

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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législative  
de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

No. 161

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(Hansard)**

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43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Monday  
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Lundi  
27 mai 2024

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 May 2024

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 mai 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

#### SUNRISE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Last week, I had the pleasure of attending the 35th anniversary celebration of the Sunrise Montessori School in my riding of Markham–Thornhill. This milestone marks over three decades of commitment to nurturing young minds and shaping our community's future. Driven by their motto, "Education for Life," Sunrise Montessori School excels with attentive teachers, full French immersion and significant parent involvement, providing a holistic and inclusive educational experience.

Speaker, as you know, children are our future. Schools like Sunrise play a crucial role in laying a strong foundation, ensuring our youth are equipped with the tools and knowledge to succeed in an ever-changing world.

I would like to thank the outstanding work of principal Grace Koo as well as her daughter Ivy and her father—three generations whose leadership has been pivotal to the school's success. Additionally, the dedication and passion of the entire staff at Sunrise Montessori School deserve our heartfelt appreciation.

Sunrise Montessori School sets a high standard for early childhood education. Their tireless efforts to serve the diverse children under their care continue to make a profound difference in the future of our society.

#### LIBRARY SERVICES

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** The closure of the Chippawa library branch is a significant loss for our community. The building is in desperate need of massive repairs, and the costs have largely fallen on the shoulders of our community. This is not a burden we should bear alone.

The library board is working hard to keep some services available in Chippawa by moving them to the local arena. While we appreciate these efforts, it won't be the same. A library is more than just a place to borrow books—it's a

community hub, a place of learning and a safe space for all.

The burden on local municipalities and library boards has grown significantly. This is largely because public library operating grants have not been increased for over 25 years. This Conservative government hasn't done anything to help libraries in six years. We shouldn't be surprised. This government doesn't believe in public services. They believe in privatization and making the rich richer.

Our libraries are being neglected, and our communities are suffering because of it. Libraries are the heart of many communities, and this Conservative government doesn't seem to care about that. We deserve a government that understands the value of libraries and public services and invests in them.

This closure is a slap in the face of every person that believes in investing in public services. We urge this Conservative government to step up, actually help the people of this province and increase library funding.

This isn't just about books, my friends; it's about the future of our communities right across the province of Ontario.

1020

#### TAMIL GENOCIDE ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** On the 50th anniversary of the Mullivaikkal massacre, the Tamil community gathered at Albert Campbell Square to remember the victims and call on Canada and the international community to bring the perpetrators of the Tamil genocide to justice and fight against denialism.

It was my honour attending the commemoration and extending solidarity with the Tamil community to hold the culprits of these heinous crimes responsible for their sins against innocent Tamil civilians. By doing so, we heal the wounds of the victims and the survivors. Kudos to the National Council of Canadian Tamils for keeping the memory of the victims alive and sensitizing the public and future generations about the scourge of genocide.

It was also a delight reconnecting with former citizenship judges Nancy Siew and Rafiq Rokerya at the Toronto Railway Museum to celebrate Asian Heritage Month and preside over a Canadian citizenship reaffirmation ceremony. This Asian Heritage Month event also had a photo exhibition with contributions from survivors of the Chinese Exclusion Act from 1923 to 1947. More than 70 photos from the survivors of the exclusion were on

display. Furthermore, the celebration promoted the ideal of “One Heart, One Canada,” where everyone lives in a harmonious, inclusive and respectful country.

Thank you to the Tribute to Early Chinese Immigrants Canada Foundation, the Toronto Railway Museum and Nancy Siew for organizing this poignant celebration.

#### CONFLICT IN MIDDLE EAST

**Mr. Joel Harden:** After seven and a half months of heartbreak, of horror and tragedy for Palestinian and Israeli communities, I’m going to ask a question, Speaker: Does anybody in this House or in our country or around the world feel safer? I certainly don’t feel safer. I didn’t feel safer when I woke up this morning to learn that 45 people were killed in a refugee camp: people living in tents, women and children.

Do I think a new generation of orphans is going to lead to peace? No, I don’t.

Do I think shooting up a Jewish elementary school in the middle of the night in this city of Toronto is going to lead to peace? No, I don’t.

Do I believe the UN’s special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Dr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal, who recently said that concerted global action is needed right now to stop the government of Israel in pursuing its relentless bombing campaign, a bombing campaign which is continuing despite the International Court of Justice telling Israel that we need an immediate ceasefire?

I want to tip my hat to the students across this country. The students and faculty and staff have been our moral conscience, and I want to call upon the University of Toronto and the University of Ottawa—all of the campuses—to work with those people of conscience so Canada speaks for peace and tell every single person in the Middle East that Canada wants a Good Friday Agreement in Israel. That happened 35 years ago for the Irish, and it can happen for Palestinians and Israelis if we’re prepared to fight for it.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Today I’m going to talk about the incredible growth in Ontario’s auto sector, and to make my point I’m going to be quoting Professor Dimitry Anastakis. He’s a professor of Canadian business history at the University of Toronto. This is what Professor Anastakis has to say:

“The scale of Honda’s EV commitment and its intention to build a comprehensive vehicle chain within Ontario (from minerals to final assembly) makes a bold statement, given the company’s past successes.”

Professor Anastakis also says it “secures Ontario as the only jurisdiction on the planet boasting six major auto manufacturers.”

Finally, the professor says, “Ontario has become an EV powerhouse.”

Speaker, this PC government has now secured over \$43 billion in automotive investment, working hard to get this

automobile investment. We’d like to thank the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development for the efforts that they have made.

Whether you’re in Essex county or St. Thomas or Oakville, we’re securing better jobs and bigger pay-cheques for auto workers in Ontario.

#### JERRY MOSKOTAYWENENE

#### JACK MCKAY

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I want to recognize Jerry Moskotaywenene and Jack McKay for their decades of service with the Ontario Provincial Police. Jerry’s career began on April 26, 1993, and he officially retired November 30, 2023, after 30.5 years of service. Jack began his career with the First Nations Policing Bureau on October 10, 1982. He joined the OPP on January 29, 1989, and retired December 31, 2019, after 36 years of service with the OPP.

Both men dedicated many years of their time and energy to providing safety and security in First Nations, towns and cities in northern Ontario at the cost of traumatic experiences which they were left to process without adequate mental health supports. First Nations responders working in Kiiwetinoong bear witness to tragedies and events unimaginable to many, and responding to such incidents takes a toll on one’s mental health. PTSD is not uncommon. It is vital that the first responders and police serving in northern First Nations are provided with appropriate channels to process the traumas they experience. Everyone should go and watch my recent video based on Jerry’s story.

Despite their years of service and the sacrifices that came along with it, Jerry and Jack received almost no recognition upon their retirement from the OPP. To this day, Jerry is still fighting to receive his retirement badge and warrant card.

Today, it is an honour for me to commend you both for your contributions to protecting the people of Ontario. Meegwetch, Jack and Jerry, for your service, and congratulations on your retirement.

#### GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Just over a week ago, I joined Premier Ford along with the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade on the banks of the Welland Canal in Port Colborne as our government welcomed one of the largest private sector investments in Niagara’s history. Asahi Kasei Corp.’s investment of approximately \$1.6 billion to build an electric vehicle battery separator plant in Port Colborne is a game-changer for our region and this province. It’s going to be an industrial anchor job creator in Niagara. I know more exciting investments like this one are on the horizon.

From mining critical minerals to building cars and batteries, Ontario’s businesses and workers are attracting



historic investments to help secure and create good jobs, grow the economy and reduce pollution.

Speaker, what's even more exciting is that Niagara is right at the heart of this impressive economic growth. From building new hospitals in Grimsby and Niagara Falls to twinning the Garden City Skyway in St. Catharines; from refurbishing the Sir Adam Beck hydroelectric power station in Niagara Falls to expanding the Peach King Centre in Grimsby, Premier Ford and this government are making historic investments in Niagara that are strengthening our economy and building a better Ontario.

As I like to say, the world doesn't end at the Burlington Skyway. With our government's support for this region and the good news of a new battery component plant, Niagara's future has never looked brighter.

#### CENTRE DES SERVICES COMMUNAUTAIRES VANIER

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** C'est avec un très grand plaisir ce matin que je veux profiter de l'occasion pour souligner et féliciter le Centre des services communautaires Vanier dans ma circonscription. Le CSC Vanier est un organisme francophone qui se démarque par son travail exceptionnel dans son offre de services mais aussi par son—

*Interjections.*

1030

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Excuse me. The member for Ottawa–Vanier, I'm sorry; I have to interrupt.

Would the House please come to order so I can hear the member who has the floor? Thank you.

The member for Ottawa–Vanier has the floor.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Monsieur le Président, c'est vraiment un grand plaisir pour moi de profiter de l'occasion ce matin pour souligner et féliciter le Centre des services communautaires Vanier, dans ma circonscription.

Le CSC Vanier est un organisme francophone qui se démarque par son travail exceptionnel dans son offre de services, mais aussi par son ingéniosité à s'associer des partenaires qui augmentent efficacement leur offre de services. Et ces services, monsieur le Président, sont essentiels pour assurer la vitalité de notre communauté.

Que ce soit des services d'aide juridique, d'aide à la recherche d'emploi, ou de façon très importante, de banque alimentaire, le CSC Vanier répond à la demande.

Avec une centaine d'employés et plus de 130 bénévoles impliqués, c'est 14 468 personnes qui ont bénéficié de plus de 25 programmes et services communautaires pour les résidents de Vanier, les nouveaux arrivants, les jeunes et les familles en 2023.

Récemment, le CSC Vanier a remporté le laurier organisme de l'année de la 24<sup>e</sup> édition des prix Bernard Grandmaître, après avoir été nommé par le bureau du maire d'Ottawa.

Le CSC Vanier mérite très certainement ce prestigieux prix de reconnaissance, grâce au leadership remarquable d'Andrée-Anne Martel et de son équipe, mais il mérite

surtout la profonde reconnaissance et gratitude de toute notre communauté.

#### CORBYN SMITH

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It is a pleasure to rise today to recognize the amazing accomplishments of one of my constituents in Perth–Wellington. Earlier this month, Corbyn Smith from Monkton, Ontario, along with his teammates on Canada's para hockey team, took home the gold medal in the World Para Hockey Championship in Calgary. Team Canada had an amazing performance, going 5 and 0 in the tournament, and would wind up beating the United States 2-1 in the finals.

Corbyn had a great showing at the tournament, finishing with two goals and six points.

This year's gold medal win is Team Canada's first world title since 2017, in South Korea.

Speaker, Corbyn was on that Team Canada para hockey team as well, making this the second gold medal he has won for this great country.

What makes his accomplishment even more impressive, colleagues, is that during the 2021-22 season, Corbyn was let go because of concussion issues. Despite these challenges, he focused on his health and was able to return to the game he loves so much and, in his words, "makes moments like these that much more special."

What also made this tournament extra special was that over 19 family members and friends were able to join him on the trip to Calgary to cheer him on and Team Canada.

Congratulations, Corbyn and Team Canada. Monkton and Ontario are proud of what you have accomplished again on the ice.

#### AMBULANCIERS PARAMÉDICAUX

**M. Stéphane Sarrazin:** La semaine dernière, du 19 au 25 mai, était la semaine nationale des paramédics, monsieur le Président. J'aimerais prendre cette opportunité pour rendre hommage à ces hommes et ces femmes qui sont parmi les premiers répondants qui sont toujours prêts à offrir des services d'urgence à nos citoyens.

Il y a une cérémonie qui aura lieu ce soir au Musée royal de l'Ontario. Son Honneur l'honorable Edith Dumont, lieutenant-gouverneure de l'Ontario, et la ministre de la Santé, Sylvia Jones, remettront des médailles de bravoure à certains paramédics de notre province.

Trois paramédics de ma circonscription, du service de paramédics des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell, recevront cette médaille ce soir, monsieur le Président.

Je serai présent ce soir pour les féliciter—pour féliciter M. Yan Bellefeuille, M. Stéphane Huppé et M. Christian Laroche.

Le 11 mai 2023 a été une journée que nous ne sommes pas prêts à oublier, monsieur le Président. Le sergent Eric Mueller du détachement de Russell de la Police provinciale de l'Ontario a perdu la vie lors d'une fusillade en répondant à un appel à une résidence dans le petit village

de Bourget dans ma circonscription. Deux autres de ses collègues policiers ont aussi été blessés.

Ces trois paramédics ont été les premiers répondants lors de cette tragédie. Ils ont risqué leurs vies pour venir en aide à leurs collègues officiers.

En mon nom et aux noms des résidents de la circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, je tiens à les remercier pour leur travail incroyable. Ils mettent leurs vies en danger pour sauver des vies à chaque jour. Ils sont vraiment des héros. Merci.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes our members' statements this morning.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Before I ask for the introduction of visitors, I will ask members to keep the introduction of their visitors as brief as possible.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Today we have with us a delegation from the county of Renfrew. As you know, the county of Renfrew has been innovative in its programs, including the birthplace of community paramedicine and the virtual triage and assessment centre. Today they're here to talk about the Mesa program, which is about housing.

Joining us today is Warden Peter Emon and council members Anne Giardini, James Brose and Glenn Doncaster, as well as the CAO of the county, Craig Kelley; Jason Davis, the director of development and property; Michael Nolan, chief of paramedic services; Andrea Patrick, director of community services; and Taylor Hanrath, manager of capital infrastructure. Welcome to Queen's Park, and great luck with your meetings today.

**M. Guy Bourgois:** Je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue à Anne Vinet-Roy. Je veux lui dire bienvenue à Queen's Park.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It is a special honour today to welcome back to Queen's Park Nathan Skoufis and his mom, Sophie, from my riding in Guelph. Nathan is a master in martial arts, a fifth-degree black belt, a member of Team Canada and a 23-time world champion in martial arts.

Minister Lumsden and I will be honouring Nathan with a certificate right after question period on the grand staircase. Members are welcome to join us for a photo.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm very proud to welcome to the House the Grain Farmers of Ontario. We have President Jeff Harrison and the team from GFO: Crosby Devitt, Debra Conlon and Allison Hessels. Welcome to the House.

**MPP Lise Vaugois:** I'd like to welcome Katy Comisso from the Ontario Bar Association, the newly elected second vice-president and in two years' time will become the president—the first time in 50 years the association has been led by a lawyer from northwestern Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're glad you're here.

**Mr. Rick Byers:** It's my pleasure to welcome James Colliver to the House today. He's the chair of the Owen

Sound transportation corp. Thanks for your great work in the community, and welcome.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning. I am so pleased today that we are being joined by representatives—presidents—representing teachers' federations all across this country. I want to specifically welcome to this House Anne Vinet-Roy of l'association des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario; Karen Brown of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; René Jansen in de Wal, from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; and Karen Littlewood of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Welcome to your House.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I would like to introduce some members of team acro-gymnastics Ontario. Recently at the Grizzly Classic in BC, all four partnerships in Team Ontario won gold. I would like to welcome the athletes—they're right over there—Naiya Cornelisz-Guerrero, Ethan Fu, Lila Lawson, Gabby Biesenthal, Ava Cornelisz-Guerrero, Malika Ismaeil, Claudia Tarzwell, Jaxxon Ruggi; their trainers, Sarah Morin and Stephanie Dovigi; and the Team Ontario manager, whom I know personally, Suzie Owen. She's a champion for Ontario.

Team Ontario will be competing at the national competition in Gatineau, Quebec, and so we wish them all the best and thank their families for supporting those little athletes.

1040

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch. I'd like to welcome one of my constituency office staff from Sioux Lookout who is here with me this week: Delaine Fiddler.

Also, I want to introduce Jerry Moskotaywenene, Jack McKay, as well as members of their families and friends who are here: Kevin, Michael, J.R., Clayton—also, Chief Donny Morris from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug.

Let's join them in celebrating Jerry Moskotaywenene and Jack McKay's respective retirements from the OPP. Today after question period, I will be providing certificates at the staircase if you want to come and say hello.

Meegwetch for your service.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'd like to propose that we continue with introduction of visitors unless there's an objection.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I'd like to welcome Kelly McDermott, president of the Ontario Bar Association, along with all the lawyers who have joined her today to speak with MPPs, and my old friend Andrew Cowan, who is in the gallery.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'd like to welcome some board members from the St. Catharines Armenian community to the chamber: Misag Belian and Gary Kacazanjan. Welcome to your House.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park retired Port Hope fire and rescue service district chief Glenn Case, who served our community with distinguished service for over 45 years. He's here with his grandson Benjamin. He even had the President of the Treasury Board ride shotgun in a fire truck when she came down to my riding.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I would be remiss if I didn't welcome to the House today my uncle Robert Greaves, who is visiting from Boston, Massachusetts, USA, and my long-suffering parents, Katherine and Geoffrey Stiles, who seem to love being in this place for some reason.

Welcome to your House.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I appreciate the opportunity to introduce some very special guests, members of the Ontario Bar Association, who are joining us here at Queen's Park today. In particular, I want to say thank you to Kelly McDermott, president; Kathryn Manning, first vice-president; Katy Commisso, second vice-president; Mohsen Seddigh, secretary; Mariam Moktar, treasurer; and Elizabeth Hall, executive director and general counsel. They've come to Queen's Park with a team of lawyers. So for those members who've actually taken and approved meetings, you will have a very good discussion this afternoon.

Joining them are Darry Buxton, Dante Capannelli, Geoff Carpenter, Neha Chugh, Daniel Goldbloom, Eric Sadvari, Melanie Webb, Frances Wood, Tyler Jensen and Jenny Commisso.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the House Zahid Butt and Shahnaz Tehseen. They are from my riding, and they're also representatives of the Pakistan Business Association.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** It's my pleasure to welcome presidents from across the country who are here as part of the Canadian Teachers' Federation delegation, including the president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Heidi Yetman; Stéphanie Babineau; Jason Schilling; Clint Johnston; Isabel Cotinais, Nathan Martindale; Peter Lagacy; Ryan Lutes; Justin Matchett; Matthew Miller; Andy Doran; Steven Le Sueur; Samantha Becotte; Ted Hupé; Lillian Klausen; as well as, of course, from Ontario, Anne Vinet-Roy, Karen Brown, René Jansen in de Wal and Karen Littlewood. Thank you so much for joining us today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. That concludes our introduction of visitors for this morning.

JAYE ROBINSON

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley West I believe has a point of order.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you, Speaker. A point of order: I am seeking unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of Toronto city councillor Jaye Robinson, who sadly passed away on Thursday, May 16, 2024.

Jaye served Toronto and ward 15, our community of Don Valley West, with such dedication. Throughout her 14 years on Toronto city council, she was a tireless public servant and champion for public transit, arts and community engagement. She enhanced our city through visionary city-building projects like Summerlicious, Nuit Blanche and her famous Moose in the City project. She will be deeply missed by friends like me and many across Don

Valley West, her colleagues and, of course, her family and her colleagues at Toronto city council.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley West is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in memory of Toronto city councillor Jaye Robinson, who passed away recently. Agreed?

Members will please rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

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

#### INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR MILTON

#### INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR LAMBTON-KENT-MIDDLESEX

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections in the electoral districts of Milton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** I have a letter dated May 16, 2024, addressed to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Dear Mr. Day:

"A writ of election dated the 3rd day of April 2024, was issued by the Honourable Associate Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice, serving as Administrator of the government of Ontario, and was addressed to Marielena Lafée Perez, returning officer for the electoral district of Milton, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Milton in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Parm Gill who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Milton, has resigned.

"This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Milton on the 2nd day of May 2024, Zee Hamid has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 6th day of May 2024, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"Yours sincerely,

"Greg Essensa

"Chief Electoral Officer."

I have a second letter, also dated May 16, 2024, also addressed to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, that reads as follows:

"Dear Mr. Day:

"A writ of election dated the 3rd day of April 2024, was issued by the Honourable Associate Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice, serving as Administrator of the government of Ontario, and was addressed to Kim Lee, returning officer for the electoral district of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Monte McNaughton who, since his election as representa-

tive of the said electoral district of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, has resigned.

“This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on the 2nd day of May 2024, Steve Pinsonneault has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 4th day of May 2024, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely,

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer.”

1050

*MPP Hamid was escorted into the House by Mr. Doug Ford and Mr. Calandra.*

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Zee Hamid, member for the electoral district of Milton, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat in the Legislature.

Congratulations.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Let the honourable member take his seat.

*Applause.*

*Mr. Pinsonneault was escorted into the House by Mr. Doug Ford and Mr. Calandra.*

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Steve Pinsonneault, member for the electoral district of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat in the Legislature.

Congratulations.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Let the honourable member take his seat.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Let all the honourable members now take their seats.

It is now time for question period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is for the Premier. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has confirmed that she’s going to be releasing a special report on his government’s conduct in relation to the greenbelt scandal. She’s looking into allegations that political staffers in the government regularly deleted emails related to the greenbelt, and that they used their personal accounts, in an apparent attempt to cover their tracks.

The last time the commissioner released a special report into the deletion of emails by political staffers, I think we all remember what happened. It triggered a police investigation, and that Liberal Premier’s chief of staff went to prison.

So will the Premier enlighten us: What will this latest investigative report reveal?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As we’ve said all along, we’ll continue to work with both the Integrity Commissioner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Nothing has changed on that score.

At the same time, the Leader of the Opposition, of course, references 2014 and the previous Liberal government’s challenges. I do recall at that time that the NDP had an opportunity at that point to vote their confidence in the government, or lack thereof, and the NDP chose to keep that government in office despite the fact that the chief of staff went to jail.

We continue to do what is important for the people of the province of Ontario; that is focus on building homes, focus on building an economy out of the ashes of what the previous Liberal government left behind, and on every account, we’re making progress. The job is not yet done, but we’ll continue on that path of economic growth and prosperity for the people of the province of Ontario.

*Interjections.*

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

Supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, Speaker, you would have thought that they would have learned a lesson.

But there’s more. Earlier today, Global News revealed new evidence that the Premier’s chief of staff used his personal email account to conduct government business on dozens of occasions. That directly contradicts his sworn testimony to the Integrity Commissioner when he claimed, “I do not conduct government business on my personal email.” Guess what? He does.

The Premier’s chief of staff appears to have repeatedly and directedly contradicted his sworn testimony to the Integrity Commissioner under oath. So, Speaker, to the Premier: Will he demand his chief of staff’s resignation?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Look, as I just said, we continue to work with the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner. If the Leader of the Opposition has any additional information that she would like to provide the Integrity Commissioner, I encourage her to do so.

This government, of course, is continuing to focus on what is important to the people of the province of Ontario. There’s no doubt that we inherited challenging circumstances back in 2018. We are continuing on the path to rebuild the province of Ontario; that is to focus on building more homes across the province of Ontario, rebuilding our economy. The job is not done yet, Mr. Speaker. We’ll continue to focus on that. And I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to work with us so that we can continue to build a bigger, better, stronger province of Ontario for the people of this province.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, it’s no surprise that the Premier doesn’t want to answer these questions. It’s not just about the Premier’s chief of staff, actually, because it goes right to the top.

An FOI document obtained by the NDP has also revealed that the Premier's director of stakeholder relations was also using his personal email to set up a meeting and discuss the greenbelt scheme with one of those land speculators, Sergio Manchia. You're going to recall, Speaker, that Ryan Amato told his colleagues, "The Premier needs to stop calling this guy." Well, you know what? He was calling this guy. So was his director of stakeholder relations.

So I want to know from the Premier, did he discuss this greenbelt property with Mr. Manchia, with his director of stakeholder relations or any other public official in the summer of 2022?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I honestly think that question directly contradicts the first two questions, because the Leader of the Opposition highlights that, through an FOI, she was able to receive information from the government with respect to the greenbelt. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition, if she has some additional information that she would like to provide the Integrity Commissioner, to do so.

We continue to work on what's important to the people of the province of Ontario. Look, we are fighting a number of issues that would help improve the people of the province of Ontario's lives. We've talked about a carbon tax, how difficult that has been for the people of the province of Ontario. The Premier has led the federation in terms of asking the Bank of Canada to reduce interest rates because it has become so difficult for people not only to get shovels in the ground, but for the people who can buy the homes to actually afford those homes. We are building infrastructure. We are building more schools. We are reinvesting in health care. Those are the priorities of the people of the province of Ontario. We're going to double down and make sure that we continue to build a bigger, better, stronger province.

#### MERCURY POISONING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the member doesn't have to worry, because it's going to go straight to the RCMP, all that information, let me tell you.

This question is for the Premier again. We've known for decades—decades—that mercury was being dumped in the Wabigoon-English River system and that it was poisoning the people of Grassy Narrows. First, it gets into the fish, which is central to the way of life there, and now, of course, devastating the community.

Last week, a new study revealed that industrial discharge from the Dryden mill site is making that mercury contamination even worse. Shamefully, Speaker, there has been no comment from this government, these ministers, since this new information came to light—crickets. Nothing.

When will this government commit to cleaning up the river of all of the mercury that's contaminating Grassy Narrows?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

1100

**Hon. Andrea Khanjin:** Speaker, our government remains committed to working with Indigenous communities and will continue working with Indigenous communities towards remediation of the mercury contamination in the English and the Wabigoon Rivers.

The member knows that several studies have been funded to the tune of \$85 million for the English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Trust, including the recent one by Dr. Branfireun. Those studies are to understand the mercury contamination, where it's moving through the river system and the food web.

Ministry technical experts will be reviewing the report's findings as part of the work on the panel and their technical subcommittee. They plan to meet with the doctor and Indigenous community tomorrow.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Methyl mercury levels are now even higher—two times higher, Speaker. The chief scientist behind the study says that if the mill stopped discharging sulphate into the river, they could have prevented harmful chemicals getting into the river and into the fish.

Children, elders poisoned under this government's watch. Studies, reviews—that's all we ever hear from this minister. What immediate steps is this government going to take right now to stop the ongoing mercury poisoning of the people of Grassy Narrows?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

**Hon. Andrea Khanjin:** As I said, our government remains committed to working with Indigenous communities towards remediation. Many who have been working on this project for days, months and years know the panel is nearing the end of the characterization phase. Sufficient scientific information has been collected to begin the development of the remediation objectives and goals.

Speaker, our government takes this issue very seriously. The panel is also funding a project team made up of recognized mercury remediation experts. We will leave it to the experts to ensure that swift and remediation action is taking place. Speaker, we remain committed to updating the Indigenous community and stakeholders, including the public, towards the progress of remediation of mercury contamination sediments.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Studying the study doesn't seem like much of a plan of action. In Sarnia, where the Aamjiwnaang First Nation have been complaining of illnesses from benzene released from a nearby chemical plant, the ministry finally ordered the plant to cease operations until there was a fix, so it is possible to take the necessary action.

So again, to the Premier, after decades—more than 50 years, in fact—with the new information about the ongoing contamination making the mercury poisoning

impacting the people of Grassy Narrows worse, what steps is he prepared to end this ongoing tragedy once and for all?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

**Hon. Andrea Khanjin:** As I mentioned, we will continue to take this matter very seriously. We've been working on it for quite some time with the Indigenous community towards remediation of mercury contamination. We will listen to the subject matter experts. Ministry technical experts will be on hand. A meeting is organized as early as tomorrow to ensure that there's a path forward on this. We will take all the necessary studies and all the necessary information in hand. We do take this very seriously. We will get to the bottom of remediation of this project.

#### GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, that was a disappointing response from the minister, and I'll point out, there were no answers there for the people of Grassy Narrows.

People are struggling all across this province to find a family doctor and rural emergency rooms are closing all across the province, but this government, they have very different priorities. On Friday, we learned that the taxpayers of Ontario could be paying half a billion dollars so that this Premier can get out of a contract a year early and sell beer and wine in corner stores.

Now, I want to know, why is this Premier pouring money into the pockets of these big alcohol corporations while our emergency rooms are closing?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and member for Oakville.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** The question really shows why we have two new members in the House here today from the last by-elections, from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and from Milton: because the NDP and the Liberals are obviously against workers. Our government is supporting workers in a transition after a 97-year monopoly. Let me repeat that: a 97-year monopoly. The people of Ontario want modernization, they want convenience, and they want change. They are supportive of what we are doing.

Clearly, the opposition Liberals and NDP support the status quo, which has been corporate monopolies—97 years. Our government is the first government in the history of Ontario to get it done for the people of Ontario. We ran on this in 2018 and 2022, and the people—

*Interjections.*

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

Supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the minister knows perfectly well that they are giving that same monopoly, that corporate consortium, a quarter of a million dollars—taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

Families across this province are wondering if they're going to be able to keep a roof over their heads. Families are looking for affordable child care. There's none. They can't find a family doctor—2.4 million Ontarians without a family doctor, people worried whether there's going to be an emergency room open when their child is sick. These are the worries that are keeping people in this province up at night.

So, Speaker, I want to go back to the Premier—maybe he'll actually answer the question for a change. More than half a billion dollars: Does that actually sound like a good deal for the people of this province from this Premier? Give me a break.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats. The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

To reply, the Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** First of all, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the opposition can't add numbers—because that's not the number, but anyway. We had a deal, the worst deal I've ever seen in business, what the Liberals signed for 10 years, just giving money away. We're here to support the workers at the Beer Store. We're creating 8,500 new stores, thousands and thousands of jobs. The LCBO is going to be the wholesaler. They're going to bring in a couple of hundred million dollars more.

But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They want to say no. They want to say no on the beer tax increase; they want to say no to more competitive retailing pricing. But I'll guarantee you one thing. I will guarantee you all these members here—every single person—will be going into their retail store, they'll be going into the convenience store to buy their wine, to buy their beer, guaranteed, 1,000%—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The official opposition, come to order.

The next—

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The member from Hamilton Mountain will come to order. We do not refer to the absence of a member.

The member for Brampton North will come to order.

The next question.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I think everyone is just excited for my question this morning. I'd really like to ask a question to the Premier, but unfortunately, my question is to the Minister of Energy.

The Liberal carbon tax is driving up the cost of food and everyday essentials. It continues to force individuals

and families across our province to choose between cooling and eating. Just last week we learned that grocery prices in Ontario have increased by an additional 1.4% compared to last year. At the same time, food bank usage in our province has increased by 38%.

1110

Speaker, the Liberals, under the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, along with the opposition NDP, persistently ignore the effects this tax has on our food supply chain. They should meet with the grain farmers who are here today and hear about how much this tax costs our farmers.

As the opposition champions the carbon tax, our government will keep costs down for the people of Ontario, and we will not stop until this regressive tax is scrapped. Minister, can you please explain—

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

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks to the great member from Perth–Wellington—who celebrated a birthday last week, as well, I should say.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in this House should know by now the damage that the carbon tax is doing, and I know the Premier probably would have loved to answer this question because he's been telling us since 2018 that we would be in the place we are now because of the carbon tax and it increasing every year on April 1. We've gotten to the point now where people are cancelling their summer holidays because they can't afford to fill up their tank and go visit great locations across our province.

The carbon tax is driving up the price of everything. The grain farmers will tell you that too—

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

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to the minister for his response. The carbon tax is failing on all fronts, except driving up the cost of basic necessities. The federal Liberals can reduce the cost of food today for children, for seniors and for everyone who is going hungry by eliminating this punitive tax. But unfortunately, it seems they're all willing to let Ontario suffer under this carbon tax.

The Liberal and NDP members sitting in this House are content to see the carbon tax triple—triple—by 2030. This is unacceptable, and this Premier and our government will continue to fight this punitive tax.

Minister, can you tell this House why the members opposite must come to their senses and join our government in fighting this carbon tax?

*Interjection.*

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

Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** I'll tell you why they should come to their senses: They will be eradicated, and they won't have any seats left at the federal Parliament, and they won't have any seats left on this side either. The two members over there, from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and

Milton, heard this at the doors just over a month ago when they went to the polls.

We talk to people across Ontario all the time, and they say the biggest issue that they're facing is affordability. Now, it's because of the things that we're doing here at the province, because we're doing as much as we can to make life more affordable by reducing the gas tax; by bringing in One Fare for transit users, saving them \$1,600 a year; cutting tolls; cutting licence plate fees; cutting all of those different fees that are driving up the cost. But it's this carbon tax that's driving up the price of everything.

And the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and the Liberals and the NDP and Mr. Green here are all in support of a bigger carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. We're not. We have a different plan—

*Interjection.*

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

I'll remind the House to refer to other members by either their riding name or their ministerial responsibility, as applicable.

The next question.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

### VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Every parent knows that without caring, qualified teachers and education workers, there is no education. Yet this government's cuts to education funding, their refusal to take action on violence and mental health and their contempt for teachers are driving them out of our schools. There are now 46,000 teachers in Ontario who are certified but choosing not to teach, at a moment when our schools have daily staff shortages.

Why isn't the Minister of Education doing everything he can to reverse this trend and make sure our kids have the caring teachers they need?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Our government, in 2017-18, came in with a mandate to increase mental health funding, because the former Liberals underfunded this area, investing roughly \$16 million to \$18 million per year. Under our Premier's leadership, we're investing over \$110 million, over a 550% net increase in funding, a commitment to invest.

We also announced a plan to mandate mental health within the curriculum, to reduce the behavioural challenges we're seeing, but also to strengthen the resilience of young people. We were the first province in Canada to mandate it in every single grade. And then, under the leadership of the member from Burlington, we codified a tool kit developed with School Mental Health Ontario and the Hospital for Sick Children.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to deal with violence, then we need to unite people around our shared values, not subdivide them, as many members of the illiberal opposition would want us to do.

We need to stand up for shared values in Canada. We have to make sure young people know that through mental

health and upstream investments we can prevent the distractions in class and keep every single child safe in our system.

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

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Speaker, this government's funding for mental health is going down to 22 cents per student per day. That is a cut from this year. That is not how you take a mental health crisis seriously.

The teacher shortage is connected to the rising levels of violence and the mental health crisis in our schools. One teacher from Waterloo wrote to me: "I'm in a K-6 school. This week so far we've had a non-verbal student elope and run off campus, three different students trash three different classrooms, one staff member get assaulted by a student, and two class evacuations. And it's only Wednesday."

These aren't just teachers' working conditions, Speaker; they are students' learning conditions. So where is the serious plan to tackle violence in schools?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** A comprehensive plan to empower students to learn about mental health in every single grade started years ago under our government. We increased funding in every single year. This is the first year students are benefiting from year-round supports in mental health, including through the summers, which members opposite oppose. We've increased the staffing by 9,000 education workers in our schools, 3,000 front-line teachers.

I know the Leader of the Opposition can't bring herself to accept matters of fact as confirmed by school boards in the province of Ontario, but if she is so committed to mental health, then why have you voted against each and every single mental health worker, psychologist, psychotherapist, social worker we've hired?

I know the inconvenient truth of the NDP: They voted against budgets. They voted against curriculum. They even voted against a tool kit developed by SickKids Ontario.

But, Mr. Speaker, we brought forth a plan to actually go after the issue of distractions in schools by eliminating vaping and—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order. The member for Waterloo, come to order.

The next question.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Ontario's farmers pride themselves on being great stewards of the land and the environment. But the federal

Liberals refuse to take that into account when they saddle farmers with huge carbon tax bills. Not only does the carbon tax add financial stress by increasing input costs for farmers, but it shows great disrespect for the work farmers do and the investments they make to keep their operations as sustainable as possible.

The federal Liberals need to finally listen to what we have been saying since day one and get rid of the carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House what she is hearing from farmers about how the federal Liberals' attacks are impacting them, both financially—

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

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I appreciate the question from the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. Quite frankly, I'm hearing from farmers and food manufacturers alike that the carbon tax is driving up the cost of production, the cost of food throughout this province, and we need to keep good companies like D&D Poultry in that member's own riding thriving because Ontario looks for it and deserves it.

I'm hearing from farmers, as well, that it's becoming an affordability issue, because the carbon tax is affecting them both financially and, quite frankly, emotionally, as well. Jeff Harrison, president of Grain Farmers of Ontario, is in the House today, and he recently has been quoted on record as saying that, reflecting on Liberal ideology about climate change, the Liberals were using a "vilification strategy" to pin the blame for climate change on farmers through exorbitant costs of the carbon tax and threatening to remove tools that farmers need to grow crops.

The Liberals need to stand up and admit they're doing the wrong thing.

1120

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

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you to the minister for the response. It is disturbing to hear how the Liberal carbon tax is not only driving up the cost of business for Ontario's farmers but causing them personal stress as well.

Speaker, unlike our government's continued support of our agriculture and food industry, the opposition NDP and independent Liberals would rather support this costly and regressive tax. They are saying no to economic growth and prosperity and saying no to supporting farmers and Ontario businesses. That's shameful. Ontarians have had enough. Scrap the tax.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what our government is doing to help agriculture and food businesses compete in a global market despite the federal carbon tax?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** We're doing a lot to support our farmers, because, quite frankly, Jeff Harrison also went on to say, "It's part of the added stress"—"it" being the carbon tax—"on farmers that they are expected to do the unachievable."



But really and truly, farmers are part of the solution, Speaker. Through their crop rotations, cover crops and the embracing of best practices, grain farmers of Ontario are actually shipping almost 30% of all grains grown right here in Ontario around the world to 50 different countries. That matters. Then, there's another significant percentage of their production that goes into baked goods right here in Ontario, which adds to jobs and again goes around the world in terms of satisfying demand for good produced food right here from Ontario.

But you know what, Speaker? The carbon tax alone is going to cause grain farmers of Ontario to pay—get this—almost \$200 million in carbon tax alone this year. That's why we're introducing programs that understand the issue and—

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

The next question.

#### FIRST RESPONDERS

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** First responders, including police officers, across the north often work alone. They are the first ones who see accidents and tragedies when they happen, but they are not given the tools they need to process the traumatic events.

Speaker, will this government commit to increasing the mental health supports available to police and other first responders such as paramedics and firefighters serving in far northern Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I appreciate the question from the member from Kiiwetinoong. Last summer, I travelled up to Lac Seul First Nation in the member's riding, and I saw first-hand exactly how important it is to have public safety in communities like Lac Seul. I want to give a special mention to Chief Bruno Rossi, who works hard every day to keep that community safe.

Mr. Speaker, the welfare of every person living safely in their communities, regardless of whether it's in southern Ontario or northern Ontario or in First Nations communities, is equally important. Everyone keeping Ontario safe deserves to be safe themselves. Just in a couple of weeks, I will be at the Ontario Police College, where we welcome almost 500 new cadets to keep Ontario safe, including people serving our First Nations communities.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Visiting communities does not increase funding to provide the mental health services that these people need.

Again, first responders in the north work with far fewer services than urban responders in urban areas. Even services like mental health services are extremely limited. Front-line responders like Jerry Moskotaywenene and Jack McKay have told us they aren't getting the support they need when they're experiencing vicarious trauma.

How does this government plan to ensure the complex mental health needs of police and front-line responders in the north are met?

*Interjections.*

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

The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** That is a very important question, and it is something that our government is taking very seriously.

As you know, with \$525 million being invested through the Roadmap to Wellness, we're ensuring that we're addressing mental health issues in every segment of the community, in every segment of the population, and ensuring that first responders are getting the help that they need regardless of where they are in the province.

One of the biggest investments made by this government is the centre of excellence that's in the process of being built for first responders. It will act as a hub-and-spoke model to ensure that supports are provided to first responders, no matter where they are in the province, at the best and highest level possible.

In addition to that, our government is making investments in mobile crisis intervention teams to be able to provide additional supports to the people who are in greatest need, but working with the first responders—not just police officers, but with paramedics as well.

So as we build the system—the system that was for the longest time left unserved—we're making the differences in building a system that's going to be the best it can be for everyone in the province, including our—

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

The next question.

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, \$1 billion of taxpayer money is currently on its way to the Premier's wealthy, well-connected friends at the Beer Store and LCBO. This isn't about convenience. This is about favouring insiders, furthering political agendas and justifying an early election.

Meanwhile, due to this government's historic underfunding and stunning incompetence, the township of Durham has the latest rural hospital to find itself on the chopping block. This is the same playbook that shuttered Minden hospital's emergency department and which now threatens the collapse of Bracebridge's hospital.

First, the Premier and Minister of Health neglect the needs of rural and northern hospitals. And staffing is foremost amongst those needs. Yet, the Premier and Minister of Health have deliberately chosen to underpay health care workers, drag them through court, let temporary staffing agencies run wild, and ignore the issues of burnout, mental health and workplace safety.

When hospitals like the one in Durham no longer have enough staff to function, what does this government do?

They give a billion dollars to the Beer Store and LCBO. That was easy.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier paying off big beer rather than doing anything to—

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

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I'm not sure if the member opposite was around for the budget, where we actually increased hospitals' annual operating by an average of 4%—we've done that for two years running.

We have, in February, seen a historic investment in primary care expansion—78 new primary care or expanded opportunities for people to be connected to primary care physicians and clinicians in their community.

We are already seeing those investments making a difference in the lives of people who want to be connected.

I would encourage the member opposite to actually sit down with some of these hospital CEOs and leadership and find out what and how our government investments are making a difference on the ground—

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

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** Mr. Speaker, the government is giving \$1 billion to the Beer Store and big box grocery stores and only \$100 million to increase access to primary care.

At a time when more health care workers are leaving the profession than ever before, this government is telling us that things have never been better. The amount of people without a family doctor has increased by more than 800,000 since this government took office, and they want to talk about beer.

That doesn't cut it for patients in Durham whose emergency department now operates on banker's hours, who will have to be driven out of their community, often in dangerous winter conditions and away from loved ones, just to get a hospital bed. Soon, diagnostic services will dry up, and doctors are already leaving.

But it doesn't end there. Developers were planning two residential communities in Durham that would have totalled 500 homes. When news broke out that the community could soon be without a hospital, those developers pulled out. The Minister of Health's failures are now turning into the Minister of Housing's failures.

Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier expect to meet his housing targets if he can't even ensure that health care needs are met in every community across Ontario?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Perhaps this a time for a bit of a history lesson. When the Liberal government was in power, they were cutting residency spots in the province of Ontario. When the NDP were in government, they were cutting nurses in the province of Ontario. Contrast that with new medical schools that will have students actually starting their training in September 2025 in Brampton. We have a new medical school coming in Scarborough. We have a new medical school coming in York region. We are

making those investments, because, frankly, it was ignored for far too long under the Liberal government, supported by the NDP. We're getting the job done.

1130

## TAXATION

**Mr. Rick Byers:** Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. As the cost of living continues to rise, Ontarians cannot afford the costly federal carbon tax. But the federal Liberals do not care, and neither do the Ontario Liberals, under the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie. They will push for more hikes until this tax gets tripled and even though Ontarians are paying the price for their unfair tax grabs.

Unlike the Liberals, our government understands the importance of building our clean energy advantage while keeping costs down for the hard-working people of this province.

Speaker, can the minister explain how our government is bringing Ontarians clean, affordable and reliable energy without introducing a carbon tax?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Well, not to put words in the mouth of the Premier, but the Premier would say, "No tax. For you, we are not going to be increasing taxes, and that includes a carbon tax."

Our plan does not include a carbon tax. Our plan is called Powering Ontario's Growth, and it builds on the strengths of our province's energy sector. That includes refurbishing the clean, reliable, affordable power that comes from our nuclear plants at places like Bruce and at Darlington and at Pickering; building new nuclear technology, world-leading small modular reactors that are under way now at Darlington; as well, ensuring that we have clean hydroelectric power that's affordable for the people by refurbishing the big dams and the small dams that we have across our province in places like Niagara Falls, in places like Cornwall, in places like northern Ontario, all across our province; and ensuring that we have just finished the biggest procurement of battery storage in Canada's history.

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

**Mr. Rick Byers:** Thank you to the minister for this response. It is encouraging to hear the progress our government has been making to ensure Ontario has clean, affordable energy to power our growing economy.

Rather than providing energy solutions, the federal Liberals have deliberately chosen not only to leave the carbon tax in place but to increase it even more despite the financial struggles Ontarians are experiencing. Ontarians deserve relief, not taxes. The simplest, fairest thing to do is to scrap the carbon tax for everyone, everywhere, for good.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House why the people of this province cannot afford the punitive Liberal carbon tax?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** We can't afford it because it's driving up the price of everything. Even a report to

Parliament in Ottawa last week indicated that the carbon tax is having very, very little impact, less than 1%, on reducing emissions across the province. All it's doing is driving people into energy poverty.

Our grain farmers are here. They've talked about the impact that it's having on grains that they produce for our baked goods and our spirits and all kinds of great stuff in our province, and it's having an impact at the grocery stores.

But the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and her Liberal caucus and the NDP and the Green Party as well, they're all in support of an ever-increasing carbon tax every April 1. We're not. We're saying no to the carbon tax, first of all because it's not working, and second of all because it's driving up costs and making life more unaffordable for the people of Ontario.

We have a plan. It's working. It's called Powering Ontario's Growth, bringing record multi-billion-dollar investment—

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

The next question.

#### JUSTICE SYSTEM

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is to the Premier. Ontario's justice system has made recent headlines for all the wrong reasons.

CityNews has broadcasted: "Stop with the Excuses: Emotional Appeals to Overhaul Court System Amid Growing Backlogs."

Toronto Star prints: "Defence Lawyer for Accused in Terrorism Case Wants Charges Stayed Due to Court Delays."

CBC reports: "Mould, Asbestos at Milton Courthouse Have Led to 'Delays in Judicial Process'...."

Is the Premier actually proud of these headlines that his government has garnered?

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

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Thank you for the question. It gives me a chance to highlight some of the amazing things that we're doing as a government, and things that only this government is prepared to do. At a time when the opposition is calling to defund the police, Mr. Speaker, we are supporting our front-line officers. We're making sure that the justice system has the tools that it needs to work the way that Ontarians would expect. We are investing new money—millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker—in new systems, in staffing. In all areas of the justice system, we are getting the job done.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Legal observers have a very different opinion of what success in the judicial system looks like.

The crisis goes beyond the courts. We see the crisis of mismanagement with the historic backlogs in tribunals. Tribunal Watch, which is an independent, non-partisan watchdog of tribunal systems in Ontario, has revealed in

their annual report that the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario's backlog grew by 500 cases, despite historically high rates of applications being dismissed without ever being heard or the fact that the complainants are now abandoning their applications due to record delays at the tribunals.

On top of these historic delays there, we're seeing historic delays now also at the Landlord and Tenant Board, without any fixes in sight.

Yes or no: Is the Premier also proud of his record in the tribunals?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, I just find it so ironic coming from that member that wants to defund the police, that marched in the parades to defund the police. If it was up to that member, you could break into a house, you could put a gun to someone's head, you could steal something out from the store. She doesn't believe they should even be in court. Everyone should get off, according to you—everyone. Give them a second chance after breaking into a home, terrorizing neighbourhoods. She doesn't worry about the courts. She hates the police.

You know something? It's just a bunch of you-know-what. I'll leave it at that.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** My question is for the Premier. Extreme heat is already here. Fire season started early. Toxic air from fires last year cost our health care system \$1.3 billion. Climate-fuelled extreme weather caused insurable losses of \$3.1 billion last year alone. The cost of climate is rising rapidly, and Ontario has gone from first to worst when it comes to climate pollution. In fact, 60% of the increase in climate pollution in Canada came from Ontario, yet the Auditor General says this government has no plan.

Speaker, the people of Ontario want a credible climate plan. All I'm asking for today is a date: a date of when the government will deliver a credible climate plan to meet Ontario's emission targets.

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

**Hon. Todd Smith:** First of all, Speaker, let me start with our energy plan, which was delivered last summer. I can send the member over a copy. It's called Powering Ontario's Growth, and that's exactly what's happening: maintaining one of the cleanest grids in the entire world.

The member opposite from the Green Party wants to put wind turbines and solar panels all over the place. Let's just look outside today. It's raining cats and dogs out there, Mr. Speaker. We are getting 100 megawatts of solar today, and we're getting about 1,300 megawatts of wind, of 5,000 megawatts of installed capacity. Can you imagine, under their plan, how many wind turbines and solar panels they would need that still wouldn't be working today?

That's why we're investing in our nuclear power plants, emissions-free. We are getting almost 60% of our

electricity from there today, and our hydroelectric facilities—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Nepean will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

The supplementary question.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** That answer, I believe, just increased emissions in the province.

Let's get to the facts. Here are the facts, Speaker: When this government came into office, our grid was 96% clean. Now it's down to 87% clean. And under their plan, climate pollution in the electricity sector will rise 300% this decade and 700% in the next two decades, undermining all the progress we made closing coal plants. The government has no plan, and the plan that the minister just talked about is actually going to make climate pollution go up, at a time when we have tornado warnings in Ottawa, right now, today.

1140

The cost of the climate crisis is going up and emissions are going up under this government. The people of Ontario have a simple question they want an answer to: When will the government bring forward a credible plan to meet Ontario's emission targets?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Once again, the member for Nepean, come to order.

The Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** We've seen this type of act before in this Legislature. What the member of the Green Party is supporting is the Green Energy Act, which drove hundreds of thousands of jobs out of our province. And do you know what? It hasn't just been Ontario's experience. We've seen what's happening in places like Germany. We've seen what's happening in California, where they've gone down these roads. They don't have power for the growth that we are experiencing in our province. We are guaranteeing that we will have the growth.

Now, the member talks about the fact that our emissions are going up. Do you know what? We are refurbishing our nuclear facilities right now. We have four reactors that are down. When they come back, we're going to have more than enough power, as we continue to see investment in our province. We are also building out non-emitting resources, right across our province, because we're putting the storage in place—something that the Liberals didn't know enough to do. And we're continuing to build out our hydroelectric fleets in places like Niagara Falls, in Cornwall, in Kakabeka Falls—

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

The next question.

## TAXATION

**Mr. David Smith:** My question is for the great Associate Minister of Small Business. The federal government's carbon tax continues to make life more expensive for Ontarians. Small business owners across our

province cannot afford the high prices of essential goods and services driven by this punitive tax. Unfortunately, the NDP and the Liberal members in the Legislature are ignoring the devastating impact of the carbon tax on our job creators. Their silence is a shocking endorsement of higher prices and more tax.

Unlike the opposition, our government is taking action to support Ontario's hard-working business owners during these difficult economic times. Can the associate minister tell the House how the carbon tax compounds the financial pressure on Ontario's small business?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** The great member from Scarborough Centre is absolutely right about the harmful impacts the carbon tax is having on our province's small businesses. The tax is not only driving up fuel costs for transportation and deliveries, but it's also increasing prices across the board for energy and goods and services that these entrepreneurs rely upon. Think of a family business in Milton, started by immigrants who came to this country seeking more opportunities for their families. Instead, thanks to the Liberals, their dream of entrepreneurship is now struggling under the weight of these surging operating expenses, brought on by the federal carbon tax.

Speaker, these businesses see Ontario's PC government, led by Premier Ford, providing relief by cutting gas taxes and the small business corporate income tax rate. The choice was clear to Milton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex entrepreneurs, because only our party—

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

Supplementary question.

**Mr. David Smith:** Thank you to the associate minister for her great response. The Liberals need to finally recognize the economic reality and harm the carbon tax is causing for individuals and families. I've met with countless small business owners in my riding of Scarborough Centre, from restaurants to auto repair shops to dry cleaners, who are being punished by soaring costs driven by the Liberal carbon tax. They all tell me that the increasing prices of utilities, supplies and transportation have made it extremely difficult for their businesses to survive.

It is not fair that the federal Liberals continue to punish Ontarians with tax hike after tax hike. Can the associate minister explain what our government is doing to support these vital job creators and offset the damage caused by the Liberal carbon tax supported by Bonnie Crombie?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you again to the great member for his question. Our government is committed to keeping Ontario the best place for entrepreneurs to start and grow a business. Unlike the Liberals and the opposition NDP, we know that now more than ever the carbon tax is making it increasingly difficult for businesses to thrive and survive. That's why, on top of our small business support programs, we've introduced major tax cuts and relief measures to directly lower operating expenses, like reducing the small business tax rate to 3.2%, increasing the employer health tax exemption and reducing the WSIB premium rates.

Entrepreneurs in Milton, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and right across Ontario all agree they want a government that fights for businesses, not against them.

Costly Crombie and her federal Liberals are piling on more costs through the carbon tax, but under this Premier, we—

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

The next question.

#### PHARMACISTS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

Since the government introduced new sources of profit for pharmacies, pharmacists at Loblaws and Shoppers Drug Mart are being directed by their corporations to perform unnecessary MedsCheck to drive profit up and up.

What has the government done to ensure that corporations like Loblaws, and Galen Weston are not abusing our publicly funded health care system?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** This gives me a wonderful opportunity to talk about the scope-of-practice changes that we have started with nurses, with nurse practitioners and, of course, with pharmacists. Do you know, Speaker, that since we made changes to primary care allowing access for minor ailments in pharmacies, we've had over 700,000 Ontarians access that service? Minor ailments, where you don't have to take a day off work, where you don't have to go to the emergency department, you don't have to book an appointment and take time off work—those are the changes that we are making through policy, through scope-of-practice changes that are truly making a difference in accessing primary care and accessing treatment in the province of Ontario.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The difference is who gets the money, Speaker.

Things are so bad that the Ontario College of Pharmacists did a survey. The survey said Shoppers and Loblaws drugstores are the two workplaces where most of the pressure happens. Pharmacists are being pressured to do more MedsCheck, cold-call MedsCheck, dispense naloxone, verification therapeutic checks. They're pressured to do more ailment assessments but do them within a time limit. All of this generates more profit. All of this is against the position statement issued by the College of Pharmacists, putting pharmacists' licences at risk, as well as patient care.

Is the government happy that Shoppers and Loblaws are raking in more profit at the taxpayers' expense?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, this question is everything you need to know about where the NDP are in terms of their philosophy. They believe that the status quo is okay, that there can be no improvement in access to care in the province of Ontario.

Well, under Premier Ford, we have a very different approach. We are going to absolutely continue to work with our regulatory colleges to expand scope of practice,

whether it's for midwives—which we've done in the last number of months, and people are already seeing impacts when they have that young baby and they want to get their midwife to have the access. We will continue working with our colleges to make sure expanded scope of practice is absolutely one of the improvements that we are making in the province of Ontario.

And again I will say, 19 minor ailments—in just over a year and a half, and we have seen 700,000 Ontarians access that service. That's the kind of improvements we will continue to make with our health care—

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

The next question.

#### TAXATION

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** My question is for the Solicitor General. From groceries to gas, the Liberal carbon tax is making life more expensive for everyone in our province. People in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora have told me that they are concerned about the impact that this tax is having on our public safety system. They want to make sure that our first responders in Ontario have the tools and resources that they need to keep our communities safe.

**1150**

Speaker, under Premier Ford's leadership, our government is fighting back against crime and building safer communities, but we need all governments to do their part. The federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts need to listen to what we have been saying since day one, and that is, scrap this tax.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General tell the House how the carbon tax is negatively affecting Ontario's—

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

The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I want to thank my friend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for standing up for public safety every day in her community and supporting the York Regional Police service.

Mr. Speaker, the member is right, and I've said this before in the House. When you look at the latest rates of carbon tax as of April 1, it's 18 cents a litre for gasoline. When you look at an average SUV at 100 litres per vehicle, you multiply a daily fill-up, you're spending \$6,500 a year just for the carbon tax. It's ridiculous.

And, Mr. Speaker, do you know who knew about it? Bonnie Crombie—because she was on the board of Peel police service. The queen of the carbon tax knew it. She should come clean with Ontarians.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you to the Solicitor General for the response. It is alarming to hear how the carbon tax is negatively affecting our public safety system. While our government remains focused on delivering solutions to keep Ontarians safe, the opposition NDP and independent Liberals continue to support a tax that puts a strain on resources for our first responders.

Speaker, I think it is interesting that the former mayor of Mississauga, Bonnie Crombie, who would have approved the budget for her municipal fire department and understood the implications that this punitive tax was having on the budget of her emergency response system—but now, today, as the leader of the independent Liberals, she is supporting the federal government and tripling this tax by 2030.

Speaker, can the—

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

The Solicitor General may reply.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** The member is absolutely right: Bonnie Crombie served as mayor of Mississauga and was familiar with the budget line for the carbon tax for the Mississauga fire department. That is absolutely true. And do you know what's true, Mr. Speaker? It's 21.5 cents for diesel, as of April 1, just the carbon tax portion. That means on an average fire truck, it is \$15,000 a year just for the carbon tax portion.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's more: Bonnie Crombie wants to support the Liberals in Ottawa to triple the carbon tax, go as high as it can go. Mr. Speaker, Ontarians cannot afford Bonnie Crombie.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Premier. Child care operators have been warning this government since 2022 about the mismanagement on the Canada-wide Early Learning Child Care program file.

Child care operators like Ola have already opted out, and now, Sunnyside Garden, a not-for-profit daycare, is telling us that the funding formula, if it's not fixed immediately, they will be forced to either opt out or close their doors.

The government's latest budget doesn't even mention child care, and last week, the minister announced the government won't be releasing a new funding formula until 2025.

The cost of living is hard enough for families, and making families pay the price for the minister's failure to implement the \$10-a-day child care spaces is making things worse. Will the minister commit to parents and child care centres today that the newly announced funding formula is a full-cost-recovery model and will be implemented without further delay?

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

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** What would absolutely make things worse is following the NDP plan to preclude 70,000 spaces, or 30% of the market. The NDP position is to literally deny 30% of the market from participating, and yet today, they actually ask a question about increasing wait-lists. It was this Progressive Conservative government that cut fees by 50%, saving \$8,000 to \$12,000 a year, after the NDP propped up the Liberals increasing it by 400%, pricing mothers out of the market, having to choose between work and raising their kids.

We're standing up for access, but we're also standing up to the federal Liberal government to make sure we get the flexibility and the funding. The very operators the member opposite speaks about, they deserve—we agree with the premise of the problem. The federal program has massive shortcomings. So stand with us, stand with operators, stand up for choice and actually get the job done for affordable—

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

That concludes our question period for this morning.

#### RECEPTION

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Scarborough—Agincourt on a point of order.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Mr. Speaker and colleagues, today in the evening, between 5 and 7, there will be a reception to celebrate Armenian Heritage Month in the dining room. Leaders of the Armenian community in Ontario, from St. Catharines, Cambridge, GTHA and other places, will be visiting to celebrate this momentous event. Everyone is welcome, from our colleagues, to come and join us to welcome the community leaders and the members and also enjoy authentic Armenian food, drinks, juices and so much more. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** It's technically not a point of order, but we appreciate the information nonetheless.

#### DEFERRED VOTES

##### TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (PROMOTING LEISURE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH), 2024

##### LOI DE 2024 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (PROMOTION DES ACTIVITÉS DE LOISIR POUR LES JEUNES)

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

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a non-refundable tax credit to encourage children's extra-curricular activities / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt non remboursable afin d'encourager les activités parascolaires des enfants.

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

*The division bells rang from 1157 to 1202.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On May 16, 2024, Mr. Blais moved second reading of Bill 178, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a non-refundable tax credit to encourage children's extra-curricular activities.

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

#### Ayes

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

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

#### Nays

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

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 35; the nays are 71.

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

*Second reading negated.*

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

*The House recessed from 1206 until 1300.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** It's always a pleasure when somebody from your riding is here. It's an absolute

pleasure to welcome Deana DeGrace from Mississauga—Malton's Peel Children's Aid Society.

**Mr. Steve Pinsonneault:** I'd like to introduce my family here today—Dakota, my son-in-law; Katie, my daughter.

Kara is my constituency office manager in Wallaceburg. Jodie is my partner. Peter Turkington was my campaign manager. Tracey Everitt works in our constituency office in Strathroy, and Michelle manages the office in Strathroy.

My daughter Julia had to leave earlier to get back to her son, along with her partner, Josh.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** It's my honour to introduce my family. I see my father, Shakil Hamid, with my dear friend Nadeem Akbar, also from Milton. My handsome nephew is walking in: 13-year-old Maaz Subzwari. And I believe my mother, Asia Shakil; my wife, Maleeha Hamid; and my sister Muzna Hamid are in security, along with two dear friends of mine, Fwad Malik and Lubna Malik, both from Milton.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Milton and Malton not only sound similar, but they're amazing places.

I'd like to welcome my friend Nadeem Akbar Khatana from Milton.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I want to welcome to the House today two members of my riding of Durham, Mr. Doug Ellis and Mr. Timothy Zub, who are here today.

#### HOUSE SITTINGS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting is cancelled.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

##### HOMEOWNER PROTECTION ACT, 2024

##### LOI DE 2024 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE LOGEMENTS

Mr. McCarthy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 200, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to homebuyers and homeowners, properties of cultural heritage value or interest and certain planning matters / Projet de loi 200, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les acquéreurs de logements et les propriétaires de logements, les biens ayant une valeur ou un caractère sur le plan du patrimoine culturel et d'autres questions liées à l'aménagement du territoire.

**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):** I invite the minister to briefly explain his bill.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Our government treats consumer protection with the utmost importance. Ontarians should feel confident that their government has their backs when it comes to protecting their homes.

The Homeowner Protection Act, 2024, would, if passed, protect homeowners from harmful practices by banning the registration of consumer notices of security interest—NOSIs—on the land registry system and deeming existing consumer NOSIs to be expired.

The proposed act would protect buyers of new freehold homes by enabling the future implementation of a 10-day cooling-off period for purchases of new freehold homes, where the buyer could cancel the agreement for any reason within that period with no fear of financial penalty. This would help provide buyers with time to confidently make informed purchasing decisions.

The government is also committed to ensuring we continue to conserve Ontario's heritage. The proposed legislation would, if passed, amend the Ontario Heritage Act to extend the deadline for municipalities to review their legacy-listed properties until January 1, 2027. This would support municipalities by easing administrative pressures and providing more opportunity for proactive designations.

Finally, to provide continued certainty for our building partners on transit-oriented community projects, the proposed legislation would exempt certain transit-oriented community lands from the immunity provisions in the Planning Act related to the making, amending or revoking of minister's zoning orders.

I would like to thank the deputy minister within my ministry, Renu Kulendran; my chief of staff, Michelle Stock; my deputy chief of staff, Kai Nademi; my director of issues and legislative affairs, Erika Soler; my parliamentary assistant, Brian Riddell; and the MPP from Kitchener–Conestoga right behind me here.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### COMMERCIAL TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 SUR LA CONVERSION D'UN USAGE COMMERCIAL À UN USAGE RÉSIDENTIEL

Mrs. McCrimmon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to change of use exemptions / Projet de loi 201, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement à l'égard des exemptions en matière de changement d'usage.

**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 Kanata–Carleton like to briefly explain her bill.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** Whereas commercial building vacancy is still very high after the pandemic and barriers prevent the conversion of previously commercial buildings to residential use, this bill would remove one significant barrier to building conversions.

This bill amends section 177 of the Environmental Protection Act so that a regulation providing for an exemption from clause 168.3.1(1)(b) will not include a limitation based on the height of a building.

1310

## MOTIONS

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 2024 annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Quebec City, Quebec, from September 7 to September 10, 2024.

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

*Motion agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Before I invite the members to present petitions this afternoon, I wish to address the House on the importance of petitions in light of the recent changes to the standing orders.

In keeping with centuries of parliamentary tradition, petitions have always been part of the assembly's proceedings, though our procedures and practices around petitions have evolved over time. Initially, members were limited to providing brief summaries of their petitions that they presented; eventually, they were allowed to either read the petition or summarize it, but any attempts at editorial embellishment would be called to order.

Speakers have addressed the matter repeatedly over the years. Speaker Warner reminded members in 1991 to "simply summarize the petition" and, if they wish to do so, indicate the number of signatures. That comes from the debates, November 10, 1991, page 3,567.

After the 15-minute time limit for the presentation of petitions was introduced in 1989, a change to the rules that was made because some members had begun reading petitions out in full as a dilatory tactic, Speakers repeatedly reminded members to make brief statements in order to allow for as many petitions as possible to be presented in the limited time available.

For example, in 1998, following a petition presentation that lasted almost two minutes, Speaker Stockwell told members that, "You can summarize them; you don't have to read them verbatim. Especially if you've read it once, maybe you could summarize it." That comes from the



debates from June 15, 1998, page 1,419. A few days later, the Deputy Speaker issued a similar reminder: “We have 15 minutes, and I would ask members to try to summarize their petitions. It’s up to them to bear in mind that there are many people trying to get their petitions read within 15 minutes.” From the debates, June 18, 1998, page 1,633.

As members can see, the issues we’re facing today are not new. Going forward, members will be permitted to make a brief statement summarizing the petition request. Members may also indicate the author or origin of the petition, the number of signatures it received and, if they wish, whether they agree with the petition. I will again urge members that the presentation of a petition should not be used as an opportunity for debate, and if the Chair believes that the members comments qualify as an argument, editorial or debate, we will move on to the next petition presentation.

There is a limited amount of time available for the presentation of petitions, and my intent is to hear as many as possible during those 15 minutes. But I will remind members that just two months ago—actually two months ago today—a single petition presentation lasted 14 minutes, and this is a trend that we have seen on both sides of the House at various times.

I ask members to make every effort to conform to the process as outlined, and, in doing so, demonstrate their respect for, and appreciate of, the value and importance of public petitions and the people of Ontario who have circulated them and signed them.

## PETITIONS

### LABOUR LEGISLATION

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is called “Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation”—Speaker, as you know, very dear to my heart. The short version of this as a summary is that without anti-scab legislation, strikes, labour disputes and lockouts tend to last a lot longer. The ACTRA lockout is a great example of that because they’ve been locked out now for more than two years.

What they’re asking for is for legislation that would be similar to British Columbia and Quebec’s and, probably by the end of the day, Speaker, legislation that will be at the federal level as well, with the passing of the federal legislation. They ask for the support on this to shorten strike and labour disputes and lockouts, and also to give the collective power to the workers to be able to negotiate fair contracts.

They have asked specifically for the legislation that existed under the previous NDP government to be reinstated and to support and pass provincial anti-scab labour bills, like NDP Bill 90, the Anti-Scab Labour Act, which—

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

Petitions?

### LANDFILL

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Hello, everyone. I have a petition here on behalf of the residents of Flam- borough–Glanbrook, the group Standing Up for Stoney Creek. Essentially, the petition actually has 4,150 signatures from east Hamilton and Stoney Creek. It calls for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to immediately assess the operations of the Green For Life landfill site in Stoney Creek for legislative non-compliance, odours and air quality/water testing—basically, to monitor the landfill site better.

I’m going to submit this massive, heavy load with new page Grace and sign my name to it.

### ROAD SAFETY

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** This is a petition to the Ministry of Transportation regarding early warning lights. It’s a request to have warning lights all along the Thunder Bay Expressway as it goes from the very beginning of Thunder Bay to the very end, so it circles the entire city. The reason for the petition is because there are so many trucks coming through and they need a lot of time to stop. There are a lot of unnecessary accidents taking place because of the heavy traffic flow.

So the request of the petition is to put warning lights so that truck drivers and other drivers have enough room to stop.

I fully support this petition, and I want to thank Will Vandewater from the Lakehead Regional Safety Council for putting it together and gathering so many signatures. I will give this to new page Farhan.

### HERITAGE CONSERVATION

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I have a petition from residents in my riding of Don Valley West who are concerned about government changes to the Ontario Heritage Act, which will strip heritage protections from 36,000 buildings across the province on January 1, 2025, unless new protections are legislated.

The undersigned are petitioning that this plan, which provides municipalities and interested stakeholders limited time to appeal, will cause lasting harm to Ontario’s architectural heritage.

The petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly amend the Ontario Heritage Act to grant municipalities an additional five years to renew protections for affected heritage buildings so that the serious consequences will not be forthcoming. I wholeheartedly endorse this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Victoria to bring it to the table.

### LABORATORY TESTING

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is entitled “Prioritize Public Health: Keep our Community PHO Labs Open.” This was a petition that was collected very quickly—9,000 signatures. I have a stack down here.

One of the main concerns has to do with the water testing. If that wasn't provided, it would cost people about \$150 to have it done. As well, they provide all the medical testing that many of us got to be aware of during COVID-19. They're concerned about closing six of the 11 Public Health Ontario labs and what that effect would have in rural and northern Ontario communities, especially the inequities that a lot of these communities have.

I'm proud to support the petition. I'll affix my signature and provide it to page Tristan for the table.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I have a petition here to raise social assistance rates, signed by over 230 organizations who recommend social assistance rates in Ontario be doubled. Both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients are grappling with alarming inflation and are requesting that the government double social assistance rates for both those on OW and ODSP.

I support this petition and will send it to the table with page Hosanna.

1320

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to express thanks to London West resident Johanne Nichols, who collected about a hundred signatures on a petition that addresses increasing costs in health care for corporate executives and administration. She notes that our health care system is in crisis. She is concerned about ensuring that funding is going to direct patient care instead of senior administration salaries. She is recommending that the Legislative Assembly institute parameters to specify the percentage of health care budget and funding that should be going to administrative and corporate personnel.

I will affix my signature to this petition and send it to the table with page Riley.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." It illustrates that during CERB, the basic income was basically pegged at \$2,000 a month and compares it to the income for OW at \$733 a month or \$1,308 for a single individual on ODSP. It been signed by 230 organizations. They recommend that the social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. It also points out that it is a time of startling inflation. It has become more urgent than ever.

I support this petition. I'll affix my signature and provide to page Farhan for the table.

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I have a petition here: "Time Ontario Provides Relief to Families From Federal Carbon

Tax." It talks about the fact that the government of Saskatchewan has removed the federal carbon tax from home heating, natural gas and electricity, which results in savings for the majority of Saskatchewan families left out of the federal government's three-year pause of carbon tax on home heating oil. So the petition is asking the Legislative Assembly to follow Saskatchewan's lead and remove the carbon tax from natural gas, propane and electric heat for the next three years.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Grace.

#### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would again like to thank London West constituent Johanne Nichols, who developed a petition and collected almost a hundred signatures. The petition is regarding the absence of mental health care in our communities. She notes that there is a very negative impact on homelessness in communities across the province, as well as the physical and mental health of those who need comprehensive mental health care but are not able to access it. She is calling for the reopening of psychiatric hospitals in the province of Ontario.

I will affix my signature and send this petition to the table with page Ethan.

#### NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is entitled "Let's Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant." In a nutshell, what this petition talks about is the funding for the Northern Health Travel Grant, for the people in northern Ontario who have to go to southern Ontario for medical attention. It's a very high cost for travel and accommodations. The funding formula hasn't really kept pace with inflation, even prior to the higher rate of inflation we're seeing right now. So that puts a massive burden on northern Ontarians who are sick.

The petition is calling for the establishment of a committee with the mandate to fix and improve the Northern Health Travel Grant. This committee would make recommendations to the Minister of Health to improve access to health care in northern Ontario through adequate reimbursement of travel costs.

It's a very reasonable petition. I support this. I'll affix my signature and provide it to page Jasnoor for the table.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I have a petition signed by hundreds of Londoners that is calling on this Legislature to bring back real rent control. The petition notes there is no rent control on buildings that were constructed in this province after November 2018, and that people who are moving into those newer units are being forced to move out when rent goes up and they cannot afford the rent anymore. The petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to ensure that all tenants in this province have protection from rent control laws in Ontario.

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Riley.

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is entitled “Protect 2SLGBTQI+ Communities and Drag Artists.” There has been an increase in anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes and harassment across Ontario. And particularly drag artists were specifically targeted by these extremists. We believe, and I’m sure everyone in the House believes, that people deserve to feel safe everywhere in Ontario.

The petition is requesting that they pass legislation to help provide safety zones and form an advisory committee to be struck to protect 2SLGBTQI+ communities from hate crimes.

I support this petition, I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Ethan for the table.

#### TUITION

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is entitled “Fight the Fees.” It has to do with the price of tuition and the increase in tuition over time. They’re saying the average domestic undergrad tuition has increased by 215% and the average domestic graduate tuition has increased by 247%. Students are graduating with a median debt of around \$17,500, which takes on average 9.53 years to repay, which seems very—God bless them for being able to do that.

Basically, it talks about the cost of tuition and the increase. What they’re asking for is ultimately free and accessible education for all to drive our economy and our province forward; a transition to grants instead of loans; and they want to ensure that students continue their right to organize, as was upheld in the courts recently.

I support this petition as well, I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Farah for the table.

#### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** This is a petition from the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. It is calling for some significant reforms to the Assistive Devices Program of this government. As we know, the Assistive Devices Program helps people who have long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment like wheelchairs, communication devices etc. The ADP also covers the cost of repairs of those devices.

We have all heard from constituents who want to see some improvements to the program to improve access to the program and also to make timely repairs. This petition has a number of measures that the government could and should take.

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jasnoor.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**MPP Jamie West:** This petition is a petition to raise social assistance rates. The petition was very strongly supported. They point out that the CERB, when it rolled

out, found people need a basic income of about \$2,000 a month and compared that to the \$733 that individuals on OW make and the \$1,308 that single individuals on ODSP would make. This has been signed by more than 230 organizations. They recommend that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works, OW, and the Ontario Disability Support Program, ODSP.

This really is about helping people who are struggling to survive at a time of just alarming inflation increases. The people on the petition are petitioning for the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for both OW and ODSP.

I support this petition, I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Tristan for the table.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### NEW MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2024, on the motion to recognize newly elected members of provincial Parliament.

1330

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

**Mr. Steve Pinsonneault:** Mr. Speaker, fellow members of the Legislative Assembly, esteemed colleagues, family, friends and Ontario residents, I stand before you today. I’m deeply honoured and humbled to represent the hard-working people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. It is with great pride and a profound sense of responsibility that I take my place in this esteemed chamber.

The first day I walked into the halls I felt like a young boy on Christmas morning. The architecture and the mere size of this building are mesmerizing. To know I’ll be one of 1,974 people to have their name engraved on those marble walls in this building is an honour all of its own.

I would like to send a heartfelt thank you out to my predecessor Monte McNaughton, who not only endorsed me but canvassed with me and gave me advice all the way through the campaign process. During my time campaigning, I learned how much Monte was loved throughout this riding, and I look to build on that legacy that he built.

My journey for the position began seven months ago when a good friend of mine, Emery Huszka, came into my office and said, “Monte McNaughton is resigning. He’s going to work in the private sector. You need to apply for this position. With your municipal experience and your work with community service, you would be perfect for the job.” He would not leave until I said, “Yes, I’ll do it.”

Winning the nomination vote in this process was so important. As everyone in this room knows, the nomination process can be daunting at times. You have to sell memberships to your friends and family, and you have to try to acquire enough votes to win the nomination and get your name on the ballot.

When we heard the vote was going to be held in Strathroy, that created its own set of problems: All the people voting for me needed to travel an hour or more. And so my good friend of 35 years, Kevin Bell, and his wife said, “No problem. We’ll organize a bus, and we’ll get people there.”

Thank you to Bev and Barb Shipley, Bill and Dianne Parks, Peter and Dinna Twanstra for holding meet-and-greets so that I could meet people in different groups. And what do you know? We won the nomination, and I got my name on the ballot.

I started canvassing from the time I won the nomination. It was a long, hard grind, seven days a week, right up to election day. Personally, I canvassed every community in the riding and went to 14,000 doors myself. My team went to a total of 62,000 doors.

You can’t do something like this without a great team surrounding you. We had dedicated and focused volunteers who kept things moving forward every day, getting to the doors, meeting voters, installing signs and making calls—all the things you need to make a campaign successful.

Thanks to all the people who proudly displayed my sign in their yard.

Thank you, Melanie Calandra, who kept my feet to the fire the entire process. Your winning pedigree is second to none, and you were a big part of my success.

Thank you to Rob Bruette, my riding association president, and all the board members for choosing me for the nomination process and your help throughout the campaign.

Mitch Baker, Dan Munro, Cam Trepanier all kept my automotive business running smoothly while I was out campaigning.

My brother, Brad, kept my car wash running and kept everything operating as I was away. He is the one person in any life that I’ve always been able to count on. He’s had my back since we were kids.

My children, Katie, Nick and Julia, helped with the campaign and have always been my biggest supporters throughout life no matter what direction I headed.

Thank you to all the Ontario PC caucus members, with too many MPPs to mention, for all their help canvassing and sending out help, as well. You showed me how effective teamwork is.

A special thanks to my neighbouring MPPs Rob Flack, Lisa Thompson, Bob Bailey, Trevor Jones, Andrew Dowie and Matt Rae. All of them went over and above with phone calls, whether that’s helping me with debates or any questions I would have, just to help me be successful.

Thank you, Ineka Hans, for keeping my books straight and all the extra work that you put into this campaign.

Thank you, Eileen McCoy, for running my campaign office in Strathroy.

Thanks to John Fraser, who supported me all the way through the process in many different ways.

Thank you to Premier Ford for coming down and canvassing in my riding. It was so nice to see the personal

side of you when you were playing basketball with a young fella in the riding.

Premier Ford sent me a text on my birthday, February 20, and said, “Can I call you in 10 minutes?” I said, “Absolutely, you can.” I said to my canvass partner at the time, “I bet he’s going to call the election. He’s calling me to tell me he’s going to call the election.” But much to my surprise, he said, “We are in caucus, and we have a tradition around here. We sing Happy Birthday to all of our members. I have you on speakerphone.” All of caucus sang Happy Birthday to me, and at the end, Doug said, “There’s only one thing missing here, and that is your presence, and that will be soon.” The hair stood up on the back of my neck.

Thank you for making me feel a part of this team right from the beginning.

Thank you to Kara Carther, who was my regular canvass partner for two months. She worked hard alongside me, whether that was going through snow, sleet or rain, and never complained—not to me, at least. She managed to knock on 8,000 doors in two months. That’s a tall order from a committed individual. She was bitten by the political bug, and now she’s going to run my office in Wallaceburg.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Michelle Dwyer and Tracey Everitt for their dedication following Monte’s resignation. Their steadfast commitment ensured the seamless operation of our constituency office during the transitional period. I am fortunate to have retained them as part of my team. They were at the forefront, ensuring our constituents did not feel the absence of an MPP while we awaited the by-election.

A very special thanks to my campaign manager, Peter Turkington. During the last month of the campaign, Peter stayed at my house. You really get to know a person during that period of time. He is extremely organized and very effective at what he does. He has the patience of a saint and is a salt of the earth individual. The PC Party needs to clone this guy.

Jodie, my better half—it takes a special woman to be around and understand the life of politics. They say that behind every successful man is a good woman, and she is living proof of that. She canvassed with me every weekend, and when people would ask her how she liked canvassing, she would say, “That’s our date day.” She stood behind me through all the highs and lows and would always say, “You got this.” I am so blessed to have her in my life, and I’m looking forward to what the next chapter has in store for us.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the wonderful residents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for placing their trust in me. Your support and confidence have brought me to this pivotal moment. I will be your voice and your advocate, listen to your concerns, and work tirelessly on your behalf. Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is a region of rich history, diverse communities and remarkable potential. From a vibrant agricultural landscape to the bustling small businesses, our constituency embodies the spirit of resilience and innovation. As your MPP, I am

committed to fostering economic growth, improving access to health care and education, and ensuring that rural and urban areas thrive together.

Our community, like many others, faces significant challenges. Access to quality health care is a top priority, and I will advocate for better resources to support our hospitals and health care providers.

Education is the cornerstone of our future. I will work hard to ensure our schools are equipped to provide the best possible learning environments for our children.

Infrastructure development, including better roads, bridges and public transit, is essential for connecting communities and supporting local businesses. I will push for investment to enhance transportation networks and create new opportunities for economic growth.

**1340**

I plan to meet with all the mayors in the riding to listen to their concerns and issues, and set up coffee shop meetings with residents to get their feedback. I believe in the power of collaboration and open dialogue. My office will always be a place your voices are heard and your concerns are addressed. I encourage all residents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to reach out, share your ideas and participate in shaping our future.

Being a tradesperson, I also look to build on the great work that Monte has done in that sector to encourage young people to get into the trades.

We are at a crossroads. The decisions we make today will shape the Ontario of tomorrow. I envision a province where every person, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the opportunity to succeed, a province where innovation and tradition coexist and where we work together to build a sustainable and prosperous future.

In closing, I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as MPP for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I am committed to working with the members of this assembly to address the pressing issues of our province. Together, we can create positive change and build a better future for all Ontarians.

Thank you, Speaker, thank you, colleagues, thank you, family and friends for making the trip to Toronto on this special occasion, and thank you to the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for entrusting me with this great responsibility. I look forward to serving you with dedication, integrity and unwavering commitment.

*Applause.*

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

**MPP Zee Hamid:** I'm honoured to rise today, acutely aware of the significant decisions made within this chamber and the impact they have on the lives of others. Being escorted in today was an overwhelming experience. I imagined these walls whispering stories of the rich history of pivotal moments and great leaders that shaped this province.

As I sat down here with my friend from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I noticed the architecture and the grandeur of it and the respect it commanded. The details in wood and the majestic windows create an environment

that is both inspiring and humbling. All this only solidified my appreciation for democratic process and the profound responsibility of governance that I do not take lightly.

As I start my speech, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on his victory. I am confident that he will do his constituents and the people of Ontario proud.

I'd like to begin by thanking the people of my riding, the riding of Milton. The opportunity to serve them fills me with an immense sense of duty. I recognize that the faith they placed in me is both a privilege and responsibility. As I address this chamber for the very first time, the weight of this responsibility is substantial, and I'm committed to working tirelessly on their behalf with unwavering integrity and dedication.

I'd also like to thank my parents, who are here today, Shakil Hamid and Asia Shakil. I think I always choke a little whenever I mention them. They taught me the immense value of service and hard work and that serving others with kindness and generosity enriches both our lives and the lives of others around us.

I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to my wife, Maleeha, also here today, who has always stood by me no matter what, and I would not be here today ready to take on this responsibility for the province we both cherish if it wasn't for her unwavering love and support.

I'd like to thank our six children in our colourful blended family, who might well be the cause of my stress-induced baldness, but they've also enriched my life in ways that cannot be measured in the count of hair follicles. They inspire me to work hard to create a better province with attainable housing, affordable higher education, better infrastructure and more jobs, not just for their generation but for everyone in Ontario.

I must also express my deep gratitude to the incredible campaign team and all my caucus members, starting from Premier Ford to staffers and everyone else that came out to help me, but especially my brilliant campaign manager, Blair Hains, who is sitting right there. He led with exceptional skills and dedication. His work ethic is an inspiration. To the many volunteers, way too numerous to name, their tireless efforts were the backbone of my campaign.

I'm also deeply thankful to my dear friends: Fwad Malik; Lubna Malik; Nadeem Akbar; my sister, Muzna Hamid and my amazing nephew, Maaz Subzwari, who are all here today. Maaz is 13, and he canvassed for me among his friends in school. I'm not sure if I got any votes, but it's a 13-year-old's first visit to Queen's Park, so we better all behave. Although, I'm told it's law to be nice to us today.

Finally, I'd like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my predecessor Parm Gill for his public service. I wish him all the best and thank him for his contributions to Milton and to Ontario.

Madam Speaker, when I was a teenager, my parents started working at Sargent Farms in Milton. That's when I fell in love with Milton, its main street, its small-town charm and the sense of community. Despite its growth into

a community of over 150,000 people, Milton has retained the same close-knit sense of community that captivated me years ago. This enduring spirit of camaraderie and connection continues to make Milton a very special place to call home.

My riding borders the riding of Oakville North–Burlington, Burlington, Flamborough–Glanbrook, Mississauga–Streetsville, Mississauga–Erin Mills and our Speaker’s riding, the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills. Yet, like all of the ridings we border, the Milton riding is also unique and distinct. We’re dealing with rapid urbanization and population growth, but we still retain a large rural area with a thriving farming community along with many rural hamlets: including Campbellville, Brookville, Omagh, Moffat, Lowville and Kilbride, all with their own rich history and traditions.

The riding of Milton is named after the town of Milton, which itself is named after English poet John Milton, which was the favourite author of the Martin family that settled in the Milton area in the 19th century. Throughout history, the Milton area has been home to many Indigenous communities, including the Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, including the Mississaugas.

I invite every single one of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to visit the beautiful riding of Milton and experience as many restaurants, coffee shops and walk our trails or visit one of our six large conservation parks. Today, the riding of Milton is incredibly diverse with nearly half of our population born outside of Canada. Roughly about 62% of residents of Milton work in the knowledge-based industry where coincidentally I spent most of my working career. Growing up as a young person, my dream was the cliché dream of being an astronaut, but the dream died the first time a rode a roller-coaster and realized my crippling fear of heights. So I stuck with math and computer science and would have spent my entire career working in high tech if it wasn’t for a train.

I remember well once driving on Derry Road in Milton, some time in early 2009, when an approaching train caused the gate to close. I sat there—and the train must have been 17 kilometres long because it took nearly 10 minutes to pass. In all seriousness, I did learn later on that these trains can be a kilometre long. Once that train passed, the gate did not go up because a different train was passing on the other side, causing me to wait another long time.

When I got home, I was so frustrated that I wanted to do something about it, except I also had crippling social anxiety, which meant my doing something was limited to sending a strongly worded email to my councillor. Now that would have been the end of it, except the councillor sent a snappy response asking me how I managed to move to the wrong side of track without noticing it. That comment upset me so much, Madam Speaker, that without knowing anything about planning, politics or petitions, I immediately left my house and started asking my neighbours to send emails to their councillors and c.c.-ing

me. That day, I only got one email. But I went out again the next day, the day after and the day after. By the time we were done, I was c.c.’d on over 600 emails. Now, I can’t be sure that that initiative caused the council to move, but the fact remains that the council managed to find money to move the underpass project up by 10 years—and I was hooked. When the next municipal election came along, I put my name forward. I ended up winning by 24 points.

To this day, I’m convinced, Madam Speaker, that if it wasn’t for that train, or had I left my house a little bit sooner, or if I took a different route, or if that councillor had validated my concerns—which is why it’s so important to respond to emails by the way—I would not be standing here today addressing this chamber. Now, as I was door-knocking during the by-election, there was one issue that kept coming up time and time again, and that was the fear that no matter how hard one worked today, they might not be able to afford the dream of home ownership. Almost every young adult I spoke with, including my own children, showed deep concerns that they were unlikely to provide their family with the same lifestyle that their parents provided for them. This pervasive anxiety underscores the urgent need for policies that address housing affordability and ensure that hard-working families can build a secure and stable future in this province.

### 1350

Hearing those concerns, I was often reminded of my parents, who came into the country and started from scratch with five children. Through their hard work, they were able to provide for us—provide a comfortable roof over our heads, clothes on our backs, and ample food in our bellies. And they raised five amazing adults, if I may say so myself. I want the same thing for the next family in this province who is starting out. Whether they’re starting their lives here or whether they’re immigrating in, I want the same opportunity, which is why it’s more important now than ever to increase the housing supply, to reduce red tape and invest in infrastructure that supports our growth.

In closing, I’d like to reiterate my profound gratitude for the trust and support I’ve received from the people of Milton and the opportunity to serve my community at Queen’s Park. This opportunity is a responsibility I embrace with utmost seriousness and dedication.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have welcomed me warmly. Despite differing political views, it is clear that we are united in our commitment to serve the people of this great province. I’m inspired by the dedication and passion each and every one of you brings to this esteemed institution, and I look forward to working together to advance the interests and well-being of all our constituents from every corner of this province we call home. Let us move forward with a spirit of collaboration and determination, ready to face the challenges ahead and committed to getting things done to build a better future for our province, ensuring that

Ontario remains a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all the members of the House for your warm welcome.

And with that, Speaker, I move the adjournment of the debate.

*Applause.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you. Please be seated.

Mr. Zee Hamid has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

*Debate adjourned.*

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL CARE  
FOR ANIMALS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION  
DES SOINS PROFESSIONNELS  
PRODIGUÉS AUX ANIMAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 16, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2024 sur les professionnels vétérinaires et à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to stand in the House.

Before I start my formal remarks, I would like to congratulate the new members from Milton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex on—I always listen; I'm very interested to listen to inaugural debates. You will be a big asset to this place. We may not always agree, but we do all share a purpose, and I heard that common purpose in your speeches. We are looking forward to debating against you and working with you. Welcome, on behalf of us all.

This is third reading on Bill 171. It's an act—I'll refresh my own memory—to update the Veterinary Professionals Act. There are two schedules in this act: One is to update veterinary professionals and the other one is to recognize veterinary technicians as a profession. They perform a very important part of veterinary medicine. Just to understand, there are two main components to—I'd say two main components, with some offshoots. But veterinary medicine is largely small-animal, companion-animal and farm-animal—domestic. There are a few offshoots. Veterinarians have veterinarian teams. That's what this act kind of speaks to: As medicine for humans has evolved from primarily simply a doctor to a team, veterinary medicine is evolving the same way, rightfully so. There are offshoots like vets in zoos, teams in zoos and teams in other places; I'm sure I'm missing some. But primarily veterinary medicine is small-animal and large-animal, which most of the time are farm animals.

It has been over 35 years since the veterinary act was first introduced, so it was high time for an update, for a redo. We criticize the government heavily where we find they're making mistakes and where they have made mistakes, where they haven't consulted and where they have paid the price, where they've had to rescind legislation, but on this act, it was pretty clear that they did. The government did a good job on consulting the people involved in the sector.

That was further reinforced through the committee process. When the people who came forward to committee—there were some issues brought up, and the government changed a few a little bit to tweak the bill, to their credit. That's how the system is supposed to work, right? The government introduces legislation. Second reading is the first shot for members of the Legislature, both government and opposition and independent to comment on the bill and hopefully suggest changes that are needed. Then, when the bill passes second, it goes to committee, and that's where members of the public and stakeholders, people who know more about what the bill contains or what the bill should contain than those of us sitting here—I do not claim to have the animal expertise of a vet or a vet technician or anything like that. So that's when those people come forward. A little while later, I'll go through some of their comments, but judging by their overall comments, they were in favour of the bill.

The comments I was most interested in—I'm going to take a side journey here. Most bills here—maybe I'm the only one who thinks like this, but I don't remember bills by their name. When someone comes up to me and says, “Did you hear about Bill 1?”, they'll talk and I won't remember until there's something—this one, I hear the working title, perhaps on both our sides, is “Cows and Chiropractors.” That's the working title of this bill, right? Basically, because veterinary—I talk about cows, because I do know a lot about cows, and one of the issues was that chiropractors were mentioned in the bill but exempted from the regulation.

The chiropractic association came forward and, actually, explained what it meant. I'd say from our side, probably, although we were aware—I was aware—that there were chiropractic services provided in agriculture, it's not often on the dairy farm, so we don't have a lot of personal experience with chiropractors on the animal side. But it was brought to our attention that often on the equine side, with horses, and with dogs particularly, chiropractic services are employed along with veterinary medicine. Chiropractors have a standard operating procedure—I hope I'm getting that wording right—for animals, and they are trained to deal with animals as well.

So that—I was going to use the wording, “allayed our fears,” but that wasn't correct. We weren't fearful of chiropractors at all, but it's not something that comes up—when you're going to the feed store, at least in my part of the world, chiropractic services don't come up a lot for cows. They come up a lot for farmers, because a lot of farmers work hard and their bodies are beaten up and

sometimes they need those services, but it doesn't come across a lot for animals.

**1400**

During the hearings, the committee process, it became pretty evident why the bill was structured the way it was. In the questioning, we asked the people who represented the chiropractors. Specifically, one of the questions was about—and I'm not going to read it, because I remember the question. It was kind of off the top of my head, and it will be off the top of my head again. Particularly for racehorses, animals of deep pedigrees, the chiropractor also needs to be protected, and they are under their own college. That was good to know.

I think the people who are most satisfied with the legislation, who have been waiting a long time, are veterinary technicians. They're actually going to be recognized. They play an incredibly vital role in veterinary medicine, a role that's often not underappreciated by the people they work with but unrecognized by the general public, and the role of this legislation isn't just to make them better recognized and more appreciated, but to have their actual duties recognized, how important a part they play.

I'm just going to read a list of a few of the things that a registered veterinary technician's typical duties could include. Some of these words I might have trouble with, like the first one; I don't use notes very often.

- phlebotomy—that's basically drawing blood;
- anaesthesia delivery and monitoring;
- surgical preparation and assistance;
- radiography—that's X-rays;
- laboratory work, including microbiology, parasitology, immunology and pathology;
- intensive care of animals;
- prevention and control of zoonotic diseases and biosecurity protocols;
- nutrition management;
- veterinary hospital management and client relations;
- sanitation, sterilization and disinfectant protocols and procedures;
- in-depth dental knowledge; and
- administering and dispensing medications and treatments as prescribed by the attending veterinarian.

When I went through that list, an awful lot of the interaction, both with the animal and with the owner, is done by registered veterinary techs, and that's important to know.

I actually have a staff member who left the field of veterinary technician. One of her best attributes is her ability to deal with the public, because it's something that doesn't come easily to some people, but it came really easily to her. She explained that when you're dealing with—she was in a small-animal hospital, and you are dealing with pet owners who are at their most stressed time. For many, pets are their family—for all people, pets are like their family. I think many domestic animals, farm animals, are like their family, but pets specifically. So when you're dealing with a pet that's sick, a pet that's hurt, you need to be able to deal sympathetically, objectively, with the owner, and that shone through with my staff

member. So this debate, also, is kind of personal for her, because she felt that at veterinary techs aren't recognized for the true services they provide.

If you think, in human medicine, you've got—vet techs deliver anaesthesia. A lot of people wouldn't think about that. You would think, well, that's obviously—because in human medicine, we have an anesthesiologist, which is a doctor, but not so here. Until I read this list, I didn't really think about that. So they perform complicated tasks, but they also deal directly with their owners.

And vet techs in Ontario have a—this accreditation has been a long time coming. There's a bit of a history here, and some of it is pretty interesting. In 1967, the first animal-health-technology program in North America started at Centralia College, near Exeter. The first class graduated in 1969. So we were leaders back then. I personally had nothing to do with it; I was born in 1963—I may look older than that.

In 1970, the Canadian Association of Animal Health Technicians is set up by a group of Centralia alumni, mostly as a way to keep in touch. That's their first organization, basically just to keep track.

In 1977, other animal health technology programs have now started, and the Canadian Association of Animal Health Technicians changes its name to the Ontario Association of Animal Health Technicians.

In 1991, it changes its name again to the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians.

In 1993, the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians Act is passed and becomes official law, allowing members to use the designation of “registered veterinary technician,” RVT.

In 2002, the Ontario veterinary technician college accreditation process goes into effect.

And in 2006, at the Ontario veterinary technicians' annual general meeting, the veterinary technicians vote yes to self-regulation. Bylaws are passed establishing the RVT profession as the first such group in the world to become a self-regulated professional body. So, again, they're leading the pack themselves.

In 2010, the large animal biosecurity program is approved.

In 2013, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, OMAFRA and the Ontario veterinary technicians hold a formal meeting to initiate talks on the topic of RVT recognition.

In 2015, Ontario veterinary techs meet with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and OMAFRA to discuss treating a working document outlining the RVT scope of practice.

And in 2020, the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians celebrates 50 years.

Now, here we are, in 2024, and I think we are finally at the point where they're going to be a registered profession and where they're going to have the credit and also the responsibility that they're due. It's very important.

The two people who came to the committee from the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians, Elise Wickett and Kelsey Streef, did a very good job of



explaining how important it is, what their job entails, how important this legislation is.

They also brought up that one of the courses where you can learn to be a vet tech is actually in my riding, at the Haileybury campus of Northern College.

1410

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Oh, wow. I didn't know that.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes, Haileybury. Again, it's an offshoot: Training people in the north helps to keep people in the north. The member who was on the committee with me, from Mushkegowuk–James Bay, commented about the lack of veterinary medicine in northern Ontario. And my colleague from Kiiwetinoong, the farther north you go, the lack becomes more acute, more acute, more acute and more acute.

I'd say we're more mid-north than north-north, but it's hard to get veterinary medicine. Considering that, particularly for animal agriculture, it's moving north, access to veterinary medicine isn't necessarily keeping it up with it. That's an issue.

I don't like to criticize the government, but sometimes the government just deserves criticism. That's two different things. But I also give credit when credit is due. I feel that's important.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Not often enough.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The member from Niagara West commented that we don't give the government credit enough. Well, obviously, they don't come forward with half-decent legislation enough either. I'll just make that clear.

But I do give credit where credit is due. I've spent a lot of time talking about vet techs, but vets are also a very important part of the veterinary medicine team, and the government has announced funding for 20 more seats for vets. It's been a long time coming, not just from this government but from previous governments. One of the unique things they have announced is that some of those seats will be in Thunder Bay, at Lakehead. That's a good move. I said so at committee, and I don't mind saying it again. Having seats at Lakehead in veterinary medicine is a good idea.

I've also said, and I will say it again, that I don't believe that the whole program should be at Lakehead. Guelph is a centre of excellence for a lot of things agricultural, but for veterinary medicine it's a centre of excellence, and I do believe that anyone who trains to be a veterinarian in Ontario should have the Guelph experience.

The reason it's so important to include Thunder Bay—and hopefully, maybe, some day another university, but we're happy with Thunder Bay—is that they will be able to recruit potential vets from the north. We know this from the college of northern Ontario—it used to be the school of medicine, but now it's the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. They have been successful at recruiting and training doctors from northern Ontario and have largely been successful at keeping them in northern Ontario. That's very critical.

Those of us who live in northern Ontario—no offence to people in Toronto, but if I have to pick a place to live,

I'm going home. Likely, if you grew up around here, where you grew up and what you're used to is where you feel at home. It's much easier to work where you feel at home.

I'm going to go off on a huge tangent, but my parents are immigrants, my wife is an immigrant, and to everyone who comes to this country with their parents, I have to give a shout-out. I just said it's so much easier to do things close to home, but whoever leaves their home to come and leaves everything behind—I have to give a great shout-out to those people, along with First Nations, who have helped build this country. I see it. I don't know it—I was born here—but I see it in my wife, in the things that she has given up and also the things she has gained. Some days she would question whether marrying me is a gain, but—

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** But we welcome you anyway.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I know it's an incredible tangent, but I just thought of that.

As I was saying, it's easier to get professionals to come when you train them where they're used to. So anyone, from wherever in the world you come from, when you emigrate—man, that's a huge, huge step, and it takes a lot of guts to do that.

But anyway, it's a good plan to train people, to train vets in Thunder Bay and bring them to Guelph. I give the government credit where credit is due that they've taken that step.

Should we do more? We can always do more. Should we create more seats? Yes. Let's get this program up and running. Let's get it up and running as quickly as possible.

As we all know, all universities are having some funding issues right now, so we need to work on that as well, because announcing new programs—if the core of the university is struggling, then that puts more pressure on the new programs as well.

Something else that this bill—an hour is a long time, so I might come back to veterinary technicians. But I'm going to come back: The bill also exempts some things like grooming, hoof trimming or massage that don't have to be regulated. That's also, I think, a good thing.

Hoof trimming is something I know a lot about. If you've got some time, look up videos on hoof trimming. They're kind of mesmerizing in a way, but they bring back memories for me.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Mesmerizing?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's mesmerizing.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Is that for cows, or—

**Mr. John Vanthof:** For cows. Actually, on our farm we did the cows—I got a professional in once a year to do everyone, and then in between I did it myself, because as soon as a cow develops a limp or anything, you've got to treat it right away. But once a year everybody got it.

But no, it's interesting. For a farmer—and obviously for the animal, but for the farmer—it's a great feeling when a cow has got a bit of a limp and you fix it, because you can see that they walk a lot nicer. They—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes. Happy cow.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Happy cow? Pedicure—happy cow.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Happy cow.

I didn't even know these videos existed, but sometimes I miss the farm and I'll punch something in. I'll look up farming or something on the farm, and all of a sudden I'll get all these ads for milking parlours and for hoof trimmers.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Parlours?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Milking parlours, yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** We don't have one in Oshawa that I'm aware of.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Well, a milking parlour, just for people's information—now, a lot of farms are robotic, so the cows get milked robotically, but on my farm we had a double-four. There were four cows on each side, and it was kind of like here: You had a bit of a basement, and then the four cows on each side, and that's where you milked them. That's called a milking parlour.

I'm really getting off track now.

1420

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** You don't do it by hand anymore?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I had to quit when I lost my thumb.  
*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Okay. Okay.

Anyway, but it's good that they're exempted. It's also good that the government recognizes that farmers, their families, their employees also need to have the ability to administer treatment, right? Because you need to work with your veterinary professionals, you need to work with veterinary technicians, but, with advice from the veterinarian and from the technicians, you also need to be able to treat your own animals. Because if you can't, if they had disallowed that, there would be times when you either would break that regulation or the animal would die, because some treatments need to be done immediately. One is bloat. I can't explain bloat completely and how it works internally, but I can explain it from the outside. The cow will fill up with gas and basically their organs will be crushed if you don't do something to relieve that gas. You can put a hose down their throat. If that doesn't work, there is a special—I don't know what you call it; it looks like a screw with a hole in it. You can use that and—we don't always walk around with those in pockets—if you have to, a pocketknife. I never thought I would say this in the Legislature. It doesn't happen a lot, but it happens. It used to happen a lot more when we put cattle on pasture, because fresh alfalfa makes cattle bloat. It's a beautiful feed if it's made into haylage or if it's made into hay, but if it's fresh and you let the cows out in pasture, then you're going to need the help of a vet pretty quick.

That's one example, but there are other examples that you need—and for day-to-day, to administer vaccines. All of these things, you can get the vet or the vet technician to do that. And there are certain things that some farmers do, other farmers don't do. When I had to give intravenous for a condition called milk fever, I had a hard time finding the vein. I did it a couple of times under the skin. So a cow gets milk—I'm finally finding something I can talk about that I know something about. When a cow gets milk

fever—so a cow has a calf. There's a huge demand for calcium, because milk has a large amount of calcium. If the feed was imbalanced before the cow had the calf, that calcium will be drawn from its body and it won't be able to stand, so you will need to get calcium into its blood as quickly as possible. The best way to do it is to find a blood vessel in the cow's neck and give two bottles of intravenous calcium. I was not very good at finding the vein so I just put the calcium under the skin and then called the vet. With this, a vet technician could do that as well, but a lot of farmers treated cows themselves for milk fever; I did it under the skin because some things I just wasn't good at. A lot of things I wasn't good at, but that's another whole story.

But that's really important that there are exemptions and farmers were happy with that as well, because at the committee—Ontario Federation of Agriculture came, Beef Farmers of Ontario came, Ontario Pork came. I missed somebody; I'm just going on my memory here. And they were also largely—not largely, completely supportive.

The one issue—and I think maybe we can deal with this in the regulations. A veterinary technician needs to work under a vet. And that's right; we get that. But getting back to northern Ontario, we need to see how big we can make that, so, how close, because even now, the vet could be three hours away. So perhaps if the veterinary technician could be closer and somehow work—and I see I'm getting a thumbs-up from the minister.

But those are the things that we need to work out, the realities of how life actually is. We need to work that out, and I think we can. I think this bill is a step forward because you're recognizing what veterinary technicians are capable of and what their relationship is with the vet.

Now, I'm focusing on domestic farm animals, because I have more experience with domestic farm animals and the vet than I do with pets.

I have a great story about a baboon, but I can't tell it—  
*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** No, no.

Just going by talking to my staff member, a former vet tech, I think the small-animal part is, on the personal level, perhaps more difficult than the farm animals, because, although farmers—you need to love animals to be successful at farming, but it is our income, our job, where a pet is truly a member of the family.

And it's funny—I don't think I've told this story to very many, and I'm going to try here. I might get in big trouble for this one. I might get in big trouble.

So, when we sold the dairy farm, we moved. I have a house across from the dairy farm, but I couldn't watch it, so we bought another house. It was the August long weekend, and I was making a parade float for—I think it was the Elk Lake Civic Holiday parade. We had two miniature poodles, Toffee and Jack, and these things never shut up ever.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** What are they?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Miniature poodles.

Anyway, Jack never liked me much, but Jack always followed me around. So I was building a float, and a two-by-four was up against the float I was building, and the two-by-four fell, and it broke Jack's leg.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yeah. That's when I became no longer a farmer but a pet owner. I made the mistake of going in the house and telling my wife and daughter that I had broken Jack's leg, and \$5,000 later, Jack was back to four legs. And even after that, he still didn't like me much.

I'm not going to say what would have happened to Jack on the farm, but it did change my perspective for me too. Like, I never—it's a pet.

1430

One of the issues for vets and vet techs is—and I can see it being incredibly hard—the difference between a commercial animal and a pet. If you think about it, for Jack, Jack lived for another two years. That's great. And we're not independently wealthy, but that \$5,000, we could afford it. Whether it was a smart investment, I don't know.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** What did your wife say?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** My wife is still my wife, so—maybe the best \$5,000 I ever spent. But I thought about it after: If Jack had belonged to someone who didn't have it, that's an incredibly, incredibly tough decision.

It came up a little bit during the committee—not about Jack, but we put some amendments forward about making it easier for not-for-profit groups to run veterinary clinics. I believe the member from London West will talk about this in much better detail later. But I did think about that, because companion animals are often companions for people who have struggles. People who have struggles often have animals. They wouldn't be able to deal with Jack, but cases like Jack could still happen to them. That's a hard one to come to grips with.

Also, to train to be a veterinarian, to train to be a vet tech costs a lot of money, so I don't begrudge that they need to recoup that money and need to make an income. I don't begrudge that at all. But somehow, we have to find a way to make that work.

What else have I got in my notes here? I'm going to change since I don't think anybody is going to stop me now. I'm just going to give a report. I was going to do this at the top, but I haven't. I've spoken a couple of times about a local cheese factory in our riding, Thornloe Cheese. Last October, Gay Lea closed it without any warning. It really made us angry. A committee was formed. We got close to 7,000 names on a petition. They held rallies. We supported. Gay Lea has since come out and said they haven't announced who, but the negotiations are progressing and they're hoping to make a good announcement in the near future that Thornloe Cheese may resume operations.

So I don't want to jinx it by saying it before, but Gay Lea came out and said that. I commend them for listening to the community. The community was disappointed. They recognized that, and they are working towards the rebirth of Thornloe Cheese. What is in the deal is the building, the quota, the recipes, the trademarks. If we can

pull this off, this will be the second time. Parmalat, years ago, when I was on the milk committee, announced its closure and we pulled it from the fire, and I'm very hopeful that we are going to pull it from the fire again.

I did an interview with CTV today and they asked why Thornloe struck such a chord with people in our area. The Timiskaming area, for those of you who have never been—and you're all welcome to come—we talk about agriculture here but agriculture isn't the first thing you think of when you think of northern Ontario. But when you cross the hill into the valley, into the Little Clay Belt, agriculture is the only thing you see. It's incredible.

There are many agricultural operations that sell from the farm, but there's nothing really on the scale of Thornloe Cheese. It's what we can point to. It was distributed across the country, it makes great products and that's the only thing that we could really point to that actually comes out of Timiskaming. There's all kinds of milk and all kinds of grain and all kinds of canola, but Thornloe Cheese—to be able to work to get that back, we are very hopeful. If we can help at all, I'd certainly like to make it public that if and when a new owner for Thornloe Cheese announces, we will do everything in our power to make that operation successful.

I remember when the closure was announced, the Minister of Agriculture approached me and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines approached me, because they all knew the importance of Thornloe. We will all work together to make sure that Thornloe once again not only comes back to life, but is successful and emblematic of our community. That is not 100% good news, yet but it's going in the right direction.

I'd like to commend the committee. The committee has had some criticism. We came out really strong at the start because we needed to show Gay Lea that we were serious, but they toned it back when Gay Lea was in negotiations, because when you're having true negotiations, you give people space. We are fully prepared to continue to do that and to commend Gay Lea and the new company, once an announcement is forthcoming.

My last issue I'd like to talk about has something to do with veterinarians, it has something to do with agriculture and it has something to do with—but it's a bit more of a stretch, so if somebody wants to stop me, you can.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** You can stop.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Don't listen to him.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Niagara West—I believe he's heckling me, and he's not even sitting in his chair. That's a drive-by. That's a walk-by heckle. Is that allowed, Speaker?

I don't know if I'll be able to get this issue on the floor again, but I'm going to today. We have had had a case—the minister knows where I'm going, and the former Minister of the Environment probably will know where I'm going in a second—in Timiskaming where the lagoon from a former dairy farm was enlarged, and it is now used to import raw human sewage. Now, that raw human sewage is being spread on the fields, with approval. This is with approval.

This is something we need to look at. When you spread animal manure on farmland you need a nutrient management plan so that you can prove that you're doing it safely, that you've got enough acres, that you're not polluting the land and that the crops that come from that land are safe. When you use biosolids you need a non-agricultural source material plan to administer those biosolids so you can do the same thing.

But when you use raw human sewage, it's up to the Minister of the Environment. And I am not criticizing the people who work for the ministry at all, but we are raising the question of whether the ministry has the capability to actually administer that.

1440

When that site was first developed, we brought it to the ministry's attention that it actually was a former dairy farm, that there was infrastructure under the concrete, and we were told, "No, no, this is a greenfield site"—it wasn't. When we asked if they checked the well that serviced that dairy farm—"Oh, no, there is no well." Well, the only people who didn't know there was a well there were the ministry and—appeared to be—the operator. Everybody else knew there was a well there. And then, they found the well, and it turns out that there was a path from the lagoon to the well under the concrete in the former dairy structure.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Like you said.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Like we said.

I give the minister credit. When they found that out, equipment went in; they dug and stopped that.

But that was a fully approved site. And it wasn't 20 years ago. It was approved with that concrete in the plans—in the plans. Now, rightfully so, in my opinion, there are members of the public who have lost faith in the ministry's ability to monitor that site, so now they're asking—the comment period just closed. For the first time in 12 and a half years, our office actually commented in the comment period. I don't know if that's proper, actually. But the reason I did it is because the first two times I asked the question, both times the response was completely wrong—it wasn't even "we'll look into it"; it was "nope." So, now, every time when they say there's no problem, we don't buy it. The comment period is over. We want to know, how does the ministry ensure that when raw human sewage is spread on those fields that the crops from those fields don't end up in the human food chain? We don't have direct access to those answers. I think that's something we need to know. Just having the ministry say, "Everything is fine, folks"—fool me once, my fault; fool me three times—and I'm not criticizing the ministry, not really, not at all. I believe that the people who work for the ministry are doing everything they can. But the rules, to me, aren't clear. So we don't know where those crops are going. We do know that the company that did the spreading was fined for spreading at the wrong time. I'm a farmer by trade. They spread that liquid human sewage under conditions that no competent farmer would ever spread human sewage—

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on a point of order.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Thank you very much. And saying it—I'll walk over and share a fun joke with you afterwards. But, unfortunately, the current line of discussion, as it has been brought by some very sage members in this House, would suggest that it has nothing to do with Bill 171, and we look forward to him coming back to Bill 171.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** I'll ask the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane to speak to the bill.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you very much.

Actually, I agree with that—I said that before I started—since I know where that advice came from.

The new member from Milton, in his speech, talked about how one political issue had made him end up coming here, and I had the same thing. Actually, one of the people who I called told me to find something better to do with my time, and that was also the member from Oxford. That's why I'm here.

But anyway, in closing, we made it very clear with second reading, we made it very clear in the committee, we're making it very clear now: We are in favour of this act. It makes changes that people have needed in the veterinary industry, in the agriculture industry and people who have pets. These changes are good for the people who work with those animals and for the people themselves. So, with that, we are happy to support.

My final closing is that I hope that the government learns from this: that you bring good legislation forward, directed legislation, and, actually, it will result in good results for the people of Ontario. We may disagree in philosophy on some things; that's fine. But a good piece of legislation is a good piece of legislation, and this is.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I can't believe we just talked about poop for the last 10 minutes in the Ontario Legislature, but here we are on Monday afternoon.

I wanted to give you a little bit more time to elaborate on the partnership with University of Guelph and Lakehead University, because we both agree it's really, really great to be able to see that partnership, fostering more seats in the north and having those people stay in the north. I'm going to talk a little bit later in my remarks about my uncle, who was a large-animal veterinarian in the north. I just want to give you the opportunity to expand a little bit on that.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I really appreciate that question. Having the ability to go to the school of veterinary medicine in the north opens it up to a much wider array of people, people who would never think of even applying to Guelph. Something I didn't get to in my remarks: It's really, really, really hard to qualify to be a veterinarian. Your marks have to be super high. Allowing people from the north to first apply—and Thunder Bay isn't close to

everybody; I'm 12 hours away from Thunder Bay—opens it up to more people.

One other comment: We should look not at lowering the bar, but at expanding the bar to people who have practical experience, because there are some people are more cut out to be a large-animal vet. We need to do that. We need to find a way to do that. I don't want to lower the bar, but to broaden the life experience bar.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I appreciate that filling an hour can be a challenge, but it was a joy to listen to. Thank you.

In Oshawa, we had a couple of make-the-news stories, which I have shared in talking about this bill before, about the kangaroo that came to visit. It was also not part of this bill, but some of the conversation that came from this visiting kangaroo that was on the lam, so to speak, in Oshawa was, what on earth is a kangaroo doing in Oshawa? It brought some attention to roadside zoos: the lack of oversight, the challenges both for veterinarians and people who deal with animal care.

This is a bill that we don't have a problem supporting, but there are other opportunities for this ministry, for this government, to make strides in caring in a better way for more animals, especially the roadside zoos being one example. What are some other things that you've heard?

1450

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd like to thank the member from Oshawa for that question. There's actually a movement in northern Ontario and northeastern Ontario to try to get the government to take a closer look at roadside zoos. I referred to it: First you had a kangaroo. We had a baboon get loose in Latchford, and it bit a lady. Latchford is a very small community; it doesn't have an animal control bylaw officer. It's a pet, so how do you deal with that? Should someone whose baboon gets loose have a baboon, quite frankly?

Anyway, thank you for bringing that forward. I think the government needs to look. I know that the municipality of Kirkland Lake and many other municipalities have put forward resolutions to try to get the government to take steps to do something about roadside zoos.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He mentioned his experience where he had had an injured animal and he had to take steps to nurse that injured animal back to health, and that kind of made him transition from a farmer to a pet owner.

I would like to hear the rest of the story. I would like to hear what happened with the animal after the animal's leg was wounded and after it had healed. What happened to the animal after that?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I should never have told the story of Jack. So anyway, the two-by-four fell on Jack's leg. I went in and told my wife, and it was the August long weekend, so we went to the first vet, and they wrapped it

up, and then we went to the second vet and they got a splint. And then the third vet, after the splint—then, Jack needed surgery.

Jack lived for two years after, and Jack loved my wife and never liked me. He didn't like me before the surgery; he didn't like me any better after, but he did follow me around all the time. He was a valued member of our family for 13 years.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I would like to thank my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane for an engaging and entertaining, but also genuine and forthright, presentation. I think it's important that we give credit where it's due—although I would say that we don't see much credit coming from the government towards us in the official opposition, and I think our scorecard is quite a number higher in that regard.

I also want to commend the committee and commend the member for recognizing the work of the committee, getting Gay Lea and Parmalat to pull Thornloe Cheese from the fire. It's a shame that the member couldn't pull Jack from underneath the two-by-four in time, but that remains to be seen.

With Bill 171, we see that the government has engaged in years of open and transparent public consultation. How is this unlike many other pieces of legislation that this government has put forward?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you to my colleague from London North Centre. That's a very good question. It's a tough question, because sometimes we don't understand. So the government understands that a good consultative process ends up with good results.

I will stick to agricultural issues. On some issues, they lack a consultative process. On land use, they seem to completely lack a consultative process. They've had to rescind bills, like the greenbelt—completely rescind legislation—even though we are in a process, in a place, where that shouldn't happen. We can disagree philosophically, but to have bills, to have policies that are so egregious to the public that the public forces the government to change direction—they don't understand consultation.

Another quick one is when it became that they were going to allow three severances per agricultural lot. Again, there was no consultation on that at all, and that is a huge problem.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question?

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I'd like to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for a very entertaining debate session this afternoon. It makes all of us smile a little more often. That's welcome.

I actually want to talk about a serious question about an email that I've had recently from a constituent who is concerned about the pricing of medicine for their pets. Talking about the increases in the last few years, their speculation is that it's largely due to the presence of the private equity industry or sector in taking over veterinary practices. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what

more the government could do to make sure that pricing for medications for pets is affordable and fair for Ontarians.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** That's actually a very good question. As I alluded to with Jack, things are really expensive. You have to ensure that drugs and medications for animals are a necessity. I think it's incumbent on the government to ensure that there are protocols in place that no one is being gouged. This government talks about gouging, but we don't see in some areas that they put a whole lot of horsepower in preventing it. I think there are things that we can do.

We understand that to provide a service, companies that make medication, companies that provide things need to make a profit. You're not going to do something to lose money. We understand that. But if you look at the profit margins of many corporations, perhaps the government needs to look how the undue gouging, or gouging at all, can be prevented.

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I would like to advise you I will be sharing my time with the lovely member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, my seatmate.

It has been a good chunk of debate—not bad for a Monday afternoon. I always appreciate when we have excellent discourse here in the Ontario Legislature. I'm going to just read some prepared remarks here for a second, but then I want to talk about some family members because I think it's always important to bring a little bit more context to how a lot of the bills and legislation and things we do hit home a little bit more.

I did just want to say that the agricultural industry in Waterloo region is alive and well. According to the 2021 census, Kitchener-Conestoga is home to 107,134 people. But did you also know, Madam Speaker, that it's also home to 111,242 pigs? My constituents are also outnumbered by chickens. Would anyone like to guess how many chickens we have in Kitchener-Conestoga?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Three-hundred thousand.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** A million.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Three-hundred thousand?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Two million.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Two million? The member from Niagara West is pretty close: 1,016,497 chickens. That's roughly the population of the city of Ottawa, and that's just in one riding. This legislation will go a long way to improving care for these animals. As well, and I think this is a crucial piece that I haven't really heard talked about a whole lot so far today: It's also going to improve the lives of the farmers who look after them.

Ontario cares about protecting the health and well-being of animals and understands the important roles animals play in our families and the important role that agriculture plays in our economy. Our government is working to increase access to veterinary care services for pets and their owners as well as farmers. Based on extensive consultations—and I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We heard today

from members of the opposition as well that there was a great consultation on the ways to modernize the laws governing the veterinary profession and improve access to care in Ontario.

Thusly, we're here today talking about the proposed Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act. If enacted, this would enable the creation of a formal scope of practice for veterinary technicians that would allow them to practise to their full potential and their training and expertise. It would also lead to the creation of requirements for continuing education similar to other regulated professions. It would streamline the complaints resolution process to allow disputes to be addressed more quickly. It would increase penalties to better reflect the seriousness of actions that could harm animals and also ensure greater public representation on the council of the regulatory college overseeing veterinary professionals.

**1500**

I wanted to—again, like I said—bring in some of that more local and, in this case, this interesting familial content to debate here today. I'm actually very lucky to have two family members—my Uncle Chuck, who was a large-animal veterinarian in northern Ontario who was a large part of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and worked with the government of Canada; and also my wife's aunt, Pauline van Veen, who was a small-animal vet who worked in many different parts of the province. I actually, a while back when we had started discussions about what was going to happen with veterinary services in Ontario and looking at some of the different acts that the minister has put forward over the last little while in regard to animal welfare—we talked a lot about the PAWS Act. I brought them into the conversation, because I thought it was important.

One of the things that came up was talking about training and barriers to training. I want to commend our government and all of those who have been part of this process, because there's a new incentive program in place that provides a maximum of \$50,000 for up to 100 recently licensed veterinarians to practise large-animal medicine in underserved areas. That is crucial to getting new folks interested in this profession—this trade, if you will—because finances are always a barrier when you're starting new. And especially in medical professions—these are medical professions that we're talking about—you don't just go to school for a year, complete the program and then go and practise. There's a lot that has to go into this. It was actually neat, because my Uncle Chuck had suggested something along these lines. How do we remove some of these financial barriers? How do we make it easier for folks to get into this profession? And we actually did it, which was great to see. Again, this is because of the fulsome consultation that the minister has put forward—and her team, of course: her parliamentary assistants and staff within the ministry. It's great to see some of these things come forward.

I also want to talk a little bit about the 2023 budget. The government announced \$14.7 million over two years, starting this year in 2024-25, to allow an increase in

enrolment in veterinary schools—and we've heard this talked about a little bit today—to 20 new seats, which is fantastic. Seeing these new partnerships with Lakehead University and the University of Guelph—I actually had the opportunity to attend that announcement with some colleagues and the minister at the University of Guelph, and it was so well received by the veterinary community, the agriculture community, because farmers in northern Ontario and other underserved areas are now going to be able to rest easy, rest assured that, when they wake up in the middle of the night and they're birthing calves and who knows what the night is going to entail, if they need to make a phone call and they need to talk to that vet or that vet has got to come over and assist with the process, there's actually going to be someone on the other end of the line that's going to be able to assist, that's going to be able to really take a load off their shoulders.

Any of us that have agriculture in our communities and get out and talk to our farmers know that life can be pretty stressful. It's not easy being a farmer. It's not easy having the weight of your community on your shoulders, being out there really trying to feed your loved ones, to feed the community around you and really put your best foot forward. We've seen a lot of great initiatives around mental health. We've seen a lot more of a community spirit and a rallying around to say to your neighbours, "If you're having trouble, it's okay. Let's talk. Let's talk farmer to farmer. We don't need to necessarily be out there airing your dirty laundry, if you will, but I'm here for you. Let's have those discussions."

When you take all of the sum of all the parts and put them together, we've really started to knit a fantastic fabric. When it comes to agriculture and especially this ministry, there have been so many great things that have been done. This is another piece of that puzzle, Madam Speaker. I think that we're really on the right track when it comes to making sure that we're able to put food on the table, making sure that our farm animals are happy and healthy, but also that our farmers are happy and healthy. It's something that I am very happy to get behind.

I'm now going to pass my time over to my colleague.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to join the debate on Bill 171 and the importance of enhancing professional care for animals.

Speaker, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is committed towards developing a modern and robust animal welfare ecosystem with laws that keep our animals safe and their owners reassured. The proposed Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act is part of a series of steps we've taken and will continue to take in this direction.

Just last month, I had the pleasure to join the debate on Bill 159, Preventing Unethical Puppy Sales Act, which was brought forward to stop harmful dog-breeding practices and impose stringent penalties on violators. The PUPS Act addressed an important policy issue spotlighted in my very first private member's bill here in the House, called Protecting Our Pets Act.

And today, this House is taking decisive action towards updating the legislative framework that governs veterinary services in this province. The changes we are debating are much-needed to increase access to veterinary care in Ontario, but most importantly, they answer the requests that veterinary professionals and animal owners have been bringing forward for years. We have arrived here after a long journey involving multiple and meticulous discussions with stakeholders across the province. I'm proud that our government has put our shoulders to the wheel in this process.

Exactly a year ago, in May 2023, I was happy to host a round table with vets in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, with my colleague Rob Flack, who is now the Associate Minister of Housing. Then, he was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. He was there to help lead the consultations, along with my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. The discussions we held on modernizing the Veterinarians Act have allowed us to stand here with a better understanding of how to strengthen the tools needed by veterinary professionals to do a better job.

Before I move further, I just want to take this opportunity to recognize those stakeholders and partners from my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore who joined me that day in May 2023. I want to thank them for their work in providing care for our animal companions. I want to acknowledge the tireless animal welfare advocates, such as the Etobicoke Humane Society, Toronto Kitten Rescue, TinyPurring.

And I'll give a shout-out to Dr. Spence and Dr. Hume from the Islington animal clinic, who see myself and my pets far too often. But that's the nature of being a pet owner. We are there, and they're always there to help—just having those conversations with them.

There is always more we can do, and I think this bill is the right step in the right direction.

Speaker, it's 2024, and we cannot bank on a law first introduced in 1989 to protect the best interests of our pets and pet owners in this province. The Veterinarians Act needed a 2024 reboot. And that's exactly what we're doing here. We proposed a law that aims to strengthen governance, transparency and oversight of veterinary care in Ontario.

The Veterinarians Act does not formally recognize the role of veterinary technicians—and a shout-out to all those great vet techs out there. You do an amazing job. You calm the animals down when we bring them in. Sometimes you get to give them a treat. You weigh them. You do a lot of hard work, and I just want to say thank you for all the hard work you do. I know we're going to give you some more work to do in the future. So congratulations for the work you do right now.

This year, the Toronto Humane Society published a study on accessing veterinary care—it's over a 13-year period—that speaks out about the relative shortages of vets across Canada. So it's not just an Ontario problem. Our government is aware of the shortage of vets in parts of the province, particularly in rural Ontario.

Our response, through this bill, is to recognize that vet techs are ready to step up and share the burden. It's time, as Minister Thompson put it, to switch to a "one team, two professionals" approach to deliver animal care that is relevant to the times that we live in.

Speaker, everyone has heard me mention my two pets at home, Bruce and Edward. I have, as I mentioned, an amazing veterinarian. Actually, I have a team of veterinarians, because Bruce has a ton of problems. Sometimes, it takes a village, I say, to raise these problem animals. He has allergies; he's allergic to absolutely everything. He was a rescue dog, so we tried to figure out what was wrong with him. Special food, special diet—this works, this doesn't work. Vet bills go up, vet bills go up, but my goodness, do we love that little boy to death, I'll tell you.

**1510**

Though this morning, he bit me because I was trying to cut his hair, and it didn't quite work. He won that battle this morning. So, I took some gel and I slicked it back, because that was the battle I was going to take on.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Compromise. It was a good compromise.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** It was a compromise.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Maybe you should have called a tech.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Called a vet tech? Well, no, he just needed a little snip over the eyes, because he can't see, and it was driving me nuts. But anyway, he won the battle today. He's just a little guy, but he's a pricey little guy.

Now, here are some stories about an amazing veterinarian. Last Christmas, presents were wrapped, sitting on the dining room table. I said "Okay," went out, came home to get ready for church, see wrappers everywhere around the house, realized that Bruce unwrapped all the gifts, which were chocolate: Lindor chocolate balls in mugs for the party I was going to the next day. Anyway, I missed church on Christmas Eve, and Bruce and I headed to the emergency Mississauga vet. When I got there, he was actually the "Lindor chocolate dog," because apparently there was a list of other dogs who were also into the chocolate on Christmas Eve. Always a fun place to spend your Christmas Eve.

But you know, it's the kindest, kindest people there, and they see you; you're in tears. You're kind of a mess because your pride and joy is there, and what's going to happen? The skills that they go through—the veterinarians, the vet techs, the people at the front—just to calm you down because we're always getting nervous and we always want to make sure that our pets are taken care of. They do such great work.

I think it was about last week or two weeks ago; Guelph was here doing a lobby day in our dining room, and I had the opportunity to speak to some of the vet techs. They were so thrilled with the legislation that was coming forward. They said it's about time they can do that work. We talk about nurse practitioners and how they help out doctors; this is sort of a similar thing, and I'm hoping that maybe this might help some of the costs going down,

because you're going to have a larger group of people who can help maybe give that shot or help you get your food or medicine or whatever. Whatever needs to be done, I'm hoping that will help the costs come down, because I know that sometimes our veterinary bills are a little bit high for many of us all across the province.

It's important to note that we need to recognize the work that our vet techs do in animal care, and this proposed legislation works significantly toward improving access to veterinary care in Ontario. As the minister pointed out, that's a welcome change being embraced by veterinarians and vet techs alike. So congratulations, Minister.

While better defining the scope of practice for veterinary medicine, the proposed legislation would also streamline the complaints and resolution process to allow disputes to be addressed more quickly. This addresses the public complaint that the complaint resolution process for veterinarians has taken far too long. If passed, the streamlined complaints process would include addressing investigations, professional misconduct and suspected incompetence. There will be mandatory reporting requirements if a licence holder suspects that another licence holder's fitness to practise may be impaired. Where appropriate, more information will be available to the public and animal owners about practising vets and vet techs.

We always want to make sure our pets are safe. They can't speak, so we just have to trust. So I appreciate this process just in case we need it. But I do know there are amazing vets out there. So, once again, we thank them for their work.

The legislation, if passed, would enable the regulatory college to develop a formal quality assurance program which will be overseen by a new statutory committee. The committee would set requirements for continuing education and refer cases of misconduct, incompetence or impairment to the college's investigations and resolutions committee. All this comes along with increased penalties that will better reflect the seriousness of actions that can harm animals. Fines for taking actions that could cause serious harm to an animal without being licensed by the college would be set out in legislation. That's a steep \$25,000 for an individual on first offence, \$50,000 for subsequent offences, \$50,000 for a corporation on first offence and \$200,000 for subsequent offences—good stuff. Good stuff, Minister. These proposed changes would ensure competence of members of the profession and further increase public trust.

As I said at the beginning, this legislation is not a stand-alone act, but one in a series of steps to strengthen the ecosystem of animal care in Ontario.

Now, I have already mentioned the PUPS Act. Before that, on January 1, 2020, our government enabled Canada's first provincial animal welfare enforcement system, called PAWS. Ontario has the strongest penalties in Canada for people who violate animal welfare laws. For this, I am extremely proud.

Now, we want our province to have a robust and dependable veterinarian capacity. We are increasing enrol-



ment into veterinary medicine with a \$14.7-million investment to create 20 additional doctor of veterinary medicine seats. To address this critical shortage in rural and northern areas, we have launched the Veterinary Incentive Program, which provides \$50,000 for up to 100 recently licensed veterinarians to practise large-animal medicine in underserved areas. For those who live in rural and northern Ontario, we certainly know those are needed.

Madam Speaker, as a member of this House, a representative of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and a passionate advocate for animal welfare, I remain committed to spotlighting this issue. If you ever see an animal in distress, please call 1-833-9-ANIMAL. That's 1-833-926-4625. That's a hotline that's been put in place, and there are people out there who will answer the phone to help out.

Once again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important legislation. I can't wait to pass this legislation. It's great for our animals. It's just part of a puzzle of animal welfare success in this province. Someone told me there has never been a government who has touched animal welfare in over 100 years. It's a different time; let's protect our pets out there and, number one, keep our pets safe.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to my colleagues across the aisle for talking about this. I know previously in debate there was a lot of focus on farming, because of the member who was speaking. I appreciate the conversation about pets.

I have two rescue dogs, and my wife really loves Petsave. One of the dogs came from Petsave. A lot of the work they do for these dogs who have been really abused, abandoned or just simply neglected is that they work with vet techs and veterinarians to provide the care and services they need. These vets and vet techs have the ability to donate their time to help these animals recover and have better lives.

I'm just wondering: In the bill, will this allow the flexibility for vet techs and veterinarians to be able to continue to provide these services or perhaps be able to do more of this sort of work?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Well, thank you for that question. First of all I want to thank those vets and vet techs who do give their time. There are so many people who donate their time to help out animals, rescue animals.

Mine is a rescue. He came from a well-established rescue place. Of course, there's always a place for volunteering your time to help out those animals in need. You don't even have to be a vet tech or a vet; you could just be anyone helping out. But we want to certainly make sure that volunteering is available for all.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I'm going to ask a question of the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. He had talked about the amazing number of chickens being raised in his riding. I was also amazed it's over a million, and I think that if we did our research, we would be pretty astounded

by the number of chickens being raised in the province of Ontario in all of our various ridings.

So I'm going to ask him about chickens and whether he can tell us anything more about chickens in and around his area. I know, for example, in my area of Essex county, not only do we have people raising chickens, but we also have industries processing those chickens. That is an important part of Ontario's incredibly safe and incredibly nutritious food chain. So I want to offer an opportunity to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga to make whatever comments he would like to make with regard to that.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** The House will be happy to know that I just received a text message from Percy Hatfield, who is watching us right now. I'm sure he's probably sending me another one. He was also very interested to know about all the chickens in my riding. I believe he used the term "constituency chickens."

So we're very blessed to have a thriving poultry industry in Waterloo region, in Kitchener–Conestoga and, of course, adjacent ridings. We had a lot of opportunity to work with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, had been out to some farms, seeing first-hand the good work that they do right from the hatcheries to raising those chicks and then into processing. We have Maple Leaf Foods in our riding as well and a lot of other smaller suppliers that then feed our families, whether that be at a retailer at a grocery store, maybe the St. Jacobs Market, or even one of the great things that we have—and a lot of other members, including yourself, will have—is a lot of great farm stands where you can pull right up to the farm and get fresh poultry.

**1520**

So chicken farming is alive and well in Kitchener–Conestoga, and I'm happy to see it thriving and continuing to. This legislation will aid in that by allowing essentially more veterinarians to get out on farm and practise.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I had the opportunity to attend the public hearings on this bill. I was there for a panel that had deputations from Dr. Martha Harding—who is from the East Village Animal Hospitals, which are veterinary clinics in London, Kitchener and Hamilton that are run as non-profits—the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society as well as the Toronto Humane Society. All three of those presenters talked about the barriers to pet ownership and accessing veterinary care because the model that is enshrined in the Veterinarians Act does not allow not-for-profit corporations to own and operate veterinary clinics.

I understand that this may be addressed in the regulations, but I'm interested in hearing from the members whether that is the direction that this government is going in because it's so important for low-income individuals to access veterinary care.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** In this particular bill, it is outside the scope of this bill, but I think we're always open to learning more about other formulas, other options, other ways to do business. But I do want to say that allowing more veterinarians to practise removes some of that red

tape, and it will allow more practices to open. It will hopefully allow for some of those rates to come down, seeing more of a competitive nature, making sure that we're seeing more specialists in certain areas and looking at expanding vet techs and making sure that they're able to perform their duties in their clinics and alleviate some of that burden that is placed on those veterinarians who are, as we see it right now, often overworked. We want to make sure that there are enough appointments available and that we can get all animals looked after and seen here in the province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question?

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga and my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for that wonderful presentation. Thank you for your passion for animals. I was a farmer's son. We had a lot of animals in the backyard during my childhood. I know this bill is very important because of increasing Ontario's veterinary capacity. It's a very integral part of this legislation. Could you please tell us, how will this proposed legislation increase the veterinary capacity for owners in Ontario?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you to the member for the question. Actually, there was a member from across the way, from Timiskaming–Cochrane, that gave a list of all the new responsibilities that vet techs will be able to take on. This is really important that we're not just relying on the veterinarian—it's two professionals in each office or more. So we're getting more work out of the people who are already there and who already have gone to school. They care for these animals; they love the profession. You're not going to get into veterinary care if you don't love those animals. That's just part of what you do, maybe kind of like us. We wouldn't be in this job if we didn't love what we do, so there's that.

But we're also opening up 20 new seats in northern Ontario, where we're bringing—just like when Mike Harris brought in the medical school in northern Ontario, we brought that school in so doctors would stay. We're bringing a veterinarian school there so those vets will stay in that community—so more seats and more work for those who are already in the field.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** It's always nice to rise in the House and to actually offer the government a compliment. I want to commend them on the approach that they've taken with this bill. I recognize that a lot of up-fronting of consultation took place, and stakeholders were widely brought in to provide some technical feedback. I think that's fantastic because that is going to enable better legislation in the outcome.

But I want to contrast this approach to other approaches that the government has taken on other bills, bills that were perhaps more lobby-driven legislation, bills that were done in a haste and bills that were reckless and then had to be backtracked. Does the government see the benefit of using a process that is open, that is collaborative, that is

consultation-driven in informing new bills that come forward? Can we expect a change in the government in their approach to developing legislation?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Well, I think this bill goes exactly to the collaborative approach we've had to consultation over the last six years that we've been in government. I certainly don't want to drag the, we'll say, good discourse, like I had mentioned earlier, down that road today.

So let's focus on this bill. I think that this bill proves that if you do have an open, wide consultation like you said—and I think we're all in agreement that there are good things that have come out of the consultation that the minister has led on this bill. I look forward to hearing some more opinions from opposition members over the course of debate this afternoon and focusing on this bill that we have before us today and making sure that we get this bill right.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** There's not enough time for another round.

Further debate? I recognize the member from London–Fanshawe on a point of order.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I just want to—if I could ask for permission to introduce a guest here in the House. I wasn't here earlier during introduction of guests.

Ellen Hastie is here today. She is the CFO of my riding association. I just want to welcome her to the Legislature. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** That is not a point of order.

Further debate?

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** It is an honour to rise in this chamber today to speak to the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, introduced by our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Speaker, I must say, the minister's work on this portfolio this past three years has been incredible, to say the least. Through her leadership and the work of her past parliamentary assistants, our government has brought forward incredible reforms in this bill. This bill is another testament to that. It affects pet owners, which make up an outstanding half of all Ontario residents. I didn't know that. Half of all Ontario residents own a pet, including myself, my brothers-in-law and many of my colleagues here in this chamber.

For pet owners, a trip to the vet is serious business. It's not only costly, but we as owners want to know if our beloved pet is healthy and free from any serious diseases or conditions. We want to make sure that our pets will live as long as possible so we can enjoy their company, love and amazing soothing for our mental health and create memories with them for as many years as possible.

Madam Speaker, they are not only our pets, they are cherished family members. So then it is unsurprising that, just as with our family members for whom we are continually building the best state-of-the-art access to modern health care infrastructure, services and health care professionals, we pet owners also want to have peace of mind that the veterinary clinic staff are well trained and know how to properly diagnose and treat our beloved pets,

that they're able to operate a surgery well, administer anaesthesia and in more sombre circumstances, properly euthanize pets who are professionally judged to be suffering with no hope of improving their quality of life.

Let me share a quick personal story about my beloved dog Kumba who passed away last year. Kumba was my very first dog, a beautiful, smart, gentle, kind and incredibly intuitive Alaskan malamute. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and even after removing her breast tumour, it became quickly apparent that cancer had spread to her lungs, brain and liver. She was very sick, coughing up blood, having trouble breathing and eventually became paralyzed in her hind legs.

At this time, I knew it was time to make the incredibly difficult choice to end her suffering. For my husband and I, it was one of the most challenging weeks of our life together thus far, but I am forever grateful that we were able to find a friendly, compassionate and professional veterinarian who came to our home in the middle of the night to ease Kumba's suffering.

Throughout this whole journey, which took about six months and entailed many clinic visits, blood work, appointments, diagnostic imaging, consultations etc., we were extremely grateful to the staff at our veterinary clinic, both the veterinarians and the technicians, who strongly empathized with our challenges and our loss, and who I observed to be well trained to work in sensitive circumstances like this one.

1530

Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is leading the way in animal welfare and advancing the veterinary profession like no other. Let's not also forget our Solicitor General's incredible work, leading the way in banning puppy mills, restoring the dignity and respect our dogs deserve.

We care about protecting the health and well-being of animals and understanding the important role they play in our families. With that, we are working to increase access to veterinary care, especially for rural and northern communities. With this act, we are answering the call from regulatory bodies and professional associations to modernize the laws governing the veterinary profession.

Speaker, veterinary technicians play a valuable role in our province and the current law on the books, the Veterinarians Act, passed 35 years ago in 1989—that's the year I was born—is highly outdated, and it does not reflect the scope of modern veterinary medicine today. That is why we are modernizing this law. This law does not define the role of vet technician, which is what we are proposing to change. What was different 35 years ago is that veterinary care is being increasingly provided by a team of professionals rather than just the veterinarian. It is now one profession of veterinary medicine that is comprised of two professionals, the veterinarians and the veterinary technicians, similarly as we're seeing in our primary care institutions where we have many health care providers working together as a team to treat our patients.

With this act, we are explicitly defining the scope of practice for veterinary technicians, recognizing the role

they play in the broader care team and in the delivery of veterinary medicine in Ontario. We are making sure their line of work has as much oversight and transparency as any self-regulated profession in Ontario, which would be appropriately named the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario.

In line with this, we are proposing requirements for continuing education, just like with any other regulated profession, like nursing for example, to ensure the proper quality assurance. And in the same way you can launch a complaint against a physician or a nurse in Ontario through their regulatory college, this act proposes to create the same system for the veterinary profession.

Additionally, this act proposes to increase penalties on actions that foreseeably cause harm to animals and actions not regulated by the college. These include a penalty of a maximum of \$25,000 for an individual's first offence and \$50,000 for any subsequent offence.

Speaker, I want to add that if any student in Ontario loves animals and wants to pursue a profession in veterinary medicine, I highly encourage them to enrol to become veterinary techs in one of our world-class post-secondary institutions across Ontario, like, for example, Sheridan College's Brampton campus that offers a two-year diploma. And I know that these current students are excited to have their future roles formally recognized, thanks to the work of our government.

Speaker, I would also like to touch on the issue of veterinary care in northern Ontario. Of course, pet owners live across all of Ontario, including our rural communities. We understand that there is a shortage of veterinarians in these communities and this act will take action to address this shortage with two approaches: incentives and education.

Madame la Présidente, notre gouvernement a déjà lancé le Programme d'incitatifs pour les vétérinaires l'année dernière, afin d'encourager les nouveaux vétérinaires à ouvrir des cabinets pour gros animaux dans nos communautés mal desservies, et depuis, neuf vétérinaires talentueux ont été approuvés. Dans le cadre de ce programme, nous autorisons jusqu'à 100 nouveaux vétérinaires à recevoir jusqu'à 50 000 \$ sur cinq ans pour ouvrir leur cabinet, et nous attendons avec impatience que d'autres candidats profitent de ce programme et de cette opportunité incroyables.

And if we are looking to grow our veterinary workforce, we rightfully need to invest in our province's post-secondary programs, which is why this bill proposes to invest \$14.7 million towards creating 20 new seats in our province's veterinary medicine program at the University of Guelph, starting in September of 2025.

Speaker, I'd like to end off with a quote from a stakeholder who is deeply appreciative of our government's efforts on this file. Kirsti Clarida, the president of the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians, writes, "This is a historic moment for registered veterinary technicians (RVTs), and I am so proud of the work we have done together with Minister Thompson to get there. This new legislation will expand scope of practice for RVTs, positioning Ontario as a future-ready leader in the

regulation of veterinary medicine by enabling RVTs to participate in team-based veterinary care to the full extent of their abilities and training. We look forward to continuing to work with the Ontario government to grow our profession.”

Our government’s work on this file truly shows that no government in our province’s history has achieved this much for the people and the pet owners of Ontario. We were elected to serve the people of Ontario, and that includes the half who are pet owners, and we will ensure that their pets get the world-class care that they deserve here in Ontario.

I was just so glad to hear that, for once, we have support on all sides of the aisle, so it was actually a great pleasure to listen to the debate today, and that speaks to Minister Thompson’s leadership and all the consultations that she has done. I’m very, very proud to support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Questions?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you for sharing your story about your dog. We all enjoy our pets, and this is an important bill for that reason.

On the weekend, I had the pleasure of joining the Pet Valu-Lions Foundation dog guide walk to raise money for dog guides across Ontario. It was in Dundas. As you would know, these dogs provide—there are vision dogs, there are hearing ear dogs, there are dogs that support families with autism and seizure response. These are families who are very vulnerable, and I did hear that even some of the dogs, if they have certain nutrition requirements, they can’t keep them with the home because the families are vulnerable and they’re struggling with maintaining their income levels.

My question to you is, these dogs will need veterinarian support, and we had a question earlier about one of the problems is that we don’t have enough opportunity for not-for-profit veterinarian options. Can you speak to how we might able do that in the province?

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you very much for that question. I do want to mention that this week in the province of Ontario we are celebrating accessibility awareness week, so thank you for bringing this important issue to light.

For that specific question, I believe it is out of scope for this legislation, but certainly that’s something we could further consult on and look at in the future.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Next question?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** In regard to veterinarians who provide veterinary medicine, we all know they have a wide range of clients; they serve pet owners and livestock owners. So in your opinion, how will this legislation, if passed, benefit animal owners across Ontario?

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you very much for that question. I don’t personally have experience with livestock, although the only experience I did have was spending some summers at my grandma’s farm in Poland, and she had many livestock. I remember with great horror when she was actually having to kill one of the chickens. Those are some of my childhood memories,

but I think it also served me well to realize how we grow our food and where our food comes from. Perhaps that’s something we could educate today’s children on more in terms of where the food actually comes from that ends up on our table.

This particular bill will help because it will include a list of authorized activities that describe the specific activities that make up the practice of veterinary medicine. It also recognizes that veterinary care is delivered by a team and acknowledges the roles of both veterinarians and technicians in the delivery of veterinary care.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Next question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Part VIII of schedule 1 of this legislation deals with the investigation and resolutions within the College of Veterinarians, including their powers and duties. Back in 2016, I met directly with the college to discuss a horrible situation in Niagara where the vet was abusing animals in his clinic, an issue that the college was aware of, including having video evidence. However, they could not respond quickly enough. They were unable to issue an interim suspension or release information because a judgment was issued. All the while, people in Niagara were bringing their pets to the vet.

**1540**

How does this legislation help in addressing this issue and do you think it will ensure issues like this don’t happen again to people’s pets in Ontario?

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you very much for that question. I think we have to acknowledge that, in every profession, there is a small percentage of bad actors, and I think the situation you spoke to shows that.

But that is why this legislation is extremely important, because it streamlines the complaints and resolution process, including addressing investigations of professional misconduct, where a member’s fitness to practice is impaired and suspected incompetent. And so, now, also the veterinary technicians will have a college to which they will report, and so there will be a clear mechanism to report misconduct.

Of course, we are also putting fines: \$25,000 for an individual on the first offence and \$50,000 for the second or subsequent offence. And so, we are holding people who intentionally want to harm animals accountable, and this legislation will be doing that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay on a point of order.

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** I want to welcome the students from Thomas Fiddler Memorial High School in Sandy Lake First Nation in Kiiwetinoong. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

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

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It’s an honour to rise today and speak in support of Bill 171, Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act.

Speaker, it’s an important act to modernize. We know there’s a shortage of veterinary services in the province of Ontario, and this act takes an important step of addressing

that shortage, partly by modernizing the regulatory framework for veterinarians, but most importantly, modernizing the regulatory framework for registered veterinary technicians. I think it's important to expand the scope of practice for vet technicians to better enable them to relieve the burden on veterinarians and to offer more team-based veterinary care in the province of Ontario. I've been a big advocate for team-based care for people, and we certainly need team-based care for animals as well, and this act takes an important step to helping us achieve that.

I want to take a few moments to talk about some ways that I believe we need to address the shortage of veterinarians in the province of Ontario. Right now, we're not even graduating enough veterinarians to cover the number of veterinarians that are retiring. And the government made some important steps to address this problem by expanding the number of veterinary placements through a partnership between the University of Guelph and Lakehead University, increasing the number of vets by 20 each and every year over the next number of years. This is an important step in the right direction, especially when we live in a world where it's harder to get into vet school than it is to get into med school—

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** It is?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It is, yes. It is. To the member opposite, it is harder to get into vet school.

But we are lucky in the province of Ontario that, at the University of Guelph, we have the number one ranked veterinary school in Canada, the number three ranked veterinary school in all of North America and one of the top 10 veterinary schools in the entire world. We have the capacity in this province to address the shortage of veterinarians in Ontario with a high-class university like the University of Guelph.

And so, I'm going to make a quick comment to my friends on the other side of the aisle. We've made important steps in helping the University of Guelph expand veterinary services. I'm going to ask you to even do more. Let's provide even more funding to the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph so we can expand the number of veterinary placements there so we can continue to graduate veterinarians to serve the people of this province and ensure that our animals are well cared for. I'm happy to work across all party lines to help make that happen, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** To the member opposite: As we know, this bill is restructuring the regulated college, and it will allow for a broader range of voices for veterinary practices, including the registration of veterinary technicians, members of the public and academics. Will the member say that he agrees with these changes, as we will be increasing the transparency of veterinary practice, ensuring all the voices are heard and ensuring that there are more veterinary services available across the province?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate the member opposite's question. I think changing the regulatory framework, especially for veterinary technicians, is an important step forward for the province of Ontario. We absolutely need

to expand the scope of practice for registered vet technicians and ensure that they can fully participate in a transparent and regulated way in team-based care.

We know there's a shortage of veterinarians in Ontario, and this is an important step in addressing it, like I've said. We can go even further by supporting the University of Guelph and expanding the number of places at the OVC.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Next question.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** To the member for Guelph, we had a question earlier where we wanted to be assured that the college would enforce issues of animal abuse. My colleague from Niagara Falls talked about a terrible case in St. Catharines. The corollary to this bill is the PAWS Act, if you ask me. I know that I had an instance in my riding—the dog's name was Merlin, who was abused. It took a very long time for residents to get an answer or to get some action on that.

One of the things that's really concerning is that the number of charges that have been laid under the PAWS Act has dropped—a shocking drop, a significant drop in the charges. Would you share my concern that we've changed the protecting animal welfare system but that we don't have the resources and the budget in place to make sure that we have enough inspectors and enough investigations happening so we can actually continue to make sure that animals are safe in this province?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate the member's questions. This is a good example of how well-intentioned legislation can pass, but if it's not backed up with the financial resources for enforcement, it doesn't achieve what we want it to achieve. I felt that the changes to the PAWS Act were an important step forward. I think it's going to improve animal welfare in this province. But that will not happen—and by the statistics, it's clearly not happening—because sufficient resources are not available for the enforcement of the PAWS Act. I call on the government to make those resources available, because we know the people of Ontario want animals to be protected in this province and it's not sufficiently happening right now.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I listened intently to the five minutes that the member from Guelph had to speak on that. I'm just curious whether or not he had considered doing a petition on this, because there was a petition that was 18 and a half minutes long on this piece of legislation. Perhaps the member from Guelph could have had a longer period of time to discuss all the great things that this bill is coming out with.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate the member from Peterborough's questions. We always have good conversations. I would say that maybe the standing orders were changed in the Legislature to address the length of the petitions because of the length of that particular petition and a few other petitions.

So I'm always happy to read petitions supporting especially the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph and will continue to say to members of all

political stripes in this Legislature that I am ready, willing and able to work with you to expand the number of veterinarian placements at the OVC, because we have a shortage of veterinarians in the province of Ontario and we have the top-ranked university in the province willing to fill that shortage.

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

Ms. Thompson has moved third reading of Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Orders of the day? I recognize the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. There's no further business.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1550.*







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<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	