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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 March 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mars 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Holland: I'm very proud to rise today in recognition of the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission who had a noticeable and influential presence at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada's 2024 conference. On March 4, Jamie Taylor and her team at the Thunder Bay CEDC hosted their inaugural Thunder Bay Mining Link event at PDAC, which saw over 170 attendees, representing north-western Ontario's active mines and advanced exploration projects. Thunder Bay service and supply companies, Indigenous communities and businesses, stakeholders and partners were all in attendance.

This event celebrated and facilitated connections between attendees and generated significant energy that resonated throughout the conference which speaks to our excitement that Thunder Bay and region remains a key player in Ontario's mining sector. The interest and attendance at this event demonstrated the large Thunder Bay contingent at the conference and the continued interest in mining in our region. Later in the evening, the enthusiasm continued at the Northern Ontario Night, which was very well attended and supported by our government.

Thunder Bay CEDC is actively working with companies interested in the EV battery supply chain, continuing their work to attract new mining supply services while supporting the growth and prosperity of all Thunder Bay businesses. Please join me in celebrating the continued successes of the Thunder Bay region as we connect people and place prosperity.

HOLY WEEK

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WEEK

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: For Catholics, Protestants and many Christian denominations, this past weekend marked

the start of Holy Week, beginning with the triumphal arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem, called Palm Sunday. During this sacred and very solemn week many profound liturgical events came to pass: the Last Supper, the betrayal and baseless arrest of Jesus and his terrible crucifixion. But at the end comes the most significant day for all Christians: the resurrection of Jesus Christ, celebrated on Easter Sunday. I wish all those here and everywhere commemorating this special time a very blessed week and a happy Easter on Sunday.

For the majority of Orthodox Christians who follow the Julian calendar, Easter falls on May 5 of this year. Last week, the members of this House unanimously supported the second reading of my bill entitled Orthodox Christian Week. If passed, this special week would formally commence in Ontario every Orthodox Easter Sunday and would recognize the presence, contributions and history of Orthodox Christians in our great province. On behalf of Orthodox Christians in Ontario, I deeply thank you all.

It is my hope that we can continue this strong spirit of collaboration so that the bill will pass third reading and receive royal assent, bringing Orthodox Christian Week to life in Ontario.

1020

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Mr. Speaker, the people in the riding of Essex are tired of taxes. This is the message that I have received over and over again. Whether it's at the downtown Espresso Café in Amherstburg, or whether it's at the Red Lantern coffee shop in downtown Kingsville or at Acorn and Oak Coffee Co. in Essex, or at Twenty-Two Coffee House in Belle River, my taxpayers have told me over and over again they are tired of taxes.

Next week, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government in Ottawa will increase its terrible carbon tax. And across the province, municipal governments have increased their property tax rates to record levels. There is only one government in the province of Ontario that is actually lowering taxes, and that is the provincial government of Premier Doug Ford.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is budget day in Ontario, and I have a message for the finance minister from the taxpayers of the riding of Essex. This is a message that I wish to deliver on behalf of my constituents: My constituents in the riding of Essex want no new taxes.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Muslims around the world are observing Ramadan, a month of fasting, faith, reflection and family. But the shadow of the humanitarian disaster inflicted on Gaza has made these holiest of days particularly difficult.

In my community, every single Palestinian family has been personally affected, and their pain is deeply felt by all London Muslims. Muslims who were struggling before the trauma of Gaza with Islamophobia and the terrorist attack on our London family are experiencing increased mental health stress, and many are turning to imams for help. That is why the efforts of Imam Twakkal, founding member and chair of the London Council of Imams, are so critical.

In collaboration with CAMH, Imam Twakkal is delivering a series of Friday sermons to break the stigma and shame of mental health and addictions and encourage Muslims to get support when they need it. Imam Twakkal told me that about 70% of the calls he receives result in referrals to London's Muslim Resource Centre. The capacity of the MRC to respond, however, is limited. Despite MRC's success in building a unique evidence-based model for culturally integrative support, one that is being replicated in cities across the province, the agency receives no core funding.

Speaker, I urge this government to recognize the value and importance of MRC's culturally informed services by providing the core funding necessary to meet the significant and growing mental health needs of London's Muslim community.

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Today, Greek Canadians and Greeks around the world celebrate Greek Independence Day. On March 25, 1821, Greeks rose in revolution, achieving independence after living under Ottoman despotism for over 400 years.

Today, Hellenes and their friends all over the world mark the restoration of Greek freedom and democracy. That is why, in 2019, I brought forward Bill 77, the Hellenic Heritage Month Act, which wrote into law that March would serve as Hellenic Heritage Month every year. Today, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada and, indeed, in the world that has enshrined this recognition into law. As well, for the first time in over 40 years, a Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, is visiting Ontario. It's fitting that he is in Toronto today to celebrate this anniversary with us.

Friends, Hellenic Heritage Month is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of more than 150,000 Ontarians of Hellenic origin in our province. Greeks started coming to Canada before Confederation. Today, we are involved in every part of Ontario life: law, medicine, business, government, the arts and much more. Hellenic culture, learning and democracy are part of the common history of the west and the world.

Zhto H Ellada. Zhto O Kanadas.
Long live Greece. Long live Canada.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Tomorrow, this government will table their budget. It has been said many times in this House that a budget is a moral document. Theology teaches us that those with political power and economic wealth are to use their position to benefit those who society has marginalized. At a time when so many Ontarians are struggling to find housing, to feed themselves, we are looking for this government to provide relief.

We are also witnessing a large increase in femicides in this province. Gender-based violence is an epidemic. Despite our pleas, this government has continued to refuse to name it as an epidemic. This government has failed to introduce any new initiatives or investments to protect and ensure that women and children are safe in Ontario. Women in my riding are waiting over six months for services from sexual assault centres and 18 months for supervised access programs. Organizations across Ontario that help victims of gender-based violence have not had an increase in 15 years.

But, unfortunately, what we are seeing is a government that is increasing our tax dollars going to campaign-style ads that are nothing but self-congratulatory. This government refuses to tell us how they are spending our money, so through a freedom-of-information request, we have discovered that the government has spent about \$8 million so far—that doesn't include the \$38 million on ads this government has placed since 2019. That's a lot of tax money that could have gone into investments in health care, in housing and preventing gender-based violence.

Ontarians will be watching and hoping to see a budget that shows that this government understands that it is their moral responsibility to help the people of Ontario.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Matthew Rae: As many in this place will know by 2026 one in five jobs will be in the skilled trades. Through the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, our government is ensuring students are gaining the necessary skills to secure these good-paying jobs.

Recently, the Avon Maitland District School Board held its first skills competition this month in Listowel. Students from four area high schools demonstrated their craftsmanship and technical skills, taking part in welding and carpentry competitions.

Among the standout performers was Leland Gile, a grade 12 student from LDSS, whose exceptional skills secured him a spot at the upcoming qualifying competition at Fanshawe College. Listowel students Mac Frey and Kiyran Coulter earned a place in the team of two carpentry provincial competitions on May 7 in Toronto. Students in hairstyling and individual carpentry will also be advancing. Students from St. Marys DCVI, Stratford District Secondary School and Goderich District Collegiate Insti-

tute also participated, showcasing the area's depth of talent.

Thank you to the tech teachers and the Avon Maitland District School Board for organizing this important skills competition, allowing local students to showcase their technical talents but also helping prepare the next generation of skilled tradespeople.

Through the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and many other initiatives, our government will continue to ensure students are prepared for the jobs of the 21st century.

GEOFFREY CHURCH

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to take this opportunity to say a few words of remembrance for our dear friend Geoffrey Paul Church, who passed away suddenly on February 29.

Geoff and I met in high school. We had a lot in common. We both skied, had part-time jobs in grocery stores, loved music and all those other things that teenaged boys like to do. We had a lot of fun together and somehow managed not to get into any really serious trouble.

It was Geoff who first introduced me to Linda back in high school. He had known Linda since grade school. It's something that we're both still very grateful for. He was the best man at our wedding.

Geoff met the love of his life, Joey, and they remained together until her passing in 2018. I was the best man at their wedding. They were godparents for our daughter Kirsten. After leaving Ottawa, Geoff and Joey lived in Halifax, Charlottetown, the island of St. Croix and Picton. The island life appealed to them.

Here are some words from Geoff's sister Pam:

"He was such a sweet guy. Boating, aircraft, guitars and classic rock history were Geoff's passions. There may never again be someone who knows more about the artists and albums of classic rock. He also took up playing guitar as a teenager and amassed quite a beautiful guitar collection. He was working on a custom guitar build the day he passed away. Boating, especially sailing, and working on boats was a way that Geoff loved to relax."

1030

To his sister Pam and brother-in-law Glen, you were both so very good to him. To his nieces and nephews and his many friends, we will all miss Geoff, and we know that he is now reunited with his beloved Joey.

Rest in peace, my friend.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to take the opportunity to wish all Christians who celebrate Good Friday and Easter a happy Easter.

Speaker, a number of diverse businesses in Mississauga are flourishing, and new ones continue to open shop. They are choosing Ontario as the home for their businesses because we have created conditions for prosperity and growth that haven't been seen in a long time.

In just a few weeks alone, I have attended multiple grand openings, including two Pakistani restaurants on Ridgeway Drive: Lahore Chatkhara and Lahori Flame. We were also at the opening of a new Tahini's shawarma on Glen Erin; they started in London, Ontario, and now they have 30 locations. And I visited a few international and ethnic grocery stores, including Hyperama South African shop and Apna Farm South Asian market.

Speaker, these are just limited examples of recent grand openings in Mississauga. People come from all around to visit new businesses, restaurants and stores in Mississauga—Erin Mills because in Mississauga, we have diverse and prosperous local businesses sharing all cultures. You can see, smell and taste every culture from every nation and ethnicity.

Trust me: If you want to explore ethnic food, international cuisine and multicultural businesses, there is no better place in Canada than Erin Mills, and the grand openings aren't ending any time soon.

Mississauga is growing, commerce is thriving and Ontario remains open for business.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO VIRTUAL TOURS

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Last week, I got the opportunity to participate in two Legislative Assembly virtual tours offered to students of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School, which is located in the town of Russell in my riding.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the tour team here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for this great initiative.

Ontario is a big province, Mr. Speaker. To have these virtual tours available both in English and French for every school of the province is a good occasion to teach students about how the provincial government works.

It was great to be able to participate in these virtual tours and greet students and answer their questions at the end of the tour. I believe that there's a possibility that we might have some of these students that are after my job, Mr. Speaker. A few students asked me how to become an MPP, and I told them that the best way is to get involved in helping each other and offering their service to the community. I really enjoyed explaining the role of an MPP and the kinds of services we offer to our constituents.

I want to thank all the students who took part in the event and would like to invite all schools in my riding to participate in these virtual tours so students can learn more about the provincial government of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is my pleasure this morning to welcome to the Legislature Jennifer Lachance, who is the mother of page Emily Charbonneau. Emily, in addition to doing a tremendous job here, today is going to be acting

as page captain, so congratulations, Emily, and welcome, Jennifer.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I would like to introduce a special education teacher from Peel, Ricky Viveiros. Welcome to your House, Ricky.

Mr. Robert Bailey: This morning, I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the parents of our page Ahmad: Muhammad Zuhair Arif; Tahreem Fatima Arif, his mom; Muhammad Mustafa Arif, his brother; and Ali Murtaza Arif, his brother. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm proud to say that one of Canada's hip-hop artists is here: MC Mohammad Ali from Mississauga. My brother, it's so good to see you here. Thank you for gracing us with your presence today.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm delighted to welcome to the Legislature the family of Sarah Penner: Bridget Haugh, her mother; Liz Haugh, her grandmother; and Suzanne Clune-Taylor, a family friend. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: From the Ontario Motor Coach Association, I'd like to welcome Brian Denny, Shawn Geary, Greg Hammond, Jennifer McGregor, Ted Goldenberg, and meeting with me later today, Ray Cherrey and Vince Accardi. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome the family of our page Alyssa Geene: Alyssa's mom Janessa Geene and Alyssa's stepdad Michael Dionne. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I'm very honoured to welcome today Lia Cheng, who's with us in the chamber. Lia has been an exceptional young leader in this country and she was just recognized for her exceptional contributions to the province. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South on a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 45(b)(iv), the time for debate on the opposition day motion number 3 regarding government advertising be apportioned as follows: 56 minutes to each of the recognized parties and eight minutes to the independent members as a group.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Fraser is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 45(b)(iv), the time for debate on opposition day motion number 3 regarding government advertising be apportioned as follows: 56 minutes to each of the recognized parties and eight minutes to the independent members as a group. Agreed? I heard a no.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. The government's own Housing Affordability Task Force strongly recommended the legal-

ization of fourplexes across the province over two years ago, but now the Premier is saying not in his backyard.

So my question is, why is the Premier blocking people who can't afford a single-family detached home from the communities they want to live in and work in?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Leader of the Opposition should know, of course, that there is no law banning this province-wide. What we have said is that we trust our municipal partners to make decisions that are in the best interest of their community. That is something that we have been talking about for months in this place, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time, we will allow communities to make the decision if that is appropriate in their areas. I think it's become very clear that some communities, like Toronto, have approved, as-of-right, four, while other communities have said that they don't want four-storey buildings to be built in parts of their communities. They neither have the infrastructure, nor were they built around four-storey buildings in the middle of communities.

So what I'm saying to the Leader of the Opposition is that we will continue to trust our municipal partners to work in the best interests of the people of the province of Ontario along with us, Mr. Speaker, but we will not force them to do something blanket across the province of Ontario. That is not in the best interests of—

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

Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I would say, Speaker, that the minister should speak to the Premier because the Premier doesn't seem to get this at all. The Premier is ruling out affordable housing options in the middle of a housing crisis. People need a place to live, and this government's solution is to go to war against fourplexes. It makes no sense. For many people, an apartment in a fourplex is going to be the only home they can afford, and it's a good option. Why does this Premier believe that these people don't deserve to achieve that dream and don't deserve the same options as everybody else?

Interjections.

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

1040

Hon. Paul Calandra: That, of course, is incorrect. What we're saying is that we're not forcing municipalities—a blanket policy across the province of Ontario. Of course, municipalities have the right already to make this decision. We've seen Toronto make that decision, Markham has made that decision and a host of other municipalities.

Still, others have said to us that allowing a four-storey building in the middle of a community that was neither built to accommodate a four-storey building, that does not have the infrastructure in place to accommodate a four-storey building, is not in the best interest of communities across the province.

So what we'll continue to do is be targeted in our approach, remove red tape, ensure that our municipal

partners can meet the goals of building the 1.5 million homes. That is why we are doubling and ensuring that sewer and water infrastructure is in place so that we can build not only hundreds of homes, but millions of homes across the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Even the housing minister doesn't seem to understand the difference between a fourplex and four-storey—it's mind-boggling.

Look, every housing expert in this province, in this country is saying we need more housing options, not less. That is what Ontarians want too. They want leadership from their government to provide more options so that we can actually find homes for our children, for the next generation, for the people that right now are at risk of losing their homes.

It is unbelievable that the Premier and this housing minister would rule out some straightforward options like legalizing fourplexes. And do you know what? They're playing into the same kind of fears that have held back density for generations.

So I'm going to ask one more time: Why does the Premier think that people who can't afford a single-family detached home don't deserve options like fourplexes?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, for me to legalize something, it would have to first be illegal, which it is not. It is currently legal across the province of Ontario for communities to build fourplexes, four-storey buildings, but what we're saying is, as opposed to doing what the Leader of the Opposition wants—forcing our municipal partners to do things in areas that were not built around that, that don't have the infrastructure in place, that don't have the parking space, that might not have the schools available to them—what we're saying is continue to plan your communities in the best interests of your community and ensure you can meet the targets that we've set.

And we've listened to our municipal partners who have said one thing and one thing only, that the biggest obstacle to building 1.5 million homes across the province of Ontario is the availability of infrastructure—an infrastructure deficit that we inherited from the Liberals. And that is why last week the Premier made an historic announcement of over \$1.8 billion to get sewer and water. We don't want to build hundreds; we want to build millions of homes.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. When the previous Liberal government was in power, they spent millions and millions of dollars on purely partisan ads. The party in government now, the Conservatives, at the time—even their Deputy Premier—said they were going to stop that practice. It was actually in their platform. In fact, the now Deputy Premier tabled a bill, it was called—let me

see—the End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act.

My question to the Premier is, does the Premier still agree that we need to end government funding of partisan advertising?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Of course, the members opposite are upset that the people of Ontario are doing better under this government than they were under the previous Liberal government. Under our government, the province has a great story to tell, whether it's the billions of dollars of investments that we're attracting for manufacturing and electric vehicles alone; the historic investments we're making in infrastructure; the Bradford Bypass, Highway 413, the Ontario Line; the millions of dollars we're spending on schools and hospitals; we're building child care places; and nearly 700,000 good-paying jobs have been created since we took government.

The people of Ontario should be proud of this province, as I am, and I hope the members opposite can find a way to stand up for the people of Ontario instead of standing in the way of the hard work that we're doing to build a stronger and more prosperous Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, that's just the kind of gaslighting that Ontarians are fed up with, I can tell you—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll caution the member on her choice of words and ask her to continue with her question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ontarians are sitting in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry. Stop the clock.

I'm having a little trouble hearing. I'm quite congested. I'm wearing a mask. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —and continue with her question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, people are sitting in emergency rooms right now, waiting hours and hours and hours with sick children. They're looking up at the screens and they're seeing government ads, paid for with their tax dollars, that are trying to convince them that everything is okay, that in fact our health care system is doing just fine, thank you. That is unacceptable, and people in Ontario are darn sick of it.

I want to ask the Premier, does he still agree, again, that we need to end government funding of this government's partisan advertising?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: What the Leader of the Opposition is saying just actually doesn't make any sense. What she is saying is that she doesn't believe that the government of Ontario should inform Ontarians about important government programs, including health programs, that we are funding to make sure we have the investments in hospitals, in health care, in child care, in education.

They're saying that they don't believe we should provide important health information like vaccination campaigns and public health measures, just like we did during the pandemic. They're saying that they don't believe the people of Ontario should be told what the government is doing to build new homes so that young families can finally achieve the dream of home ownership. They're saying that they don't believe that the government of Ontario should inform Ontarians about how we're spending their hard-earned taxpayer dollars to build a stronger economy and create new jobs. And they're saying that they don't believe that we should promote Ontario around the world as a great place to come and invest and create jobs to build a better economy and a more prosperous future for Ontarians. Mr. Speaker—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Does it promote tourism? No, it does not. Does it tell people, "Here's a service you could use?" No, it does not. It does not. Those are not the ads we are talking about.

We are giving this government a chance to show Ontarians who they truly are. Enough is enough. We need to close the loopholes and stop spending Ontarians' hard-earned dollars on these purely partisan ads.

So my question, again, to the Premier is: This afternoon, when we retable the bill that Deputy Premier herself tabled under the previous Liberal government, is this government going to support that bill?

Interjections.

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

President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Are the dollars that we're spending to attract new business to Ontario working? Absolutely. We are becoming a global leader in electric vehicle manufacturing, because we are doing the hard work of promoting this province as the best place to do business anywhere in North America. It's because we're telling the story about the changes we're making, that the government is making, under the leadership of Premier Ford, going back on the 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, to finally get Ontario back on the path where people want to come to Ontario to build their lives, to build their companies and to create jobs. After 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, we're reversing the trend of chasing jobs out of the province. We are creating jobs, and people are going to get a chance finally, under our leadership, to build the lives that they deserve, find homes for their families, jobs for their children and live a great and prosperous life in this province, and we will not apologize for that.

1050

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Premier: This government's self-congratulatory It's Happening Here ad campaign has cost taxpayers \$8 million. You know what is happening here, Speaker: 2.3 million Ontarians are desperate for

primary care; 203 emergency room closures, largely due to the shortage of nurses, largely due to Bill 124, this government's legislation; shelters designed for six-week stays are housing folks for months because of a lack of affordable housing options; and nearly half of Ontario's universities are running deficits, saying they are at a breaking point—that is what's happening here in Ontario. We heard all of this during our pre-budget consultations with folks from across this great province.

Instead of meeting the needs of Ontarians, this government is selling them partisan ads about what a great job they are doing. Why does this government continue to ignore the real problems that Ontarians are facing?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know what's happening here? What's happening here is 8,000 new physicians have joined and registered since 2018. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are making investments that are making an impact in communities across Ontario: a historic \$110-million investment in primary care multidisciplinary teams—multidisciplinary teams that are going to be in Kitchener-Waterloo, that are going to be in Ottawa, in London and across Ontario to ensure that people who want to have a primary care physician have the opportunity to do that. Those multidisciplinary teams are making an impact in the communities that we serve, and the people of Ontario need to know that it's happening here.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: This minister should vote for the legislation that we're introducing later on today. It is exactly the legislation that she introduced when the Liberals were doing the same games here in Ontario.

During pre-budget consultations, we heard from Ontarians about the continued underfunding of health care, about housing and around education, around basic public services in Ontario.

Meanwhile, this Conservative government spent \$24 million on partisan ad campaigns in 2022-23. When the Conservative government was in opposition, they were dead set against partisan advertising. The current Minister of Health stated—and this is a quote from Hansard: "It's inappropriate, people see through it, and it must stop." We agree with that statement.

My question to the Premier: Is the government fixated on partisan government advertising because they know that they are failing the great people of this province?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: This is very clear: They wouldn't be able to come up with a marketing plan if their life depended on it. We're business people. We want to market Ontario to the 16 million people that are here that have relatives and friends and businesses all around the world, not to mention how we are marketing everywhere down in the US, our number one trading partner—we do about

\$460 billion in two-way trade—telling the world that Ontario is open for business, come and invest.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? They've invested. They've invested in a big way. Some \$28 billion with EV, tens of billions of dollars in tech, \$3 billion in life sciences and, my favourite one, the manufacturers out there: They created more jobs than in all 50 US states combined. Our province is moving forward. We're an economic powerhouse in North America.

TAXATION

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a question for the Minister of Energy this morning. Hard-working families and workers in my riding of Niagara West are concerned about the 23% Liberal carbon tax increase coming on April 1. With far too many people struggling to make ends meet, I know that the people in my riding are looking to governments of all stripes for more support and relief, not more taxes.

I know that that's why Premier Ford and this government have fought the regressive Liberal carbon tax all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. But it's not just the people of Ontario who oppose the Liberal carbon tax increases. We're seeing Premiers from Newfoundland and Labrador, PEI, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick—they've all come out to speak against the Liberal tax hikes. But the federal Liberals and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, aren't fooling anyone here in Ontario.

So my question, Speaker, is: Could the minister please tell this House why the people of Ontario cannot afford another federal Liberal carbon tax hike?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, let's just be really clear about what the member from Niagara is talking about this morning. The Parliamentary Budget Officer—this is the officer that oversees the finances on Parliament Hill in Ottawa—has said that the increased carbon tax coming up a week from today is going to cost an Ontario family almost \$1,700 next year—\$1,674. That means increasing grocery bills. It means increasing cost of home heating. It means increases, certainly, at the gas pumps as well, as you're filling your vehicles.

As the member rightly points out, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, isn't fooling anyone. Crombie is one of only a few leaders across the country—and there's hardly any anymore—that aren't speaking out against the federal government's carbon tax. That includes NDP, Liberals and Conservatives right across Canada. She continues to support the Trudeau government's mammoth 23% increase.

We have to scrap this tax. There's still time to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the minister for his response. It really is hard to believe that Bonnie Crombie or anyone else, frankly, is still able to stop the job-killing Liberal regressive carbon tax. And it's not the

first time that we've seen Bonnie Crombie step forward to support this regressive tax. As a Liberal MP, we saw that Bonnie Crombie was one of the first people in Canada to back one of the most extreme Liberal carbon tax policies that was ever proposed. It's why we can't count on her or any other Liberal members of this House to speak out against the unjust Liberal carbon tax hike.

Our government has and will continue to fight against the Liberal carbon tax because we know it's not what the people of this province expect or deserve. Could the minister please tell this House a little bit more about why the Liberal carbon tax is creating financial hardship for so many hard-working families and workers here in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Niagara. We're urging the federal government to treat Ontario families fairly. The Liberal caucus here in Ontario doesn't seem to understand that. They're in full support, actually, of the federal government's carbon tax. As a matter of fact, in a comment made last week by the federal environment minister, Minister Guilbeault, he said, "My understanding of her position"—speaking of the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie—is that she was "happy to fall back to the federal system."

Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has been focused on driving costs down for the people of Ontario, whether it's cutting gas taxes by 10.7 cents a litre, bringing in One Fare to all transit systems across the GTHA, scrapping the licence plate sticker fees and other fees, eliminating the tolls on the 400-series of highways—we've taken many, many steps to ensure that the cost of living is more affordable for the people of Ontario. But a week from today, the feds are going to drive up the carbon tax—

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. Recently, Metrolinx put out insulting ads that were called, See Beyond the Construction, that ran in movie theatres across the GTA—Speaker, those are the ads you see when you go to a film. But these ads mocked transit riders who were legitimately complaining about broken deadlines and massive cost overruns in the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. But following public outrage and loud groans in movie theatres—believe me—the ad campaign was yanked from Metrolinx's YouTube page. But we have since discovered that this ad campaign alone cost \$2.5 million.

So, Speaker, will the Premier rise in this place today and apologize to transit users, apologize to the taxpayers of Ontario for this terrible ad by Metrolinx?

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

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Speaker, when the Liberals and NDP were in government, they built nothing. The NDP and Liberals are choosing to attack the public servants like engineers, like railway experts and planners.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is focusing on building Ontario. We have the Ontario Line,

shovels in the ground—the Liberals and NDP voted against this. We have shovels in the ground for the Scarborough subway—the Liberals and NDP voted against it. We even made One Fare possible, saving \$1,600, and the Liberals and NDP voted against it. We won't take lessons from the Liberals and NDP. We will continue to build Ontario, and we will get it right.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Well, I guess back to the Premier: The transit riders of the GTA just got your answer—no apology. Metrolinx can have a million-dollar CEO that runs insulting ads that cost the people of this province \$2.5 million, and no one on that side of the House today will stand up and apologize. That's a shame.

But do you know what also is a shame, Speaker? I've learned from an internal source at Metrolinx that they have over 400 staff alone in communications and marketing—400. If you eyeball a \$60,000 salary, that's \$8.5 million. What limits is this government going to allow Phil Verster, their million-dollar man, to go in spending the people's money and insulting transit riders as they fail to build transit?

Speaker, for the sixth time in this House, I will rise and insist that this government do the right thing and fire Phil Verster.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, no other government is doing more for transportation infrastructure than this government under the leadership of Premier Ford. We have tasked Metrolinx to build the largest transit expansion in the history of North America. These are public servants. They are engineers. They are planners. They are experts in transportation, Mr. Speaker. They are globally recognized public servants from our local communities. We will continue to build transportation.

Mr. Speaker, 80% of the priority projects are ahead of schedule, and we are focusing to make sure we get to build this transit right for the future generation. We will never take lessons from the NDP or Liberals, who chose to build nothing.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. Since the federal government imposed the carbon tax, people in our province and across this great country have been paying more for everything. Whether it's at the grocery store to buy food or at the gas pumps, they are finding it challenging to keep up with the rising costs.

To add insult to injury, the Liberal-NDP coalition is now hiking the carbon tax yet again on April 1. Speaker, that's unfair to the hard-working people and families of Ontario who are already struggling to buy the necessities for daily living. We know the opposition doesn't care to intervene so that's why our government must continue to fight this tax and make life more affordable for Ontarians.

Speaker, can the associate minister tell the House what steps our government is taking to fight the carbon tax?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her work and for her advocacy, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to hear when things are made in Ontario. What I'm not happy to hear about, Mr. Speaker, is the carbon tax made in Ottawa by the Liberals and NDP. There are many commuters in my riding. I hear first-hand the concerns about the carbon tax. It is inconceivable to put a tax on commuters who must travel to make a living.

Mr. Speaker, we hear from the people of Ontario. That's why we are making sure no government puts a carbon tax on the people of Ontario. If passed, a carbon tax will require a referendum under our Get It Done Act. In Ontario, we will keep the heat on in our homes not on the finances of the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Say no to the carbon tax and yes to common sense.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the associate minister for the response. I know that people in my riding were ecstatic to hear that our government introduced legislation that would protect Ontario workers and families from the high cost of a carbon tax.

Speaker, the federal government has increased the carbon tax on gasoline five times so far, and they are planning another seven increases by 2030. Grocery prices are already unaffordable for far too many people, as are the costs for other products and services. This tax is only adding further strain to Ontarians' household budgets.

While the opposition NDP and independent Liberals continue to ignore their constituents, our government is advocating for Ontarians and are calling for the end of this tax. Can the associate minister tell the House how our government is combatting the Liberal-NDP tax hikes?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member for that question. Some things never change: The Liberals ran deficits in Ontario. The NDP ran deficits in Ontario. Now the Liberals and NDP are teaming up to do the same thing federally. I don't remember these carbon taxes being part of their campaign promises.

To make sure the Liberals and NDP can control their spending habits and not take a loan against Ontarians, we are making sure carbon taxes are a matter of referendum. Commuters don't deserve to be treated this way at all by the Liberals and NDP. We are—

Interjections.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, even now, they want to heckle because they don't want to hear the truth.

Our message is very clear: Ontario's economy will grow, but not from the taxed pockets, but from the hard work and innovation of the people of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Health. On March 5 to 7, Englehart hospital's emergency room was closed—the first time ever in history. So people who don't have access to primary care for that time didn't

have access to an emergency room either. Now we hear many hospitals are in danger of collapsing because of the extra costs they're paying for agency nurses. And while this is happening, at exactly the same time, the government is spending advertising dollars saying how great the health care system is.

My question to the Minister of Health: Is she the Minister of Health or the minister of self-promotion?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We are investing more in northern Ontario, particularly as it relates to health care, than any other previous government. In fact, our Northern Ontario School of Medicine has an additional 108 seats available for physicians to practise, train and live in northern Ontario. And to suggest that the people of Ontario shouldn't know when we do expansions of a Learn and Stay program that is an opportunity for young people to apply to cover their nursing education, their paramedic training, in exchange for serving in underserved communities, speaks to how the member opposite is not looking at this in a holistic way.

When we expand the scope of practice for pharmacies, ensuring that people can go to their local community pharmacy and get 19 minor ailments treated, we have to educate and inform people so they make use of that service—a service that has had over 800,000 Ontarians use it since we brought it in, in January.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: This member previously brought forward a bill to stop partisan advertising—what the previous Liberal government was doing—which they are doing now. I'd like to read a quote: “‘This issue is a total flip-flop from the Liberal members opposite,’ Jones said in 2017. ‘What’s that line? ‘That was then; this is now.’” What has changed, Speaker? It appears that the Premier will only maintain those principles when they are convenient.”

My question is to the Minister of Health: You introduced this bill initially. What happened to those principles?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats. I will once again remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: When we make policy changes that impact the people of Ontario, it is important that we communicate those changes. Two years ago, we did not have minor ailments available within community pharmacies. That's over 5,000 community pharmacies where people can go and get treated for minor ailments. When we communicate those changes, when we ensure that people know for minor ailments they can go to their local community pharmacy, we see the impact.

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As I said, 800,000 individual Ontarians have used and accessed that service, a service that was not available prior to January 2023. So, yes, I absolutely will continue to encourage us promoting new policy and new initiatives that impact the people of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Tomorrow is a big day: It's the day we find out whether or not this government will comply with one of its own laws.

Speaker, the Conservatives campaigned saying they wouldn't pave over the greenbelt and they would reduce Ontario's debt. We know they failed on the greenbelt, and so they're being criminally investigated by the RCMP. What people may not know is they have also failed on the second. This government has added \$93 billion in new debt since taking office in 2018. That is despite creating their own law. In 2019, the government amended the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act to require that the government provide a debt reduction strategy each year with the budget, but they have yet to do so.

My question to the Premier: Will he take responsibility for the ballooning debt under his government and uphold his law of the land by providing a debt management strategy in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I can't believe what I'm hearing. That's the party that bankrupted this province, that chased 300,000 jobs out of the province, that raised taxes more than any other government in the history of Ontario, making sure they had the largest sub-sovereign debt in the entire world, highest energy costs.

Do you know what we did? Do you know what we're proud of? As they chased 300,000 jobs out of this province, we created the environment and the conditions for 700,000 more people working today than there was five and a half years ago. My good friend Minister Vic Fedeli just told me the new numbers in trade with the US went from, when you were in office, \$390 billion up to \$494 billion in two-way trade, almost a half a trillion dollars, because everyone in the world knows Ontario is open for business.

We're booming. We're going to continue being the economic leader around the world.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'll repeat the number: \$93 billion in new debt.

The people of Ontario are getting used to this Premier and his government playing the blame game, breaking promises, helping their insider friends and changing the rules of the game when they don't like them. But, Speaker, the government has only itself to blame for not adhering to its own law. They have been called out by the Auditor General every year for the last four years for failing to meet the requirements set out by their own law.

The government is being investigated by the RCMP for their \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal, and given what they're doing at Ontario Place and the science centre, they seem well on their way to more investigations.

So, once again to the Premier: Will he commit today to following his own law and put forward a debt management strategy in tomorrow's budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Rick Byers: Tomorrow is a very exciting day for this province. I want to add to the brilliant answer that the Premier just gave on what this government is doing for the economy here in Ontario. On all fronts, whether it's \$185 billion in infrastructure, in transit, in highways, in health care, in education or the 700,000 jobs that have been created under this government—as noted by the Premier, more than anywhere in the entire North American segment—we're doing that here in Ontario. We will keep doing it for the benefit of Ontarians, the benefit of our economy, the benefit of Ontario families.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Energy. At a time of high interest rates and increasing cost of living, it's incredibly important to find ways to make life more affordable for people in Ontario. But, Speaker, the federal carbon tax is only making life more expensive for the folks who work hard to make a living. Families and farmers in rural areas like mine in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock are concerned about how much more money they need to pay for gas and heating because of this tax. They're looking to our government for help in keeping costs down so their hard-earned income can stay in their pockets where it belongs. That's why we need to keep pushing the federal Liberals to eliminate the carbon tax and provide Ontarians with much more financial relief.

Speaker, can the Minister of Energy please explain how the carbon tax is creating hardship for Ontarians in rural communities?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who, incidentally, will be hosting all of us later this fall in Lindsay when she hosts the International Plowing Match.

I challenge the Liberal members of this House to show up at the IPM and, when farmers are looking them straight in the eye, tell them that they support the federal government's increase—the colossal increase—to the carbon tax. It's going to be a 23% increase one week from today. What is that going to mean for the farmers across Ontario? It's going to mean increased costs for fertilizers. It's going to mean increased costs for their tractors that are working in the fields to produce the crops. It's going to increase the price for those that are transporting those crops to the terminals and to the grocery stores. It's going to drive up the cost of everything, Mr. Speaker.

But yet this Liberal caucus under the leadership of the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, continues to support the federal carbon tax. As a matter of fact, members of this caucus say that people in Ontario are better off with it than without it. It's hard to believe—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: The minister is correct on how it's affecting the people of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–

Brock and the province. You can hear it first-hand when you come up.

But, once again, the federal Liberal government and their NDP allies are going to raise the carbon tax next month. While everyone has been speaking out against this tax hike, the new Liberal leader and her caucus have been silent.

Speaker, we know that life is already expensive for the hard-working people of our province. They need a plan to improve affordability and the cost of living, not a 23% tax hike. The federal government needs to listen to Ontarians and get rid of the regressive tax now.

Unlike the NDP and the Liberal members in this Legislature, our government will not stop fighting until the carbon tax is eliminated once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to protect the people of this province and in my riding?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the great member, who does such an outstanding job standing up for the people in her riding. Our government has taken a responsible approach, actually, since forming government six years ago—one that actually makes life more affordable in the face of the carbon tax.

Interjections.

Hon. Todd Smith: The member of the Liberal Party over here continues to talk about his cap-and-trade program and alluding to the fact that it won't have any impact on the people. Well, we ran a campaign—and the Premier was leading that campaign—back in 2018, where we promised to cap taxes and trade Kathleen Wynne. That's exactly what we did, and his party has been paying the price ever since: seven seats, eight seats, nine seats—you can count them up on two hands, Mr. Speaker—because the people of Ontario have rejected the increased way of life that comes with electing a Liberal government.

The people in Ottawa are finally feeling the pinch; the people here should be realizing it too. Stand—

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

The next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: On Friday, the Premier said that fourplexes are “off the table” because he is concerned about nearby neighbours shouting and screaming about traffic and shade. The Conservatives have spent the last six years accusing everyone in this room of being NIMBYs when the real NIMBY is sitting right there in that chair. The Premier is sending a very clear message—a very clear message—that first-time homebuyers don't deserve to live in certain neighbourhoods.

So my question is to the Premier: Can this government reverse course and allow fourplexes, as-of-right, in their upcoming housing bill?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, there is no law that forbids municipalities from having this type of

development. But what we have said quite clearly is that we will continue to work with our municipal partners to ensure that we meet the goals that we've set with respect to housing, but overwhelmingly, Speaker, what we have heard from our stakeholders, from municipal partners and from those people who actually build homes, is that the real problem is the infrastructure deficit that was left behind by the previous Liberal government.

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We have looked at that and we have said that although we have been asking—every single provincial Premier across this country has been asking the federal government to redirect funds into infrastructure. Because they have refused, we are going to go it alone, Mr. Speaker, because we're not interested in building hundreds of homes, we're interested in building millions of homes for the people of the province of Ontario, and the only way you will do that is if you put infrastructure on the ground to unleash the building of millions of homes in every part of the province, and that's what we're doing.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: This government cut \$9 billion in infrastructure funding because of Bill 23, and that's on you.

My question is back to the Premier. Mississauga, under former Mayor Crombie, was denied funding by this government because they failed to meet their housing targets. Now, we've learned that the federal government is looking at denying the Conservative government funding because they failed to meet their affordable housing targets. We are on track to lose \$357 million in federal funding because the Conservatives couldn't get their act together to build enough affordable housing.

My question is simple: Can this government present a credible plan to build enough affordable housing to address our affordable housing crisis?

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Surely the member knows that affordable housing in the province of Ontario is done by our municipal partners through service managers. In fact, the province of Ontario—through its partnership with municipalities, which is the law of the province—has constructed over 11,000 units of affordable housing, which the federal minister has rejected and said, “No, it doesn't count.” The federal minister has said, “No, long-term-care homes that are subsidized don't count. No, student housing doesn't count.”

At every turn, the people of the province of Ontario had been making investments and the federal government has unilaterally decided to cut funding to the province of Ontario. They are treating Ontario differently than any other province, and that is a hallmark of this federal government—they pit one region against another.

So, I say to the member this: If you want the \$350 million, if you want the \$400 million, then get off your

backside and have those members do something: call their partners in Ottawa and—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. The next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. People are sick and tired of this government's failure to address the housing crisis, which is the primary driver of the affordability crisis. Rents are sky-high and young people are wondering if they'll ever be able to afford to own a home. And now the Premier says no to legalizing missing middle homes, no to the fastest way of increasing housing supply where infrastructure already exists, no to homes that ordinary people can afford in the communities they love.

So I say to the Premier: Build homes people can afford. Legalize missing middle homes province-wide. The Premier has a choice. He can either choose to be Premier NIMBY, or he can choose to say yes to removing the barriers to housing. Which one will he choose today?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Premier and this caucus will choose to be the caucus that delivers 1.5 million homes, Mr. Speaker. You know how? By investing in infrastructure. We have an infrastructure deficit across this province that we inherited from the previous Liberal government.

In fact, the mayor of Guelph, who I met with just last week, said the number one obstacle to building homes in his community is the lack of sewer and water in that community. In Niagara region, the lack of sewer and water is holding up the development of thousands of homes across the spectrum, Mr. Speaker.

When I go to every community across this province, they say, “You can choose to build hundreds of homes, or you can choose to build millions of homes.” Millions of homes come with sewer and water, and that is why we are doubling down on the things that actually get homes built.

I will let them talk about pie-in-the-sky discussions on how you get things done. We'll get it done because we'll put the investments in place to get it—

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Respectfully, to the minister: He's always welcome to come to Guelph and give us money for meeting our housing targets.

But here's the bottom line: This government took \$5.1 billion for infrastructure away from municipalities. They've given half back. That will not get the job done, especially when the Premier says no to building homes where the infrastructure already exists.

We know that the cheapest and fastest way to increase housing supply is to build missing middle homes where we already have infrastructure. As a matter of fact, if only

18% of single-family homes became a fourplex, that would be two million homes where we already have infrastructure. So the government needs to say yes to more homes that people can afford, yes to more choices, yes to vibrant communities.

So the question is, will they say yes to removing the barriers to missing middle homes province-wide?

Hon. Paul Calandra: There's a plan: So let's tax the people who build homes even more—because somehow that will magically get more homes built.

Let's be very clear what the opposition is talking about: They are talking about building four-storey buildings in communities that were not built to handle that, in communities that don't have schools, in communities that don't have parking. What we're saying is that we trust our municipal partners to understand where it is best to meet the housing challenges and targets that we have set.

In Guelph, in his own community, they said the number one obstacle is sewer and water capacity. So when the members opposite talk, what they're really saying is that they don't actually want to meet the targets. They're the ones who want to stop homes from being built. They are terrorized by the fact we're going to put billions of dollars of infrastructure in the ground that will help us build 1.5 million homes across the province. We'll get it done, and we won't allow—

Interjections.

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

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. Unlike other parts of our province, the north faces unique barriers regarding fuel costs. Northern residents rely more heavily on their vehicles to go to work, to visit family and friends and to run their daily errands. The carbon tax is negatively impacting these communities as they're hit hardest at the gas pumps.

It's disgraceful that the federal government is forcing this burdensome tax on the people who need financial relief the most. And it's also disgraceful that the Liberals and the NDP in this Legislature continue to downplay the impact of the carbon tax on individuals and families in northern Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House why northern and Indigenous communities in Ontario cannot afford the federal carbon tax?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for the question. No doubt, we live in big country out there in northern Ontario, and it costs a lot to get around.

Just this weekend, I read a post from the member from Kiiwetinoong. He pointed out that a fruit salad costs \$30.35. We learned that butter is \$8 a pound, flour more than \$25 for 10 kilograms. These are all double the cost that we would pay here in southern Ontario, and those prices are already high.

Now, I don't want to refute the member's notion that the grocery stores up there, including the Northern Store,

have a peculiar pricing model, but there is no dispute about the fact that it's the cost of transporting those goods and the carbon tax that's embedded in it that is driving those costs up. When communities are asking for upgrades to roads, to build bridges and infrastructure, they're facing a 25% cost increase, and that's unacceptable.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for that response. The previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, neglected the north. In fact, the Liberal member referred to it as "no man's land." Now, at a time when the carbon tax is making everything more costly, the NDP and the Liberal members in this Legislature continue to ignore the needs of northern and Indigenous communities. That is shameful.

1130

While our government continues to take leadership in addressing Ontarians' affordability concerns, we need all parties in this Legislature to do the same. Speaker, can the minister please explain the detrimental effects that the carbon tax is having on the people, communities and businesses in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: When the Minister of Energy and I sat down with a community leader from way up north, the first thing he wanted to express was his concern about further increases to diesel fuel, which is the source of energy for that community.

I was in Ottawa last week, speaking to some of my federal counterparts. Tone deaf is the feeling I left with—perplexing. How is it that the province of Ontario, perhaps advancing the single biggest environmental policy as a sub-sovereign government, from earth to electric vehicles and mines to motors—this amazing, incredible opportunity for a fully integrated supply chain that will reduce GHG emissions, yet a carbon tax is going to be slapped on every single aspect of the production of those critical minerals to make this world a greener place to live. It's unacceptable on every level, and it's time to just scrap the tax.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Under this government, a quarter of elementary schools and a third of high schools are facing daily teacher shortages. Nearly half have daily EA shortages. Instead of fixing the problem, the government invested millions of dollars to try and convince parents that everything is okay in our schools, with ads that the Auditor General said are too partisan and not supported by any evidence. Why does the Minister of Education think it's okay to spend on partisan ads but not invest in our kids?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is ironic to get a question from New Democrats or Liberals on the teacher supply issue when they opposed a common-sense provision supported

by every trustee and principals' association to allow and leverage retired educators in the front of class.

It isn't surprising, in a way, because this is part of a track record of opposition to common sense. They opposed 3,000 more front-line teachers and 7,500 more education workers in our schools today. They opposed a provision that cut certification timelines by 50% in Bill 98, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act. Of course they opposed the removal of regulation 274, the punitive, regressive regulation on seniority hiring, because they conceived it.

It is our Premier who is standing up to ensure we have qualified educators to go back to basics in Ontario schools. We'll take no lessons from the members opposite, who have opposed every step of progress on the way, instead of standing up for quality education in this province.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: If the minister was actually doing a good job, he wouldn't need to spend millions trying to convince parents he is. Under this minister, the Auditor General has called out the Ministry of Education multiple times for partisan ads that are attempting to foster a positive impression of the government. Our kids don't have access to social workers, EAs, qualified teachers or even school buses, and yet the minister is running ads to congratulate himself on a job well done.

Will the Minister of Education support the NDP motion today to ban partisan advertising, like his party promised in 2018?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are proud as a government to have delivered deals with every teachers' union in this province, providing stability in the classrooms for two million children. We're proud to have increased mental health funding by 550% compared to the Liberals. We're proud to have invested \$15 billion to build schools over the next decade, after the Liberals closed 600. We are proud to finally see improvements in reading, writing and math in every single grade—3, 6 and 9—of assessment because our government is actually investing in the foundations of learning, going back to the basics.

We are making a difference. We know there is more to do, but the most important that we can do, as parliamentarians, is to stand up to ensure children remain in school without disruption. And that is exactly what our Premier, exactly what our government is doing: ensuring stability, hope and opportunity for the next generation of students in this province.

TAXATION

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question today is for my good friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Many farmers need to use massive fans to dry down their crops, so that they can store them over time. If not properly dried, that grain or corn will grow mould. A lot of those fans are powered by natural gas, which, of course, is subject to a carbon tax. As a result, many farmers in this province, like my friend Max Kaiser in Greater Napanee,

are having to pay an additional cost of \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year just in tax.

The hard-working farmers in Ontario are vital to our growth and our economic prosperity. They should not be punished by this horrific, regressive and harmful tax. Our government must continue to stand with them and oppose this disastrous tax. Can the minister please explain how the federal carbon tax is negatively affecting all of Ontario's farmers?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the question from the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington because he does really get it, because he's working and listening with farmers every day, which I wish the federal Liberals and provincial Liberals would do as well. If they did, they would actually be hearing first-hand how the carbon tax is causing everything to go up with regard to production.

Just on Thursday, I was at the Christian Farmers annual AGM and the chair actually asked me to thank the Premier for listening. To give you an example, grain farmers have estimated that by the year 2030, the grain farmers across the province of Ontario will be paying \$2.7 billion in carbon—

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the amazing minister for her response. Carbon taxes are harming hard-working individuals, businesses and farmers across this province. Since the introduction of the carbon tax, production costs for our farmers, our greenhouse growers and our food processors have risen substantially. The delivery of every single consumer good in our province, particularly processed and fresh foods, is being affected by one of the most economically harmful taxes our province has ever seen.

Ontario farmers need to be able to produce food at a competitive rate or the industry's export opportunities will be hindered and our own cost of groceries will continue to climb.

Can the minister please explain why our food producers are being punished by this carbon tax?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, with all honesty, the Liberal ideology that's driving the provincial party over here in the van that goes to Ottawa to support the Prime Minister and his ridiculous tax actually is doing nothing but to drive up the cost of food.

Just on Saturday, I was at the Grey County Federation of Agriculture meeting. The apple farmers from the Georgian Bay fruit growers specifically asked that the federal government pass C-234 immediately, because it too is raising the cost of cooling their buildings so that they can keep apples year-round for Ontario consumption.

Moreover, though, Speaker, you need to know the greenhouse growers have been charged an additional \$16 million in 2023, but by 2030, when the carbon tax triples, they're going to be paying almost \$90,000 an acre.

Again, do the honourable thing once and for all and tell those—

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

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care has informed me he has a point of order.

Hon. Stan Cho: A point of order on two big milestones this morning on the government benches: a 30th birthday and a 40th birthday. The 30th, of course, is to Minister Michael Ford, and the 40th to the great parliamentary assistant to long-term care, John Jordan. Happy birthday, gentlemen.

DEFERRED VOTES

STORMWATER FLOOD
PREVENTION ACT, 2024LOI DE 2024
SUR LA PRÉVENTION DES INONDATIONS
DUES AUX EAUX PLUVIALES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to implement the Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual and to report on stormwater management guidelines periodically / Projet de loi 168, Loi mettant en oeuvre le Manuel d'orientation sur la gestion des eaux pluviales par un aménagement à faible impact et visant la rédaction de rapports périodiques sur les lignes directrices en matière de gestion des eaux pluviales.

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

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

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

On March 21, 2024, Mrs. McCrimmon moved second reading of Bill 168, An Act to implement the Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual and to report on stormwater management guidelines periodically.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hazell, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Jama, Sarah	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Karpoche, Bhutula	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanhof, John
Fraser, John	McCrimmon, Karen	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 34; the nays are 66.

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

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FEWER BACKLOGS AND LESS
PARTISAN TRIBUNALS ACT, 2024
LOI DE 2024 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DES RETARDS ET DE LA PARTISANERIE
DANS LES TRIBUNAUX

Mr. Hsu moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to establish the Adjudicative Tribunal Justice Council and to improve the transparency, independence and capacities of administrative tribunals / Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à créer le Conseil de justice régissant les tribunaux décisionnels et à améliorer la transparence, l'indépendance et les capacités des tribunaux décisionnels.

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 for Kingston and the Islands like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Ted Hsu: This bill, which has the short title, Fewer Backlogs and Less Partisan Tribunals Act, would, if passed, establish an independent adjudicative tribunal justice council to see that governments fulfill their obligations as set out in the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act, 2009.

The council will monitor the appointment, operational and severance policies of Ontario's tribunals. It will have proactive approval, reporting and investigative powers, and its chair will be an officer of the Legislative Assembly.

Ontarians deserve accessible, timely, expert, inclusive, impartial and just resolutions to everyday legal disputes, provided by tribunals such as the Landlord and Tenant Board. If governments stop leaving vacancies while waiting for "like-minded" or patronage appointees to tribunals, we'll be better served. You don't have to look further than the distress caused by long delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Everyday justice has to work—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Introduction of bills?

QUI VIVE ISLAND CLUB INC. ACT, 2024

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Qui Vive Island Club Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

PETITIONS

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled "Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers' collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the withdrawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute, that is, the ability to apply economic pressure;

"Whereas the use of scab labour contributes to higher-conflict picket lines, jeopardizes workplace safety, destabilizes normalized labour relations between workers and their employers and removes the employer incentive to negotiate and settle fair contracts; and

"Whereas strong and fair anti-scab legislation will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less hostile picket lines;

"Whereas similar legislation has been introduced in British Columbia and Quebec with no increases to the number of strike or lockout days;

"Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under an NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the Harris Conservatives;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout;

"To prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers;

"To include significant financial penalties for employers who defy the anti-scab legislation; and

"To support Ontario's workers and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like the Ontario NDP Bill 90, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023."

I support this petition. I will affix my signature and provide it to page Krishna for the table.

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I want to thank Sally in my office for the work on this.

"Whereas in 2015 the Liberal Party of Ontario with their leader Kathleen Wynne who was the Premier of Ontario at the time announced that Ontario would implement a cap-and-trade carbon tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario began their cap-and-trade carbon tax scheme on January 1, 2017; and

"Whereas this cap-and-trade carbon tax scheme immediately raised the price of every consumable product in Ontario; and

"Whereas during the provincial election in 2018 the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario campaigned against this unfair tax on the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the newly elected Doug Ford Progressive Conservative government of Ontario repealed this unfair tax on the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas in 2018, the federal Liberal government passed the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act; and

"Whereas on January 1, 2019, the federal government's output-based pricing system for large emitters came into force; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario on fuels came into effect on April 1, 2019; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario will rise by an additional 23% on April 1, 2024; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario is a tax on the factors of production (i.e., labour, capital, and intermediate inputs). Intermediate inputs are goods and services (such as energy) used in producing goods and services; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario will raise the intermediate input cost and thereby increase production or business costs. Intermediate input costs play an essential role in most businesses, affecting the final price at which goods and services will be sold to customers, which in turn influences the business' profitability; and

"Whereas when the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario is applied to refineries, utility companies, and other intermediaries that supply electricity, fuel, and other energy that industries use. The tax then translates into higher fuel prices, which in turn increases input costs for other industries; and

"Whereas the production of goods and services necessitates businesses input costs which include capital, goods, services, energy, wages, and salaries, production

costs will increase by more than 10% in the utilities industry; and

“Whereas in 2023 Ontario’s agriculture sector 6.7% of production costs are for energy; and

“Whereas in 2023 Ontario’s forestry sector 7.7% of production costs are from energy; and

“Whereas Ontario’s electric power generation, transmission, and distribution sector will see a cost increase of almost 11.8% due to the federal carbon tax forced onto the people of Ontario. (Electric power generation uses natural gas in the generation mix, which accounts for 5.8% of the industry’s inputs.) At 62%, iron and steel manufacturing will see the highest cost increase of all industries from the carbon tax; and

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“Whereas the federal carbon tax is costing Ontarians, on average almost \$500 per year, increasing annually until 2030, when the average cost for an Ontario household will be faced with an annual federal carbon tax bill of over \$1,416 annually; and

“Whereas there is a federal fuel charge that applies to all purchases of different fuels such as gasoline, propane, and diesel, this hurts the daily aspect of life on Ontarians especially those residents of northern Ontario and Indigenous communities where prices are significantly higher than elsewhere across the province; and

“Whereas the Chiefs of Ontario have been calling on the federal government to consult with them on the impact that this harmful tax is having on all of their communities; and

“Whereas due to the federal government’s failure to address the First Nations’ concerns, the Chiefs of Ontario have filed for judicial review into the application of the carbon tax in Indigenous communities; and...

“Whereas those in northern Ontario do not have a choice when it comes to how they heat their homes, they are using home heating fuels such as natural gas or propane; and...

“Whereas home heating is not a luxury and Ontarians should not be unfairly forced to pay additional costs to stay warm during the winter months; and

“Whereas the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer just concluded that the federal government finances will increase the deficit by \$5.2 billion in 2030-31; and

“Whereas higher federal carbon tax will have a negative impact by shrinking the economy by 1.8%; and

“Whereas a higher federal carbon tax will have a negative impact on approximately 185,000 jobs across the country; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax has contributed to inflation, high taxes and big spending, which is leading to higher interest rates and is forcing thousands of people out of the housing market; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax has shown to have a significant impact on inflation, which accounts for a 16% rise in inflation last year alone; and

“Whereas truckers in the province of Ontario are facing an additional cost of about 17.5 cents per litre; and

“Whereas this increase in fuel costs will translate to an annual cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000; and

“Whereas small businesses across the province of Ontario, especially those with fleets of trucks, the federal carbon tax could add up to over \$100,000 annually; and

“Whereas this increase in cost will lead to layoffs or forcing those small businesses to close their doors permanently; and

“Whereas 60% of households in Ontario pay more in carbon taxes than they receive in rebates. This figure could be increased by 80% by 2026; and

“Whereas farmers are the experts on improving climate impact on their farms, and the federal carbon tax penalizes those farmers who are working hard to create greener farming; and

“Whereas since its introduction, the production costs for farmers, greenhouse growers and food processors have increased significantly. The delivery of every single consumer good in our province, particularly fresh and processed food, is being impacted by this punitive tax; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax is driving up the cost of transporting agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer and packaging; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax is driving up the cost of transporting fruits and vegetables to market; and

“Whereas rural Ontario is home to more than 2.5 million people and as the federal carbon price rises so will the cost of food and energy; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax is not working to reduce emissions. Instead, it is simply driving up the costs of goods, services, and other essential items for the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas in the natural resources sector, the federally imposed carbon tax has had an impact on the cost of products such as sand, stone, lumber, and other building materials” needed to build schools, hospitals, homes and roads; and

“Whereas not only does the federal carbon tax make raw materials more expensive, but it also increases costs across the entire supply chain; and

“Whereas small businesses contribute significantly to the federal carbon tax revenues, up to 40%, but receive very small portions of it in rebates; and

“Whereas the federal government has decided to cut the carbon tax rebate for small businesses from 9% to 5%; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that \$8 billion will be collected from small businesses and only \$35 million returned; and

“Whereas for most businesses—56% of them in fact—will have no choice but to pass on those increased prices to the consumer because of the federal carbon tax and the HST to the consumers ... ; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax is also affecting Ontario’s public safety; and

“Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police alone have spent almost \$4 million on carbon tax; and

“Whereas the \$4 million spent on carbon tax could have put 40 new officers directly on the front line; and

“Whereas that is only the costs borne by the OPP and not the other first responders such as ambulance paramedics and firefighters that are on the roads multiple times a day requiring them to fill up their vehicles; and

“Whereas the federal government’s carbon tax has impacted Ontario’s public hospitals by increasing annual heating costs by \$27.2 million for the year of 2022 alone; and

“Whereas that \$27.2 million would be better spent on front-line services that improve the health care for the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas without the carbon tax hospitals would have been able to offer an additional 104,615 MRI operating hours, providing scans for an additional 157,000 patients;

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

“To continue to urge the federal Liberal government to repeal the unnecessary increase in the federal carbon tax scheduled for April 1, 2024, imposed on the people of the province of Ontario.”

I fully endorse this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Tyler.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition certified by the Clerk calling for paid sick days. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is overwhelming evidence to show that paid sick days significantly reduce the spread of infectious disease, promote preventive health care and reduce health care system costs; and

“Whereas 60% of Ontario workers do not have access to paid sick days, and cannot afford to lose their pay if they are sick; and

“Whereas low-wage and precarious workers are the most likely to be denied paid sick days; and

“Whereas enabling workers to stay home when they are sick without losing pay helps limit the spread of illness in the workplace and allows workers to recover faster; and

“Whereas during an infectious disease emergency, it is unreasonable and dangerous to public health to make workers choose between protecting their communities and providing for their families; and

“Whereas legislating paid sick days through the Employment Standards Act, with transitional financial support for struggling small businesses, will ensure that workers have seamless, uninterrupted access to their pay;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately amend the Employment Standards Act to provide Ontario workers with 10 employer-paid days of personal emergency leave each year and additional paid sick leave in the case of an infectious disease emergency.”

I fully support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it with page Jack to the table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: “Whereas Alzheimer’s disease affects over 250,000 people in the province of Ontario;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition, and I sign my signature to it and give it to page Noah.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I move the following motion:

Whereas in 2017 the Auditor General found that the Liberal government spent \$17.4 million on partisan ads with the primary goal of fostering a better impression of the governing party; and

Whereas this is the result of loopholes created under the Liberal government that watered down advertising rules and weakened the Auditor General’s oversight of government advertising; and

Whereas the Auditor General found that, in 2023, the current government used the same loopholes to spend \$24.89 million on partisan ad campaigns, including \$20 million to promote the Ministry of Health; and

Whereas the current Minister of Health introduced a bill in 2018 entitled End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act, and that bill has been reintroduced by a member of the official opposition;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the Ontario government to pass the official opposition’s Bill 176, End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act, 2024, to close the loopholes and ensure that taxpayer dollars are not spent on ads intended to foster a positive impression of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day number 3.

I recognize the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, people deserve a government that's putting every dollar to work making their life easier. They deserve quality health care that's there when they need it, housing they can afford in the communities they want to live in, and strong public services that make those communities great places to live, work and raise a family. But right now, people across this province are losing hope that these basic expectations are going to be met.

After six years of this Conservative government, life is only getting harder and more expensive. Instead of rising to the challenge, fixing what they've broken and taking on the big issues our province is facing, this Conservative government is spending millions of taxpayer dollars on partisan ads telling people just how good they have it. They are blasting the airwaves with expensive, highly produced ads that have only one purpose: to promote the Conservative Party. But Ontarians aren't buying it, and neither are we.

That's why today, the official opposition NDP is seeking to put an end to taxpayer-funded partisan ads and to put that money to work hiring health care workers, building homes and making life more affordable for the people of this province.

Before we go any further, Speaker, I'd like to take us back a few years, to 2017. You'll remember this as the dying days of the previous Liberal government—a government that was mired in scandal and deeply unpopular after having privatized Hydro One, cut hospital funding and overseen the expansion of hallway medicine. It was not a good time for Ontario; that's for sure. In fact, the failures and misguided priorities of the Liberal government were what drove me to seek office—certainly, what I was seeing in our schools and in health care.

As their popularity was plummeting and the polls started to look really bleak, they spent big on massive ad campaigns that sought to turn the tide of public opinion. They promoted programs that didn't even exist yet in some cases. And they did it all not with money from the Ontario Liberal Party, but with taxpayer funds—government funds.

How did they get away with it? Well, guess what? They changed the law to allow them to get away with that. In 2015, they removed the Auditor General's authority to review all government advertising and to stop ads that were deemed too partisan; that is, ads that don't inform or share information about government services but instead just seek to create this positive impression of the governing party.

New Democrats took up the issue, and we called out the Liberals. We called them out for rigging the ad review system so that it would help them out. And we had an unlikely ally, I would say, in the Conservatives, who, at the time, were the official opposition.

Leading the charge, in fact, was none other than the current Deputy Premier, the MPP for Dufferin–Caledon. Here's what she had to say at the time: “The government

is spending taxpayer dollars on an advertising campaign on their latest hydro scheme in an attempt to save their electoral fortunes....

“The Auditor General has said that these recent hydro advertisements would not have been approved under old legislation.

“In the past two years, the government has spent nearly six million taxpayer dollars on a series of advertising campaigns the Auditor General said ‘provided viewers with no useful information’ and ‘could be seen as self-congratulatory and in some cases, misleading.’

“It is shameful that this government refuses to respect taxpayer dollars and restore the Auditor General's authority to review and approve government advertising.”

Strong words.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the deputy House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: In standing order section 25(d), it should be noted by the Speaker that, in the opinion of the Speaker herself, members who refer to at length or in debates, or read unnecessarily from verbatim reports from Hansard or any other document should be discouraged, discontinued and not used. The member opposite should know that rule.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Stop the clock.

We'll have the leader continue.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I understand why it's uncomfortable for the members opposite. Clearly, when I'm reading back the words of their own Deputy Premier at a time when they're spending, really, record numbers on partisan ads paid for by taxpayer dollars and we're out there calling them out for this and speaking up for responsibility on the part of government, for non-partisanship—the things that people don't want to see a government doing: wasting government dollars, taxpayer dollars, on propaganda. I understand why this is so uncomfortable for the members opposite.

I will continue. Those were some strong words—wouldn't you say, everybody—from the Deputy Premier. I mean, my goodness.

The member from Dufferin–Caledon even tabled a bill to reverse those changes and restore the auditor's authority to act in the public interest.

Later on, they went even further: They made it a part of their platform in 2018. In their platform, they said they were going to change things. But something happened. They got into power. That's right. They got into power, and then they got into trouble. That's what happened. A dismal record on housing, court battles with nurses and education workers, stag-and-doe deals, RCMP criminal investigations—suddenly, those partisan ads don't look like such a bad idea, do they?

A freedom-of-information request by CBC that was just released today found that this Conservative government spent nearly \$8 million of public money—your dollars—on a glitzy ad campaign. That's the one that's called *It's Happening Here*. And I remind everybody: That aired

during the Super Bowl, during the Grammy Awards, during an NHL All-Star Game. Was it paid for by the Conservative Party? No, it was not; it was paid for by you—by you. The people of Ontario paid for that. And just for context, people should know that the Canadian Super Bowl ads cost about \$250,000 to \$400,000 per spot. That's what this government is spending your hard-earned dollars on. The Conservatives want you to think that they're—and we heard it this morning when I asked the Premier questions. The Conservative government wants you to think that they're spending it on ads to attract investment. Really? Nothing in those ads says that, first of all. Nothing in that ad actually speaks to, "Come to Ontario. Live in Ontario."

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More importantly, they don't talk about any of the services. That's really a critical piece of what a government ad should be doing. It should be improving people's lives by providing information that they need—not a partisan puff piece, not a vanity ad to serve the interests of the Premier.

These ads don't inform the public of new programs. They don't inform you of new services. They simply sell an idea that things are going just fine—no need to worry about inconvenient facts, like the 2.3 million Ontarians who don't have a family doctor. By the way, that's a number that is just increasing and increasing, along with wait times and wait-lists.

But the ad buys are increasing too.

The Auditor General's 2023 annual report found that the Conservative government spent \$20.8 million, 72% of their total ad budget for 2023, on a health care campaign—many of us will recall this—called Building a Better Health Care System. I remember the Auditor General's report, where they looked at that ad campaign and they said this: "The ads we took issue with included statements such as 'we're reducing wait times for surgeries,' 'we're building 3,000 more hospital beds' and 'we're adding and upgrading nearly 60,000 long-term care beds'"—it defies belief, but, more importantly, "without context or evidence to back up these claims."

At a time when people are losing their access to primary care, when people are experiencing dangerous wait times for treatments and diagnostic checkups, when rural emergency rooms are shutting down and nurses are leaving the profession in droves—and I will point out, as well, we are spending more than \$1 billion now on private agency nurses in both long-term care and hospitals; we are hemorrhaging our health care dollars—what does this government decide to do? They don't try to solve the problem. No. They just put out some fancy ads to tell people, "Guess what? That's not what's really happening. Everything is okay."

So when you're sitting there in the emergency room waiting room with your sick child, for six hours, for eight hours, don't worry, because you can look up at the screen above you and see an ad telling you, "Do you know what? You're wrong. It's okay." Well, it's not okay, and the government opposite knows it.

We've gone ahead and we've tabled the exact same bill that the Deputy Premier tabled back in 2017—

Mr. John Vanthof: Word for word.

Ms. Marit Stiles:—word for word, yes. And with today's motion, we are asking the House to not only vote in favour of it but to fast-track it.

Let's get something done for the people of Ontario. Let's spend their tax dollars responsibly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I listened closely to the debate this afternoon on opposition day motion number 3. As the parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, I appreciate the opportunity to respond on behalf of our government.

I also appreciate the motion's reference to \$17.4 million in partisan advertising under the former Liberal government. As some members will recall, the Auditor General, at the time, concluded that the Liberal government's advertising campaigns on everything from hydro rates and cap-and-trade to education and retirement were not just partisan, but they "did not provide viewers with any useful information." Often, she concluded that the Liberal government's ads were actually misleading. For example, the Wynne government spent over \$8 million on ads for their proposed retirement plan that never actually came into effect. As the Auditor General wrote, these ads often "overlapped with Ontario Liberal Party ads," and they went on air in 2015, during a federal election campaign that included disagreements between Premier Wynne and Prime Minister Harper.

When this government was elected, we cut provincial spending on advertising by about 75%, from \$62.6 million in 2017-18 to \$16.4 million in 2018-19.

But all members should recognize that the government's advertising can also play an important role in informing the public about policies and services that affect their everyday lives. This was never more clear than during the pandemic. And I'm sure I don't have to remind the members about the early days of COVID-19, four years ago.

With the pandemic behind us, as I begin my remarks, I want to give members another more recent example. Opposition day motion number 3 says that the Auditor General found that the government spent "\$24.89 million on partisan ad campaigns, including \$20 million to promote the Ministry of Health." But this includes ads with very important information about new programs and services, including, for example, allowing pharmacists to treat people for 19 common conditions like acne, pink eye, and yeast infections. Since the beginning of last year, over 700,000 people have received treatment at 4,600 pharmacies, and that's 94% of all pharmacies in Ontario. Justin Bates, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association, said that this policy is having a "tremendous impact," making it easier for Ontarians to get the care they need. It's helping to free up family doctors and hospitals so they can deal with more complex conditions. This has been a great success, but it never would have been possible without

government advertising to ensure that the people know about the new policies and the new services available at their local pharmacies.

Just in case the members opposite missed it, the Auditor General actually included one of the government's ads about this program on the cover of her annual review of government advertising in December 2023.

The Leader of the Opposition's motion claims that the Auditor General found this was a partisan campaign to promote the Ministry of Health, but respectfully, this wasn't a partisan campaign, and the Auditor General did not find that it was. She actually wrote the opposite. On page 3 of her review, she wrote that most of the health care ads she reviewed included "new information about health care services." The goal was not to promote the Ministry of Health, but to educate and inform the public about the important new health care services.

Speaker, at this point, I believe it would be helpful for all members to provide some background on the legislation, regulation and policies that govern all provincial advertising in Ontario so that we can all understand what is permitted and what it is not.

Let's start at the beginning. My ministry, the Treasury Board Secretariat, is responsible for the Government Advertising Act. TBS is also responsible for the bulk media buy fund. And finally, Supply Ontario, an agency of TBS, is responsible for the procurement directive on advertising, public and media relations, and creative communication services.

The Government Advertising Act defines government advertising as advertising paid for by a government office, including ads that are published in a newspaper or magazine, displayed on a billboard or on public transit, displayed digitally, or broadcast on radio or TV or in a movie theatre.

Speaker, let me be clear: Governments of all parties have paid for advertising to educate the public about new programs, plans, services or policies. It is important that the people of Ontario know what the government is doing, especially when there are changes to programs and services or changes to their rights and responsibilities.

Advertising can also be used to encourage behaviour in the public interest or to discourage behaviour that may be harmful, and to promote our province as the best place in the world to invest, live and work—"A place to stand, a place to grow." Do you remember, Speaker—some members may not—that this piece of government advertising, which was produced by the government of John Robarts, actually won an Academy Award in 1968?

This isn't a partisan issue. All governments have good reasons for advertising in Ontario that are a prudent and responsible use of the public purse. For example, recent provincial advertising has educated people about actions you can take to prepare for emergencies and the importance of improving accessibility. It has also promoted Ontario as a tourist destination for people outside the province and for people outside Canada.

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The Government Advertising Act includes very tight restrictions on the content of these government ads to

ensure they do not benefit any politician or political party. Some members might benefit from a review of these rules. Section 6 of the act prevents any advertising that includes the name, voice or image of a member of this House unless the main audience is outside Ontario. Ads that include the name or logo of a recognized party are not allowed, and neither is criticism of any recognized party or any member of this House. The act even prevents the use of colours associated with the governing party.

Speaker, without even a single exception, this government has followed these rules. The Auditor General has reviewed our ads, as required by the act, and confirmed that they all comply with the rules.

The government has also ensured that our advertising is delivered in the most efficient and cost-effective way to maximize value for taxpayers. It is important for us to understand this process. When any ministry requests advertising, there is a comprehensive approval process. It begins with the fiscal planning process that I spoke about earlier this month. Line ministries create advertising proposals with the timing, content and budget for their proposed ad campaigns. Then, the Cabinet Office plans and develops all advertising for the year, including a central marketing plan, with contributions from all line ministries. Members can imagine the coordination that this takes, but it is necessary to prevent ministries from competing with each other when buying media time, in order to get the best value for our tax dollars. In today's media environment, it is absolutely necessary to avoid a situation where there are too many government ads at any given time.

Cabinet Office also helps to find similar priorities between ministries and avoid duplication in our ads, which generates savings for the province. The central marketing plan allocates funds from the bulk media buy account, based on the needs of the line ministries. However, as we saw during the pandemic, sometimes new and urgent advertising campaigns are proposed during the fiscal year, and these are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. I want to thank my friend Michelle DiEmanuele and her team at the Cabinet Office for all the work they do on this every year, including work with our team at the Treasury Board, to ensure that funding is available from the bulk media buy fund.

Earlier, I mentioned Supply Ontario. I want to take a moment to outline their important role in this process as well. As the new home for the procurement of provincial advertising, Supply Ontario maintains lists of approved vendors for advertising, to help promote openness, fairness and transparency. Every vendor that we use must be on one of these lists. And for larger ad campaigns, these vendors are invited to bid in a competitive procurement. This is done to ensure that every campaign and every ad meets all government requirements.

As I mentioned earlier, the Auditor General also has an important role in this process. Sections 4 and 5 of the Government Advertising Act require the government to submit most ads to the Auditor General for review and approval before they can be used. There have been several

cases when the Auditor General found ads had to be changed in order to comply with the act. But in each and every case, the minister made the required changes, and the new ads were approved. At this point, the minister can begin their campaign. Paid media space is purchased through the provincial media-buying agency of record. This agency of record is clearly checked to ensure it maintains the highest standards of ethics and professionalism. Once the campaign is complete, the minister prepares a request for funding from the bulk media buy fund of the TBS, which supports the purchase of media time, creative research and production costs, to pay for provincial government advertising, while ensuring value for money.

Speaker, I want to raise a small but important point here. While the bulk media buy fund supports most expenses for government advertising, there are also a limited number of revenue-generating ad programs that are funded outside the bulk media buy fund. This includes advertising related to Ontario Parks or provincial tourist attractions or events, plus the advertising of provincial agencies like the LCBO, Metrolinx, and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. These organizations oversee, conduct, procure and pay for their own advertising. Just to take one example, Metrolinx has a campaign now to raise awareness of the One Fare program, which is saving commuters an average of \$1,600 each year. However, all other advertising is reviewed by TBS. Any related financial documents are submitted to TBS, including every relevant invoice. The Treasury Board carefully examines all requests for government advertising funds based on the relevant legislation and policy. If approved, transfers from the fund are made by the Treasury Board.

Speaker, this process is not unique to Ontario. In fact, the centralized management of government advertising budgets is consistent with best practices in large organizations and governments around the world.

As I said, each and every advertising campaign has been subject to the same rules, and these rules have been followed without any exception.

At this point, I would like to provide some details about some of the advertising campaigns that we have funded, about how they all have an important, non-partisan purpose, and about how they follow all of the legislation and regulations that govern all provincial advertising.

Speaker, as we have said many times before, the health and safety of the people of Ontario is the government's highest priority.

Some members will recall returning to the House on this day, four years ago, to listen to Minister Rod Phillips speak about Ontario's first action plan on COVID-19. There was confusion everywhere. Many people didn't know where to turn for information they could trust. For this reason, some of this government's most important advertising campaigns were about urgent public health and safety information for all Ontarians. I'm very proud of the government's record on this. Provincial advertising helped Ontarians understand how vaccines would stop the spread of COVID-19, and it helped us achieve one of the highest

vaccination rates in the entire world. At the time, we were asked to provide proof of vaccination to enter certain buildings and events. As the members will recall, to make the process easier, we launched enhanced vaccination certificates with official QR codes and Verify Ontario, a free made-in-Ontario app, to make it more convenient to provide proof of vaccination while also protecting privacy. This was about keeping people safe. But for sure, for most Ontarians, it was a completely new experience, so public advertising was essential. Again, all of this advertising was reviewed and fully approved. And the results speak for themselves: This advertising helped to keep people safe during the pandemic.

But it is also important to make sure that the people of Ontario know that their government is working for them to build a stronger, better health care system. Ontarians deserve to know exactly how their tax dollars are being spent. That's why there was an ad campaign to inform the public about the province's work to hire more doctors and nurses, reduce surgical wait times, and support new hospital infrastructure projects. I know the members opposite don't like hearing this, but the numbers are worth repeating, because under this Premier, Ontario has a great story to tell. Provincial spending on health care and long-term care has increased from \$59 billion in 2017-18 to \$81 billion this year; that's an increase of 40%.

1350

As I said here just last week in our debate on the Supply Act, in my community of Mississauga-Lakeshore, funding for Trillium Health Partners has increased from \$821 million in 2018 to \$1.2 billion this year; that's an increase of almost 50% in five years.

We're investing over \$48 billion in the largest hospital building program in Canadian history, with the largest and most advanced hospital to be built in my riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore.

We're also investing \$6.4 billion to build and upgrade almost 60,000 long-term-care beds—the largest long-term-care building program in our history.

Last November, I helped open the largest long-term-care home in Ontario, for 632 residents in my community, at Wellbrook Place. We do everything big in Mississauga-Lakeshore. And again, with 632 long-term-care beds—that's more than the former Liberal government built from 2011 to 2018, in just one location.

And since 2018, we have added 10,400 new doctors and over 80,000 new nurses to the health care system across the province.

Madam Speaker, these are the facts. It is absolutely essential that all Ontarians understand the investments that their government is making in our public health care system. When some members of the opposition say that the government is starving our health care system, it is important that Ontarians understand that this simply isn't true.

Again, these ad campaigns have followed the strict approvals process that I've already outlined.

The Ministry of Health is not the only ministry that uses advertising to inform the public. The Minister of

Transportation has also used advertising campaigns like the Winter Safe Driving campaign to help save lives across the province. I'm sure members have noticed that although it is technically spring, drivers are still dealing with winter driving conditions in many parts of Ontario. Unfortunately, collisions on our roads are about 10% higher in the winter months compared to the rest of the year. The Winter Safe Driving campaign, which started on November 1 and wraps up at the end of March, was designed with the goal of reducing collisions, injuries and deaths on our roads. I think all members would agree this is a very important initiative. Among other things, the campaign promotes the Ontario 511 app.

I'm sure all members are aware, but just to reiterate, Ontario 511 is a phone app, a website, a social media account, and a toll-free bilingual hotline. It provides valuable real-time information on highways, construction, weather and traffic to help Ontario drivers safely plan their route. This service can be a real lifesaver, especially in any emergency. I know that the Commissioner of Emergency Management Ontario, who is actually my neighbour in the Whitney Block, agrees that Ontario 511 is a valuable tool. To promote it, the government has a comprehensive and bilingual campaign, including 18 digital displays, six online videos, four ads on a popular music platform, and two banner ads on YouTube. This campaign is still running now, so we don't have the results at the present time, but it is important for me to note that the most up-to-date information is used to evaluate all provincial ad campaigns after they are completed. Again, this comes down to fiscal responsibility and transparency. All campaigns supported with the taxpayers' money should be run in the most cost-efficient way possible.

It is also important that the people of Ontario know about some of the historic investments that the government is making in our transit and highway infrastructure, including the \$71 billion for transit and the \$28 billion for highways. These are historic investments.

And I just want to pause for a moment here to thank the federal government for cancelling their EA so we can get shovels in the ground on Highway 413.

I should also thank the Supreme Court, which found last year, in a 5-2 decision, that the federal Impact Assessment Act is unconstitutional.

Speaker, another important purpose of our government's advertising is to promote our province to investors around the world.

I would like to take an opportunity to talk about some of the great work that the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has done in this area. Four years ago, he created Invest Ontario to promote Ontario as open for business, attracting new investments and bringing thousands of well-paying jobs to communities across Ontario. To do this, Invest Ontario has used advertising around the world to promote the province and our amazing investment opportunities. And the results have been incredible.

I know the members opposite don't like hearing this, but this is worth repeating because this is great news for

this province. Under this Premier, the province has attracted over \$28 billion of new investment from global auto manufacturers in the last three years alone. Last year, in 2023, Ontario created more manufacturing jobs than all 50 US states combined. In fact, since 2018, Ontario has added over 715,000 new jobs. And I could go on.

I think it's fair to say that at least part of this progress is because of effective advertising campaigns from Invest Ontario. And the evidence supports this. Before their advertising campaigns began, the Ministry of Economic Development found that only 2% of international investors could name Ontario. Just to be clear, these valuable investors, who countries, states, and provinces around the world were trying to attract, could not even identify our province. But the latest numbers tell a very different story. In a survey during the ad campaign, these investors were 13% more likely to recognize Ontario as an attractive destination for auto sector investment, and an incredible 41% more likely to invest in Ontario.

So what happened? The answer is simple: Effective and efficient international advertising campaigns have raised awareness of Ontario as a great destination for international investment. And as I said, this awareness has translated into real investments in the future of this province, worth tens of billions of dollars, and thousands of new jobs.

Since 2020, Invest Ontario has secured \$2.4 billion in investment directly, creating over 2,600 jobs. And I believe this is just the beginning at Invest Ontario. Their 2024 International Foreign Direct Investment campaign has reached millions of potential decision-makers in six major international markets. These markets were chosen because they represent the greatest opportunity for large-scale investment in Ontario's key sectors: the auto and EV sector, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and critical technologies. The campaign was designed to use media platforms where senior decision-makers spend most of their time, including places like business class airport lounges and popular investment websites. The results of this most recent campaign are not available yet, but I believe it will build on the progress we have made so far, and I'm excited to see how Invest Ontario will continue to provide value through its cost-effective, targeted and carefully designed advertising campaigns.

1400

Speaker, I would like to thank all members for being here this afternoon and taking the time to listen to the government's response to opposition day motion number 3.

I'd just like to reiterate that this government's use of advertising is well within the requirements of the Government Advertising Act. All of the rules of financial oversight have been followed, without a single exception. It has been a pleasure for me to speak about the high standards of oversight and approval that each and every government advertising company must meet.

In closing, I also want to thank the Minister of Health, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and all

of our other colleagues, for the important advertising campaigns they put forward for the people of this great province of Ontario. I'm proud of all the work they're doing, and I'm certainly not going to apologize that we're making sure Ontario is well informed about how their government is working for them to build a stronger province. The Premier made an important announcement about this in Mississauga this morning, and I know the Minister of Finance will have more to say here tomorrow.

Moving forward, I hope that the members opposite can find their way to standing with us, instead of standing in the way of the work that we are doing to build a better province here in Ontario for future generations. I know that our colleagues here are supportive of this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the time today to speak.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: For the love of humanity—honestly, you can't make it up. The member from Mississauga–Lakeshore went on at length about how the Auditor General approved these ads. The reason she approved those ads is because she had no choice, because the Liberals watered down those rules and basically gave the Auditor General no power to call out partisanship.

Your party, not that long ago, was aligned with us. That's why we brought forth this motion today. It was actually today's Deputy Premier who brought forward this motion when the Liberals basically put the screws to the people of this province. And now you are fully in bed with the Liberals on partisan advertising. Well, there you go.

I don't even know how you say it with a straight face. To my friend from Mississauga–Lakeshore: I don't understand it—because this is exactly what the auditor warned about. This is what she said: "Ontarians could end up paying for partisan political advertising under changes the Liberal government is proposing." She said this would "gut the 10-year-old act"—which it has done.

"They would place her office 'in the untenable and unacceptable position of approving ads because they conform to the narrow requirements of the amended Government Advertising Act, but may be clearly partisan by any objective, reasonable standard.'"

That is the Ontario that we are in right now. That is happening here in Ontario—just like that advertisement.

She went on to say, "Under the proposed amendments such an ad would no longer be considered partisan, although most reasonable people would conclude otherwise, yet it is Ontario taxpayers who would have paid for them."

Do you know why this is so painful for so many Ontarians today? It's because their lives are so hard. We are in a cost-of-living crisis. You've removed rent control. People are getting renocted, demovicted. It is a precarious place for the vast majority of Ontarians today.

I want to also say to the member, on his defence of this indefensible policy, that we are not talking about public service announcements about changing your tires; we are talking about putting forward inaccurate information to the

public, and then adding insult to injury by saying to them, "You must pay for this. You have no choice in the matter."

It's so very obvious that—perhaps it is just this age-old adage that power corrupts, because when the PCs were over here, they were mad as hell about this policy. In fact, I've got some quotes that I will be sharing with you.

I totally agree with the Globe editorial which says that these partisan advertisements that the taxpayers are footing the bill for erase the line between party and government. Isn't that the truth?

And when you're watching the Super Bowl and you're watching how this image of Ontario—where people have access to doctors; if your child has autism, you have a therapist; or if you drive a car, you're not stuck on Highway 7. I just heard in an advertisement this weekend that the government is building Highway 7—well, someone should tell the people who are supposed to be building Highway 7, because I have to tell you, nothing is happening in that regard. Even when the Minister of Transportation came to Waterloo, a reporter, Terry Pender, said to him, "Aren't you embarrassed to be here making an announcement about another announcement?"

Also, I heard that two-way, all-day GO service—we're getting service every 30 minutes, except it stops at Brampton.

So you can imagine the people who have to bear witness to such a waste of tax dollars—because there is no redeeming quality in these advertisements. They don't even make people feel good in Ontario, especially when you look at the stats around how one out of every four persons who goes to a food bank is a child. That is what's happening in Ontario. Some 600,000 women are waiting for mammograms. That's what's happening in Ontario, not this glossed-over version of—this version that exists, I think, in the Premier's head.

The other advertising campaign that went on is Ontario Is Getting Stronger, and they did this just before the last election. So they're using taxpayer dollars to basically campaign on. The Auditor General, prior to this gutting of the act, would have shut that down, because it undermines our democracy and our trust in government. And these are serious issues. So that Ontario Is Getting Stronger—it always made me quite angry, actually, when I was watching it. We know that Galen Weston is getting stronger. We know that the insurance sector is getting stronger. Do you know what's not, though? The needs of children who are in our special education classes. They're suffering. So this is a very serious disconnect, and it goes back to the way that this government operates, I would say—like it is a sticker business, like they can do whatever they want.

And it's disappointing to see colleagues we worked with shoulder to shoulder on this very issue, on this bill. They supported the bill when the now Deputy Premier brought it forward in the last session, but when the Minister of Economic Development—when he was confronted with this abuse of tax dollars for partisan purposes, this is what the member from Nipissing said: "While this government continues to make life

unaffordable for Ontario families, they're advertising on the taxpayer's dime. It's simply unacceptable." We totally agree. He went on to say, "It's time for the Wynne government"—you can just replace "Ford" in there—"to end this shameless self-promotion on the taxpayer's dime and focus on addressing their years of waste, mismanagement, and scandals." When you know your history, you can sometimes predict your future. And that sounds a lot like what's actually going on right now in Ontario.

When the Deputy Premier, actually, went on to say and brought forward this legislation—it was part of the debate at the time. She said that her bill, which is our bill now, was aiming to reverse the Liberals' 2015 changes that she said watered down the Auditor General's oversight. She noted that the Liberal government justified introducing tougher rules by slamming the former Progressive Conservative government's use of taxpayer money on partisan advertising, in 2004.

So this is a long-standing issue, with both Liberals and Conservatives trying to out-scandal each other on advertising.

She went on to say, "This issue is a total flip-flop from the Liberal members opposite." I feel like I'm in a theatre of the absurd right here. "What's that line? 'That was then; this is now.' What has changed, Speaker? It appears that the Premier will only maintain those principles when they are convenient."

And aren't we exactly in this spot—and I think our agricultural critic, this morning, really posed a very important question: Where are your principles now?

1410

So is it a question of the government saying, "Do you know what? We're going to be a little bit different than them. Our advertisements may be a little cheaper. Maybe they'll be even glossier"? But this is a disconnect from what the people of this province are experiencing. The amount of money is staggering.

My colleagues are going to talk about some specific issues as it relates to Metrolinx.

At the end of the day, these ads serve no public good. We take an oath, as legislators, to come to this place to try to better the lives of Ontarians, and giving them cheap commercials with a glossy theme and a snappy tune is an abdication of the responsibility and dedication to the people of the province who we're elected to serve.

Shame on this government. We will never stand with you as you continue these policies which work against the people we're elected to serve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and join this debate on opposition day motion number 3.

I can tell this House that hearing from the member opposite that we are a very different party on this side actually warms my heart, because we, on this side of the House, are very different from the opposition and from the Liberal Party. We are getting things done.

On the topic for today, I would like to start just by differentiating our budget items from the Liberal budget items. This comes from the Auditor General's report itself. Between 2015 and 2018, the Liberal government spent \$48.9 million annually on advertising. On this side of the House—if you take out the pandemic years, which were very different—this side has spent \$29.2 million, and it has been money well-invested in ads that have been informing. They've been approved by the Auditor General, pursuant to the policy, and they have been providing Ontarians with important information about what has been going on in our province—important information about access to health care; important information about housing programs; important information about long-term care; and important information about how we are improving Ontario's economy.

We've attracted, as we heard this morning, 700,000 jobs to this province and over \$35 billion in investment in the EV sector and the agricultural sector and other business sectors.

We are absolutely different, on this side of the floor, from that side of the floor. We're improving life for Ontario residents, and we're getting the job done, and we're happy to talk about it.

Madam Speaker, if I can just review the Government Advertising Act history—it was passed in 2006, and it requires the Auditor General to review government advertising to ensure it is free of partisan content, as defined by the act. The act applies to a government office, which the act defines as a ministry, Cabinet Office and the Office of the Premier. Items that are reviewable by the Auditor General under the original act included any advertisement that a government office proposes to pay to have published in a newspaper or magazine, displayed on a billboard or broadcast on radio or television; printed matter that a government office proposes to pay to have distributed to households in Ontario by bulk mail or another method of bulk delivery, where bulk mail or bulk delivery means the printed matter is not individually addressed to the intended recipient; and any additional classes of messages prescribed by regulation.

That original act was amended in 2015, and these changes include: adding digital advertising to the Auditor General's scope of review, and digital advertising is defined by the regulations; defining what partisan means in relation to government advertising; clearly stating what can be advertised publicly by the government, such as fiscal policies and policy rationales or objectives; clarifying rules around government advertising during general elections; and, finally, requiring the government to submit a preliminary version of the ad to the Auditor General for review, in addition to the final review process.

The amendments addressed comments received since 2011 from former Auditors General requesting the ability to review digital advertising. The amendments also clarified what is meant by the term "partisan" and defined a partisan ad as partisan if:

(1) It includes the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or the Legislative Assembly, unless

the primary audience is outside Ontario. However, the use of a member's title would be permitted—e.g. Premier's Awards.

(2) It includes the name or logo of a recognized party.

(3) It directly identifies and criticizes a recognized party or a member of the assembly.

(4) It includes to a significant degree a colour associated with the governing party, unless the item depicted in the ad commonly appears in that colour.

Just adding to the comments of my colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore, these ads were all approved by the Auditor General, as per the act. These ads were all legitimate, they were almost half the cost of what the prior Liberal government was investing, and these ads were serving a public purpose in making sure that Ontarians know about the activities that are going on at Queen's Park that impact their daily lives.

We believe that the government should provide important health information, like vaccination campaigns and public health measures, like we did during the pandemic.

We believe that the people of Ontario should be told about what their government is doing to help build new homes so that young families can achieve the dream of home ownership.

We believe that the people of Ontario should be informed about how their hard-earned tax dollars are building a stronger economy and creating thousands of new jobs across our province.

We believe that Ontario is a place we should all be proud of.

There's work to be done, and we're happy to do that work, we're quite prepared to do that work, and we will continue to do that work. It is for this reason that we on this side of the floor believe that the ads that we have been putting out are responsible, informative and are a very critical part of continuing to be an open and transparent government about the things that matter most. And we will not apologize for that.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Ontarians expect their government to respect tax dollars, not spend millions on partisan ads. There was a time when the Deputy Premier believed this, as well. It's outrageous to me that governments spend money on what are, in essence, political pieces. The reality is that Ontarians see right through these Conservative talking points. These ads don't pass the smell test. Ontarians want the government to respect their tax dollars, not prop up the Conservative Party.

Let me be clear: Not all government advertising is bad. We're not proposing to stop the government from sharing important information with the public. The millions of dollars on these ads could have been spent on other causes that Ontarians need to know about.

It's not too late. The Premier and the Conservative caucus can do the right thing. When you support this motion, you will be sending a clear message that you

understand there is a clear and distinct difference between the Ontario Conservative Party advertising and Ontario government advertising. You can change course and support this motion.

I urge the Premier to stop wasting taxpayer dollars and start prioritizing the interests of Ontario residents over the Ontario Conservative Party and support this motion.

The next time one of your constituents approaches you, one of those individuals comes to you in your ridings, you look them in the eye and you say, "No, it was far more important for the Ford Conservatives to spend \$24 million on vanity ads that only promote their Conservative brand." It was far more important for you to spend \$24 million on vanity ads than help hundreds of thousands of people who are looking to us, as legislators, and to you, as government, to do the right thing.

You can think about them when you stand up and oppose this bill.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I rise in the House to join in on the debate today on opposition day motion number 3.

Madam Speaker, since we were elected, we—I bet you every member here in this House can agree that we inherited an absolute mess and mismanagement of this province. The former government chased away 300,000 jobs.

Over the past six years, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has invested back in the people of Ontario. To that end, Ontario is becoming a world-class province that is now being taken seriously on the global stage. We are competitive with all 50 states, creating more manufacturing jobs than all states combined. As the Premier has said many times over and over, we are eating their lunch.

Toronto continues to grow, and that's why we here in Toronto are focused on building infrastructure and promoting amenities that realize the vision of Toronto as a world-class city.

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When we talk about advertising, the former Liberal government advertised, and they were told that they advertised inappropriately. But we, this government, have cut advertising spending by 75%, from \$62.6 million in 2017-18 to \$16.4 million in 2018-19. I guess when you're the Liberal government and you're driving away jobs and when you're driving away the economy; when people are struggling to do anything; when you're not building schools; when you're actually closing 600 schools; when you're not building any roads, so people can't get from A to B; when you're not investing in infrastructure, the only thing you can do is advertise.

But we are not advertising like the Liberals. As the Auditor General said, they did not provide viewers with useful information; they were actually misleading. On the other hand, when we are advertising, we're talking about the great things that are happening in Ontario.

I'd like to share a couple of examples of some of the great things that we can showcase about our province.

I know not everybody in this room may agree with Ontario Place, but I am so excited about the future of Ontario Place for this province. It is going to be such an amazing place.

Interjections.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you. It is. It absolutely is.

I remember, as a kid, going there in the 1970s, and it was this wonderful place. My dad took us, and we went to this water park and swung on some ropes. I'm excited for the future and for the next generation to see this great place and enjoy it as we did as kids.

And it's not just about Toronto; that's about everywhere. That's not just about the people who live and breathe in Toronto; that's about people who live in Windsor, people who live in the States—people who live all around the world can come to this beautiful province and see what we have to offer. And that's what advertising is all about. Let's see what we have in Ontario. It is an amazing province.

And we are investing. What are we investing in?

We're investing in housing. We hear about that every day—the money we're investing in housing. We are building houses in our province.

We are investing in our hospitals. In my riding alone, the Queensway health care centre is building a new nine-storey patient tower. And at St. Joseph's hospital, we're also building.

Do you know what? It is an amazing time to be living in Ontario. I am extremely excited.

Schools: We are rebuilding schools. In my riding alone, we are rebuilding four schools. Thank you to the Minister of Education. And in September of this year, we're going to have two brand new schools open—Holy Angels and St. Leo—which are going to be first-class, all with child care spaces for those parents, so it makes an easy drop-off when you have to drop off two little ones versus driving around town. So I thank the minister for those investments. I can't wait to get shovels in the ground for our Bishop Allen school. It's going to be a high school in our riding for 1,400 students. Those kids at Bishop Allen certainly deserve a new school, so we're very excited.

We have investments in our schools, our universities, our colleges.

We are creating economic growth, jobs, as I mentioned—700,000 jobs. We need to be promoting those. We want people to come to Ontario to live. If they don't know Ontario is a much better place than it was when the Liberals were in power, how are they going to come here? So we need to advertise to let people know that we are building our province. We have the best province, and why would we not share that with the world?

I had the opportunity to drive this weekend. It was a beautiful, sunny weekend, and I was driving east along the 401, and then I drove west along the 401. While I was driving, I heard some of the ads on the radio—and I don't want to say too much because I don't want to take away from my colleague from Niagara West. It talked about taking the GO to Niagara. I never thought about taking the

GO to Niagara. I have some American cousins coming up for Easter weekend, and I was trying to figure out, how do I go to work and how do I let them enjoy—because they want to go down to Niagara Falls. Well, now I can tell them they can take the GO, thanks to the government ads. So this was good news. And it's always good to hear the great things that we're building.

And when you're stuck in traffic, isn't it nice to know that the government of Ontario has our back and we are going to be building more roads so we can actually get from A to B even quicker? I can't say that about this morning—the one lane is cut off from the Gardiner, so I was a little bit later than I had hoped this morning. But investments in the Gardiner and the DVP, investments in the city of Toronto will help eventually get that traffic moving. I'm a driver. I like to drive my car, and I know many people here do like to drive their cars. We need solid roads to drive on.

I thank the government for investing—and I appreciate hearing that we are investing in our communities, not just here in Toronto but all across the province.

Every year, I always take a drive to Thunder Bay, which is where my family resides. We like to go to camp—we call it camp—up north. There is a beautiful drive to Thunder Bay. If you haven't taken that drive, I really highly recommend that road. You just have to make sure that there isn't a flood across Wawa—I've been stuck there a couple of times and had to take Sultan road. It's a great drive, and it's beautiful scenery.

We want people to come to our province and see these beautiful sights.

Northern Ontario is such a beautiful place to go and drive, especially in the summer. I'm not sure about the winter—I'm not a big fan of winter driving—but in the summertime, it's such a great place to go and visit.

I highly recommend for all those viewing around the world, come to northern Ontario, come to Toronto. We have great things to offer.

Something else we've been talking about is One Fare. I had a little interview with one of my students from Humber College. Our college students are thrilled with One Fare. It's going to save them money. And that's for everybody. If you do come to Toronto and you don't have a car, you can hop on a GO bus, you can hop on transit and go around the GTA with one fare. Our government is saving not just Ontarians but other people from around the world who visit us can also save money with One Fare.

Congratulations to the government on the One Fare program. It is amazing for students, and it will be amazing for tourists so they can get around this community.

I want to highlight a couple of other things that I love about my city.

I already talked about Ontario Place because I'm extremely excited about the future for Ontario Place.

Do you know what? You can take the GO downtown. I don't know if anybody here is a Raptors fan. I know we had the number one fan—the super fan—here on Thursday. You can go to a Blue Jays game, taking the GO train. You can enjoy our diners—places for lunch and

dinner. You can go see the Leafs. Hopefully, when you go see the Leafs, they are winning—often they are not, but we certainly always love our Leafs. It's something certainly to see in Toronto—making a stop at the art gallery and see KAWS that's there right now, and the CN Tower, the Rogers Centre, Casa Loma.

What about Casa Loma? I don't know if anyone has ever seen Casa Loma. It's a great old building, a nice castle, and you can grab a snack there.

Advertising our cities is something that's important—not just about places to go, but events and festivals such as the Pride parade. Let's advertise. Let's get people from all around the world. They come here for the Pride parade and celebrate our diversity and our culture. We're very proud. I'm a very proud Torontonians. I go to the Pride parade every year, and I just think it's an amazing opportunity for all.

We also have Caribana coming up. I know they showcased an event here at the Legislature not too long ago so we could see a little bit about what that's going to be about this year. We certainly want people from all around the world to come and celebrate Caribana the week of August 1 to 5.

What else do we have here? We've got tons of multi-cultural events.

Come on down to Toronto if you love to eat.

We have Greektown. We have Chinatown. We have Little India. We have the Latin and Spanish community.

Madam Speaker, we have so much to see and do here in Ontario. I am so proud of living in this province.

I was with the Premier on Friday. I heard him talk about this province, and I left there with a smile on my face, saying, "I am so proud to live in this province, with a government that cares—investing in health care, investing in our schools, investing in our students, investing in people. We are making a difference."

Because I live in the riding of the largest food terminal—I'm running out of time—and I know the agriculture minister is here, I have one last thing to say: Good things grow in Ontario.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to talk about partisan advertising and how much it costs the taxpayer.

I want to quote the Auditor General, who said, "We documented concerns about one campaign" submitted by the government, called Building a Better Health Care System campaign. "Our office concluded that the primary objective of" this campaign "was to foster a positive impression of the government."

The Auditor General went on to say that of the 443 ads submitted, 181 would have been classified as partisan for their content.

This campaign represented \$20.8 million in advertising spending.

Let me quote the Minister of Health from when she was in opposition. She said, "These millions of dollars on these ads could have been spent on other causes" like "how to deal with the fentanyl crisis. This information could have

saved lives, but instead it is helping the Premier's re-election campaign. That is unacceptable, and it must stop." I fully agree.

1430

She went on to say, "It is clear that these ads ... are not about the well-being of Ontario, but the well-being of the Ontario Liberal Party."

I agree with all of this, but it is a repeat—exactly the same thing that they were against when they were in opposition and the Liberals were doing it, they now think that it is all good.

That \$20.8 million: If this would have been invested into northern Ontario, into our interdisciplinary primary health care teams, everyone in Ontario would have had access to primary care. It would be a game-changer. If that money would have been invested in northern Ontario, the safe consumption sites, supervised consumption sites in Sudbury and Timmins would stay open. The one in Sault Ste. Marie would have the money to open. It would save lives. But no, \$20.8 million of the \$33.72 million in advertising spending from this government went to partisan advertising—so the Auditor General told us. We know that it is wrong.

Let's do something good for a change. Let's make sure that taxpayers are not paying for partisan advertising. Vote for this NDP motion.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm very grateful to be able to rise this afternoon and participate in debate on a motion from the Leader of the Opposition—and for their participation this afternoon. I've listened very intently to a number of different colleagues speaking passionately about the motion before the House, and I want to thank all those members for adding their voices to debate.

I want to pose a question to the members who are here in the chamber this afternoon, and my question to you all is: When? When did the New Democratic Party become a party that failed to aspire for better? When did the New Democratic Party become a party that believed in opportunity for the people of Ontario? When did the New Democratic Party of Ontario become a party that no longer believed that if you could see it, you could be it? I want to build on that theme in relation to this motion this afternoon, because we've all heard that phrase, and I think it's an important one. It's an important aspect of all of our roles in this House—to lift up those voices who aren't always lifted up; to ensure that the people we have the privilege of representing understand that there are opportunities that exist here for them in the province of Ontario. I look at the almost a million people who came to this province last year from so many corners of the world, because they believed that better was possible when they made their home here in Ontario. Aside from those who are in this chamber who are Indigenous, all of us came from somewhere—we all came from somewhere, to this province, from another land, believing that we had the opportunity to grow a life for our family, to build a career, to build opportunities for our children, because we saw

that potential in the lives of those who had come before us. We saw it and we believed it, and we knew that if we saw it, we could be it.

And yet, when we see the New Democrats, the party who I know will often stand in this chamber and say, “It is the New Democrats who were the party of advocating for primarily government-paid health care”; who have a long history of standing for not just workers’ rights, but farmers’ rights, standing for those who work hard to build strong products that we can be proud of in every corner of this globe, I have to ask the question: When? When did the NDP lose their way? When did they fail to see that supporting these workers, supporting the incredible products that are grown here in Ontario, that are exported from this province, means that we all have a responsibility, as legislators, as members of the legislative branch, but also, in the government, in the executive branch—wanting to make a little bit of a distinction between those two here. The executive branch and the government also have a role in promoting that opportunity, so that those who see what happens here in Ontario, those who see those opportunities, understand that that is also an opportunity for them.

Speaker, I know I don’t have that much time, so I’m not going to be able to dig into all the examples of that, but I think of those I’ve met in my constituency, who came here with very, very little—family members, neighbours, those I’ve had the opportunity to meet, from church basements to town halls and chambers of commerce—who said that they came to this province with a dream and a belief in what was possible if they worked hard, if they followed the rules, and if they were able to bring forward good ideas that could grow the economy, grow their community and grow a better home for their children. And now they are the same people I had the opportunity to speak with, who come to me in my constituency office and say, “What we are seeing in the province of Ontario, finally, is a government that dares to dream big, that believes in the potential of this province, and that is giving us the tools to succeed.”

And there are a few different areas to that. One of the reasons is that—I think it’s important that we’re seeing the government promote made-in-Ontario and Ontario opportunities, and one of the advantages that we have in comparison with every other jurisdiction of the world is our manufacturing strength.

In Niagara, we have a long, proud, rich history of manufacturing. It stems from our ability to capture the incredible power of Niagara Falls. If you have the opportunity, go through the Niagara Parks station and see that incredible site, where, for over 100 years, the power of the Falls has been harnessed to drive big machinery. And we have many, many people working with that machinery to produce incredible products.

In Ontario, it’s a legacy that we saw, under the former Liberal government, go by the wayside. We saw the former Liberal government abandon labour; we saw them abandon the hard-working men and women in places like Niagara and across Ontario who build incredible

products—from our auto parts sector to our advanced manufacturing sector, in aerospace engineering to the mining sector, and everything in between. Ensuring that along every part of that supply chain continuum, there were those who were not just saving a little bit of money to be able to put food on the table—that’s important, too—but who were able to put more than that away, to be able to ensure that they have something in the bank account for a rainy day or to put their kids through university. Those are the dreams that the province of Ontario is upholding and is uplifting by the investments that have been made in things like the electric vehicle space; by ensuring that strong manufacturing is coming back in a way that we have never seen in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I don’t know if you’ve had the opportunity to hear the statistic—it was something that, when I first heard it, frankly, made me surprised but also understand now why I’m seeing that amount of growth in the Niagara region. Last year, in the province of Ontario, more manufacturing jobs were created than not one, not two, not 10, not 20, not 30, but all 52 US states combined. That is a dream and an opportunity that is a reality for so many men and women who are now able to work good jobs in those areas.

Speaker, it’s about ensuring that there’s clean, affordable energy, so that people aren’t worried about having to choose between heating and eating but are able to ensure that when they look forward to the future, when they dream about what is possible, they are able to know that, whether it’s next year, this year or five or 10 years from now, when they come home and they plug in their electric vehicle made in Ontario, they are able to have clean, affordable, reliable energy being produced because of the nuclear investments that this government is making.

It means that when they have a child or they have a loved one they have to take to a walk-in clinic, or whether it’s someone they have to take to a local hospital—like the two new hospitals going up in Niagara. It’s not just the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital that we saw cancelled by the Liberal government, with the support of the NDP, in the 2012 budget—when the NDP propped up the Liberal government and cancelled the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. It’s not just the new South Niagara Hospital that’s going up. It’s work on other sites—for example, the new Hotel Dieu Shaver site that’s being worked on as we speak; the planning for an expanded rehabilitation hospital in the Niagara region. Not one, not two, but three hospitals are coming to the Niagara region.

It’s incredibly important, though, that we have the people to do that work. That’s why, when I go and I visit the students, so many of them, again, from across this world—not just Canadian-born, but those who come from every corner who see the opportunities that exist in this province and believe that, if they come here, they will be able to leave a better life for their children than those who came before them. They’ve seen the advertisements; they’ve seen the important work that’s already being done here, and they believe that they have a government that has their back. That’s why, when I go to Brock University and

I go through their nursing program and I speak with the students who are in that nursing program—they tell me, “A couple of years ago, there used to be 300 spots, and we were all competing for these 300 spots in this nursing program at Brock University.” Today there are 760 students in that nursing program at Brock University—well over double the amount of training spots. Those are people who have the opportunity now to give back, to earn a good wage, to be able to earn a good salary for their family, but also who are able to provide incredible care in a time with aging demographics, when we need people to provide that care.

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So I look at my history and my family’s history, when we came here after the Second World War because we saw Canadians who dared to dream big. We saw Canadians who were willing to go overseas to put their lives on the line—men and women like those from the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, who I had the opportunity to join at their officers’ mess over the weekend, in St. Catharines—who believed in freedom and opportunity so much that they were willing to put their lives on the line and, by doing so, to go overseas to liberate my grandparents in Holland, in the Netherlands, and to be, in fact, a form of a walking advertisement for the best of what Canada is.

Those people, when they came here and they saw the incredible opportunity that was happening in the post-World War II era here in Canada, saw a national dream that was being created.

And who was part of that dream? Who was part of the national conversation that was happening? Of course, I know they’ve never formed government, at least at the federal level—and it took another 40 years for them to form government here, provincially. The New Democrats, or the CCFers, I guess they were called at that point. They might not have been people who, again, my ancestors always philosophically agreed with. My ancestors were farmers. My family are farmers. They’re hard-working people. They’re people who believe in the importance of community, of building things and of leaving a better future. I believed, growing up, that that was, again, a party that believed in those things. They believed in dreaming big. They believed the old line that you may as well shoot for the moon, because even if you miss, you’re going to land among the stars. That was something that I’d always thought the NDP believed in—that they shot for big things, even if often poorly thought out and naive in the way that they designed a lot of their programs.

So I go back to that question: When did the NDP lose their vision? When did they believe that better wasn’t possible? When did they believe that it wasn’t important for a national people, for a people here in Ontario or Canada, to believe in themselves and their potential, in their skills, to be proud of the things that they’re doing? When I hear them stand in this place and—I don’t want to be rude, but—complain, as they do, about the investments that are being made and the way that we’re working to build that pride in the people of Ontario, it makes me sad. This is a party that has a long history—a history in

agricultural communities in southwestern Ontario, and Prairie roots among the Baptist preachers and those who continue to inspire me. It has its roots in people who believed that better was possible and that they could bring forward a positive vision of what Ontario could be. It was a party of people who believed that if you could see it, you could be it. But now this is a party who seem to think, “No, no. We don’t want you to see it, because we don’t want you to be it. We don’t think that the people of Ontario deserve to have a government that is investing in a national, in a provincial, in a forward-looking vision that they could be part of.” They don’t want to see people who are encouraged to know that we have some of the cleanest steel in the world. They don’t want to be part of bringing forward opportunities for people in skilled trades. They don’t want to be part of building up an incredible system of health care, where you have staff being trained in levels they’ve never seen before, opening up brand new facilities that they’ve never seen before. They don’t want to be part of the solution.

Again, Speaker, I go back to my question, and I want to leave you with it: When did the NDP lose their way? When did they fail to learn and when did they fail to understand that providing a vision for the future for the people of Ontario is crucial to continuing to grow, to bringing more people here to this province, to continue that legacy that each and every one of us who is in this House believes in? I would leave that question with you in hopes of an answer, because this motion doesn’t answer it. All this motion says is, “We don’t like things that the government does.”

I’ll be candid. That’s what I hear regularly from my constituents—they say, “We know what you’re doing. We see what you’re doing. We have your back in what you’re doing in building up this province, in providing opportunities, in getting homes built and in ensuring young people have good careers, good-paying careers in Ontario.”

But all we ever hear from the opposition is negativity, negativity, negativity, and today, unfortunately, they continue that trait.

So, Speaker, regrettably—I love supporting the members of the opposition when they have good ideas—I will not be supporting this motion.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Some things don’t age well, like my old flip phone, last week’s bananas, and the 2018 election promise from this government.

Back in 2015, the Liberal government weakened the Auditor General’s oversight on advertising, allowing millions in taxpayers’ dollars to fund partisan advertising about unverified claims. Ontario was outraged about using taxpayers’ own money to lie to taxpayers. This government’s caucus reacted by tabling a motion to reverse these changes, and the Premier pledged to take action on the motion, if elected, to end this misuse of funds—except, once elected, this government broke that promise and they doubled down on partisan advertising, using taxpayers’ funds for self-promotional ads, like advertising a housing

plan that decimated the greenbelt during the scandal that tried to sell it off, and the Building a Better Health System campaign, which, as the Auditor General noted, lacked evidence and context.

Ironically, the same member who tabled the 2018 motion to stop partisan ads now heads the ministry that blew \$20 million, two thirds of Ontario's ad budget, on a partisan campaign. This has been a slap in the face of all front-line health care workers who know better.

Speaker, it's more than just the ads; it's about the government's self-promotion at taxpayers' expense.

When criticizing the Wynne Liberals' use of public funds for partisan ads, Doug Ford said, "We're the only ones to protect the people."

Ontarians are tired of leaders who promise to protect their interests only to abandon these principles once in power. It does not have to be this way, and it never should have been this way.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour today to rise in support of accountability, transparency and fairness—principles that this government seems to have forgotten since they formed government. Rather than holding virtues and values that they loudly claimed prior to 2018, they have lost their way.

Today, the official opposition is giving the government the chance to stand up for their values again, to remember who they were. It's not too late.

It's clear that the government has gone astray, twisting themselves in knots trying to pat themselves on the back. But today, Conservatives can get back on track by supporting their own legislation. It's never too late to do the right thing.

The official opposition will always fight for more for people, while the Conservatives want Ontarians to settle for less, to settle for a bait-and-switch, where they're pretending to spend money on things that people care about when, in actual point of fact, they're not doing the right thing.

The media has had some really interesting lines about what this government has done. David Moscrop said that it has been "inept and dodgy...."

"In essence, the Ford government devoted millions of dollars promoting itself while emergency rooms closed, homeless residents froze in the streets," ODSP "recipients struggled to make rent and feed themselves, and the province's infrastructure crumbled."

He also stated that the campaign pushed "the boundaries of the human capacity for cynicism."

Robert Benzie from the Toronto Star said, when he mentioned—the Toronto Star headline on the print edition: "Our Money, More Lies," also blasting the ads as "spectacularly misleading."

"Doug Ford's Feel-Bad Movie of the Summer...."

"It's misdirection worthy of a Las Vegas illusionist...."

"An unapologetic partisan ad" that "erases the line between party and government," was the Globe editorial's line.

Now is the government's chance to stand up for itself, to support its own legislation.

Prove that you have not lost your way. Prove that these values mean something to you. Make good on your promise. It's never too late to do the right thing.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to our opposition day motion. The member from Niagara West kept repeating, "If you see it, you do it." That's their motto. They saw the Liberals doing partisan ads, pretended like they didn't support it and have now gone on to do it themselves, so I guess he's accurate: If you see it, do it.

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Speaker, I would like to rewrite some of the ads that the government has put out. It starts with, "What if we told you there's a place where it's all happening? And what if we told you, you already live here?" Between those lines there's a lot of fluff about the government.

Well, Speaker, what if I told you there is a place where over 800,000 adults and children accessed food banks last year, an increase of over 38%; a place where food banks were visited nearly six million times; where 2.3 million people don't have access to primary care physicians; where emergency departments are being closed, all around the province; where for decades we have First Nations communities that are still on boil-water advisories?

What if I told you that there are 588-day wait-lists in my community for children to access mental health supports and parents are being forced to surrender their children to the children's aid society, hoping for their children to get help?

What if I told you that 200,000 Ontarians are waiting years for access to social housing, more than 7,000 people in Windsor-Essex on our wait-lists for affordable housing?

This is the reality of the province of Ontario. And what have we, the people of Ontario, told the government? That you already live here, and the people of the province need you to stop spending tens of millions of dollars on advertisements to say that you're doing great when the reality is the people of the province need you to spend that money on the supports and services that they need.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to rise this afternoon and speak to a particular concern I have with this bill. My colleagues have talked about it. When we spend \$20 million-plus on advertising that is not persuasive, that does not reflect the government's record, what are we missing an investment on? Well, Speaker, I spoke this morning in question period. I asked a question that was not answered about the fact that Metrolinx, a public agency of this government, is following their example. They spent \$2.5 million on an ad that insulted transit riders as Metrolinx continues to fail in its record to build transit. I think that's because the government set the example.

But what could we have done with \$2.5 million? Well, Speaker, back home, primary care clinic founders in the

market for folks with mental health and addictions and their families, they proposed a clinic that would cover 10,000 people, that would help some of our most struggling neighbours in need. They got \$2.5 million. That's the amount of money we're talking about.

But if I were to say in this moment we're living in right now—because I think there's a role for government advertising—what kind of government ads do we need right now? I am hearing consistently from neighbours back home about their heartbreak and the heart-rending situation they are seeing in Gaza right now. They would like this government to affirm, like the federal government did last week, that the Geneva Conventions are being broken right now, that a million and a half Gazans are starving in Rafah as they are awaiting a military invasion. I would like to see billboards, I would like to see ads from this government, saying they see those people suffering, they support the fact that we need an immediate ceasefire, we need to help those people in the region. That is the billboard Canadians are waiting for, not some self-congratulatory message.

Human rights is core to the province of Ontario. It should be something we all care about. That's the ad that we want: a ceasefire right now.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I want to talk about what's happening in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean right now. At the Queensway Carleton Hospital, which is one of the busiest emergency departments in the province, we have people who are sitting and waiting 14 to 16 hours just to see an emergency room physician. Unfortunately, the government has cut funding for the ER at the Queensway Carleton, so starting next week, there's going to be 10 fewer hours of ER physician funding every single day, which means these people are going to be waiting even longer.

We are seeing day surgeries being cancelled so that they can expand the number of people who are sitting in the ER waiting for care.

While this is happening, rather than investing in the services, in the health care that people desperately need, this government is investing in partisan ads to tell people “Everything's fine. We've got a great health care system. I don't know what you're seeing around you, but everything is just perfect here.” These are ads that the government has spent millions on and that the Auditor General has said were partisan and intended to foster a positive impression of the government. That's what they're doing instead of fixing the health care system.

And then these people's kids in school don't have EAs. They don't have teachers. They don't have social workers and counsellors, and that's if they can get to school at all, if the school bus is actually running. This government has been running taxpayer-funded partisan ads saying everything is great in schools, and the Auditor General has said these are partisan and that there is no evidence to back up these ads.

This is deeply insulting to people in Ontario, who are struggling with many challenges right now, who want to

see their government actually take these challenges seriously and fix the concerns that they are facing. That is why I'm asking the government today to support the NDP's bill to end the public funding of partisan government advertising. Stop wasting taxpayer dollars on patting yourselves on the back and actually do something to help the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to rise in the Legislature today to speak to our bill to ban the government from spending millions of dollars of our money on advertising that is just designed to make the Conservative government look good.

Let's just give the Minister of Health a round of applause; she was the one who wrote the bill in the first place.

Interjections.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Right? Thank you.

We're not talking about ads that are designed to help Ontarians learn about important programs like driving safely in winter or vaccination programs. That is not what we are talking about today. What we're talking about are ads that provide no useful information but instead just provide a general positive impression, using tag lines like “it's happening here,” or “building a better health care system,” or the crazy Metrolinx ads that criticize transit riders for saying, “Hey, why is it taking so long to build a transit line and why are you millions of dollars over budget?” Those are ridiculous ads. No, we are talking about ads that are essentially propaganda and are puff pieces. Ontarians do not want their money spent on unnecessary partisan ads. What they do want is for that money to be reinvested in services that they all depend upon.

We are talking about investing funding in our hospitals so that we have the staff that we need to provide the surgeries, the testing and the care that people are desperately waiting for. We're talking about investing in our schools, so we have the educational assistants and the vice-principals and the teachers who can provide high-quality care to our kids. We are talking about investing in affordable housing, so we can solve one of the biggest issues of our generation, which is the affordable housing crisis.

We are not seeing any of that here with this government. What we are seeing is partisan ads. It's time for it to stop. Ontarians want it to stop. Stop telling us that everything is fine and start investing our money in services and programs that people are asking you to invest that money in.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This government is spending money hand over fist to brand itself as a good government instead of being a good government. Spending money to convince people of the good work that they should be doing does not fool people into believing these nonsense ads.

The government has spent nearly \$25 million on partisan ads, including \$20.8 million to promote the

Ministry of Health, desperately trying to paint a positive impression of this government, but it isn't working, because it isn't real. These partisan ads are not political reality, and people sitting for hours in hospital waiting rooms, or who are desperately trying to get medical care, are not fooled and they're not fools. They don't appreciate the wildly out-of-touch, rosy health care picture being painted by these government commercials.

The Premier stood in this Legislature and talked about how good his government is at marketing and branding. Well, imagine if this Premier thought governing was even a fraction as important as branding. And, Speaker, between buck-a-beer stickers that don't stick and disappearing licence plates, I don't know how much this government should brag about branding.

Regardless, our motion is to support the official opposition Bill 176, to end the public funding of partisan government advertising. Interestingly, it is a bill we've introduced, identical to a bill tabled by the now-Minister of Health, who was a voice then against the behaviour that she is responsible for now.

As the critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways, I was shocked at the terrible ads that Metrolinx ran to admonish and condescend to transit users in the GTA. Folks who have been waiting for 13 years for transit had to endure these "see beyond" ads that gaslighted and diminished real concerns of the public. People thought that they were snarky, sanctimonious and shocking, and these Metrolinx ads were rude and disrespectful to real people who rely on dependable transit to get to work, school and medical appointments.

1500

Worse, Speaker, it was recently reported by the CBC that Metrolinx spent \$2.25 million of the public's dollars to be rude to them—\$2.25 million of our own money to condescend to us—rude and inappropriate, but encouraged, because this government loves advertising, even if what they're selling is stuff and nonsense.

So stop spending public money on partisan advertising. This government needs to be a good government, not just play one on TV.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to talk about a quote that was done by Laurie Scott from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock when the Liberals were bringing in partisan ads. This is what she said: "Why is it that this government cannot find the money to fund advertising that can raise an awareness campaign that could actually help save the lives of human sex trafficking victims today, instead of finding money to fund self-serving hydro ads?" That's who said it—Ernie Hardeman, same thing; Lisa MacLeod; Vic Fedeli.

And I want to say that they're spending over \$30 million on advertising. Why are they not advertising the fact that we had 6,000 people die in long-term-care facilities? Why isn't that up there? Why aren't they talking about my urgent care centre that you're not funding, that they're closing after 7 o'clock at night, as people who live

in my area in Fort Erie don't have an urgent care centre? Why is that not being there? Why is the fact that you don't talk about Bill 7, where you're forcing 300 seniors, without consent, to go live 150 kilometres away from their families there? Why isn't that there? Why is it not talking about the poverty that we have right here in Toronto? The one member is proud to live in Toronto, where they're dying on our streets in Toronto today as I'm standing up here.

Why would we advertise in the Super Bowl, the Grammy Awards, the NHL All-Star Game—instead of taking that, why not take that money and reinvest it into health care, reinvest it into education, reinvest it into our seniors in our communities? That's what we should be doing with these tax dollars. They should support this bill. They should stop partisan ads and support the NDP. For the first time, my friend over there Sam Oosterhoff from Niagara West was absolutely correct. He should support this bill.

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

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, in 2017, the Liberals changed the rules, and the Auditor General found that they spent \$17.4 million on partisan ads. In 2018, the Conservatives brought forward a bill by the now Minister of Health and Deputy Premier. They brought forward a bill called the End Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act. That's the opposition day bill that we're debating today, word for word. It's their Conservative bill.

However, in 2023, the Auditor General found the Conservatives had spent \$24.89 million using the same Liberal loopholes—Liberal, Tory, same old story. We hear it all the time, and it's proven again today. So today, our opposition day debate really is about stopping this loophole. Freedom of information showed that there was \$24.89 million. The CBC's latest report has \$38 million, plus \$7.9 million for the "It's Happening Here" ads, plus \$2.5 million for the Metrolinx ads. We're just shy of \$50 million set to trick people, to confuse people, to tell them things. This isn't right.

I've got to tell you, the Conservative brand, Doug Ford's brand, is that the party with the taxpayers' money is over, and it continues with this member—

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): One second. Point of order?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order: Speaker, members have been warned by this Speaker and by other Speakers, but members of the opposition continue to refer to members by their first and last names, not their riding or their title. This is the third member in this afternoon's debate alone who has done that. We've let that go until now. Please remind the experienced member to refer to other members appropriately and professionally.

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

The member from Sudbury is reminded about the rule of using—

MPP Jamie West: My apologies to the member opposite.

I want to just finish that the ethics of using taxpayer dollars on partisan advertising is questionable, but what about the ethics of using taxpayer dollars to attack the livelihoods of some of Ontario's most precarious workers, by using ad agencies that use underpaid, non-union performers who have no standards for health and safety, decent work conditions and fair pay? The CBC reported on the debacle of the \$2.5-million Metrolinx campaign that was used to gaslight the very taxpayers who are funding the work. Those ads were produced by Leo Burnett—

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member to watch language: “gaslighting.”

Interjections.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Prior to 2015, there were clear rules forbidding governments from using taxpayer dollars for self-promotion; however, in 2015, the Liberals changed the law so that the definition of “partisan advertising” was so watered down as to be useless, and in 2017 the Liberals got away with spending \$17.4 million to promote themselves on the taxpayers' dime—shameful.

In 2018, while in opposition, the current Minister of Health introduced a bill entitled End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act, which is what we are reintroducing today.

Here we are now in 2024, and I'm getting furious phone calls from people watching the Super Bowl, asking me why they are being subjected to partisan political ads promoting the Ford Conservative government. That was just the beginning. When my constituents found out that \$25 million of our taxpayer dollars were paying for these partisan ads, their fury changed to rage. What we are seeing is partisan and self-congratulatory government advertising.

What these ads tell me is that the Conservatives are so worried about the damage their government has done to public education and public health care; the fact that food banks can't keep up with the demand; the fact that low-wage, precarious workers make up the majority of people teaching at universities and colleges; that arts institutions are crumbling; that the wages of forest firefighters, highway inspectors and conservation officers are so low they can't attract and retain staff; that private, for-profit health care is popping up everywhere; and that schools are so underfunded, special needs kids are left by the wayside—what this tells me is that the only way the Conservatives can overcome their dreadful record is to use our money to convince us of the opposite.

You have a chance to rediscover integrity as a concept and a reality. Support our bill to end partisanship in taxpayer-funded advertising.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: We must end the public funding of partisan government ads, and the government can do this today by saying yes to our Bill 176.

In 2017, the Auditor General found that the Liberal government spent \$17.4 million on partisan advertising; essentially, advertising to make the Liberals look good all while thousands of Ontarians were experiencing the heights of Liberal hallway medicine and just a couple of years, actually, after the Liberals decided to screw teachers over, at the time, out of their rights to collective bargaining, fair wages and the right to strike by ordering them back to work. The Liberal government created its own loopholes. They watered down advertising rules and also weakened the Auditor General's oversight of government spending.

Today, in 2024, we're still paying the price with this worse Conservative government that has used the same loopholes they criticized the Liberals for creating to spend over \$30 million on partisan ad campaigns, including over \$20 million to promote the Ministry of Health—all this while over 2.3 million Ontarians don't have access to a family doctor; surgical wait-lists are booming; PSWs are being run off their feet in long-term care; our food banks, like those in St. Paul's—Hillcrest Community Food Bank can't keep up with the demand and is always running out of food; our local Toronto District School Board is struggling with a \$20.8-million deficit, facing possible program cuts that will directly impact Learn4Life adult general interest courses, programs for seniors, daytime programs for seniors, people who are struggling with isolation and loneliness, outdoor education, international languages and African heritage program delivery.

Metrolinx, this Conservative government's government agency, has been wasting millions of dollars as well making fun of my community members in St. Paul's and others through cheap-shot ads insulting and mocking our constituents who have expressed frustration with the billions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule Eglinton LRT construction and other projects—all while ACTRA members have been locked out for almost two years while this government props up union-busting ad agencies that take on underpaid workers without worker protection.

1510

The Conservative government must support our Bill 176. We must end the public funding of partisan government advertising and ensure taxpayers aren't paying for government ads that rewrite history and, frankly, are allergic to the truth. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I ask the member to withdraw the final statement.

MPP Jill Andrew: Pardon?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Unparliamentary.

MPP Jill Andrew: Withdraw.

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

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and today to speak on our opposition day motion, which is basically trying to encourage the government to vote for opposition Bill 176, End the Public Fund-

ing of Partisan Government Advertising Act, 2024. I was very proud to co-sponsor that bill with our leader, Marit Stiles. But what makes this bill unique—and I didn't think that we would ever do this, or admit to doing it, but we're going to admit we copied this bill word for word from a Conservative member—word for word. When that Conservative member from Dufferin–Caledon was on the opposition benches, we debated that bill, and we voted for that bill because it was a good bill.

I'm going to go out on a limb a bit here, Speaker. Obviously, at the time, that bill was trying to stop the Liberals, who were in government, from wasting taxpayers' dollars on self-promotion instead of investing in where they should be investing taxpayers' dollars. At the time, it was actually something we agreed with the Conservatives on. Because although the NDP and the Conservatives are far apart in our philosophy, old-time political people will tell you that both the NDP and the Conservatives had principles. We believe in totally different things. We believe in publicly delivered, publicly funded services; they believe much differently. But we had principles. My question is—once they got to the government benches, the principles seem to have disappeared.

I'd like to read a quote, Speaker. I don't read quotes very often, but today I'm going to do it. This is a quote from the original author of this bill, the MPP from Dufferin–Caledon, when she was talking about this bill to her local media:

“The PC Party has committed to restoring Auditor General oversight of government advertising, but last time the Liberals voted down this legislation. Reintroducing this important legislation is a second chance for the Liberals to do the right thing and ensure that taxpayer dollars are respected and ensure oversight is to the Auditor General.

“Despite the Liberal government proroguing the Legislature for political reasons, I will continue to use every opportunity to fight for the legislation I believe will make a difference to the people of Dufferin–Caledon.”

I couldn't agree more. So once again, now we're giving—this isn't actually about Liberal/Conservative; it's about doing the right thing, having the Auditor General look at advertising before they put it out.

We're not opposed to government advertising. There's a purpose for certain government advertising. Actually informing people of government programs or how they can get help, that makes sense. But when you start an ad with, “Imagine if you lived in a place,” and you end the ad with, “But you do live in this place,” there is no relevant information coming from that ad. We all know it. That is a self-promoting ad.

I'll give you another example of how this government is doing this. When you drive down the highway, and you come, it says, “Here is the site of the 413, part of our government's \$28-billion road-building plan.” It doesn't say, “Ontario's.” It says “our,” with a big blue sign. It's that kind of stuff. But when you spend millions and millions doing it, guess what, folks? When you're playing this at the Super Bowl and saying, “Well, we're going to

bring business because of this,” do you know what? I know a lot of business people, and they do a lot of in-depth work to see where they're going to locate. And I give credit where credit is due; I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development helps with that. But I don't think that the captains of industry are watching the Super Bowl, going, “Oh yeah, let's go to Ontario. They have a great Super Bowl ad.” No, no. You're self-promoting, and that money, the taxpayers' money—you claim to be so worried about taxpayers' money. Those funds could be so much better invested in actually providing the services, because do you know what? News flash: If you actually provide the services, you don't need to advertise that someday you might, and that's what you're doing.

In my riding, an emergency room was closed, and there's ads on the radio saying, “Oh, things are going to be great in the future.” That is the problem.

What is so disappointing is, we thought—I thought—as many disagreements as I have with Conservatives on philosophy, I thought and a lot of people across Ontario thought, “Well, at least they have principles. We don't trust the Liberals, but at least this government will have principles,” and the fact that you're doing exactly—exactly, carbon copy—what the Liberal government did before shows that whoever is running your ship doesn't have principles. I hope some of you do. I think many of you do, but you're not showing it by (a) spending the money on these ads, and (b) for the Deputy Premier to potentially not even support her own legislation, her own, word for word. There's no poison pill. This was done by the Conservative—whatever you call your think tank, this was written by that.

But do you know what? Once you crossed the aisle, you basically became Liberals. You're willing to say and do anything to protect yourselves, and that's why many people are so disappointed in this government—so disappointed. Specifically people in rural Ontario thought they were electing their neighbours with principles, and it's not the case at all. Just like the Liberal government before you, you're treating their money like your own money. That is what sunk the Liberals, and in the end, if you're not careful, that is what will sink you.

Please show us you're not like that. Vote for this motion.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, today, we are debating and we tabled a motion asking the government to fast-track a bill that their own Deputy Premier actually wrote, and it's simply to ensure that Ontario's public dollars don't get spent on partisan advertising, but go to actually helping Ontarians.

Being elected is not a free pass to waste the taxpayers' money, Speaker. It's just not. Ontarians need a government that's going to put every single dollar to use on things that matter. They don't need propaganda. They don't need that kind of puff piece. They don't need vanity ads that serve the purposes of this Premier. They need a helping hand. That's what the people of this province need.

And I want to say, I listened to the debate and the members opposite, the Conservative government members, talking, and I've got to tell them, they're not fooling anyone here. If their advertising and these campaigns that we've been talking about this afternoon weren't partisan, if they didn't have to worry about any of that, if they were to pass the smell test, they would pass this motion. Why wouldn't they? But no, they won't, because they know exactly what's going on. They know that those ads do not pass the smell test for Ontarians. Ontarians don't need an advertisement trying to sell them a vision of a province that they don't have, that's unreachable for them. My colleague the member from London North Centre said it's like they're showing us nice things that we just can't have. It's kind of cruel.

We in the NDP really do believe in responsible government, in transparency, in integrity. The government can be done differently, and it can be done well. That's why I'm hoping that the members opposite will actually join us in supporting this motion, a motion their own Deputy Premier drafted. Support us in ending this wasteful spending on propaganda and puff pieces, and actually help us get some things done that are really good for the people of this province. Ontarians deserve that, and I can assure you that if this government won't support this motion, an NDP government will bring that transparency, will bring that integrity and will bring back responsible government in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 3.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1521 to 1531.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 3.

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

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgooin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Holland, Kevin	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Trevor	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sabawy, Sheref
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Todd
Dowie, Andrew	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Michael D.	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ghamari, Goldie	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Harris, Mike	Pirie, George	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 33; the nays are 60.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MURRAY WHETUNG
COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024
SUR LES PRIX MURRAY WHETUNG
POUR SERVICES À LA COLLECTIVITÉ

Mr. Dave Smith moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to provide for an award for exceptional cadets / Projet de loi 31, Loi prévoyant la remise d'un prix aux cadets exceptionnels.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I thought a fair bit about what I was going to talk about today, and I did some research with the legislative library. I think I'm going to start with this: Today, we have an opportunity to actually have a watershed moment here in Queen's Park.

I asked the legislative library to do some research on this, and it appears that there has not been a piece of legislation passed in Ontario's history that recognizes an Indigenous individual. They did find a motion, they did find another private member's bill that was introduced back in 2008. Tom Longboat Day was introduced at first reading but never made it to second reading, and then in 2010, a motion was put forward to declare April 18 Tom Longboat Day. That motion passed but was never enacted. So if this passes third reading today and we get royal assent, it would be the first time in Ontario's history that we would have a piece of legislation named after an

Indigenous individual, to honour an Indigenous individual. I point that out because Ontario has a long history, and we've never done something like this.

What the purpose of this bill is—it's twofold: It's to promote the idea of volunteering, it's to promote the idea of citizenship and the act of giving back. And secondly, it gives us an opportunity to talk about an injustice that we've had in Canada for a number of years. During the First and Second World Wars, more than 7,000 Indigenous individuals and an unknown number of Métis and Inuit individuals voluntarily joined the armed forces.

What was interesting about it when we were doing the research on this is that First Nation individuals were not eligible to be conscripted. The reason for it, and this seems so very foreign in 2024: If you were born a First Nation person, you were not considered a Canadian citizen—not until the mid-1960s. Think about that for a moment: Canada existed, Canada was formed in 1867. From 1867 until the 1960s, if you were one of the First Peoples of this country, you were not considered Canadian, and you were exempt from conscription. That probably wasn't a bad thing—that you were exempt from conscription—but the reality is, more than 7,000 voluntarily joined the Armed Forces, voluntarily went overseas to fight for what we believe was the freedoms that we enjoyed here in Canada, and yet those freedoms were not extended to those very same individuals who were volunteering.

1540

We checked with the federal government on this. We couldn't get an exact number, but it was known that some of those soldiers who went overseas, some of those individuals who voluntarily joined the Armed Forces to fight for us were stripped of their status as Indians because they had been off-reserve for more than four years. When you think about that—they stepped up and voluntarily joined the Armed Forces to fight for Canada overseas, and what did Canada do? They stripped them of their status as an Indian, and in some cases, they didn't have citizenship afterward. So they were no longer a First Nation individual, they were no longer Indigenous—no longer considered an Indian, and they weren't considered a Canadian. Yet they had stepped up and gone overseas to fight.

I think that's one of those injustices that we need to remind people of; I talked about it in second reading. This bill has come forward a couple of times now, and in both of the second readings that we've done on it, I talked about the fact that I grew up near Deseronto and I had a number of friends who were from the Tyendinaga First Nations reserve, and I didn't know this story. And I think that someone like myself, who grew up that close to a reserve, who had that many friends who were Indigenous and never heard these stories—how would someone who wasn't close to a First Nation, how would someone who didn't have friends who were Indigenous know anything about it? The reality is, they wouldn't. Yes, it was a dark time in Canadian history, but it is worth reminding people so that we don't repeat that history.

Part of the reason that we've named this bill after Murray Whetung is, Murray is somebody who volunteered

to join the Armed Forces. Murray was born in 1921. He joined the Canadian army on August 8, 1942, just before his 21st birthday, so as a 20-year-old, he stepped up. What was interesting about that was, as a Curve Lake First Nation member—100% of the eligible males from Curve Lake volunteered to join the Armed Forces to fight the Second World War; the entire male population stepped forward and went overseas.

Murray is not someone who lost his status when he came back—he actually came back to Canada twice during service. There's an interesting story—if there's time, I'll tell it—about one of his trips back.

When the war was over and Murray came back, he wasn't allowed to wear his medals. He had been awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, the War Medal for 1939-45, as well as the general service award. He wasn't allowed to wear the medals when he first came back. He wasn't allowed to wear his uniform when he first came back. He wasn't allowed to go into the Canadian Legion when he first came back. Yet he voluntarily went overseas to fight.

He was on a ship that was supposed to be part of the D-Day invasion, and the night before the invasion occurred, that ship was torpedoed by an airplane and it damaged the rudder. So he didn't get over to Juno Beach until day three of D-Day, although he was scheduled to be part of the D-Day invasion. We've all seen historical footage of that and the carnage that occurred on that day, so he was probably spared because his ship was torpedoed.

He was a signalman. His job was to make sure that the communication lines from the front line to the command stayed intact. Murray talked about how most of the time they were doing their work under the cover of darkness. They'd set up a tent over the lines so that you wouldn't see the light—because there were German snipers out there whose sole purpose was to shoot the signalmen so that they couldn't have the signal, they couldn't have information flowing from the front lines back to the command on it. He did put his life on the line pretty much every day when he was out there doing it.

When he came back to Curve Lake, Murray continued to volunteer; he continued to give back to his community. It was well known that if you were doing any kind of a community event and you needed people there to help set up, you needed people to volunteer to have it run, Murray was one of those guys who was always there for it. Yet, as a veteran coming back, he couldn't go to the Legion. He couldn't wear his medals. He couldn't wear his uniform. He was mistreated that way. But he was just a happy-go-lucky guy who felt it was important to give back, who felt it was important to do the right thing because it was the right thing to do, and he instilled that in his family.

He was one of 13 brothers and sisters. All of his brothers joined the Armed Forces because they felt that that was something they should do. They all gave back. Many of his kids served on Curve Lake—Grand Council. His granddaughter was former chief—or was the chief in Curve Lake. He instilled in his family that desire, that need, to give back.

What this award will do for us, if it passes, is give us the opportunity to inspire young cadets to give back to their community, to volunteer for the sake of volunteering. It will give us an opportunity to tell that story of that injustice, but to tell it in a way that turns it into something positive. Although so many of those First Nation veterans were mistreated, they continued to give back. They continued to see that service, above all, was very important and to make sure that their community was a better place for it. If we can instill that in those youth, in those cadets, we can have a generation of young people growing up with the idea that part of their job of being a resident of this province, of being a resident of this country, is to try to make the place better for others. I think that's a very positive message. I think that's a great message to give.

In today's world, there are so many times when our heroes let us down. We idealize different people for different reasons. We hold up sports athletes as something that they should or shouldn't be, that we should aspire to. We hold actors to that. And we find with all of them—it doesn't matter who—that they have flaws.

What we don't do enough of, in my opinion, is celebrate the everyday hero, who doesn't look for the accolades, who doesn't look for the praise, who doesn't do it for the money; who does it because it's the right thing to do, who stands up and says, "I will make a difference in my community," because that's what we should do.

That's what this bill will do, as it will celebrate one of those everyday heroes. And it will be the first time in Ontario's history that we will have passed a piece of legislation to honour an Indigenous veteran. It's long overdue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I am very pleased to address the House this afternoon with respect to Bill 31, the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act, 2024.

First and foremost, I want to express my pride in supporting my caucus colleague the member for Peterborough–Kawartha, as he has placed this bill before the House.

Speaker, Murray Whetung stands as a shining example of a great Canadian—a member of the Curve Lake First Nation and a veteran who served his country with pride and honour, both on and off the battlefield.

It is of the utmost importance that we honour the legacy of First Nations veterans, and this is exactly what this proposed legislation would do.

Bill 31, if passed, would establish an award to a cadet in each local Royal Canadian Air Cadet corps, Royal Canadian Army Cadet corps and Royal Canadian Sea Cadet corps, as well as Junior Canadian Rangers, who have displayed excellence in volunteerism and in citizenship over the previous year.

Allow me to paint a picture of the man this bill is rightfully named after.

During his service in World War II, Signalman Murray Whetung played a crucial role in setting up com-

munication lines that were vital to wartime operations. On August 8, 1944, Murray Whetung received his first good conduct badge award for his exemplary service to his unit. And throughout World War II, he demonstrated bravery and faced many life-threatening situations. As a signalman, Murray was instrumental in running lines from Juno Beach to Brussels, Belgium, and to many other parts of war-torn Europe.

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Upon the conclusion of the war, Murray continued his service in Germany, setting up lines and communication systems for the Canadian Army there. Signalman Whetung was honourably discharged from service on December 4, 1945, and received several medals as a result of his outstanding service.

Upon returning home, Murray remained a devoted member of the Curve Lake First Nation and continued giving back to his community, and he served as one of its pillars until his passing in 2021, just three years ago.

Speaker, Murray Whetung is but one of many of the brave and exceptional Indigenous Canadians who risked their lives in both world wars. Thousands of Indigenous individuals voluntarily enlisted, as referenced by the member for Peterborough–Kawartha. And despite facing discrimination and injustices before and during the wars, those individuals protected the rights and freedoms of all Canadians on the home front with unwavering dedication—a dedication that ultimately came at a heavy cost.

Hundreds of Indigenous Canadians paid the ultimate price and gave their lives in battle for the freedom of Canada. Furthermore, those who returned home after the war faced a multitude of challenges. At that time, under Canadian law, many of those who returned from war were stripped of their First Nations status. The law was such that if one was not on one's reserve for a certain period, one was then deemed to have forfeited First Nations status.

This period was also a time when people of First Nations status had been disenfranchised. A little bit of history here: The Electoral Franchise Act of 1885 was introduced in the federal House of Commons by the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald. For the first time, the right to vote was extended to Indigenous Canadians. This is confirmed by Richard Gwyn in the second volume of his biography of Sir John A. Macdonald, at pages 419 and 420. This is also in the legislative library, for those who wish to read it. That act extending the franchise to Indigenous Canadians was repealed by the Laurier Liberal government in 1898. And it was not until 1960, when Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and the federal Progressive Conservative Party introduced legislation that was passed, restoring the right to vote for Indigenous Canadians.

So at that time that this hero, this signalman, Murray Whetung, returned from war, not only was he stripped of his status as an Indigenous Canadian, but he also would not have been allowed to vote.

This treatment of Indigenous people was beyond unjust and is a disgraceful chapter in Canadian history.

Despite the injustices that Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous Canadian veterans faced upon return, many continued to provide immense support to their communities across this province and across this country. Many returned to their local communities and continued to serve on councils as chiefs and as volunteers in many different initiatives that helped improve the daily lives of their families, friends, and neighbours.

This is the true spirit and strength of heroes. Heroes are people who tirelessly help others, demonstrating by example the potential in each and every one of us for good and for love.

Speaker, this bill would help create and maintain a focus on the stories of the contributions of Indigenous veterans to both wartime and peacetime efforts, through the memory of Murray Whetung.

Our Ontario government supports advancing real and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada through the continued implementation of various initiatives, as part of our response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action. If passed, this bill will continue to help us to do so and serve as an important step on this journey toward reconciliation. We will continue to provide support and pay our respects to Indigenous heroes and ensure that we understand, that we educate, that we inspire future generations with their history and their stories.

Signalman Murray Whetung was a courageous individual. He fought for his country, and he supported the community of Curve Lake—a true hero in both war and peace. The lessons that he embodied and the inspiration of his legacy will be everlasting for his community, for Ontario and for Canada. This bill, if passed, will ensure that his memory will never be forgotten.

So I urge every member of this House to support Bill 31 and to honour not only Murray Whetung, but all of those who have served and continue to serve our province and our country with high distinction.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I am proud to rise to speak to this debate.

It is an important bill, and I congratulate the member for bringing it forward. It's also an example of how, in this House, private members' public business is important. We can get important work done.

I have to say, I brought forward a bill called the Nancy Rose Act to address pediatric palliative care in the province of Ontario, which was a good bill.

My seatmate, the MPP for Hamilton Mountain, has a bill, Bill 74, vulnerable persons alert act—another important bill.

So the business that we bring to this House—private members' public business—is important, and this is an example of that.

I was honoured to spend the day in Anishinaabe territory. I was invited to Peterborough. I would like to acknowledge that Anishinaabe territory, Peterborough county, is located on the Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory

and in the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nation.

We started the day with a smudge that was conducted by Murray Whetung's son Lorenzo Whetung. He asked us to cleanse our ears and our minds and our tongue so that the proceedings of the day would allow us to be open to one another and to share important moments, and I think that is what we did during that day.

As has been said by my colleagues on the other side, we heard from Murray's family. It was an absolute honour to hear from their mouths directly the legacy of their father and their grandfather, to hear about his character, and to hear about the injustices that he suffered that also impacted his family and that he suffered with grace and dignity. Murray Whetung is a lesson not only in his service, in his dedication to helping others, but in the way that he continued to raise a family and conduct himself in our community—commendable. His family—it was quite obvious during the day that they were exceedingly proud of him, and rightfully so.

I want to say that this is a bill that we absolutely supported at second reading.

I would like to take a moment, if you don't mind, to share what our critic for Legions, military and veteran affairs had to say—that's the MPP for St. Catharines:

"I fully support this bill, as a proud mother of a son in the Canadian navy and a proud Legion member. It is so important that the cadet program in Ontario is recognized....

"I want to say thank you to all the youth in the cadet programs—the youth that stand guard in all inclement weather at our local cenotaph."

Again, I need to emphasize that she is the proud mother of an active service member, and she stands tall and is always prepared to support and defend the rights of our military veterans.

I also want to say, during second reading, we talked a lot about the experience of Indigenous First Nations in Far North remote communities. I would like to suggest that we need to acknowledge that there are so many injustices that need to be set straight—the fact that there is not clean drinking water in Far North communities, the fact that we continue to see lack of housing. The infrastructure deficit when it comes to Indigenous First Nations communities is in the billions. We see communities where family members die, literally, for the lack of a fire station, where a nursing station burns down and it's not replaced. So these are important injustices that weren't happening 50, 70 years ago—they're happening right now, today. And it is my hope that this bill will help us to acknowledge that. It is a first step in acknowledging that.

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We did hear very specifically from the MPP from Kiiwetinoong, who shared that every day in this House he brings to this House the concerns and the struggles and the real, real suffering of the people of his communities.

We also heard from the MPP from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, who also shared that while this bill is important, it cannot stand alone; it has to be looked at in

the context of what we are experiencing right now, today, in Indigenous communities across the province.

So while I think this is an important bill, I'm hoping that this is an opportunity for the government to actually start to step up to address the injustices that are happening in our Indigenous communities across Ontario.

As has been said, we know that Indigenous veterans and Indigenous soldiers stood side by side their Canadian comrades, and many of them served with distinction.

In researching this bill, I was able to research a gentleman by the name of Thomas George Prince, who was an Indigenous Canadian war hero. He was the most decorated soldier in the First Special Service Force, or what's known as the Devil's Brigade. They served in Anzio. I have said it before in this House, and I'll say it again: My uncle Albert Gavin also served in the Devil's Brigade in Anzio. So while my uncle Albert—uncle Red, as we actually called him—well, Uncle Red is no longer with us, I wish I had known this, because it certainly would be a really interesting moment to make this connection—to hear first-hand. It's quite possible that he served alongside Murray Whetung.

We need to understand that Indigenous soldiers and veterans are highly, highly decorated. Thomas George Prince is just one of those.

Even though they were equals on the battlefield, we have heard that they couldn't vote, and in many cases, Indigenous veterans were unable to receive veterans' benefits. So for decades, they were forgotten soldiers. In some cases, they had to give up their status rights in order to serve and then give up status rights in order to receive benefits. And unfortunately, many Indigenous veterans, as we have heard, were banned from Royal Canadian Legions. They were also unable to get advice on post-war benefits. In some instances—it's hard to believe this—Indigenous folks had to give up their land to returning veterans who were non-Indigenous.

These are injustices that are hard to fathom, but this is what Indigenous veterans suffered in our communities.

We know that there are still many Indigenous veterans who have not received entitlements. Despite the fact the federal government issued an apology in 2003 and compensated many, there are still many who have not received their justful entitlements.

Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge that this bill is an important acknowledgement and recognition of Murray Whetung and Indigenous veterans who have served in our province.

I also think it's important to acknowledge that November 8 is National Indigenous Veterans Day. This is a day of remembrance and commemoration of the contributions of Indigenous veterans in the First and Second World Wars, as well as those serving in Korea. National Indigenous Veterans Day began in Winnipeg in 1994, because they acknowledged that veterans were not recognized in Remembrance Day activities.

In Canada, there are over 12,000 Indigenous people—that's an estimation—who participated in all three wars,

including 7,000 First Nation members and approximately 300 who died during these conflicts.

As we have said, after the war, enlisted Indigenous people returned home to continued discrimination—in some cases, denial of benefits, loss of status and expropriation of their land by the government for non-Indigenous veterans. Isn't it shocking to hear that this happened not that long ago?

It was only in 1995 that Indigenous veterans were allowed to lay wreaths commemorating their fallen comrades at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. It took until 2003 for the government to provide veterans' benefits to First Nations soldiers who had been denied them in the past, and it wasn't until 2019 for Métis veterans. Honestly, that's shocking, that Métis veterans still, up until 2019, were not recognized and did not receive the benefits and the acknowledgement and the praise and thanks that they deserve for having served in Canada's Armed Forces.

I want to say that we heard from, really, so many people there, and I learned so much. We heard from Grand Chief Reg Niganobe, who talked about something that was very interesting. I have to confess to the House, and I'm sure the MPP for Durham—the minister—and I have shared our nerdy love of Canadian history, one of the things we have in common. I really think that it's important to acknowledge—these acknowledge recent wars, but this history of Indigenous people serving their country can be traced back to the War of 1812. I mean, probably before that, but my readings so far have only taken me back to the War of 1812. Grand Chief Niganobe raised this issue that if you look at Indigenous or First Nations participation in the War of 1812, they served on both sides, and they were promised an Indigenous country, essentially. At the end of the war, at the Treaty of Ghent, they were betrayed by both sides, American and British forces.

We also know, particularly for folks from my area, that this was also during the time that the Haldimand Tract was proclaimed. Governor Haldimand proclaimed that—how many miles on either side of the Grand?—six miles on either side of the Grand should remain an Indigenous territory. We know that that has not happened, and I would say that it's interesting.

Again, if you go into the hall leading up toward the north wing where the library is, on the wall, carved in marble, is Governor Haldimand's name, he of the Haldimand Tract. I think, with irony, it's hard to believe that his name is carved in marble but that promise disintegrated and does not exist today. If you are the least bit interested in this, I think that to really understand how we formed as a country and as a province, the lessons of the War of 1812 are important for all of us in this House.

I also want to talk about something that, time and time again, was raised by the deputants themselves. I would say that the cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers deputy commanding officer David Wright, unprompted, raised the issue that Junior Canadian Rangers were not acknowledged in this bill. I have had conversations with the member who is putting this bill forward, the member from Peterborough—Kawartha. It is my understanding that there

will be a way to acknowledge the Junior Canadian Rangers. It's not the case right now, so I will take him at his word that this is an omission that will be addressed. But I think this also gives me an opportunity to raise the issue of Junior Canadian Rangers.

Many people are not familiar, and I have to say I was not either until I had the opportunity to attend those long-day hearings. "Junior Canadian Rangers are part of the Canadian Cadet Organizations and are linked to the Canadian Rangers. This program aims to offer young Canadians, aged 12 to 18 ... in remote and isolated communities across Canada an opportunity to participate in a range of developmental activities in a formal setting. It also aims to engage them with their local communities."

This is not an Indigenous program per se. But because of where the Junior Canadian Rangers operate, the vast majority of the youth who participate in this are Indigenous. So I think that there certainly needs to be a way that we bring recognition in this House to this group of youth.

I know that when we were there, during the course of committee, we heard from the commanding officer David Wright, as I said, who represents the cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers. He said right off the top, unprompted, that this needed to be included. We also had commanding officer Daniel Hutt who represented the Air Cadet League saying absolutely, in response to a question, he thought that this was an appropriate inclusion—the Junior Canadian Rangers—particularly given the fact that this bill honours an Indigenous veteran and that many of the Junior Canadian Rangers are Indigenous. And he said, again, not because it's for Indigenous youth, but the fact is, where they operate, which is the Far North and remote parts of Ontario, that's primarily Indigenous or First Nations territory, and that's who the kids are that participate in that.

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We also heard from Army Cadet League Captain Rick Brown. I had a long conversation with him about his work in making sure we had cadets week acknowledged in Ontario, because there's also a cadets week that we acknowledge in Ontario. He said that, absolutely, the Junior Canadian Rangers should be included.

So, what I would like to do is take the opportunity to just share a little bit of the legacy and tradition of the Canadian Junior Rangers that operate in the Far North and remote communities in Ontario. I'm going to read from this lovely book that was lent to me by a wonderful woman named Athena. To begin with, I want to say that in this foreword, it says, "First Nations people feel very comfortable with the Canadian Rangers because their traditional survival skills in the harsh northern environment are acknowledged, respected and welcomed as an integral part of the Canadian Army training. The First Nations people in the Canadian Rangers feel appreciated and validated through their role as army trainers."

There's just a couple of examples that I want to read out from some folks who have served in the Canadian Rangers, and I'm going to start with—bear with me—the Muskrat Dam Canadian Ranger Patrol and a woman

named Emily Beardy. Emily Beardy was part of the Canadian Rangers in her community, and I'm going to read a story that she shared: "Emily took part in a search-and-rescue operation. A man was travelling to the neighbouring community of Sachigo Lake, but he didn't arrive on time. The season was spring. At this time of the year, melting snow and ice make travel dangerous in northern Ontario.

"The Canadian Rangers left Muskrat Dam at midnight by snowmobile to help their counterparts search for the missing traveller. Unfortunately, after travelling about half the distance, Muskrat Dam's patrol had to turn around because they dared not cross the melting ice on the waters. But the Canadian Rangers from Sachigo Lake found the traveller and took him home safely to their community."

I also want to share a story from Neskantaga Canadian Ranger patrol. This is Maggie Sakanee. She was one of eight children who grew up in this community. She lived in a trapline cabin that her father built in the bush approximately 20 kilometres east of Neskantaga. In 2003, Maggie joined the Canadian Rangers, and she recalled the time when she noticed the absence of an elderly Neskantaga man during the winter. She alerted her fellow Canadian Rangers, who set out to search for him. They found him safe 48 hours later, 20 to 30 kilometres east of their home. The man had started a fire to keep warm and had built himself a shelter.

"Maggie happily works with and educates the Junior Canadian Rangers in her community. She passes on her traditional Aboriginal knowledge about survival on the land. She believes that skills such as building an improvised shelter, shooting and cooking on an open fire are essential for everyone who ventures into northern Ontario's harsh climate."

I might be running out of time to read it, but I also very quickly want to talk about a woman, Ruth Morris, from Kingfisher Lake, who is part of the Canadian Ranger patrol. Ruth joined the Kingfisher Lake Canadian Ranger patrol in 2010. She initially took part in a 10-day training and, since then, she has learned how to use modern technology in search-and-rescue exercises. She has also learned mapping skills, safety in the bush and shooting at the range. She identifies strongly with the program and all that it stands for.

So that's just a few of the many proud Indigenous community members that have served in the Canadian Rangers and who are mentoring and encouraging Junior Canadian Rangers in our Indigenous and northern communities.

I want to end by saying that Minister McCarthy, and perhaps the member, talked about this being a step towards reconciliation, and I accept that. I accept that we cannot right the wrongs of the past; that is not something that we can do here. But we can choose and we can right our future. That is possible for all of us. And while this is a step towards reconciliation, I would say it's a small step. I would say it's a small step considering the challenges that we are faced by, the kind of colonial system, by the colonial racism, as has been described by MPP Sol

Mamakwa from Kiiwetinoong. I think that if we are looking towards real reconciliation, this is an important award, but, if we're looking for real reconciliation, we need to show that we mean it.

Tomorrow is budget day. I hope to see in the budget a truly important and large investment—a significant investment—that will help address the kind of discrimination, the kind of two-tiered system, that Indigenous folks in this province live in.

I will end by saying I think this is an important bill, it's an important acknowledgment of an Indigenous veteran. Hopefully this provides us an opportunity to begin to have a dialogue about the many ways in the past that we have mistreated and disrespected Indigenous folks, and hopefully this is an opportunity going forward, through this award, to continue to do better to collectively acknowledge that we have an obligation as treaty people, as humans, to see justice done in our Indigenous communities across the province.

Thank you for this bill. I appreciate it and hope to see much more from this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm proud to be able to speak to the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act because it holds profound significance. It acknowledges the sacrifices and contributions made by all Indigenous people who have honourably served in the Canadian military. During the First and Second World Wars, more than 7,000 First Nation members voluntarily joined the Canadian Armed Forces to fight overseas, as they were exempt from conscription. Their choice to put their lives on the line, their valour on foreign soil, speaks volumes about their love for this country and their commitment to defending its values, but their dedication came at a steep cost. After serving in the wars for a period of time, many First Nations members were forced to give up their Indian status, and, as a result, were denied their rights they so valiantly fought to protect.

Despite these injustices, they returned to their country with a spirit of service. Through serving on councils as chiefs and as volunteers on various initiatives, they continued to give back to their community. One such individual was Murray Whetung, a Curve Lake First Nation veteran who served during World War II. His story is not just one of dedication to his responsibilities as a communication specialist. Murray was mistreated. He faced discrimination. Upon his return from serving overseas, he was not allowed in the Royal Canadian Legion. He was not permitted to wear his medals. But such hardship did not deter his commitment to serving his community, and passing on the values of duty and compassion, as he continued his volunteerism. Today, his dedication and leadership are a beacon of inspiration for us all. That is why the commemoration of the sacrifice and contributions of our local First Nations members like Murray is imperative.

Through this legislation, we have the opportunity to celebrate and honour individuals like Murray Whetung, whose selflessness and dedication continue to have a

positive impact on their societies. The values embodied by Murray—community involvement, volunteerism and a deep sense of responsibility—resonate profoundly within the army, air and sea cadets of Ontario. This award will be bestowed upon deserving members of the cadet corps and squadrons, recognizing their exceptional volunteerism and citizenship within their communities. This initiative will not only honour the legacy of Indigenous veterans like Murray, but also inspire future generations to embody the values of service and community, instilling a culture of giving back and making a positive impact at a grassroots level.

No one is too young to make a difference because, in the end, community service and volunteerism are not just actions, they are fundamental aspects of what it means to be an Ontarian. They embody the spirit of compassion, empathy and solidarity that defines us as a province—and yes, as a people.

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Whether it's lending a helping hand to your neighbour, participating in local initiatives or supporting charitable causes, every act of service contributes to the fabric of our society. That is what Murray believed, Speaker. And that is what it means to be an Ontarian.

The Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act, 2023, will ensure that the service and protection of Canada by the Indigenous people will always be recognized and honoured, as it should. Their stories of resilience will remain an integral part of our province's history—in fact, our country's history.

As we move forward with the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act, we acknowledge that our journey toward reconciliation is ongoing. Through the passage of this bill, we not only heighten awareness of past injustices, but embrace a future with a renewed commitment to inclusivity, understanding and respect. It's about weaving the stories of Indigenous veterans into the fabric of our province, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten. It's about shedding light on the personal fulfillment derived from giving back, giving people a hand up, and will contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and thriving society for all people, serving as a catalyst for meaningful action.

Speaker, it's heartening to note that this bill has also garnered widespread support. Murray's family stands proudly behind this legislation, recognizing it as a fitting tribute to his enduring legacy. The cadets across Ontario who embody the very values that Murray was known for have also expressed their support for this recognition of exceptional volunteerism and citizenship. I'd like to read a quote into the record, Speaker, if I may. It's from one of the representatives of the board of the governors of the Air Cadet League of Canada: "The board of governors supports the proposed legislation, using the service of Murray Whetung as an example to recognize a cadet in every corps or squadron in Ontario for volunteerism in their community."

And the Anishinabek Nation, specifically the veterans committee, have lent their support to this bill as well, recognizing it as a meaningful step towards honouring the

contributions of Indigenous veterans and fostering a spirit of reconciliation and unity. The collective support that the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act has is more than just legislation; it's a testament to the power of the community. It's a reminder that every act of service, no matter how small, plays a vital role in shaping our community and enriching the lives of our fellow neighbours. It's a collective commitment to honouring our past, embracing our present and building a future where the spirit of service and community shines in every corner of our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'd like to begin by thanking the member for Peterborough–Kawartha for bringing this bill forward to recognize the exceptional service of Murray MacKenzie Whetung, a member of the Curve Lake First Nation, who faced discrimination and mistreatment, but continued his commitment to his community and his country. We can barely imagine this kind of fortitude. What an appropriate way to acknowledge and celebrate Murray Whetung's service by acknowledging the exceptional volunteerism and citizenship of a cadet within their own community and their own corps.

Young people who have already committed themselves to a life of service and community, whether they go on to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces or not, learn service, leadership and commitment, and having more cadets learn of Murray Whetung's service and commitment is so very important because there is still so much to do. It's not enough to talk nice words without the action to actually address the modern-day mistreatment of Indigenous people. Hopefully this award will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the sacrifices and contributions of Indigenous veterans. If we educate our young people, they will carry Murray's legacy of service forward. We owe a significant debt of gratitude to Murray Whetung and his family and all Indigenous veterans.

Let us continue to work to ensure that they receive the thanks and acknowledgement that they all so rightly deserve. Let us start moving forward together, and I'm sure that Murray would be pleased to know that his name is being used towards the improvement of conditions for Indigenous people and Indigenous veterans and that cadets are the ones who will be awarded this award in his name for their services.

Meegwetch. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of Simcoe–Grey to speak to Bill 31, the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act, 2023. I want to thank my colleague the MPP for Peterborough–Kawartha for bringing this important bill forward and allowing me the opportunity to speak today.

This is an extremely important award, Madam Speaker, because it is a tribute to an important First Nations elder, decorated veteran and family man, Murray Whetung. We heard earlier that he was discharged honourably in December of 1945 after coming back and serving in a

very, very dangerous time, obviously, in Europe and being a part of the D-Day wrap-up. He was 24 at the time that he was discharged, and he died in February of 2021 in his 100th year. He had 76 years after his time overseas, and when he came home, he continued to be an important contributor to his community. He was an engine mechanic, a United Church minister and an elder and good friend to many in the Curve Lake First Nation. He had 12 children, over 50 grandchildren and I think they've lost count of his great-grandchildren. So Mr. Whetung is a man who cast a long and indelible shadow in his community, both in terms of serving his country overseas, but also in serving his community long after when he returned home.

We've heard others speak about the importance of his contribution as a veteran in a time when there was great discrimination against our First Nations soldiers. It's interesting that he went into the army because First Nations were not allowed to go into the air force or the navy, and so he became, as all of his brothers, a member of the army and fought the ground battles that really changed the complexion of the war in the European campaign.

This recognition is of the critical role that our First Nations people played in defending our country willingly and not through conscription; they all volunteered to defend our way of life, a way of life that often was at odds with their own. And we've heard about the prejudices they faced overseas and the potential loss of their Indian status if they were away from their band for over four years, and then coming home and not being able to wear their medals, their uniforms, or, in fact, go to the Legion and even to vote. They defended our nation when they did not have the right to vote, and it was not until 1951 when they were given the right to vote and then subsequently allowed into our Legions.

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So it really speaks to the character of Murray Whetung and his brothers that they would make this sacrifice, that they would risk their lives for a way of life that really didn't accept them at that time. And that is another reason for the importance of this bill, is that it is, in part, an act of reconciliation. And reconciliation, as the report from Murray Sinclair's committee suggests, is about truth and reconciliation, and before we can get to reconciliation, we have to confront the truths at the time so that we can move forward together so that we can be partners in making Canada a more accepting and better home for our First Nations peoples.

And it's important also because it is a recognition of the cadets and Junior Rangers and the important programs that are offered through the air cadets. I know in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, in Collingwood, Branch Legion 63 has the cadet program there, Branch 1909, and I've been many times in my former life as a municipal politician to their annual reviews and banquets, and it's wonderful to see these youth aged 12 to 18, young men and women, who are participating in the programs, getting exposure to healthy programs, community service. Many of them go to Base Borden, which is also in my riding, to attend the

Blackdown Cadet Training Centre program in the summer which is a two-week camp, and I was at their review last summer—to see the proud faces of these kids and their parents as they completed the two-week program there.

So it's very important to have this recognition to recognize their achievements and their commitment to serving their communities, but also so that they became aware of the life and legacy of Murray Whetung and the role of our Indigenous forces and veterans in both wars.

The Legions—and there are nine of them in my riding—and every year on Remembrance Day, as well as throughout the year are integral parts in their community and in supporting community events such as hockey banquets, sport banquets, parades and as well, during the pandemic, in my riding in Collingwood, the Legion served a vital role as the overflow hospital with 17 beds in the case of any wave of the pandemic that forced patients out of the hospital.

And these are just aspects of the important role that our Legions play in our communities. Not only do they provide supports for our veterans and our first responders—I as well am a member—they are important places to gather for our communities to celebrate our communities, to honour and recognize the roles that our veterans played in our lives and the incredible debt that we owe to each and every one of our veterans. In the words of Winston Churchill: “Never has so much been owed to so few by so many.”

And that continues today when we see the geopolitical instability in our world that we are not as far from war as we would like to be, and it is important to understand and appreciate the legacy of our veterans and to promote their values as we move forward to make our communities safer, more inclusive and more resilient.

So I want to give an acknowledgment out to all of the Legions in my riding for the great work that they do and to thank them and their boards for making such an impact in our communities.

It is a great honour today to be speaking in support of this legislation to recognize a very important man, Murray Whetung, but also to recognize what he represents as one of over 7,000 First Nations veterans and the contributions they made to our country during the war, despite the negative impacts it could have on them, on their return—and also to recognize and carry forward the legacy of Murray Whetung and his caring, giving, all-embracing attitude to make sure that our young cadets honour and appreciate that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je veux remercier le député de Peterborough–Kawartha. Je n'étais pas sur la liste pour parler, mais je pensais que c'était important. Puis, vu que j'écoutais les allocutions attentivement, ça vient m'interpeller. Comme vous le savez, moi, à Mushkegowuk—Baie James, je représente sept communautés autochtones. Dans chaque communauté, il y a des « rangers ».

Mais je voudrais vous parler un petit peu de Murray Whetung, dont on a entendu parler dans les allocutions en

anglais. Pour les francophones, c'était un d'une Première Nation qui est allé à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Il était un « lineman ». C'est lui qui gardait les lignes de communication ouvertes. Mais si on se souvient, les Premières Nations n'étaient pas obligées d'aller en guerre. Lui, il a décidé d'y aller de son propre gré. Fait que, drette en faisant ça, c'est un héro—juste le fait qu'ils ne sont pas obligés d'y aller, et ils le font de leur propre gré pour défendre ce en quoi ils croient, et ils ont fait la différence dans la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

Puis, encore pire : quand il est revenu, M. Murray Whetung ne pouvait même pas aller dans les Légions comme les autres vétérans, à cause qu'il était d'une Première Nation. Même pas les médailles—parce qu'il a été décoré de plusieurs médailles, et il ne pouvait même pas porter ses médailles. Ça, tu sais, c'est comme insulte par-dessus insulte. Quand tu penses qu'il est allé défendre notre pays, ce que tout le monde aujourd'hui reconnaît—et on sait que c'est une injustice, là. Si on parle de « truth and reconciliation » et qu'aujourd'hui on est dans ce mouvement-là, et on sait que ça s'est fait dans le passé, ça ne peut pas faire autrement que de venir te chercher. Ça ne peut pas faire autrement. De dire que les Premières Nations sont allées défendre notre pays et on leur a fait vivre des conditions de même, moi, ça vient me chercher.

J'ai parlé à mon collègue qui a amené le projet de loi. Je lui ai demandé pourquoi, dans ce projet de loi, on ne reconnaît pas les « junior rangers » à la grandeur. Il y a une raison de question fédérale là-dedans. Il y a une question. C'est pour ça que je me suis levé pour en parler : parce que je veux reconnaître certaines choses qui se passent. Ces « junior rangers », il ne faut pas l'oublier, ce sont des jeunes qui, comme les cadets—ils font la même affaire que les cadets. Ce n'est pas juste pour les Premières Nations, mais c'est des communautés de Premières Nations. On a beaucoup de monde qui fait du bon travail là-dedans, puis qui passe des connaissances, des traditions, qui passe tellement de « knowledge », de connaissances, à la jeunesse.

Souvent, on a entendu des histoires d'horreurs, comme mon collègue de Kiiwetinoong en a parlé. Je sais, dans mon comté, on en vit souvent : des pactes de suicide, des enfants de 10 ans. Puis quand on regarde un organisme comme les « junior rangers » et toutes les personnes qui travaillent dans l'organisme pour donner à ces jeunes-là des valeurs, des connaissances—puis ce n'est pas un pays qui est facile. Plus tu vas au Nord, plus c'est froid et plus les conditions sont difficiles, arides. Mais ça leur donne des conditions de survie, comme on fait avec les cadets dans nos régions. Les « rangers » font la même affaire.

Moi, il y en a un qui m'impressionne tout le temps. Il s'appelle Stan Sutherland. Le monsieur est d'un âge avancé, et c'est son fils—je pense que c'est Donald—qui prend la relève. Mais c'était tellement impressionnant de voir ce monsieur-là le jour du Souvenir—on parle du 8 novembre. Il y avait tous ces « rangers » qui viennent. Le 8 novembre, c'est pour reconnaître les soldats des Premières Nations qui sont décédés dans les guerres mondiales. Il y en a beaucoup. Puis on voit que ces jeunes-

là apprennent certaines choses, qu'ils leur passent les valeurs, s'entraident, puis aussi qu'on leur donne, comme je disais, toutes ces connaissances-là. Mais ce monsieur-là m'impressionnait tellement avec tout ce qu'il apportait à ces jeunes-là et avec comment il était respecté à travers la communauté. Je veux lui dire salut, à Stan, parce que c'est un monsieur qui m'a marqué beaucoup dans mon travail que je fais aujourd'hui.

J'ai une autre personne que je voudrais reconnaître. C'est Joe Lazarus, de Kashechewan. C'est un autre mentor pour ces jeunes-là. Il ne faut pas oublier—c'est pour ça que je me suis levé pour parler, parce que c'est un bon projet de loi, mais je me sentais interpellé de reconnaître ce monde-là, parce qu'on ne peut pas, pour une raison quelconque, ramener ça—puis on parle de M. Whetung, Murray Whetung, qui est d'une Première Nation. On parle des injustices qu'il a vécues par rapport avec comment on traitait les Premières Nations dans le temps, à cause qu'on avait des préjugés. On a un projet de loi où on aurait pu faire mieux, mais certaines choses nous empêchent de le faire. Il reste un goût amer—pas parce qu'il n'a pas fait le travail. Il y a des raisons, mais on aurait dû essayer de trouver une solution. Ce n'est rien que ça, mon point.

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Je veux aussi parler de Byron Corston qui est de Moose Factory, un autre mentor pour ces jeunes, et de Jessie Sutherland de Fort Albany. Mais tous ces jeunes-là, aussi, il ne faut pas oublier que c'est tout relié—s'il y a de quoi que les Premières Nations ont, c'est que leur culture est tellement belle. Je le dis souvent, moi : on a tellement à apprendre de cette culture-là. On devrait travailler plus étroitement avec les Premières Nations, les « seven teachings », et ce qu'ils nous apportent, ce qu'ils nous amèneraient—on a tellement à apprendre. Je peux vous dire que la population se porterait beaucoup mieux si on vivait selon les « teachings » des Premières Nations, parce qu'ils ont tellement à nous apprendre.

C'est pour ça que je vous invite souvent à venir faire un tour. Vous allez voir comment ils traitent leurs « elders », les personnes âgées. Eux autres, ils vivent avec eux; c'est leur plus grande richesse, les « elders ». Souvent, nous, on oublie ça, comment c'est important que les « elders », nos ancêtres, nos vieillards—des fois, on les met dans une institution. Des fois, il y a beaucoup de personnes qui les oublient; ils finissent leurs jours seuls. Tu ne vois pas ça avec les Premières Nations. Toute la communauté s'occupe des « elders ». Toutes les communautés vont leur donner—ils vont faire certain qu'ils ne manquent pas de bouffe, qu'ils ne manquent de rien. Ils ont tellement à offrir, puis tellement à nous apprendre.

Mais ça, ces jeunes-là, ces « juniors rangers » se font passer toutes ces connaissances-là, toutes les valeurs, des valeurs qu'on devrait apprendre d'eux autres aussi, des valeurs à ces jeunes, qui amènent un souffle d'espoir, un souffle d'espoir que ces jeunes-là—ont parlé des groupes de jeunes de 10 ans qui font des pactes de suicide. Tu te dis, bien, on vit dans la même province, puis qu'ils ne sont pas capables de voir—ils voient tellement noir qu'ils font un pacte de suicide, quand on a des organismes comme les « junior rangers » qui pourraient les aider et qui aident

beaucoup de jeunes. Ils les amènent sur le territoire. Ils les amènent—comment survivre. Ils ont sauvé beaucoup de monde, aussi : les personnes qui sont perdues en forêt. S'il y a quelqu'un qui connaît la forêt, c'est les « junior rangers ». Ils en ont sauvé beaucoup. On parle de gars comme Stan et Donald, que j'ai mentionné, tous ces mentors-là qui ont fait tellement, qui passent ces valeurs.

Je trouve que c'est une opportunité qu'on a manquée de reconnaître aussi les « junior rangers ». Je me sentais interpellé d'en parler. Pourquoi? Parce que toutes les injustices que Murray a vécues, souvent, d'autres Premières Nations continuent de les vivre aujourd'hui.

Je sais que peut-être ce n'était pas l'intention. Ce n'était pas l'intention non plus—je ne questionne pas le député. Ce serait injuste de moi de le dire. Mais je trouve qu'on a manqué une opportunité qui aurait fait beaucoup pour les groupes comme ça, les « junior rangers », puis aussi tous ces mentors-là qui travaillent fort pour garder ces jeunes intéressés, de les sortir de ces misères, sortir de ces idées noires puis de les amener à avoir—bâtir des humains forts, des humains qui sont là pour aider leurs communautés après.

Parce que comme les cadets, ils font toutes sortes de belles activités dans les communautés. Quand la personne âgée a besoin du bois du chauffage, c'est qui qui va? Souvent, ce sont des « junior rangers ». C'est distribuer la bouffe, donner à manger, distribuer ce dont ils ont besoin, garder la communauté quand il y a des situations qui se croisent. Ce monde-là va aider dans des situations de crise. On le sait—les feux qui se passent.

Fait que, comme j'ai dit, je trouve que c'est une opportunité manquée, mais c'est sûr que c'est un bon projet de loi. Je veux reconnaître le travail qui a été fait, mais je trouvais que c'était important qu'on mentionne ce monde-là.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): The member from Mississauga–Malton, please.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, before I start my remarks I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the treaty lands and the territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, traditionally inhabited by Indigenous people. As a settler, I am grateful for the opportunity to meet here and would like to say thank you: Thank you to all generations of people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years.

Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the House and speak in support of Bill 31, the Murray Whetung bill, as proposed by MPP Dave Smith, the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. This bill recognizes the sacrifices and the contributions made by one of the greatest Anishinabek warriors and highly decorated service members, the late Murray Whetung.

This quote is not from me; it actually came from regional Grand Chief Reg Niganobe: This bill, the Murray Whetung bill, it will help us to ensure that we are able to recognize the support and “the significant commitment made by” the “Indigenous people, both past and present, who have honourably served in the Canadian military... Once passed, this ... bill will ensure that the service and protection of Canada by the Indigenous” community “will

never be forgotten and that their stories will remain an important part of Canada's military history."

Thousands of First Nations individuals volunteered to serve in the First and Second World Wars. These brave individuals had voluntarily joined the fight to protect Canada and were placed overseas to fight on behalf of Canada. It is very unfortunate: Some of them had to lose their life and never came back, and many of those who actually came back were stripped of their status.

Despite facing this injustice, many First Nations who returned continued to give back to their community by serving on councils, as chiefs, as volunteers on countless initiatives that improved and enhanced the lives of their friends and their neighbours. That is why, Mr. Speaker, this bill gives us an opportunity to remember and honour those who served and continued to serve and volunteer to give back to the community in this ongoing process toward meaningful reconciliation. These acts showcase the shared values held in respect to volunteerism and giving back.

Speaker, in our culture, we call giving back a "seva," which means helping others with the goal to serve the community and serve the supreme God. As we know, volunteering is essential, because it helps to foster community cohesion, address societal needs and promotes personal growth. By offering their time and skills to support others, volunteers can contribute to the well-being of their community. So I would like to say thank you to the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for bringing this important bill to recognize volunteerism, this Bill 31.

Murray Whetung was a World War II veteran, a devoted member of Curve Lake First Nation and someone who not only valued giving back to the community but, further, passed on those values to his family and friends. Jodi, Lorenzo and Emily, who are watching this live from their home, I want to tell you this: You're blessed to have a family member who has given back to Canada and to promote our community. Thank you so much for your valuable contributions.

As we know, Murray was the recipient of many medals and honours, including the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, a Defence Medal and a Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp.

Through this bill, we are able to recognize First Nations veterans and volunteers for their service and remind everyone that service to the community is valued and appreciated.

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According to Curve Lake First Nation former Chief Emily Whetung, family member and granddaughter, "My Shomis"—which means grandfather—"was humbled when MPP Smith approached him about the idea of an award named after him. My Shomis did what he thought needed to be done and didn't expect special recognition. He was a shining example of choosing happiness in the face of adversity and an inspiration to so many of us."

This showcases the importance of recognition and how it is a valuable tool for appreciating members of the community. Such people don't look for recognition. They don't work for recognition, but we need to recognize their work so that others can look up to them and find a role

model and follow that role model and give back to the community.

I want to say thank you again to the member from Peterborough for bringing this important bill. We all have been elected by our residents to serve them, to be their voice, to come and do the meaningful work. Through this bill, the member is doing what he has been elected to do. I want to acknowledge that again.

This bill, if passed, will lead to the creation of an award to be given to one candidate in each of Ontario's 288 active Canadian cadet corps and squadrons who has displayed exceptional volunteerism and citizenship over the previous year. What a wonderful way to promote and recognize 288 people every year. It will be presented at the annual ceremonial reviews. The recipient will be selected based on the amount of time they have given back to the community through volunteerism. What gets measured gets done, and here, what gets done is actually being recognized. What a wonderful way of thinking.

I would also like to take the opportunity to highlight the important role that cadets play. Being a cadet is a wonderful opportunity for personal development and skill building. Through activities like fitness training and leadership workshops, cadets develop valuable qualities such as discipline, responsibility and resilience. Being a cadet can also instill a sense of civic duty and patriotism.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to say, let's take another step toward reconciliation by recognizing the sacrifices and the contributions made by Indigenous people and by rewarding corps that demonstrate exceptional citizenship and volunteerism within the community by supporting Bill 31, the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act. This bill is going to promote community work, citizenship, volunteerism, and help us to reconcile. There are many benefits we can achieve just from one bill.

I want to take a moment and urge everyone in the House, let's come together; let's work together and support something which will create a history.

I want to take a moment and thank my colleague the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for being the champion of change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Further debate?

M. Anthony Leardi: C'est un plaisir d'offrir quelques mots sur le projet de loi 31, Loi de 2024 sur les prix Murray Whetung pour services à la collectivité. J'aimerais remercier le député de Peterborough-Kawartha, mon collègue, pour avoir parrainé le projet de loi. Le député a souligné tous les bons efforts de M. Whetung et aussi les bonnes activités des corps des cadets.

Si cette Assemblée adopte le projet de loi, le ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme chaque année va offrir un prix à remettre à un cadet de chaque corps local des cadets royaux du Canada. Ça va créer un prix pour un cadet dans les cadets de la marine, un cadet dans les cadets de l'aviation, et aussi un prix pour un cadet dans les cadets de l'armée canadienne. Le prix est basé sur la démonstration du service à la collectivité et à leur corps de cadet, avec un sens civique et un esprit de bénévolat.

Qui sont les cadets et que font-ils? Les cadets sont des personnes âgées de 12 à 18 ans qui participent aux activités visant la formation professionnelle et personnelle. Il y a approximativement 57,000 jeunes personnes qui participent aux activités des cadets chaque année, soit les cadets de l'armée, les cadets de la marine ou les cadets de l'air. Ces 57,000 cadets sont supervisés par des membres militaires et des membres civils pendant leurs activités. D'habitude, ce sont des personnes qui appuient les corps de cadets avec leurs activités et leur fonds.

Dans ma propre circonscription, je sais que les corps de cadets sont appuyés par des membres de la Légion royale canadienne. Nous avons, dans le comté d'Essex, le corps de cadets 101, régiment de Fort Malden; le corps de cadets 1112 de l'armée canadienne; et le corps de cadets 2918 de l'armée canadienne, et d'autres corps de cadets régionaux.

J'ai eu le plaisir de rencontrer les membres du corps de cadets 2918 souvent. Ce sont des jeunes personnes qui vivent dans la ville de Kingsville et dans d'autres parts du comté d'Essex. J'étais impressionné par leur professionnalisme et leur maturité.

Il se peut que les gens aient l'impression que les corps de cadets fonctionnent seulement pour former des gens «militaristiques», mais ça ne serait pas la bonne impression. Les cadets participent dans des activités non seulement physiques et militaires mais aussi des activités intellectuelles et civiles. Ce sont des activités qui assistent à la bonne formation des personnes qui vont occuper des postes de leadership à l'avenir.

Ce que j'ai vu avec les cadets à Kingsville—ce sont des jeunes personnes qui étaient impliquées dans des activités importantes, non seulement militaires, mais aussi des activités qui visent à la bonne formation des caractéristiques civiles.

Laissez-moi vous donner quelques bons exemples.

Les cadets de l'armée canadienne peuvent participer aux expéditions longues et exigeantes. Ça peut inclure des expéditions d'alpinisme et la descente en eaux vives. Les cadets de l'armée apprennent comment prendre soin de leur équipement de campagne et comment agir comme une équipe avec leurs collègues.

Ils peuvent participer aussi aux activités sportives comme l'escalade et le vélo de montagne. Bien sûr, il y a plusieurs camps d'été. Ils peuvent même participer à une course de parachutisme, si on est assez courageux.

En été, les jeunes cadets peuvent participer aux activités dans la forêt. Par exemple, ils peuvent apprendre comment fabriquer un abri de fortune et comment survivre dans la forêt sans outils modernes. Ils peuvent apprendre des compétences importantes—par exemple, comment trouver de l'eau et comment se rendre visible aux secours.

Les cadets de la marine peuvent participer aux activités qui relient des traditions de la Marine royale canadienne. Par exemple, ils peuvent apprendre comment faire de la voile avec un petit bateau ou faire de la voile dans une

embarcation qui peut accueillir jusqu'à 12 personnes. Ils peuvent prendre un programme de formation qui mène à un certificat de conducteur d'embarcation ou une licence d'opérateur radio. Ils peuvent même avoir l'occasion de participer à un entraînement à bord d'un grand navire.

Les cadets de l'air évidemment apprennent tout ce qui est relié à l'aviation. Ces cadets prennent des cours techniques liés à l'aviation. Ils peuvent étudier des aspects mécaniques. Et bien sûr, ils auront l'occasion de voler en avion. Pour les cadets qui sont âgés de 16 ans et plus, ils peuvent devenir pilotes de planeur ou d'avion motorisé. Ça veut dire une licence de pilote privé.

Et peut-être, madame la Présidente, la chose la plus importante, c'est que toutes ces activités dont j'ai parlé sont absolument gratuites pour les cadets royaux canadiens. Les cadets ne doivent pas payer pour ces activités. Ces activités sont offertes comme cours d'entraînement et de formation professionnelle et personnelle.

Murray Whetung, membre de la Première Nation de Curve Lake, était l'un des anciens combattants qui a poursuivi son bénévolat dans la collectivité. Encore une fois, j'aimerais remercier le député de Peterborough—Kawartha pour avoir parrainé le projet de loi. C'est un bon projet de loi, et je serai très content de l'appuyer avec mon vote.

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: There are some people here who are in the gallery now who were not here during introductions. I'd like to introduce them because they were instrumental in the development of this bill: Sally Carson, Christopher James Carson, Andrea Dodsworth, Jonah Mamers, Mary Babcock and Emma Henry. And I know, right now, because I received a text message, Jodi and Lorenzo Whetung and Emily Whetung MacInnes are watching this at home.

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

Mr. Smith, Peterborough—Kawartha, has moved third reading of Bill 31, An Act to provide for an award for exceptional cadets. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day?

Mr. Trevor Jones: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1703.

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Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
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Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

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