we’re bringing forward yet another piece of legislation with respect to red tape reduction in order to make sure life is easier for the people of Ontario, including us and our families and our children. I often will think about that.

Now, why I like this piece of legislation is because I come from a high-growth community, and in order for us to continue to build—and yes, we’re talking about homes. In order for us to build homes and to keep up with the infrastructure requirements, we need to make it easier for municipalities to interface with the province, we need to make it easier for ministries to interface with one another, and we need to make it more simple for those companies who are doing the work that we’re asking them to do to keep up with the housing demand to get that done.

Of course, we’re a community of great agrarian roots. We have been a community that had been led by the farming industry and agriculture until we, over the past 20 years, have become more of an urban area inside the city of Ottawa. What does that mean? It means we need new schools. It means we need new roads, bridges and transportation. It means we even needed an interchange on Barnsdale at the 416, which I was excited was in the budget.

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But it also means we need new hospitals. It means we’re bringing in new Canadians, people from different parts of Canada. Of course, with that, we need to interface with our local elected officials but, more importantly in some instances, the bureaucracies behind them.

So this red tape reduction bill is aimed at Ontario’s growth. It’s aimed at the growth happening in Ottawa. It’s aimed at the growth happening in my own community of Barrhaven. The goal is to protect important regulatory reforms that have been made over time for workers, for the environment and for the local communities that they impact. It’s designed to make life easier and more affordable, whether it is for the consumer or the producer.

We know that this piece of legislation, if passed, is going to save Ontarians 1.5 million hours of work, either on their home computer or at the office. It’s going to save us \$1.5 billion. That’s why it’s important for us to litigate this, but it’s also important for us to discuss it with Ontarians so they know the changes that are coming that will serve the interests of them and their families.

It will become an important environmental investment for growth and job creation in the province of Ontario. As I said, it will create lots of safety measures that support

both the economy and the hours people are putting into it. It's about simplifying forms and creating processes that make sense to people. It's eliminating unnecessary delays, and it's going to make it, as I said, easier for us to work with governments.

We're taking action on priority projects. There are so many things each and every day our ministers are out doing, our Premier is out doing. We're calling it "getting it done." In order for us to get it done, we have to make it easier to do it. That's really exciting for me to see the projects that we're working on are going to see reductions and eliminating delays and extra costs associated with dealing with government.

I think we can all agree that if we want to see highway projects like the 413 or the 174 or any other highway project in between get built, we want to make sure that the taxpayer is paying as little as possible in the grand scheme of things but also to make sure it gets built quickly in order to get them onto those said highways. I think it's critical that in order for us to meet our competitive demands in this province and to attract investment, we continue to boost the needs and to be flexible while at the same time improving oversight and streamlining regulation.

Let's be clear, sometimes when we're dealing with a red tape reduction bill, we're actually making oversight stronger. That might be a surprise to certain people but having been a minister myself, sometimes it is actually removing a layer that is hindering and not necessarily reporting up to the people it needs.

I see the Minister of Mines saying the same thing because he knows it's very critical in order for him to be hands on, in order to get (a) the investment into mining extraction and at the same time making sure that he is working with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and other community leaders to get those mines built in a proper way. I think that that is absolutely critical for us.

One other thing that I thought was interesting with this piece of legislation is something that I started working on, if you can believe it, in 1999, when I worked for John Baird. It was foreign-trained individuals coming into Canada as doctors and nurses, ready to actually support the health care system in the province of Ontario, yet, because government being government and working with the college of physicians being as it is, it was almost impossible to get these well-trained physicians and nurses into our system. This piece of legislation is going to make it easier to conduct that process and to register them quicker. That means more nurses and doctors in our health care system across the province of Ontario.

I can tell you, there's not a member in here who hasn't had that complaint, who hasn't raised that complaint that there are not enough nurses and doctors in the province of Ontario. We agree. We're working on it. I think we can all agree that we're working on it, but I think we all can agree that if health care is concerned, we want any abled and trained individual that can do the job in the job. There shouldn't be barriers to that. I think that's one of the great things that are happening here.

I know the Minister of Labour is here. He's very intent on paying attention to this debate, and he knows that in order to support his workers and the companies that want to employ his workers, we need digital transformation in order to support them.

I noticed that we're going to be changing the systems in order to create a better environment for documents via email. That's going to save people time, it's going to save people money and it's going to put people back to work. That's what we really want in Ontario, is people who are working, especially in the fields that they desire, especially in health care, but also making sure that we're saving them money.

I think that one of the other key areas, when I was a minister, that we focused on and we really cared about was trying to create wraparound services, trying to make sure that ministry A, ministry B and ministry C worked together. That does not necessarily happen all the time. Sometimes there is a siloed approach. Well, one of the things that this piece of legislation is doing is working to be more predictable and more transparent with the public as it pertains to the projects that they're working on. I think that's long overdue, and I congratulate the ministry here for putting that together.

Just finally, one thing that I care about that we should all care about, because I can't tell you how many of you over the years have come to me about a festival that needed funding or an arts program that wanted funding or a sports organization that wanted funding—it's the Transfer Payment Ontario system and that network, and it's called TPON. We are right now going to be able to consolidate that for better service for not-for-profits and for charities. We all know that charities and not-for-profits are having a more difficult time finding volunteers. They're having a more difficult time raising money. The government should not be in their way. The government needs to ensure that there is a better process for them, and we're going to be doing that as a result of this legislation.

I'm very proud to stand here and be part of this debate. I know there are many questions, and people in this chamber will offer many different solutions to the variety of issues that they deal with in their different communities across the province, but I'm delighted that we're talking about it because the reality is, we're all here for the same reason, and it's to make government better for the people that we all represent. We all have different views and values. That's okay, as long as our number one goal is to make sure we get something across the finish line that is better for the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I thank the government member for her speech. It's always a pleasure to work with her in this chamber.

Yesterday, I met with a constituent who was a PSW, and she was very concerned. She had just retired as a PSW, and she said that she is very, very afraid of her future as a renter, as a tenant.

All of the initiatives that the government tables here always have to do with the purchase of individual homes, but they're not willing to take action in terms of rental. Now, I know what the response is going to be, that they've had many rental housing starts, but it's a chicken-or-an-egg thing, because with rents at \$2,500 to \$3,000, yes, there's an interest in building more units, but that's actually the problem. Why are this government's initiatives when it comes to housing not willing to visit rent control? Because people like this PSW just don't have a future to wait for when it comes to their housing.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Your constituent who was a PSW—I applaud them for doing the work. I know during the pandemic it was quite difficult. I have a cousin who is a PSW, and my gosh, they just stood up there every single day and did the work that they were required to do. I find it very disheartening that at a time where she has a bit more flexibility in not working in such dangerous conditions, that she feels that—she's not unsafe, but that she is insecure because she doesn't have a place that she can afford.

I've got to admit here, and I think we all do, that the prices, whether it's home ownership or rental, have skyrocketed. But the answer to that is not more red tape, and with respect, I think we'll have a philosophical disagreement here. The answer to that is more supply, and that's what this legislation is attempting to do. It's not going to be done overnight, but we do need to increase the supply of housing and renter facilities across the entire province, apartment buildings across the province, in order to meet that demand. That's the only way it's going to come down.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: What an excellent presentation from the member from Nepean. I thank her for her public service.

I'd like the member, though—Speaker, through you—to tell us more about the Building Faster Fund and what the government is doing to encourage municipalities like her riding and surrounding ridings to address the housing supply crisis.

1620

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you to the member from Whitby. He has been a long-time friend and colleague. I have to say, I'm always so impressed when I'm with him because he does take this chamber very seriously, but he knows all of the issues that are hard that we need to discuss. One of the things I think he could agree with, because Whitby is very similar to Barrhaven, where it is fast-growing, very attractive to young families—it is in the city but not quite downtown so it provides us with a great degree of flexibility, and we get to have it both ways.

I'm excited about the Building Faster Fund, the BFF. We were recently the host in Ottawa to the Premier where Ottawa received \$37 million. We were excited about that. Because here's the thing: Growth needs also to pay for growth because when I build that house, it means I need to build a road, a school and a health care system as well, and that's the reality of what the BFF does.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member from Nepean for her presentation.

One thing that we have noticed when we take a look at Bill 185 is that there seems to be a lack of mention of Ontario's heritage assets. Architectural Conservancy Ontario has noted within all their meetings with government members, as well as opposition members, that 36,000 properties are currently at risk and that Ontario is the only province without a grant program to encourage the conservation of buildings of significant heritage value. They have called for the government to increase the existing Ontario heritage property tax relief program. It is useful, but it has limited impact on developers.

I wanted to know if the member from Nepean had any comments about heritage properties and what the government should be doing in order to make sure that we are preserving those wonderful properties that we have in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was a phenomenal question. I'm a former heritage minister and it really makes my heart sing that people are talking about heritage in the province of Ontario, because I firmly believe that if we lose our heritage, then we won't know in our future what we've had. Especially with so many people coming to the province of Ontario from other parts of Canada and other countries, we want to make sure we are preserving what we have.

And I can say that when I was heritage minister, we had unprecedented investments into that ministry and into the sector in order to do just that. So there are programs in place that do allow it. I know that Minister Ford, who now has the heritage file, has been working diligently across the province in order to support that. But I would be happy—I know the debate doesn't allow us to have a back-and-forth exchange, but I wouldn't mind sitting down with you over a cup of coffee—actually I drink tea—and we could engage on some of your ideas.

I don't actually support more taxes. I think that we're already taxed to the limit. We just have to figure out how we could better allocate supports that we already have.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the member for Nepean. I really enjoyed her dialogue today and her perspective is interesting, unique and she's experienced. She has lived it.

Our government is delivering on a commitment to cut red tape, to really do it, but businesses in my riding, like Bradt's Butcher Block in Leamington and Abraham Orthodontics in Chatham-Kent-Leamington, are under extreme pressure from a competitive global market, just like businesses in Nepean. And the outlook, economically, is fragile around the world.

So can the member please explain what's being done to help our businesses remain competitive?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you. I know we did a lot during the pandemic in order to digitize a number of

different opportunities. I know the ministry of small business is doing a lot for entrepreneurs.

But let me speak directly to your constituents who I believe—if the breadbasket of Canada is in Saskatchewan and different parts of the Prairies, certainly the greenhouses are part of your area and they do great work. A lot of food production is happening there. We have to look at, for them, environmental supports. We have to look at business supports. We have to look at what is happening internationally because they are highly dealt with with trade. We also don't want to have your tomatoes be overlooked on the grocery bench because Mexico is taking the market. So we have to make sure that energy prices are low, that we have red tape reduction and that we're looking at the environment—and I see our environment minister here, and she will be right on that, I'm sure.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you once again. I was heartened to hear the member from Nepean's comments on heritage properties because heritage properties are really a key economic driver. They contribute to the character and the quality of our neighbourhoods. They provide insight into our history, and really promote artistry within our communities as well.

But I did want to specifically note with the member that there are 36,000 properties that are at risk because of this government's actions, and that all of these 36,000 properties will currently lose the meagre protections they have on January 1, 2025, unless this government acts.

Does the member have any advice as to how they will be advocating to make sure that these properties will be protected in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you. I'm glad that he mentioned the economic benefits, because between heritage, sports, tourism and culture, you are looking at a \$75-billion suite of sectors. It might have increased over the past two years.

When you look at that, you think that's actually bigger than the GDP of Manitoba. It's bigger than mining, forestry and natural resources all put together, and it creates tens of thousands of jobs right across each one of our communities. So it's really important that we look at, also, the economic aspect as well as the cultural aspect of our heritage properties.

I'm happy to take his concerns directly to the minister. I know that the Minister of Heritage is diligent in his work. He knows that he has to work with his organization, the Ontario Heritage Trust, who would be a great advocate for the member opposite if there is anything in his particular community that he wants to support, but I think that would be a start, and I thank him for his question.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank my colleague for her comments. I know she brings a great deal of experience to her role now and has served in many different portfolios.

She made comments about the number of hours that this legislation will help to save our residents and how difficult

interfacing with government is. I'm wondering if she can elaborate on that aspect of the legislation and how she sees that that will be a benefit for the residents of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member has 20 seconds for a response.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, that was a great question. He's a strong member. He doesn't have as many years here, but he's got as much wealth of knowledge as I do, I could say. I think it's great that he talks about that. Every one of us has a computer. Some people are just new to computers—seniors, my husband—and it's easier for them—

Mr. Will Bouma: Are you calling him a senior?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, well, he's plus-55, so hi, Joe.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a privilege, always, to be able to stand in the House. Today, I think this is definitely a topic that is very concerning to my constituents, to the city of Hamilton, to so many folks. When I'm out in the community, all the time, this is the number one issue that I'm hearing from people: the lack of housing and the concern over young people not being able to afford a house, the concern over affordable housing on its own, supportive housing—I hear that often. I hear from families who are concerned greatly, and rightfully so, because they have no idea where their young adult children are going to be able to live out their years and be able to start that family and bring grandchildren into the family because of the affordability measure. And this, unfortunately, is not in this bill. If the government would have taken the time to actually listen to community, I think they could have done a better job in ensuring that affordable measures were built into this legislation and ensure that people have a place to live.

As I'm sure you have seen, Speaker, there are tents everywhere throughout our city. They're in our downtown. They're at our city hall. They're on our waterfronts. They're through our escarpments. They're in our parks. Everywhere you turn, there are people panhandling on corners, there are people sleeping in bus shelters. Really, anywhere where they can find space to hopefully stay out of the wind, they're there, and that's not okay. That is not the Ontario or the Hamilton that I grew up in. I have never seen anything like that, as I'm sure many of us have not, but now it's a common occurrence. It's unfortunate when our young children are seeing this and they think that it's the norm because this is what they're growing up with. It's not the norm. This didn't have to be this way. I think that the government could have done better to ensure that the legislation that's put forward—once again, on another housing bill—would have done better to ensure that we did have the ability to build that housing.

1630

Last night I had the privilege of visiting Halam Park co-op housing in my riding. I believe, as you were a city councillor, it was in your area. That is a wonderful example of housing that was built in wartime, for soldiers and their families. The 1970s, I believe, was when it was

built, and then 20 years after that, it became a co-op house facility.

The people who come together to ensure that the gardens are done, that there are people active constantly, there are events, there are supports, that all of the wonderful amenities that come with living in co-op housing—Halam Park is a shining example of that. Last night, I had the opportunity to thank the volunteers who really do make Halam Park a wonderful place to live. There were children right to one woman, Shirley, who has lived there for 48 years. Her husband, Hugh, who is now deceased, was part of the enactment of bringing this into a co-op facility.

There is great pride in that community, and that is something that we could mimic. It's an example of how we can do better. I don't think there is a better example of good community housing than co-ops, and we never see that in the legislation that's brought forward.

One of the things that I'm still waiting to see is the definition of affordable housing. Affordable for who? Where does that come from? That is something that is always missed here, but yet they've made sure that they took out some other wording that is old school. They could have updated that as well.

This bill will not help you find a home. It will not help protect you from illegal evictions. It will not bring rent control back into the picture.

An offside conversation, talking about rent control: We have members on the government side who say, "Well, the market has gone up, and my mortgage has gone up. The rent doesn't reflect that." Well, that's a different story than just taking all rules away from rent controls. When we see apartments that were built after 2018 have zero rules when it comes to rent control and people who have their rent increase by \$3,000 a month—who can afford to do that? I couldn't afford to do that. Nobody in this place—mainly—would be able to afford a \$3,000-a-month increase. This is the problem that we're seeing when we have bad legislation put forward.

I have to say that it's good to see some of the reversals that are in this bill because, once again, we have seen this government who has pushed forward legislation that municipalities and other folks were screaming, "No, no, no. This is bad. This is bad"—like Bill 23 and development charges for the cities, Bill 109 and application fees. I think there were a few more other reversals that are in this bill to reverse legislation that was previously put forward by this government that people had been speaking out about. If there's anything that we should be doing as leaders in our community, it's consultation. With consultation, they would have heard this feedback of how this would have hurt the city. So I'm happy to see those reversals in here and making sure that municipalities do have the funds to build infrastructure and that municipalities are not on the hook for developers when they don't keep up their timelines because that's not something that is in the control of a municipality and yet the government thought it was a good idea at the time to enact that.

I want to quote the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. They're happy to see that walking back of Bill 23

because that undermined it, "They do not, however, replace the need for a comprehensive conversation to update the provincial-municipal fiscal framework to support sustainability, affordability and economic prosperity." They have a lot to say to ensure that we are building for the future, and I think this bill misses it.

The interesting one was OREA, which is led by Tim Hudak, who is the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. They say they're happy to see that there's some recent progress on a couple of solutions, but "we are disappointed that two key recommendations by the province's own Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF)—strongly supported by Ontario realtors—have not been included in" this "bill. We need to build more homes on existing properties and allow upzoning along major transit corridors if we are going to address the housing affordability and supply crisis in our province."

The affordability task force, which was put into place by this government, is not seen in any of this. The fourplexes that the Premier refuses to implement, probably because Bonnie Crombie said something about it so that just made it all wrong, but this has been something that everybody has been calling for. This isn't a four-storey building. Fourplexes are not four storeys in the middle of residential. It's a bigger house, quite frankly, with units inside that house that could quite easily be transitioned into communities and, unfortunately, this Premier doesn't see that being necessary, but would provide so many people with the opportunity of an affordable place to live, within a community, within walking distance to the schools and the local shopping marts and places where families need to be in that community.

Whether there's good things in here or not, I think the bill misses the point on so many factors.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions and answers.

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member for that presentation. The member stressed the importance of consultation, and as we leaf through the legislation, I'm wondering if the member can express if they feel that folks who are unhoused were consulted, if they thought that folks who are in fear of experiencing demovictions were consulted? Were those fine tenants in our communities who are being abused by abusive above-guideline rent increases—which I tried to ban, by the way, and the government said no. Are those folks being consulted?

I guess I'm wondering who you think has been consulted by this government on their housing bills, whether Bill 23, Bill 185—heritage categories or criteria are up for grabs. Who is being consulted by this government?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Toronto—St. Paul's for that really important question, because if you look at the bill as it's written, you would not see people who are underhoused or people who are struggling for that affordability piece or supportive housing. You don't see them reflected in any of the bills.

What we have seen reflected is developers and builders. We're now starting to see some municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario being reflected,

but that's from blowback, not really consultation, right? That's blowback of, "You did this wrong and you need to change it because it's hurting municipalities." It's raising property taxes in municipalities, and that goes against all of the no tax increases that this government seems to claim.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I just wanted to rush up before all of my colleagues who were standing up. I wonder if the member would just comment on the use-it-or-lose-it provisions that are in the bill. I suspect that we're probably going to be on the same page on that, but I wonder if she could comment on the impact that might have on ensuring that—the point of the bill is to ensure that we utilize the resources within the existing urban boundaries to their maximum. I wonder if she might have any comments on that or any suggestions on how we might improve that provision for our municipal partners.

1640

Miss Monique Taylor: Thanks, because I didn't have the opportunity to raise the use-it-or-lose-it. That was a bill brought forward by an NDP member from Niagara Centre, who knew and had seen and had consulted with municipalities, seeing that developers were not—they were buying up the space, they were talking about the plans, but they weren't getting the permits and they weren't moving it forward. What that did was it left empty lands vacant and municipalities not having the ability to push them forward.

So it's important that this legislation is here. Like I said, there are good things in this legislation. I just think that it is not near enough to fit the need of what our communities, what our municipalities and what the people who we serve are asking for.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Under schedule 4, there is a prescribed exemption from zoning rules for site plans to approve processes of prescribed standardized housing designs. That way you can have these standard designs and you can build homes quicker—I'm assuming that's the intent.

What I wanted to ask the member is, in these standard designs, how important is it that we have accessibility pieces in these standard designs? I say that because we have an aging population, so as we are building these standard designs, let's incorporate accessibility features in the homes. What do you think about that?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London-Fanshawe. Absolutely. I was calling on the Liberal government for universal design so many years ago, so that when houses are built, they already have the modifications built in. You or I could be disabled tomorrow. We could need chair lifts, we could need bathtub bars—many things.

But to ensure that is built into the design—it doesn't have to be prominent. They can build over it, but the beams are there, the strength is there to ensure that accessibility

can be managed in a very quick time for all households. So it's good to see that some of that's being enabled in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Brian Riddell: The official opposition has previously indicated that they support the use-it-or-lose-it policy in the province. In fact, the opposition critic for municipal affairs stated at the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, "We are bringing up a use-it-or-lose-it policy"—which keeps coming up. It's been "something that we've been pushing for the last couple of years."

Given the official opposition has been on the record as being in favour of the use-it-or-lose-it policy for a number of years, can the member opposite tell me if their party will support the bill?

Miss Monique Taylor: As I had just previously said to the minister's question, the use-it-or-lose-it was an NDP bill brought forward by the member from Niagara Centre. We think it's good legislation. We're happy to see that incorporated. We're happy to see that the government takes on NDP initiatives, because there are good ideas from all sides of the Legislature. The good ideas don't just come from government, because we have seen a lot of bad ideas come from government.

It's good to see bills that are brought from the opposition, because they are done with consultation. They aren't things that we make up. They're done by talking to our communities and seeing the need of what needs to be there. We're happy to see it included in the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for an excellent presentation. I think we see that within Bill 185, it undoes a lot of the mistakes this government has made, backpedalling on a lot of self-created issues, some own goals that they've made on themselves.

However, within this legislation, we don't see a really concerted attempt to take on the affordability crisis that we are seeing within our communities right now. I would like to know from the member, what would you like to see mentioned in this bill in particular as it pertains to housing and affordability?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London Centre, because yes, there are many things that so many people in our communities ask for. We need supportive housing. We need student housing. We need small family dwellings that families can afford. We don't need big, huge mansions built in the greenbelt. We need co-ops.

Fourplexes are built right inside communities where there's other housing, where children who go to school together can play together. These are the types of things that our communities want, that our neighbourhoods are desperate for, so that your mom and dad who live here know that their adult children and their grandchildren can

live up the street in these great fourplexes that just truly make a difference for our community.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I'm a big fan of the advocacy organization Strong Towns. I admit they don't always fall in line with this government, but we did on parking minimums—or, rather, getting rid of parking minimums. I know that that's something that a lot of the urban planners in Hamilton have been very in favour of. I'm wondering if the member will comment on the impact that this bill has on parking minimums and what she thinks the impact will be on the ongoing urban revitalization and business development in Hamilton.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Yes, this was one of the things that was in our platform in 2022, making sure that we changed the way that parking was administered and the number of spaces compared to the number of people.

But we do need to ensure that there is some parking, as was mentioned earlier. So many folks have PSWs coming to their house, they have DSWs, or they just have no choice but to have a vehicle. So I think there needs to be a better mix, and I think that this is possibly a solution going forward that doesn't force those buildings to have as much parking and take up as much space that could instead be utilized for more housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's always an honour to speak on behalf of the residents of Humber River–Black Creek, and I'm going to begin again with a question I asked one of the government members. I'm going to relay a very short story about a PSW who had just retired, who I spoke with the other day. I came to recognize her in her retirement. She had spent 25 years helping individuals, going to their homes, washing them, cleaning them, keeping them company, doing important things.

You would imagine that at the end of her years and years of work on behalf of all of us, on behalf of our parents, our grandparents, that there would be some level of comfort, but that wasn't the case. She's a tenant, and she said that she was very, very afraid for her future. Rents continue to escalate year after year and are becoming unaffordable. She had lived some years in that apartment, but her entire future was something that she questioned. Her kids, her grandkids: What is that future going to look like?

All of the conversations that we have here in this House when it comes to housing by this government generally focus on solutions for those wanting to own homes, and a certain type of home, valued over all others. But what is constantly missing is the future of tenants. Today, rent is absolutely unaffordable, and not just in Toronto, where rents are well into the \$2,000s. That's a similar situation across towns and cities across the entire province itself.

Now, we spend a lot of time, especially in afternoon debate and sometimes during question period, talking about governments of the past. They like to talk about the

governments of the early 1990s; we talk about the government of the late 1990s. A minister raised something that was done during a government of the early 1990s, which was a trade-off. Now, it wasn't positioned that way.

The government of the early 1990s brought in rent control, but part of the trade-off was, any new rent, any new buildings, any new rental that was built past a certain point would not be subject to that very same control. That was the trade-off. Because if the argument was that people will no longer want to invest with that provision brought in, well then that would have been the solution. But guess what? It didn't change anything, because even with that provision, even with rent control existing and allowing landlords to charge essentially what they wanted in new construction, we didn't see a proliferation of new rental multi-residential properties being built. We didn't see any of that. The next government certainly didn't address that. The Liberal government following didn't. And this government hasn't.

1650

But now, we exist in time where rents have never been so high. And so what is the solution to that, that is said? "Well, we're just going to bring in supply." But it's interesting because they are only relying on the market to deliver that supply. Now, they will say, "We are seeing more new rental homes being built now than we did under the last government, per capita." But here's the reality—it's kind of the chicken or the egg thing, because we are seeing new rental being potentially considered and, in some cases, built, but that's because rents, in many cases, are north of \$3,000 or even higher. So it is the unaffordable rents in the first place that are spurring construction of new rental if that's even happening. The point is, you'll see new rental units, but it's still unaffordable.

Now, how on earth are our constituents, government members' constituents, able to afford that at all? And I know that each and every one of us here are doing our best for our communities, whether it's government or our side, trying our best to serve the people that have given us the trust to support them in our own elections. But I know that I have to have these hard conversations, like I mentioned with the PSW. Why not consider rent control in housing bills? Why not? Why not consider something like that in multi-residential properties? You say that these new homes are being built, you're saying that these new buildings are being constructed, but people are not even going to be able to afford it.

Now you say, "Let's continue to add to that supply." What kind of solution is that? That's not a solution for the PSW that I met the other day. That is a solution that might be a generation away, a decade away, but for the market to now even out by the new construction that is being built, that's going to take a long, long, long, long time to be able to deal with that.

Another thing that I used to hear a lot under the past session of government was talking about cranes in the sky. Before this Conservative government took office, we saw, in the city of Toronto, year after year, that in many cases Toronto led, before the Conservative government, in terms

of cranes in sky, most units being built, most investment—all of these things. Why I raise it? And, of course, I expect this of many governments. They always want to take credit for things that they say are positive and say, “Well, you know, it was us.” They would go so far as claiming the weather if they could in some cases.

But in other instances they never want to take the responsibility for bad decisions, or things that are not happening. You’re never going to hear them get up and say, “We are now seeing tent cities, the highest number of per capita individuals facing homelessness that we’ve ever seen.” They’re never going to wear the responsibility for the rents being through the roof, but they’ll say, “But they’re building more rental buildings under our watch.” It almost feels like a cynical conversation that’s here. I know that it can go so far as to offend the people that are watching here, not seeing their lives being improved by decisions that are being made by this government.

The minister talked about the fact that a lack of infrastructure is what is now causing certain areas to not see development happening. Well, here is a section of an email I just received the other day—in fact, yesterday. And so here is with regard to infrastructure under this government, who says they want to put shovels in the ground and try to incent, every way, shape or form, more development of housing. Ashley, who reached out to me, said:

“You can imagine my disappointment, frustration and anger when the province announced that they would be reducing the frequency of trains stopping at Weston and Bloor from 15 minutes to every 30 minutes. This seems illogical to me as the Weston area is experiencing intensification as prioritized by the Ford government. To bring people into a neighbourhood and then reduce their access to public transit goes against every good planning and urbanism principle.

“On top of that, we know the current construction that is making it harder to access downtown will continue for at least three years. How are people supposed to get to work, see their families and support other Toronto businesses if we cannot access them?

“When I took the UP Express this past weekend to meet some friends downtown, the train was packed. I had to stand, which never bothers me, as I know the ride is short and it’s a small price to pay for this convenience. This issue will only get worse with the reduced service.”

So here it is: In some cases, the government says they’re going to build. They’re going to put infrastructure in some places. Other places are completely ignored. Some will argue it’s partisan or political. I won’t get into that. You just have to look at the Eglinton LRT and look at some sections that were buried versus others and ask who represents those ridings—but I won’t go any further down on that.

Here’s the reality: We are not seeing a lot of those investments—and this comes from a constituent themselves. They want to talk about rental housing. They’re not willing to build affordable housing. So here’s a thing they have absolute and direct control over, but they refuse to do it.

We all heard a member claim that it was communism—communism—to build affordable housing in the province. And, of course, I assume that this member would probably think of some of their Conservative forebearers as communist, because there have been past Conservative governments that—yes, as crazy as it sounds—built affordable housing. They also brought in conservation authorities and actually trusted their judgement. They brought in public hydro. We heard about the late Roy McMurtry and what he delivered here, and I ask myself how far has this Conservative government fallen, as compared to the principles of its past?

But the last thing I want to talk about in this short time—and this is something that I don’t think a Conservative government is very well-suited for to challenge: There is a competition on housing. What is this government willing to do about the further financialization of the housing market? We are seeing large investors, people worth lots and lots and lots and lots of money, that will continue to buy up homes, single-family homes, entire swaths of it. We’re seeing that in the States and we’re going to continue to see that.

We hear about that couple all the time—used to describe why they’re doing what they’re doing—living in the basement of their parents’ home, waiting for that first opportunity of home ownership. And it’s not just supply. Because of the existing supply, they are going to have to compete with those big, powerful financial interests that are going to continue to buy up not just the current housing but whatever housing you put out there and at no matter what cost. If there is no solution that is brought to deal with that, or even a willingness or a stomach to face that down, then what is the future going to look like?

I hope that this government will look at that and I hope, as this government brings legislation to this chamber in a majority government, that they will think about tenants. But telling them that supply may come maybe a decade or far into the future is not going to help that PSW who spent 25 years of her life taking care of people’s health and is now living in a situation where she doesn’t know what her future looks like.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks this afternoon.

My question, Speaker, is: When the Ontario Liberal leader, Bonnie Crombie, was the mayor of Mississauga, she had one of the worst housing records in Ontario. Last year, under her leadership, in the middle of a housing crisis, Mississauga actually rejected about 90% of the proposed homes. That’s over 17,000 homes that won’t be built for the people in her community, in a city that only reached 39% of its annual housing targets, Speaker. When it comes to building housing, Bonnie Crombie has failed to get the job done. Does the member opposite agree with us that Bonnie Crombie has failed the people of Mississauga?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I definitely agree with this principle. But the thing is, there was a time when the government was working hand in hand with the mayor of

Mississauga at the time, and now, the times they are a-changin', right? They have changed their tune on it.

I know that there have been many criticisms that were levelled against the Liberal leader at the time, mostly by others and certainly by this government now, and I know that more could have been done in Mississauga in terms of housing starts—that, definitely, I agree with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek and his debate and always his thoughtful comments when it comes to various debates on this legislative floor. I know that he spends a lot of time in his community and that I'm sure people are also asking him for affordable housing, which unfortunately we're not seeing in this legislation.

1700

I think the government has missed an opportunity to actually support our communities. Maybe he could share some of the stories that he's heard from people in his community when it comes to affordable housing.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much for that question. Absolutely. I spent a lot of my speech talking about the needs of renters, and many that are nowhere near being able to purchase a home and are struggling even with rent.

The government has the power to build housing themselves. They can look past the philosophy—again, some members have referred to it as “communism”—to say to themselves that it is possible to build affordable housing themselves. It is within their powers to do so because all of their legislation thus far is to try to incent certain things to be built. But they have the ability to pick up the shovels themselves and do it. I'm hoping they will, because so many across this province are counting on them to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Questions? The member from Brampton North.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, you look great. You're a really good-looking Speaker.

My question for our friend opposite: Like me, he represents a community that has seen rapid growth and, frankly, a large amount of newcomers, new Canadians, because he's right by the airport. Brampton is the same; we're right by the airport. We've doubled in size in the last 20 years. Our infrastructure hasn't kept pace, and our housing hasn't kept pace.

One of the things that's important about this bill is our commitment around getting to that 1.5 million new homes by 2031. But in order to support those homes, we also need infrastructure. We got a great win with the federal government, our wonderful Minister of Transportation, where the federal government has finally backed off the federal impact assessment for the 413. It seems like even they have seen the light on this issue. I'm wondering if the member opposite has seen the light and is ready to support the 413 as well.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: To the credit of this member, he does talk a strong talk in defending Brampton. He talks about the 413 all the time. But I wish he would get up and

ask the minister about auto insurance in Brampton. This is something that has to be near and dear to his heart, and it must be so difficult for this member to sit there with his hands under his legs and not ask questions about auto insurance. This is something I'm waiting for, and I'm really looking forward to hearing at some point during question period if he really cares about the people of Brampton, just like he asked about the 413.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Questions?

MPP Jill Andrew: To the member who spoke so eloquently about why housing is necessary in his community and about the experience of that retired PSW: Can you explain what types of infrastructure you'd also like to see the government committed to in terms of making life better for Ontarians, for your residents? Obviously we need affordable housing. Can you speak to the benefit of other things like community centres, like libraries, like transit that works?

We know right now that Metrolinx has been dragging their little feet a little bit long in terms of the Eglinton LRT construction. We know that the community in Mount Dennis that's relatively near to your community as well is also feeling left out of the consultation process with Metrolinx with this government.

What would you like to see in terms of infrastructure, and what is the benefit of infrastructure to housing in your community?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: In the short time I had, this is something that I did want to talk about. This is one of the things—yet again—that this government has had to repeal, and it had to do with development charges. Because definitely we need to see transit, but when those development charges come in, they build the infrastructure, they build the community centres, they build the parkland and all the things that are necessary—especially under intensification. This is yet again one of those examples where the government has had to go back on that, because it was putting municipalities, already cash-strapped, into dangerous, dangerous territories.

By the way, I know I talked about the governments of the past, but it was the downloading that we're still seeing to this very day in the late 1990s that has helped put these municipal governments in a very tough bind.

I appreciate the question. There needs to be so much more investment, and governments need to do whatever they can to help our great municipalities do and deliver the services that their residents are counting on every day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Madam Speaker, as a representative of a riding that incorporates a lot of the forestry industry in my area, I am really pleased to see that with this bill, we've joined British Columbia and Quebec on a consultation and a commitment to adapt the building code, that it would allow for up to 18-storey mass timber buildings. I'm hopeful that the member opposite will actually stand and indicate his support for this initiative, for that industry and for improved apartment buildings.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Definitely, as with all bills, there are certainly good things that are within it; not just that, the use-it-or-lose-it clause is something that is important. It's something that our members have pushed and fought for, and it's good to see a government finally listening, at least on this one thing.

With regard to mass timber construction, I'm proud to say that the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority headquarters is located in my constituency, and it is one such building—maybe not 18 storeys—that has relied on that technology in terms of construction. And it is something good to see in your bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I was listening to the member opposite mentioning initiatives in transit located in his community. Also, student housing is in his community.

I know the Council of Ontario Universities said the following in response to Bill 185: "Exempting universities from provisions in the Planning Act and removing zoning barriers will help expediate the development and construction of much-needed campus housing projects, as well as help ensure student success."

Speaker, I know this is what we often heard from our universities across the province, asking us to support these important measures. Can the member opposite tell us if they will answer their call and vote for this important piece of legislation?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for the question.

As I said, there are some elements of the legislation that are good and some elements that are worth supporting.

On the topic of universities, considering that students in Ontario pay the highest per capita tuition across all of the country, I hope that this government will bring the investments to universities, to put us at a level where other provinces and other jurisdictions will be looking at us enviously to say, "Wow, look at the amount of support and investments that are coming from the province of Ontario for its universities." So if this is something that this

government cares about, I hope it will really take us down that way so those students will be able to congratulate them and feel that support they're getting from the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Leardi has moved that the question be now put. There have been over nine hours of debate, 24 members have spoken, and I am 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 this motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): On division, the motion is carried.

Mr. Calandra has moved second reading of Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Do we have consensus to see the clock at 6? Agreed? Agreed.

Report continues in volume B.

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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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Vacant	Milton	