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Mercredi
30 octobre 2024

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 30 October 2024

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 30 octobre 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 29, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend various energy statutes respecting long term energy planning, changes to the Distribution System Code and the Transmission System Code and electric vehicle charging / *Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur l'énergie en ce qui a trait à la planification énergétique à long terme, aux modifications touchant les codes appelés Distribution System Code et Transmission System Code et à la recharge des véhicules électriques.*

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to speak in this House—I always am—but I have to say, I'm not pleased by this bill.

As you are well aware, Speaker, all governments are imperfect, and I would argue this government is more imperfect than most.

If you are a person who is trying to balance your budget; if you're a person who is trying to cover your household bills, worried about your electricity bill or your gas bill or your insurance bill, worried about what you're paying for groceries; then I have to tell you, you are not going to be happy about this bill—notwithstanding its title, which, I have to say, should be recognized as an act of creative genius, given how little it actually applies to the legislation before us. The bill that has been introduced is deeply flawed, and I want to touch on some of the key issues, and then I'm going to go into some depth.

First of all, I think we all recognize that Ontario's energy needs are growing—not a question. Now, more than ever, we need a government that keeps a focus on affordability, reliability and sustainability. You may or may not be surprised, Speaker, to find out this bill doesn't require that those factors are actually taken into account in the plan that this bill will provide a framework for. They may be touched on, but they don't have to be addressed in the plan.

Any serious energy plan needs to shift to non-emitting sources and stop the overreliance on gas as we confront

impacts of climate change. That's not in this bill. And if you're worried about higher grocery prices because drought or flood are affecting the crop-growing regions of North America, this bill is not one that's going to help protect the price of food and future, because it is not one that explicitly uses the energy system to meet our climate goals and help the rest of the world protect itself.

When it comes to large infrastructure projects, this government's track record raises serious questions, especially on transparency and financial accountability.

I would ask, when was the last time anyone in this building took a ride on the Eglinton LRT, or when did you last hear of the completion date of the Eglinton LRT?

Delivering the goods and being open about what's going on—not the forte of this government, and that is reinforced in this bill.

With the right energy plan that's grounded in evidence—I have to emphasize “grounded in evidence”—and transparency so that the public can actually see the basis for the decisions that are being made, and with the expertise of workers in the energy sector—and we have a very sophisticated workforce here in Ontario, people who are second to none globally—we can ensure that our province has the energy we need for a thriving economy in the low-carbon future ahead of us.

It is key that we actually make sure that we continue to invest in the workers who develop our energy systems and support them in doing the critical work that they do to make sure the lights are on.

However, this bill takes us in the wrong direction when it comes to transparency and depoliticizing our energy planning decisions. We've seen it before. We saw it under the Liberals. That politicization of energy planning was one of their signature calling cards. That was a huge problem. This bill reinforces that Liberal tradition of ensuring that things are not properly examined and that evidence is not presented or made available to the public. We've seen the dangers of politicized energy policies from previous governments.

This bill's attempt to cut out the independent regulator takes us further away from a future where energy policies are based in evidence and transparency. Again, I would say, with that direction, this government is the true inheritor of the Liberal tradition.

Time and again, we've seen this government push legislation forward that takes away guardrails and accountability. This bill is no different. Bill 124 is an example of a bill that didn't look after the people of this province, that did not actually reflect the legal framework that we operate in. This is a government that does not think

that protection of your legal rights under our Constitution or charter is a really significant matter.

There is no question that our energy needs are growing, but you have to be very careful about how you plan for meeting those needs and how you deliver. We've been here before. Ontario has previously heard projections of huge growth and energy demand and found that the projections fell far short of reality.

I am saying there will be more electricity demand. There is no question we are moving away from fossil fuels, from oil and gas and coal, and as we do that, in the operation of our economy, people will be using more electricity. We're going to see enhancements, growth, and digital capacity in Ontario that will require more electricity, but the question for all of us is—the need to get it right.

It will be critical to avoid overbuilding, because that's very expensive. Everyone who has gone through the experience of the last two decades under the Liberals will know from their wallets how expensive that is. We've all experienced that. On the other side—and there is no doubt about this—underbuilding is a problem, because then we face supply problems.

As Yogi Berra has been quoted as saying, “Prediction is hard, particularly about the future.”

That is the difficulty that we are going to face in sorting out what goes on here, which is why it's critical that the public get the opportunity to examine all the data that is being used to develop a plan, and get to question those who have put forward that data in an open hearing.

We need to go into this with our eyes open, with all the information on the table for public review and assessment. Let's be humble. I know that's tough. I know it's really tough. But previous projections have regularly been wrong.

I'm just going to do a little trip down memory lane for those who may not have been deeply scarred by this information already.

0910

In 1976—man, I was a young guy then—Ontario Hydro was projecting a 7% annual growth in electrical demand and calling for a vast building program of new power plants. None of the plants they called for in that year were ever built—zero. Peak power demand, two decades later, in 1997, was 22,000 megawatts, not the 57,000 that hydro had predicted. So they were a bit off. They were tens of billions of dollars off in their projections of what we needed to spend. I want to say to people, \$10 billion here, \$20 billion there, \$30 billion over there—after a while, you're talking real money, and it shows up on people's hydro bills. So that was 1976.

In 1989—let's go forward—all of that is sort of forgotten. Ontario Hydro called for an aggressive program to build new power plants, as they had in 1976. Hydro was forecasting that peak demand would track economic growth at 2.5% per year and top 35,000 megawatts by 2014, 50% above its 1989 level. What happened? In 2014, peak demand was lower than it was in 1989, when the plan was hatched.

So those are two occasions when what I would say were pretty bright minds got the numbers wrong dramatically.

In 2005, I want to say to all of you, the Liberals actually decided to go whole hog. The newly formed Ontario Power Authority forecasted that peak demand for electricity would start growing nearly twice as fast as it had over the previous 15 years, reaching 30,000 megawatts by 2025. Worried that a gap might develop between supply and demand, the government expedited approval of new gas power plants, and we all know how that went.

I actually had the opportunity—I don't know if the member from Renfrew-Nipissing was on the committee as well, and if he wasn't on it, he was certainly around for the gas plant inquiry. We got a chance—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Those were the good days, my friend. Those were the good days.

Anyway, we were dealing with a \$1-billion scandal for two gas-fired power plants that the Liberals had commissioned with the argument that, if they weren't built, lights would go out in Oakville and the west end of the GTA. As you know, those plants were never built there. We put out about a billion bucks. The plants were built in Napanee and down in Windsor, and frankly, the power crunch that the Liberals were projecting at that time didn't appear.

In fact, in 2023—and I looked it up last night; and I thank my teacher who taught me how to read and use a computer—the top demand day in 2023 was 23,713 megawatts, slightly above where we were in 1997.

So I urge everyone in this room to be cautious. We have to be sensible. If you don't build enough capacity, there is a real problem. We all know that. But if you overbuild—and we've lived it through our wallets and our purses; we've lived it through the bills that have landed through the mail slot—it's awfully pricey.

The government is basing its approach on the Independent Electricity System Operator, and they're forecasting a dramatic increase in peak demand by 2050 for Ontario to successfully decarbonize its economy. I think decarbonizing the economy makes tons of sense; it's critical for us. And they could be right. But if we look at predictions in the past, we have to be humble about our ability to project. The IESO puts the price tag at meeting that demand at about \$400 billion, and it's the only number we've got. We haven't had one from the government on its electricity plan. But if you look at the vision paper that the previous energy minister put out and you look at the IESO plan, there's a lot of overlap—so let's say in the \$400-billion range over the next 27 years. That's just for the big generating plants. I'm not talking about the transmission lines that take that power across Ontario.

If you've gone out on the 401, out to Clarington, you see those big transmission lines. If you go past Pickering, you'll see the big transmission lines. If you go to southwestern Ontario, you'll see those big transmission lines. I want to tell you right now: They're not cheap. They are pricey pieces of hardware. So if you're talking about a big ramp-up of the electricity system, everyone out there who owns a wallet today could well find it thinner and lighter in the future, if we get it wrong. With \$100 billion here, \$100 billion there, soon you're talking real money.

It stands to reason that the shift to electric vehicles and heat pumps will add new electricity consumption to the system—that makes sense to me—although it's interesting; the EV manufacturers and EV charging station suppliers have been to committee in the past, and they predicted a fairly small increase in the need for capacity. They said, "You have huge overcapacity overnight, so we can charge these at night. You actually aren't going to have to build a lot more electrical generating capacity." Maybe they're right.

But we need to know that there's a transition going on, not just in generation, but also in how businesses use power, how homeowners use power. That transition, in the past, has led to tremendous reduction in the need for new power.

I'll just say, LED lights swept through North America, dramatically reducing demand. I used to be on Toronto city council—I don't know what sins I committed, but that's where I wound up for a while—and I sat on a committee dealing with the conversion of the street lighting system from old incandescent to LEDs, which, in the 1990s, were pretty cutting-edge. It was very clear that the reduction in power was going to be dramatic. That had a big, positive impact on the city of Toronto's operating budget, but it also changed the environment in which we do power planning.

As the price of power goes up, the attractiveness of investments that reduce your power consumption also goes up, and so you have these two things happening all the time. Be very careful when you predict power demand for the future. When you overpredict, you pay through the nose.

We're developing those technologies globally, but I'm not seeing, in this plan to make a plan—let's be clear: This is not an electricity plan; this is a framework to write a plan, and that framework is profoundly flawed.

Given what I've said to you all about the difficulty in predicting the future and the need for the public to be able to intervene, we need to be very careful about where we're going, and we need a government that keeps the focus on affordability, reliability and sustainability.

Affordability is affected by a variety of things—not just the generation technology, but, as I've said, all the wires to support it, all the transformer stations, all the staff you need.

There's no indication in this document, this plan to make a plan, that, in fact, the government will assess the evidence, put forward a plan and allow the public and stakeholders to question the government's assumptions at a public hearing. The Liberals never allowed that—and for those who had the pleasure of sitting with me in estimates committee, I would go after Liberal ministers on this. Again, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing—let's say he wasn't a pussycat in those estimates meetings. I know it's a shock to some members of that caucus, but he was not the shy introvert you know from social events.

Hon. Mike Harris: Are we talking about the same John Yakabuski?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm just trying to make a point that in those meetings, he really came into his own. He was the man that you would expect he would be.

Hon. Mike Harris: You mean he was right?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, no. I won't go there. I wouldn't say he was right, but I would say he was aggressive.

The Liberals wouldn't put their plans out for public scrutiny and examination. They would not let that happen.

If you're going to be making investments in the hundreds of billions of dollars, you need to actually have an opportunity for the public to question those who put together the estimates.

0920

I'll go back. Last year, the Ontario Energy Board, the body that regulates the rates that you pay for gas and electricity, had hearings about Enbridge. This was a very substantial hearing, because, as you're all well aware, the world is shifting and, increasingly, we are not going to be using gas. Just as we moved away from coal, we're moving away from gas. Enbridge presented a report by some very high-priced and, generally speaking, reputable consultants showing that it was cheaper to take on climate change by burning gas than making more electricity, which was a pretty strange report. Because there was the opportunity to actually go through the numbers and question those who were pulling it together, it was found that the report that was before the board was fundamentally flawed mathematically and in terms of understanding how energy systems work. Unprecedented, in my knowledge, the board ordered Enbridge to have the report rewritten so that it actually reflected reality.

If you don't have a public hearing where the public stakeholders can question those who put forward a report, then your ability to determine what's true and what's false is dramatically cut.

I'll say to all of you, if you're paying a big bill now, if you're having trouble covering your expenses now, you want scrutiny on spending in a way that would satisfy you that, yes, something has to be spent, or you want scrutiny that will show it doesn't have to be spent and you don't have to deal with a bigger bill. I think that's the least one can do.

This government says they're committed to affordability—and when you hear that, my friends, grab your wallets and make sure no one else's hand is in your pocket. They say they're committed to affordability, but the bill itself says the minister may—not "shall"; "may"—consider affordability in developing his plan. Well, you've got to be kidding me—"may" consider affordability? I thought the title of the act was all about that, and yet it's not required in the act. I asked the minister about that yesterday, and it was very impressive—he danced around, he shimmied, he shook, but he didn't say, "Yes, you're right. Affordability must be part of the plan. It should be a requirement in writing the plan." It's not there. If you're concerned about paying bills, don't you think the government should say that it's mandatory, in writing the plan, that affordability is one of the focuses? But it is not in this bill.

We also need to focus on reliability. There are a lot of threats to power getting from a power plant to your home and a lot of threats to the ability to turn on the lights, your television, put the kettle on—whatever. We've got inadequate generation as a potential threat. We've got cyber failures and cyber attacks. We've got equipment that's aging, possibly failing. But the thing that's not mentioned in this plan to make a plan is adapting to climate impacts.

First of all, I think everyone in this room agrees—maybe someone can surprise me, but I think everyone agrees that the world's weather is changing fast and, decisively, it's getting worse. So, last year, the Ontario Energy Board actually put together a plan. They had London Economics International do a study for them, and they themselves wrote a study based on that—on how we'll adjust to, how we'll live with this new climate that we're living in. I think it's worth looking at some of what they had to say. They noted some recent weather events in Ontario that caught people's attention.

In May 2022, a derecho brought winds of 190 kilometres an hour to the Ottawa-Gatineau region. It knocked out thousands of trees, left 180,000 homes and other buildings served by Hydro Ottawa without power. Some of the outages lasted for days. The people from Ottawa can speak to this at greater detail than I can, and they can talk about it, I'm sure, with greater emotional depth than I can because they were either living with it or dealing with constituents whose lives have been upended by it.

On September 21, 2018, six tornadoes touched down in or near the National Capital Region. When did Ottawa show up in Kansas? I have no idea how they moved that whole city down to Kansas, but that's what we got. The strongest had estimated wind speeds of up to 265 kilometres an hour, others 220 kilometres, others up to 177 kilometres. Over 300,000 customers—in Ottawa, Gatineau, eastern Ontario—were without power. According to the Canadian Disaster Database, the estimated total costs attributed were approximately \$334 million. The OEB sort of set the stage with, "Yes, you can expect very powerful storms that will take out the electricity system." In Canada, insured catastrophic losses have risen from around \$456 million per year over the late 1900s and early 2000s to routinely exceeding \$2 billion per year.

I want to say to you, you may think that the climate crisis is distant and not affecting you because no tornado has gone through your front yard recently, but you pay higher insurance rates, because when insurance companies put out billions, they recover that money from their whole customer base. That is consequential.

People have seen the reports on Hurricanes Milton and Helene going through Florida, going through North Carolina. If you actually take to YouTube and take a look at some of the news stories on American television in the southern part of Florida, you will see that those people are paying—the ones who can get insurance—very, very high rates. Because if you haven't been hit, your insurance company will come after you nonetheless to help make up

the losses where they have been hit. The North American market is affected by those losses, the Canadian insurance market is affected by those losses. So the next time you get an insurance bill and you think, "Hey, what's going on here?" some of it may well be profiteering, but some of it is the impact of climate change. That's happening.

Natural Resources Canada reported in August 2022 that Canada's climate is warming at a rate of about twice that of the global average. Climate model projections showed that this will continue, and it will increase the risks that we face in our daily lives and in our economy. The OEB, which has provided all this information, reports that the electricity sector is one of the sectors most at disruption from climate change. That's our nervous system. People in this room—well, maybe the pages weren't around in 2003, but the rest of you—were around with the big power outage in 2003. Life was upended in this part of the world. Life was upended. When you're talking about the nervous system of a society, you're talking about the oxygen line of a society—in a hospital, it's literally the oxygen line—you have to worry about how that change is going to affect the delivery of electricity to you and your family. So we need to take steps to protect ourselves against it.

The OEB talks about a variety of direct and indirect impacts of climate change on our system, but I have to say, this plan to make a plan does not include addressing the whole question of adapting to the new world we live in. That is a major failing because if you're talking about how the electricity system operates, how it operated 10 years ago, 20 years ago or 30 years ago is no longer a guide because we're going into a different reality. When you go from Toronto to Montreal—Montreal is a very nice city but it's a different place with different driving, different restaurants. It's a great place actually, but we are not in the place we were 10, 20, 30 years ago. We are going into a world with far more extreme weather and we have not paid attention to it.

I have to say, the Liberals talked a lot about climate, but when we had the big ice storm in 2013 and we had—in my riding, people were without power for weeks. There was never—that I've been able to get, nor has the legislative library been able to get—a follow-up study of what happened and what should have been done. It was promised at the time, but to my knowledge, there was no follow-up study.

0930

In some places like California, recognizing the impact on their power system, they are starting to put their power lines underground, which is an awfully expensive thing to do. You want to look at other things before you do that, because it's about \$8 million a kilometre, and we have many thousands of kilometres of power lines in this province.

When the OEB looked at how you would deal with this different world, they talked about protecting key communications systems. They talked about replacing the aging infrastructure, so it would have a better chance of surviving extreme weather. They talked about the need for

small, local grids so that people would have some local protection.

In fact, I had the opportunity earlier this year, with a number of my colleagues, to present a bill to have the government facilitate and fund the development of local grids, not only because as technology evolves, it would produce cheaper power, but also to ensure that people have reliability, protection in extreme weather. That is something that needs to happen. Even the Ontario Energy Board thinks that is something that would help us in a crisis.

They also say that we need energy efficiency to maintain livable conditions for longer periods, and they are right. People in North Carolina took a while to get power back on. People in Florida, in the area where those hurricanes hit, were without power for a long time. We're going to need to do that if we are going to protect ourselves and our families in the years to come. That is something that needs to be tended to. It is not in this plan to make a plan. It is not addressed.

It doesn't make any reference to climate adaptation. There are a few things I've noted that aren't here: transparency, a commitment to affordability, and taking account of adaptation. If you're going to have a serious plan, it needs to shift our production of electricity to non-emitting sources, and stop overreliance on gas as we confront the impact of climate change.

This is an integrated plan, or so it says, so it's covering gas, electricity and, I assume, other forms of energy. We need to use this plan to help deliver on our climate targets, because we know that as the world gets hotter, our standard of living is going to be dropping. It's going to be harder to bring in crops. It's going to be harder to get goods moved around the world. We're going to spend more on infrastructure that's damaged, homes that are damaged, and other buildings that are damaged.

This government has its own orphan climate plan that, in court, when they're challenged on it, they sort of disavow: "Yes, we put it forward, but it really is of no legal consequence." To not actually say in the plan that you are going to use our energy system, which is going to be central to this task, to meet our climate targets, is a gross loss of an opportunity—more than loss of an opportunity, it is a dereliction of duty.

I think when you look at the government's plan to expand gas plants in Ontario, that is a huge problem. When you look at this plan, you're not seeing the commitment to reducing the use of gas.

A few years ago, Toronto Hydro, Hydro Ottawa and, I think, the Peterborough public utility commission, who are all members of the Electricity Distributors Association, put together a report and sent it to the government, saying, "You're about to invest major bucks in new gas plants. You can deliver the electricity services that are needed at a much lower cost by investing in conservation." The Electricity Distributors Association got to cite the provincial electricity system operator saying, "Yes, it's a lot cheaper to do this. The investment in conservation has been very effective at reliably meeting our needs in this province." That plan was ignored by the government.

Why is the government listing gas as an option for the plan while the reality is that we already have about a quarter of our system's capacity as gas plants? Why would it be expanding that in the face of what's going on with the climate? When you look at the financial needs that people in this province have, the affordability crunch they are dealing with, why you wouldn't take the cheaper option is beyond me—not just cheaper, but effective.

While I'm here, I will note as well that the rest of the world, which is suffering substantial damage from the climate crisis, is changing the way they deal with carbon. The European Union is bringing in what they call a carbon border adjustment mechanism. If you're not reducing carbon use in your country or region, then you pay a penalty to sell goods into the European Union. If we want access to markets, we have to show concretely that we are reducing our carbon use, our carbon consumption. The European Union is entirely right to do that. Their pilot plan is around aluminum, iron, steel, cement, fertilizers. I don't know how much of those things we send to the European Union, but given that other countries are starting to look at this, including the United Kingdom, Türkiye, Australia, if we want to trade internationally, we have to get serious about reducing our emissions.

When you omit that from this plan, what you are saying to Canadian workers in manufacturing and heavy industry is, "Well, do you know what? We're just going to hope for the best." It says that you don't have a plan to make sure that you can access those markets in the years to come. That is a substantial problem.

I have already talked about climate adaptation and cost. I also want to note that the Financial Accountability Officer released a report on budget impacts of climate hazards to public infrastructure in Ontario. Although the report is fascinating and I know everyone in the room wants to hear every word that was written, I will just pick out the highlights—that's that we have about \$708 billion in infrastructure in Ontario that's vulnerable to climate hazards. If we don't invest to adapt to the extreme weather that's coming so the bridges don't get washed out, highways don't get washed out, electricity lines aren't taken down by high winds, then we are looking at adding about \$4.1 billion per year, on average, to maintain our existing public infrastructure—\$4 billion. You notice that, right, in a budget? It's not \$5 billion; it's \$4.1 billion. We can invest now to make our infrastructure more resilient, hardier.

Frankly, if you are not taking the opportunity, when you're dealing with a major system like electricity, to help that system enable us to get to our climate goals, even though they're inadequate in Ontario, you are not being responsible with the public purse. You're not being responsible for those people out there who are struggling every day to pay their bills every month, to pay their rent or pay their mortgage. Those people are having their lives set aside.

The next thing I want to say is that when it comes to large infrastructure projects, this government's track record raises serious questions not only on performance

but on transparency and financial accountability—and does it ever.

I can't say it often enough, but I sat in committees with Liberal energy ministers and watched Liberals in other circumstances, and frankly, this government is just following their lead. I don't know what it is. Is it the water supply on the other side of the chamber? Is it something genetic? Who knows? But the Liberal approach is one that this government seems to have taken on and embraced and enjoyed.

0940

In my riding and in a few other ridings, the Ontario Line—by the way, we need these subways. You know how congested the streets are in this city. It can get pretty rough. So we need the investment. That project was sold as a \$9-billion expenditure. In fact, when the Premier brought it in, he said, "The city was going to spend \$6 billion or \$8 billion on a relief line, a subway line from Pape station to the downtown. But for a few billion more, we can get 15 kilometres of line." Well, as you may well be aware, that line is now costing about \$20 billion. They actually, oops, overlooked \$10 billion in expenses—or the Eglinton Crosstown.

I had the opportunity to deal with the city of Toronto on their relief line, and I had a chance to deal with the province on the Ontario Line. With the relief line—constant public meetings, a lot of data, so that we could critique what was going on. Frankly, in the end, at least in my riding, although those people who had a tunnel going under their house weren't fully happy, they understood the logic and they went with it. With the Ontario Line, when I would question a decision and ask for a cost comparison, I could not get the costs. I was told, "Oh, it's more." Well, how much? These are public accounts. This is public money. Why doesn't the public get a chance to actually critique what's going on there? I have to say, that is an approach that we see on the ground today, that is being perpetuated again in this bill.

I just mentioned the Eglinton Crosstown. It seems to be in semi-permanent limbo. The opening date—state secret. I don't know how they keep it as secret as they do. I'm sure there's surveillance of the vault that the data is kept in. You can't find out. The provincial agency is not up front about issues, and frankly, in that, they simply reflect the approach that is taken by their masters. I'm going to explore that a bit further in this speech.

I know I'm starting to run out of time, and I've got so much more.

This bill is actually about reducing transparency. The previous Liberal ministers, who worked really hard not to answer questions and who, in estimates, would be aggressive in saying, "I can't answer that"—in fact, in one meeting we had, Todd Smith, the former energy minister, was there. We were asking about the sale of Ontario Hydro, and the energy minister had a lawyer sitting beside him. Every so often, I'd ask a question and the lawyer would dig into the energy minister's ribs, and I wouldn't get an answer. But that's nothing. They were minor

players. I'd say this government is moving into the big leagues with not being open about what's going on.

I think we should all recognize that with the right energy plan—grounded in evidence, with transparency, with the expertise of workers in our energy sector in Ontario—we can ensure our province has the energy we need for a thriving economy and a low-carbon, no-carbon future. We're not short of smarts or skills in this province. We have an energy sector—very broad—with the intelligence, the training and the planning to meet our needs, second to none globally. But in order to do that, we're going to need to give them a plan and a direction that makes sense. We can ensure a much richer economy.

We spend, today, somewhere between \$15 billion and \$20 billion a year importing oil and gas and coal. The money goes to Pennsylvania. The money goes to, probably, Saskatchewan and Alberta. That comes out of our economy. If we were to take that cash flow and put it into Ontario to power this province, then we would have a much more robust economy.

Something we did at the beginning of the 20th century when we developed hydro power in Ontario—renewable power—is that we developed the expertise to export engineering staff and knowledge globally. We were seen as a leader. And we could have done that with the current generation of energy production. We are not seeing it in this particular jurisdiction, in this particular regime.

When we, the New Democrats, developed our Green New Democratic Deal before the last election, we were looking at what it would take to actually build out a green system, to actually invest in people's homes and businesses, to dramatically reduce their use of energy so that their bills would be stabilized at a lower level; so that they wouldn't have the same problems with emissions; so that, in a crisis, they would be in a position to ride out extreme cold weather or extreme hot weather. The reality in this province is that you would have labour power demands that you'd have to really work on meeting.

We have the potential in this province to eliminate the import of oil and gas and put hundreds of thousands of people to work. People who are already working in energy could go further. People who are historically excluded from the labour force would have an opportunity to take part in a variety of well-paid, high-skill jobs. That's something that we need to do. I'm not seeing that in this bill. I'm not seeing the commitment to a transformation of our energy system. I'm not seeing, even more importantly, frankly, the ability of the public to examine and question the evidence the government says it's operating on. Without that—and it doesn't matter what stripe the government is—the public is going to have real problems.

The bill takes us in the wrong direction when it comes to transparency and depoliticizing our energy planning decisions.

We've seen the problems, with the Liberals, of politicized energy policies from previous governments, with the governments cutting out any hearings before the Ontario Energy Board—real problems.

The bill would be much more clearly labelled and understood if it was called simply the “just trust us energy bill, 2024.” That, I think, would express the actual heart of the bill and would be far better understood by people in Ontario.

I would say to all of you, why is it that people in Ontario may not trust this government and this Premier? I’m going to expand on this further if I have enough time. But I just want to note—I’ll cite the greenbelt. In 2018, the Premier, running for office, told a room of developers that he’d open up a big chunk of the greenbelt for home building. When that was revealed, the Premier pivoted, understanding that he put his foot in his mouth up to his knee, and he made an unequivocal promise: “We won’t touch the greenbelt.” He repeated that commitment through his first term. Then, in November 2022, the Ford government changed its mind and removed 7,400 acres from the greenbelt slated for housing development. So how do you have trust in a Premier who only lives up to a commitment when there is a Mountie investigation going on?

There are a lot of reasons to not just sign on to a “just trust us energy bill, 2024.” I think there are reasons to go to committee and try to change this bill. I think that would actually be a useful forum both for debate and, hopefully, for the government to see some reason and put transparency in the bill and require that affordability be a central part of the plan—not just “may” be part of the plan; require that considerations of affordability be there.

This is a government that is proposing to build a tunnel under Highway 401. You’ve got to be kidding me.

Interjection: Apparently not.

0950

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Seriously, when I first heard it, I thought, “He’s talking off the cuff. He’s at a stand-up comedy venue, and he has decided to get whatever yuks he can by saying something that no one would believe any serious politician would say.” Apparently, I didn’t understand what was going on. The Premier is seriously proposing something that he won’t give a price for. He did say that we would do a feasibility study, and then he said, “Well, we’re going to build it anyway.” So I guess the feasibility study was more like putting a ribbon on the package—it didn’t change the contents, but it might be prettier.

Those instances of not being able to trust the Premier say to me, this bill—man, you should not trust what is being put forward.

Ronald Reagan said, “Trust, but verify.” And do you know what? Ronnie was right. You’ve got to do that.

If you’re going to come forward and say, “I’m doing this,” give me the means by which I can verify that you are telling me the truth; that your evidence is actually consequential and it isn’t full of holes, it isn’t Swiss cheese—like the report that Enbridge brought to the Ontario Energy Board that was shredded and then had to be rewritten.

The cost, the reliability, the sustainability of energy affects every person in the province. It’s the difference

between making our household budgets work and not work. It can’t be driven by a bill that limits public access to information and effectively eliminates the potential for the public to have any input in our energy future. Just as the government changed the whole system of regulating gas with Bill 165, effectively ending regulation by a tribunal in Ontario, this bill takes the public out of the process; this becomes a far more lobbyist-driven planning process. That is not a good thing.

I’m starting to get low on time. I can see that. I won’t ask for an extension this time.

The Liberals vastly overbuilt the power system when they were in power, and we’ve all paid. We are paying, what, \$7.3 billion a year in electricity subsidies now? What we’re paying in electricity subsidies makes the Ministry of Energy one of the big ministries in Ontario. It’s not education, and it’s not health—but boy, it isn’t the \$400 million or \$500 million it used to be. Speaker, \$7.3 billion is a lot of subsidy dollars, and I’m not seeing in this plan to make a plan that that actually is going to be addressed.

I want to go, in the time I have left, into some detail on the bill.

Schedule 1 amends the Electricity Act to promote electrification and facilitate energy-efficient measures aimed at using electricity to reduce overall emissions in Ontario.

As I said earlier, electrification makes sense. That’s where the world is going. We don’t burn coal to heat our houses anymore. In the future, we aren’t going to be using electric-resistance baseboard heaters because they are so wasteful. Technology has changed. We have the ability to dramatically cut our electricity use, make our homes warm and not use gas.

So I have to ask: If the government is committed to electrification, why did we pass a bill to protect Enbridge’s plans to expand the gas system? On the one hand, we are saying we’re going to electrify everything; on the other, we’re saying we’re going to increase the number of houses that use gas. Which story is true? Is the government actually thinking that they are going to spend hundreds of billions on new power plants that won’t be needed because we have more gas in our houses?

One thing I have to note: In Germany, because of their experience with Russia not being a reliable supplier of gas, more and more people are switching away from gas to electric heat pumps. That is setting in motion a dynamic for those who remain with the gas system seeing higher and higher bills, because fewer and fewer people are paying for the pipes in the ground. What the government is proposing is that fewer and fewer people will be using gas—or they are spending hundreds of billions to no purpose. At the same time, they’re sticking the existing gas customers with bills that they’re going to have trouble paying in the future.

In an integrated plan, what is the government planning to do to protect those who remain on gas over the next few decades? In New England—there are some states that are now integrating the planning between the gas grid and the

electricity grid, so that as gas users come away from that system, the gas lines are shut down, electricity is provided, and things are done smoothly, not in a jagged way that causes financial problems for the customers on both sides. Is the government proposing to do that? I guess we will find out. If you're talking about an integrated plan and actually electrifying everything, then you have to have in the plan what that means to look after those who are still gas customers.

This is the one that was striking—well, there were a number of things that were striking, as you may have gathered from my remarks to this point: “The minister may”—but not “shall”—issue an integrated energy resource plan setting out and balancing the government’s goals and objectives that may respect various listed energy matters. This replaces the existing requirement that the minister produce a long-term energy plan. It’s interesting to me that we’re debating a bill where production of a plan is actually optional. It doesn’t say the minister “shall” issue an integrated energy resource plan, which is sort of what you would expect if you were doing energy planning for this major part of Canada. Why do we not require a plan? Maybe the minister doesn’t want to be tied down to a plan. Maybe he wants to just fly by the seat of his pants. The minister may say, “I had a lobbyist come in and see me. That was a good story. I think we should put the bucks there. If I have a plan, well, that might tie me down.” It makes sense to have an integrated plan, but if it makes sense, it should be something that’s not just optional for the minister; it’s something that the minister must do.

The bill goes on: The minister is required to launch a consultation on a new plan within five years of the issuance of the previous plan, if one is issued, but it’s not clear whether the minister is actually required to issue a subsequent plan. It doesn’t require it. I have to say, the Liberals ignored their long-term energy plan system. Their system would have required hearings. They ignored that. We went after them on it. As everyone in this room is well aware, actually adhering to their own laws, own bills, was not something they were really hot on. This government seems to have the same approach. I don’t know why they wouldn’t do this. Logic dictates that you would actually require a plan. Maybe it’s just, again, as I was saying, that they want to make sure they’ve got the freedom to satisfy the most recent lobbyist who has come into the room.

Note that the existing requirement that this be a long-term plan was removed.

Subsection 25.29(2)—I know you all need to know the exact number—of the current Electricity Act lists various energy matters that “may” but not “shall” be covered in the energy plan, including cost-effectiveness, reliability and use of cleaner sources. This bill makes various changes to this list, including consumer affordability, enhancement of energy infrastructure to support economic growth, and cost-effective procurement. Again, the items that may be covered don’t include climate adaptation.

So the next time you’re freezing in the dark and wondering, “Will the power ever come on?”—maybe you will have the opportunity to experience what people in

Florida got to experience, and that’s sweating through the night, with the food rotting in the refrigerator, wondering when or if the power is going to come on.

The bill doesn’t include meeting our climate goals, and that, given the climate damage we face, is a huge omission. It also gets rid of making efficiency in conservation the first step, the priority.

1000

Yesterday, the minister, in his opening remarks, said that the cheapest way to provide electrical services—the cheapest kilowatt is the one you don’t have to generate. Do you know what? The minister was right. You can’t meet 100% of our electricity needs through energy conservation or efficiency—you just can’t. You do have to produce power, but the starting point of any plan that is affordable is to make sure that the cheapest option is the foundational stone, the starting point, and then you go on after that. If the government were to say, “In the process of setting this plan, we’re going to first determine what’s the least expensive source of power that meets our other needs around reliability and sustainability”—but that isn’t in here either. So you really have to ask how you’re going to make it affordable if affordability is not cooked in right at the beginning.

This bill—oh, my goodness; time is short, and so much to say.

The current act requires the IESO to publish a technical report on the adequacy and reliability of electricity resources prior to launching consultations on the energy plan—the minister “shall” publish other information, such as key data and cost projections, but only if the minister determines that this information should be made publicly available. I think I’ll wrap up there. If it’s what the minister thinks should be available, rather than what the public needs to make a determination as to whether or not something is going to work and is affordable, that is a profound problem.

This bill does not, as its title might indicate, actually help people with higher bills. Frankly, you’ll hear the word “affordability” mentioned 20 or 30 times because it’s nice to say it. If people hear the words, they often think something is being done, but just because someone says something, doesn’t mean it’s necessarily the case. That’s the problem we face here. Repeating something lots of times doesn’t actually mean that something is being done in the area that we’re concerned about.

I would say this “just trust us bill, 2024,” has profound flaws. I think, in committee, it would be worth having debate about them. Hopefully the government would amend it so that they overcome some of the worst sins visited upon the province by the Liberals and actually bring forward a plan that’s useful. If they don’t amend it profoundly, this is not going to lead to electricity people can afford; it’s going to lead to electricity that will make life far more difficult for them.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the honourable member across the way for his one-hour address on this.

We always have a good time chatting on these things—rarely agree, but we agree to disagree.

I do want to raise a couple of points that the member mentioned. He talked about the Liberals politicizing the system. He used the word “affordability.” And then he went on to talk about this credible company, this firm, London Economics International. Well, I have to ask the member—because London Economics International told us that the Green Energy Act was going to cost a minimum of \$40 billion.

You’re talking about affordability. You’re talking about politicization.

We talk about the most expensive act in the history of the province with regard to accelerating the cost of electricity, and I have to ask the member if all of those things—and you’re still repeating them today, not just 15 years ago. Why did your party support the Green Energy Act if you knew that it was going to cause such a problem that we are trying to address today, which is the issue of reliability and affordability in our electricity system?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I appreciate the commentary from my colleague.

We sat through the hearings, which happened all over the province, on the Green Energy Act. If you’ll remember, in a number of rural areas, farmers came forward saying, “We need this because we need the income.” I want to note that we, on our side, tried to amend that act to ensure that private companies didn’t get to build this new green infrastructure; that it was public and community-based. As the member will recall, he voted against making this new green infrastructure—that it was public and community-based. As the member will recall, he voted against making these new installations public. Our sense was that a publicly owned renewable energy system would actually deal with the problems that we have. I will note as well that gas-powered plants provided power at dramatically higher costs than the green plants, the green installations that went forward.

I think we have a problem with the Liberals in the way they operated that system from top to bottom.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from Toronto—Danforth for his remarks.

When I think about the goal of the legislation and what the member had to say—making energy affordable—I think of, particularly, seniors living in rural parts of our province, who are continuing to live in energy poverty.

I look at a province like Prince Edward Island and what they’ve been able to do to help those homeowners, those residents, to get off expensive forms of home heating and on to heat pumps.

I look at the IESO’s program—in order to qualify for the program, a household of two has to be making a before-tax income of \$64,000 or less. Meanwhile, energy companies, including Enbridge, which the member named, are enjoying fantastic profits.

My question for the member: Why won’t the government consider asking Enbridge to pay some kind of levy,

like the UK government is doing, in making sure that those seniors can make that transition to affordable energy for their homes?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate that question.

Enbridge makes a fortune. Enbridge is a money-spinner. Enbridge is a multi-billion dollar corporation and, frankly, I think that having Enbridge assist in making the transition to heat pumps makes a lot sense. I would say to Enbridge, “If you want to actually have a future, if you want to continue in business, it would be a great advantage to you to actually get into the heat pump business—install them, lease them, make money—because you know very well, and it was clear from the presentations that you made at the Ontario Energy Board, that there is not a long future for gas in this province.” Maybe a few decades—it isn’t going to be gone overnight.

If you’re actually going to meet climate goals, we’re not going to be burning gas in 2050—or if we are, it’s going to be very, very small amounts.

Enbridge has a responsibility, I think, to its customers and to its workers to look at a new business model. I agree with my colleague. That’s the correct approach.

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

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I have to correct the record for the member opposite. He spoke about the fact that he thinks Türkiye has better standards than Ontario when it comes to emissions. Ontario emitted 3.8 megatonnes last year in the production of electricity; Türkiye emitted 374 megatonnes. I don’t know how that math works out and why he’s praising Türkiye when Ontario has a very, very clean grid.

I didn’t hear the member opposite speak about nuclear in his presentation. We know how important nuclear is and its value to Ontario.

Will the member opposite stand in this House and say that he firmly supports the continued build-out of our nuclear fleet and sector here in Ontario?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to say first, it’s unfortunate that the member didn’t listen to me closely when I noted that Türkiye is looking at bringing in carbon-based adjustment mechanisms so that companies have to pay money to ship goods into Türkiye if they haven’t actually taken action on carbon. I’m not saying Türkiye is better. Listen to my remarks. Our good people from Hansard are here. I suggest you read Hansard tomorrow or maybe this evening—the early rushes—and see that I didn’t say that Türkiye had better standards. I just said that Türkiye, along with other countries, is going to bring in a carbon tariff if you want to sell into that market, and if you don’t do—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, thank you.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to point out, just further to what I asked the member, in England, there is an energy profits levy on 25% of profits in the North Sea sector—recently expanded to 38.1%. That has generated, for the

British economy, for investment into renewal energy, \$3.6 billion.

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I think about a truck driver I met in the by-election in Belleville, when I went down to knock on doors there. I talked to that truck driver, and he told me about when he would drop off fuel at a homeowner's house, and he knew that that homeowner could not pay the \$1,200 bill for the fuel-up that that homeowner was going to pay and that they were going to be in an arrears to his company. He had to drive away thinking about how that family is going to choose between heating or food.

Why don't we ask Enbridge, which is a massively profitable company, to pay more money into the treasury so we can help those seniors get affordable energy? Why isn't that in this bill?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a good question.

I have to say, I can't speak for the government—and I think they would be horrified if I tried; I'm getting assent on that side of the aisle. I can't say why they aren't proposing that fabulously wealthy oil and gas companies aren't paying to help society, aren't actually addressing those issues, but they should be. There's no getting around it.

Frankly, on a somewhat different tangent, increasingly in North America, there are jurisdictions that are starting to sue oil and gas companies for the damage they are doing. Oil and gas companies have worked assiduously to tamp down any actions on climate.

I think you're quite correct; oil and gas companies should be anteing up. They've got the money to do it.

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

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the member sharing some clarifications in his previous answer, but I do want to repeat the second part of my question, because I noted, again, he didn't talk about nuclear.

We know the importance of nuclear here in Ontario as a baseload, capacity-building tool that we have in our energy tool box.

Again, would the member opposite in the NDP stand firmly in support of maintaining and expanding our nuclear fleet here in the province of Ontario and continuing that important resource?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The simple reality is that nuclear is a substantial part of our electricity system in Ontario.

The other reality is that this government has firmly refused, at every point, to say what kind of expense we're looking at for any energy investment. It's not just that you're silent about investment and nuclear; you're silent about any other investment, as to what it will cost.

Anyone who looks at a plan with no price tags, no projection as to what the capital costs are going to be, what the power is going to be—why on earth would you say yes to something that's uncoded? Would you sign a contract with no price on it? Would you buy a house with the cost of the house blank, so that you get to pay whatever the vendor wants to sell for? I don't think you would. But maybe I misunderstand you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we are out of time for questions.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I know, but it is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LAJPAT RAI PRASHER

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Today, I rise to recognize the inspiring journey and contributions of Mr. Lajpat Rai Prasher. A Canadian success story, Mr. Prasher came to this country over 50 years ago with a vision for a better future. Through hard work and dedication, he established and grew a telecom enterprise from modest beginnings, eventually selling it to Telus, a leading Canadian telecommunications provider.

Mr. Prasher's impact goes beyond business. He has dedicated his life to supporting strong community values and fostering relationships between Canada and his country of birth. Known for his openness and inclusivity towards all faiths, he is highly respected in the community. Recently, Mr. Prasher received the lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Hindu Chamber of Commerce recognizing his long-standing contributions as an entrepreneur and community leader. His life exemplifies the spirit of resilience and community that defines Canada. I am honoured to call him my friend and mentor.

Congratulations, Mr. Lajpat Rai Prasher.

BABOTH FAMILY CHARITABLE DONATION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I was honoured to join Rob Baboth, his family and colleagues as they presented a cheque to McMaster Children's Hospital to purchase a new Cribette for the neonatal intensive care unit. This is in honour of Dianne Baboth. The Baboth family has raised funds for the children's hospital since 2009 by holding an annual golf tournament in her name. The proceeds have contributed to three rooftop playgrounds that allow patients and their families to play outside and to gather for things like movie nights and pictures, things that would be impossible for children and their families—to spend so much time at the hospital.

I would like to say that we also had a chance to tour the cancer ward and see the remarkable things that the folks at McMaster Children's Hospital do—and you would know that, Speaker. We saw the incredible ways that staff have been able to use the donations from the Baboth family to improve the patient experience for the kids and for their families, and for the siblings too. We have to remember that when one child is sick, the entire family is impacted, and the Baboth family understands that. Their commitment is incredible.

I want to say that I appreciate seeing the McMaster Children's Hospital—I, from the bottom of my heart, appreciate everyone in that hospital. It goes out of the way to make sure that children and their families who are experiencing life-limiting or, perhaps sometimes, life-ending experiences—that they do everything they can to make sure that they live in dignity and that they have healthy outcomes.

I want to thank the community, who donates the funds to make sure that our families, when they're going through the worst possible thing imaginable—they may feel alone when they're in the hospital, but when they see those playgrounds, when they see those contributions, they know there's, in fact, a community behind them.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Deepak Anand: Ontario's 31,500 physicians delivering emergency care, managing chronic conditions, promoting preventive health are the backbone of happy and healthy communities. Thank you for your service. With Ontario's population growing and aging, having access to quality health care is more critical than ever.

As a proud Schulich MBA graduate, I'm thrilled to see my alma mater, York University, building Canada's first medical school dedicated to training primary care physicians, backed by an initial investment of \$9 million from the 2024 budget, Building a Better Ontario. Set to open in September 2028, York University's school of medicine will be devoting approximately 70% of its new postgraduate seats to primary care and will have up to 240 undergraduates and 293 postgraduate seats once at full capacity.

Together, with investments like this, we are building a stronger health care system that meets the evolving needs of residents from Mississauga–Malton and Ontario.

The commitment of our government added 260 new undergraduates and 449 new postgraduate medical seats.

I want to wish the best of luck to all the future doctors of York University. I'm excited to see the community coming together to support this project.

Thank you, Premier, thank you, Minister of Health, and thank you, President Rhonda, for all your support. Together, we're going to build a better, stronger Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

MPP Jill Andrew: Today is a big day. The Conservative government will unleash their fall economic statement, letting Ontarians know what is and what is not their priority.

So far, we know that the government has committed to giving Ontarians \$200 rebate cheques. Some are calling these cheques bribe money, as they're arriving just ahead of a possible early election—couldn't be more coincidental.

This government has already made sweeping billion-dollar deals to help liquor up Ontarians—bribes and booze. Well, we the people have some other priorities, and

we are eager to see the fall economic statement address them.

Properly fund health care. Too many people in our community do not have access to a family doctor. They end up in the ER—well, that's if their ER is open.

Invest in real, affordable housing, including protections for tenants like rent control in all buildings, eliminating abuse of above-guideline rent increases, and a complete scrap and replacement of Tarion in order to support new homeowners, including some victims of fraud—buying homes that have never been built.

Actually tackle gridlock. Finish and open our Eglinton Crosstown LRT, one of this government's biggest and most expensive failures to date.

We need investments in the Ontario Arts Council, which currently has a starving artist budget, despite pleas from artists and cultural workers across Ontario.

This government can fix our schools, address the repair backlog and invest in more education workers and mental health supports for students, because I'd like to think that for this government, kids trump bribes and booze.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I'll ask the member to withdraw her final comments.

MPP Jill Andrew: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you.
1020

EVENTS IN KITCHENER SOUTH— HESPELER

Ms. Jess Dixon: On October 19, I held my second annual fall festival, which is the one community event that I do. My main goal there is to provide a day that, for families and children, is really, really worth coming out to. We rent out beautiful Steckle Heritage Farm in Kitchener South–Hespeler, have pumpkins and food trucks and face painting. I do my best to make it something that's really worth going to. I had a huge amount of help. We had wonderful food trucks. We had Fo'Cheezy, BeaverTails and Leen's Shop. We also had some amazing face painters, with Bre and Robin—and some help from my friends at Xtreme Motors, Dave and Adnan, for moving 200 pumpkins.

I also want to shout out a lot of my wonderful volunteers, which include my parents, as well as Caitlyn, Michael, Gabe, Marie, Ron, Megan and Corey.

But the people I really want to shout out are my constituency office staff: my office manager, Bonita, and Anna, Gerry and Caitlyn. It was an organizational challenge pulling this together, but what stuck out to me as I walked around the farm was the number of residents who came up to me and told me a story about how my office staff and my caseworkers had fixed something for them; how they had been the only people to listen and care when they were struggling with something. It really stuck out to me just how incredible my office workers are. I know we all have them, but I'm particularly shouting out mine today.

Bonita, Gerry, Caitlyn, Anna, thank you so much. I would not be able to do my job without you.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak on behalf of the workers of Ontario, who are the backbone of our province. And yet, despite all they do for us, they continue to face challenges. This government pretends to work for workers, but recent events tell a different story.

Look at CUPE Local 2361 at the University of Western Ontario. They stood strong for 330 members in their fight for fair wages, respect and improved work conditions. But in their fight for better conditions and wage parity with similar other unionized positions, what did they encounter? They faced the deployment of scab labour, an unacceptable practice that undermines the bargaining process, threatens fair wages and diminishes workplace safety.

I'm glad that CUPE Local 2361 could ratify an agreement with their employer, but I can't help but be concerned about the next group and whether they can exercise their rights to free and fair collective bargaining.

Ontario needs strong, immediate scab labour protection. This government needs to pass the bill that the NDP proposed—Bill 90, the Anti-Scab Labour Act—because, when it's passed, there will be Ontario legislation that will make it illegal for employers to hire scabs during strikes and lockouts.

We believe in fair wages, safe workplaces and meaningful protections.

To CUPE Local 2361 and all Ontario workers, we see you and we stand with you.

It's time for Ontario to stand up for workers and deliver the protections they need now more than ever. So I ask this government to pass the NDP's Bill 90, the Anti-Scab Labour Act, today—now.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Ric Bresee: As we approach Remembrance Day, I want to take a moment to recognize the many meaningful services that are held across Hastings–Lennox and Addington. Each year, these ceremonies allow us to honour and remember those who have sacrificed for our freedom.

While I would love to attend all of these services, I do want to highlight one in particular today: the Remembrance Day service at the Wilton cenotaph, organized primarily by Lion Mike Shabinsky of the Odessa and District Lions Club. For 40 years, Mike has dedicated his time to this important event, in collaboration with the military. His commitment to ensuring that we remember and reflect on the sacrifices made by our veterans is truly commendable. This Remembrance Day service typically attracts around 200 attendees, including military personnel, veterans, schoolchildren, wreath-layers and representatives from the police, EMS and first responders.

The Odessa Lions Club accomplishes so much each year, from supporting local hospitals and public schools, to funding and building parks and playgrounds and preparing food baskets for families in need. Their work on

Remembrance Day also has an incredible impact on our community.

I say thank you to Mike for his dedication and his leadership. He truly embodies the spirit of service that the Lions Club stands for, and his impact on the community will be felt for generations.

COMMUNITY LIVING GUELPH
WELLINGTON

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise on behalf of the board, staff, volunteers and clients of Community Living Guelph Wellington.

I participated in a meet-and-greet with CLGW on the weekend, which the Speaker attended, representing the Wellington part of GW. The stories I heard from front-line staff, parents and participants were heartbreaking. The chronic underfunding of programs for people with developmental disabilities is leading to service cuts and the selling off of housing assets. People are desperate for help. CLGW's treasurer pointed out that over the last 30 years, the organization has received a 7% funding increase when inflation was 60%. They are covering 2024 costs with 1994 dollars and are experiencing a funding deficit of \$3 million.

Speaker, one parent whose adult son has been on the waiting list for housing for over a decade asked me, in tears, if she had to commit suicide for her son to move up the housing list.

The Premier said that if you can't work, he will make sure you are cared for. Many people with developmental disabilities cannot find employment and require 24/7 care. They are not being properly cared for when services, supportive housing and programs are being cut.

I believe we are a more caring province than this, and I am eager and willing to work across party lines to provide the care these families deserve.

SARNIA-LAMBTON REBOUND

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise in the Legislature today.

Last week, I was honoured to participate in the 40th anniversary celebration of Sarnia-Lambton Rebound, an award-winning organization in Lambton county that focuses on the well-being of young people and their families. Since its founding in 1984, Sarnia-Lambton Rebound has successfully served over 40,000 young people from across Sarnia-Lambton.

Started by local residents Barry Symington, Dee Cox and Terry Fitzgerald, Rebound's original focus was on bringing young people in the community together to learn positive social skills that would assist them in dealing with the transition from childhood to adulthood and the challenging years in between.

In addition to positive social skills, today, youth aged eight to 24 can access programming at Rebound that supports challenges with mental health, stigma, identity, isolation, bullying, and pressures from social media. In

addition, youth are able to participate in skill-building workshops and youth-focused community events, like the Youth Makers Expo, the Red Carpet Ready event, the Act II Theatre Program, the Rebound Rocks tour, and much more. In total, 2,491 local youth accessed over 20 programs at Rebound last year.

Mr. Speaker, Rebound has been an invaluable resource for youth and families in Sarnia–Lambton for the last four decades.

I want to congratulate executive director Michelle Holbrook and all the staff, volunteers and supporters of Rebound on this momentous anniversary. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I wish them continued success in everything they do.

HOSPICE FACE TO FACE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Andrew Dowie: One week ago, the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County revealed some incredible news: The 22nd annual Hospice Face to Face campaign raised, this year, just over \$110,000—a new record. This brings the total campaign fundraising to more than \$1.8 million for the hospice. As the executive director of the hospice, Katharen Bortolin, so aptly put it, “Our community always shows up and we are always so grateful.”

The Face to Face fundraiser supports the Fairley Family Transportation Program and supports rides for hospice patients and families across the community. Many of these are delivered through the GENIE, the Granting Exceptional N’Impactful Experiences, program, a unique partnership between the hospice and Essex-Windsor EMS that allows clients to travel in a retrofitted ambulance.

Equally touching this year was its dedication to the memory of Dr. Jamie Henderson, the honorary co-chair of the Face to Face campaign for many years. Dr. Henderson personified the compassion, kindness and gratitude for which our hospice is known, and helped me greatly in crafting a tribute to his good friend and our riding’s former MPP Michael Ray.

1030

To John Fairley and the entire Fairley family: Thank you for your passion and dedication to keeping our community an incredible place.

And to Katharen and all the staff at the hospice: Your service to our loved ones is beloved and appreciated.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It is my distinct pleasure today to introduce some exceptional young people from my community.

In 2021, Ethan and Matthew McQueen started Kids Helping Kids Sleep Out to bring attention to homeless and trafficked youth. This year, with their friends, they raised \$107,000 to support Covenant House.

Please welcome Matthew McQueen, Ethan McQueen, Jack Riley, Brandon Wayland, Roman Coviello, Henry

Yang, Cole Thomson, Arjun Chahal, Jude Lefebvre, Logan Wolfe, Owen Tochor, Jacob Schor, and Adrian Mesman.

As well, I’d like to recognize and introduce my co-op student, Maxwell Zanerips, from King’s Christian Collegiate.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: It is my pleasure to welcome the Kosovar Albanian Canadian youth group here at Queen’s Park for the first time: Yllka Bojku, Luka Lamaj, Aryjola Zogu, Aldo Zemblaku, Megan Keli, Bardha Cunaj, Gurra Efendija, Orges Zejna, Ina Shehi, Alesja Cani, Alesio Vrap, Jurgena Therca, Mario Cani, Valentin Cela, Aulona Tofaj, Alma Stafa, and Ledor Babatinca.

Ms. Laura Smith: It is my very great honour to welcome Idit Shamir, consul general of Israel in Toronto; Ms. Iris Weinstein Haggai, daughter of Judih Weinstein Haggai, Canadian victim of October 7; Gadi Haggai; the Honourable Irwin Cotler, former Minister of Justice of Canada; Adina Isenberg; and Yair Castel, consul general of Israel in Toronto and Western Canada.

We ask that all people, if possible, please join us at the commemorative event for the Canadian victims of October 7 at Queen’s Park, in rooms 228 and 230, following today’s morning session.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome all of the co-op housing federation who are with us in the Legislature today for their lobby day; in particular, Golden Horseshoe co-op housing. Today I was able to visit with Sarah Burnett, Monica Brodeur, Angie Armstrong, Kathy Dimassi, Willy Noiles, and Doug Sider.

Thanks so much for all you do for co-op housing, and welcome, everyone, to Queen’s Park today.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I, too, want to welcome all members of the Canadian co-op housing federation who are at Queen’s Park today. I especially want to shout out to the folks the MPP for Kitchener Centre and I met with this morning: Elana Harte, Shelley Watts, Carine Nind, and Natasha Verwey. Thank you for your advocacy for housing in Ontario.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council, who joined us this morning.

Every year, 247,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer. We honour the life-saving work that isotopes and nuclear science is providing in cancer treatment.

Please welcome them here at Queen’s Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m so pleased to be able to rise on behalf of the official opposition here and welcome to the Legislature Mr. Mark Golding, Jamaica’s Leader of the Opposition, along with a significant entourage. My colleagues will welcome others, but I did want to particularly mention Mr. Golding’s entourage who are here from Jamaica: Sergeant Marc Anderson, Ms. Ferguson, Mr. Christopher Henry, and Mr. Andre Hylton.

It’s very nice to have you here. We are honoured by your presence.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It’s a pleasure to introduce our director of communications, Rebecca Bozzato, and her father, Richard, who is here today to watch question period for the very first time.

It's Rebecca's last week in our office, and we'd like to thank her for everything that she has done.

Welcome to Queen's Park, Richard.

MPP Jill Andrew: I would also like to welcome Mr. Mark Golding, Jamaica's leader of the official opposition and president of the People's National Party.

It gives me great honour to welcome back to the Legislature community leaders Dr. Laura Mae Lindo, former MPP for Kitchener Centre—they're still coming in—Clayton Greaves, Dr. Simon Black, H.E. Dr. Macaulay Kalu, Dr. Barbara Stewart, Dr. Carolyn Benjamin, and H.E. Sandra Bowen. Welcome to your House.

And I'll give a big shout-out to Masani Montague for Rastafest, who does incredible work in Toronto—St. Paul's, Toronto Centre and all around Toronto celebrating Jamaican and Rastafarian culture.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If there are no objections, I would like to continue with the introduction of visitors.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I also want to welcome Dr. Laura Mae Lindo to the House. She has been a great mentor, as I step into the riding and her shoes. She continues to be an amazing local champion for our community.

Thank you, and welcome back.

Mr. Billy Pang: It is a great honour to welcome my constituents from Markham–Unionville to Queen's Park today.

First, a warm welcome to Bin Chang and Chris Lee, the proud parents of today's page captain, Sophie Lee. Thank you both for joining us and supporting Sophie in her important role here.

I'd also like to recognize Allen Song, CEO of Global Education Academy, along with their teachers and students. Global Education Academy recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, a remarkable milestone. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I look forward to meeting all of you today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to welcome Denise McGahan from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, who is here today along with April Ager-White and Diana Yoon. I'm looking forward to our meeting later this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to welcome two incredible guests. Evan Cameron, my former OLIP intern, is here today with the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council. And the great mayor of the city of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, is here at Queen's Park today.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I have two people I would like to welcome—first, Liane Boyer, the mother of Lily McLean, our wonderful page from Thunder Bay.

I'm looking forward to meeting with you and having lunch later.

I'd also like to welcome Willy Noiles, who wears many hats and is also a representative of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups.

I'm glad to see you, Willy.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like to add my voice to the chorus of welcomes, to the very special delegation that

has brought Mr. Mark Golding and his party to the Legislature of Ontario. This was done through the hard work of the Friends of Jamaica committee.

I want to recognize Sharon Abrahams, Norma Telfer, Angelina Williams, Michelle Meghie, as well as local media who has accompanied them—their work is also critical in making sure that the announcements and the voices of Jamaica reach the local community here in Ontario.

I want to welcome Anthony Joseph from Caribbean Camera, Natasha Von Castle, and our dear friend Masani Montague from Rastafest and Studio M.

1040

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Canadian Bankers Association, including Anthony Ostler, Angelina Mason, Andrew Ross, Dan Ouimet, Nick Colosimo, Monika Farias, Alanna Sokic, Gary Clement, Alex Phillips, Virginia Clarke, and Thi Tran. I'm very much looking forward to the anti-scam alliance round table, and I know you'll be watching the fall economic statement carefully.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd be remiss if I didn't address Willy Noiles. He's part of my riding association.

Thank you for all the work you do.

And thank you to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada for being here this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, am very pleased to welcome a special guest, a former member of this Legislature, in the west public gallery, who served as the member for Kitchener Centre in the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments: Laura Mae Lindo.

Welcome back. It's great to see you.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

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

People in Ontario are working harder than ever and paying more than ever for rent, for mortgages, for groceries, for heat and hydro. While they try to make every single dollar stretch, the least they can expect is a government that's going to put every dollar to work for them, building homes, hiring doctors and fixing schools. But for the six years that this Conservative government has been in power, people have watched their tax dollars go to insider schemes and big corporations instead of those basics.

So my question is, why should any hard-working Ontarian believe that today's economic statement is going to make their lives better when this Premier has only ever put his insiders first?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I find it so ironic, coming from the opposition that voted against every tax cut that we've done.

As a matter of fact, we're the only government in recent memory that has never raised a tax. We reduced the tax. We reduced the tax when it comes to vehicle registration stickers. We reduced the tax on the 412 and 418—we got rid of the tolls. And the One Fare is saving people \$1,600 a year, travelling back and forth. We reduced the gas tax by 10.7 cents, saving families up to \$380, on average, every single year.

We're finally putting back into people's pockets, rather than the government's.

Every single person is going to get a \$200 rebate cheque so that they can stimulate the economy. They can go out and maybe buy their kids a pair of sneakers; go out for dinner.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: You've cut services. You've introduced user fees.

Life is harder and more expensive for Ontarians than it has ever been today in the province.

People are stuck—they're stuck waiting for a doctor, waiting for a home they can afford, waiting for someone in power to do something for them.

Today's economic statement could take steps to expand truly affordable housing, to put more doctors in our communities, to get lead pipes out of our kids' schools. Instead, people are going to see billions—billions—of their tax dollars go to private spa companies and private health companies and anyone else with a connection to this Conservative Party.

Why do the Premier's insiders get billions while working people get a one-off cheque and a pat on the head?

Interjections.

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

The Premier.

1050

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, let's just review the past week.

There are so many families who want to have a child and they can't. We've put a massive tax credit in for IVF. That's going to help over 20,000 families.

Mr. Speaker, we announced Learn and Stay for medical students—if they stay in the area for five years, we pay for their medical school.

We got rid of the 20% of foreign students coming in, taking our kids' medical seats. Now it's going to be 100% Canadian, 95% Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: Then we announced we're going to end congestion. We're getting rid of the bike lanes in Toronto and across Ontario because only one—

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

Interjections.

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The truth is, today, that life under this government, after six long years, is harder, is more expensive than it has ever been before, and Ontarians know that.

They know what this \$200 cheque is. They know it's a bid to win them over before an election, and they're not going to fall for it. They also know what this cheque is not—it is not a solution to the affordability crisis; it's not going to build the affordable homes people need, and it sure won't get them a family doctor. It's not going to leave them in a better place next month.

Speaker, will this fall economic statement give Ontarians what they paid for, or will they get more headaches instead of homes, delays instead of doctors, and schemes instead of schools?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, let's reverse: Six years ago when their party, the NDP, and the Liberals, chased 300,000 jobs out of this province, they were leaving in droves—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Independent members, come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: —talk about life being more affordable. There are over 860,000—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Let me repeat that: 860,000 people are collecting a bigger paycheque because they have a better job under our administration.

We're going to continue looking at ways to put money back into people's pockets.

The NDP and the Liberals believe in one thing: tax, tax, tax. Leave the province. Take your business down south.

We take a different approach. We have seen over \$70 billion of investment come to Ontario. We're an economic powerhouse around the world now, not just in Canada. We created 43,000 jobs last month. And 95% of all the jobs in Canada last month were created here—165,000 this year alone—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Minister of Transportation will come to order.

The next question.

HOME CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This is the same government that drove health care workers by the thousands out of this province because they tried to freeze their pay just when we needed them more than ever. So that's a bit rich.

People deserve a government that works just as hard as they do—one that puts their tax dollars to work making

their life easier, not more difficult. But after six long years of this Premier and his costly schemes and all his scandals, people are not getting what they paid for.

Just look at health care: Under the Conservatives, fewer people have a doctor. Hallway medicine is worse than it has ever been—even under the Liberals, my goodness. And there's a shortage of medical supplies for people who are relying on home care. It has been over a month—how many people are still facing these shortages today?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about health care.

When we walked in, hallway health care—a bankrupt system in the health care system.

We have spent \$33 billion more, total \$85 billion: 80,000—let me repeat that, 80,000—new nurses, 12,500 new doctors, 3,500 new acute-care beds, and we're adding another 3,000 because we're building 50 new hospitals or additions to hospitals with \$50 billion. That's what we're doing.

1050

We brought Dr. Philpott on side to make sure that not only are we leading the country with a connection of Ontario citizens to family physicians—we don't think that's good enough, because we only have 88%; we're going to fill that 12% gap. We're putting money towards health care like it has never been before.

Just call the CEOs of any hospital in Ontario and ask them, “Are you getting more support under this government or under the NDP?”—

Interjections.

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

The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Minister of Transportation will come to order.

Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, the proof is in the pudding, right? Under the Liberals, a thousand people a day were being treated in hallways in our hospitals. Today, that number is doubled under this government—great job.

They had one job to do: get medical supplies to vulnerable home care patients—just one little thing they had to do. They couldn't get it done.

Providing health care is a basic function of a provincial government. It is the right of every single Ontarian. But to this Premier, health care is just another opportunity for his insiders to make a buck—that's the truth—while everybody else gets left to fend for themselves, risking infection, injury, worse. They're left trying to source essential medical supplies on Amazon, for goodness' sake.

So my question is, are these patients supposed to wait for their \$200 cheque to buy their own medical supplies, or is this Premier going to fix the mess?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Opposition calling the 12,500 doctors and the 80,000 nurses we registered “insiders”? Because they're the people coming on board—or the 30,000 students, or the \$546 million that we're connecting over 600,000 people to primary care.

Mr. Speaker, the number one priority is always health care, and right beside it is the economy and making sure we have the proper infrastructure, which we're doing. We're building the 413. We're building the Bradford Bypass. We're building the 401 east. We're putting money into hospitals, putting money into schools—over \$16 billion we've invested in the budget in schools alone.

Mr. Speaker, we're rebuilding Ontario from the disaster that we ended up getting when we landed in 2018. I call it the bankrupt province—it's no longer bankrupt. People around the world are—

Interjections.

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

The member for Sudbury will come to order. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I'm not sure that anyone who's going without a pain pump or diabetes equipment is going to take comfort in that response from their Premier. As a first priority, people want the supplies they need to keep themselves and their family healthy. Then, they want answers to how this was allowed to happen.

We know that Bayshore health's lobbyist just happens to be the president of the PC Party of Ontario. So I want to know from this Premier—maybe that's why he's not rushing to fix this mess. Is that why that company got this sweetheart, insider deal with Ontario Health atHome? And shouldn't that contract require them to actually deliver the supplies?

Interjections.

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

The response, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The members opposite can throw accusations. We'll get things done.

As soon as we heard that there were distribution issues, we understood that we had to assist, and we immediately started working with Ontario Health atHome. We have special assistance teams with this vendor to make sure that people get the critical medical supplies and medications they need. We know it is unacceptable for people who are living at home and needing these supplies to have any delays.

In addition, we have ensured that any individual who went out and purchased necessary supplies can get those supplies reimbursed. Over 80% of those cheques are already being distributed. We know that we had to take action to ensure that people get the services they need.

But I have to look at the budget increase that we've had in home care in the province of Ontario—last year alone, a 10% increase in people accessing home care. We are—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier.

People across this province are struggling and they are hurting. Their rents are higher. They can't find a family doctor. Kids in our schools are learning in classrooms with leaky roofs, with garbage pails catching the water. Ontario has become a have-not province.

Today's fall economic statement gives this government an opportunity to right those wrongs and course-correct in a major way.

To the Premier: Will today's fall economic statement show a government that is willing to invest in the promise of this province—because this province could be such an amazing place for everybody, not just for the insiders—or should we expect more stale ideas, beer promises and bribes from this government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order. I think I can handle this. I appreciate the interventions of the members, but I think I can handle it.

I'm going to ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Just take a look at what we're doing in this province. We're rebuilding the economy, we're strengthening our health care, we're tackling gridlock, we're building infrastructure for our growing communities, and, yes, we are balancing the budget.

The Premier got up earlier and talked about how we're building this economy. Mr. Speaker, if you look, since 2018, the economy has grown by over \$300 billion, to \$1.1 trillion. That's good for workers. That's good for families. That's good for businesses. They're able to put food on the table. They're able to feel good about themselves. They're growing this province. And we're doing it together, under the leadership of this Premier, with all my caucus colleagues.

I'm looking forward to saying more this afternoon, in the fall economic statement.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Balancing a budget on the backs of the most vulnerable in the province of Ontario is nothing to brag about.

Under this government, taxpayers are not getting what they paid for. The government is failing at the very basics: education, health care, affordability, compassion.

Our public services are facing a shortfall of \$13.1 billion over the next three years.

This government is consumed with their schemes, their scandals, their fantasy tunnels. They are completely disconnected from the problems of everyday people in this province.

Election cheques won't make up for the fact that the cost to put a roof over your head has skyrocketed under this Premier.

To the Premier: Will today's balance sheet show taxpayers how much of their money is allocated to these pandering schemes at the expense of public services like health care?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: There you have it, Mr. Speaker: They're against putting taxpayer money back in their pockets. They're against families. They're against businesses. They're against building this economy. But it's no surprise; there isn't a tax that they haven't loved, a fee that they haven't wanted to increase.

We cut the gas tax again, helping families and businesses right across the province.

Their party just up the road—they support an increase to the carbon tax. They're taking money out of businesses' pockets. They're taking money out of people's pockets. That's their solution.

I think people are tired of the solutions coming from that opposition. They're supporting this party and our plan to build this province, support workers and support families.

1100

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Good-paying jobs that were lost under the Liberals are being brought back to the province. The Liberals turned their backs on southwestern Ontario, and hard-working families had to pay the price. Under their watch, factories closed, jobs were lost, and our manufacturing capacity was hollowed out. But now our government has created the conditions for job growth in every region of the province.

Over the summer, I joined the minister to welcome important manufacturing investments that will benefit the families in my riding and across the region.

Can the minister please share with this House some of the investments that have been made in Oxford?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, I can share what has happened in Oxford. They are a manufacturing powerhouse. Some \$93 million in new manufacturing has landed in Oxford. Vuteq Canada, automotive parts manufacturer—\$40-million investment, 145 new jobs. Trans-Mit Steel—\$23-million investment, 17 new jobs. Armtec, a great company in Tillsonburg—\$27 million to build a brand new facility. MTO Metal Products, a manufacturer of custom metal parts—\$2.5-million investment, 16 new jobs.

Speaker, these are all investments that are creating great-paying jobs for the hard-working families of Oxford. They're all here because we've lowered the cost of

business by \$8 billion annually. And these jobs are part of the 860,000 new jobs we've created in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary. The member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, in 2023, Ontario created more manufacturing jobs than all 50 US states combined. Our manufacturing sector that was crushed under the Liberals is thriving again.

It is a contrasting tale of two leaderships. The Liberals were content with watching goods that were once made in Ontario moving out. In contrast, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has created the conditions to restore Ontario's manufacturing might.

To all the job creators: If you're looking for a place to invest, Ontario is that place.

Over the summer, I joined the minister to welcome an important investment in Mississauga.

It's such refreshing news that the good-paying jobs are being created right here in the province of Ontario.

Can the minister please provide this Legislature an update on any other investments and expansions that are happening right here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We are seeing job-creating investments in every single part of our province.

Speaker, we were in Mississauga–Malton with the member as we cut the ribbon at First Choice Beverage. They are a Canadian producer of juice and dairy alternative products. They're investing \$50 million to boost their manufacturing capacity at their Mississauga facility, creating 20 new, good-paying jobs along the way.

With the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, we turned the sod at Golden Windows. This is a \$30-million investment. They're an Ontario-based manufacturer of windows and doors. They're building a 240,000-square-foot facility in Kitchener, adding 50 new, good-paying jobs.

Speaker, we've supported 135 projects, leveraged \$1.9 billion in new investment, and helped create 3,500 new jobs.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

Palliative care physicians from all over the province are still reaching out to me about the crisis in home care medical supplies. The minister's decision to hand off the last mile of medical supplies delivery to Bayshore is leaving palliative care patients in pain. It is also hurting small businesses, who for years have been handling medical supplies delivery to their communities, to their neighbours, and they all lost their contracts. This decision is bad for patients. It is bad for small businesses.

Speaker, how could this minister make a worse decision for home care patients and small businesses?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: While the member opposite and her party were voting down every single investment that we were making in home care in the province of Ontario—

they were voting against it. We have increased home care capacity in the province of Ontario.

Yes, absolutely, it's unacceptable that people cannot get their medical supplies and necessary medications on time. But we have acted quickly to ensure that Ontario Health atHome—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: —embeds themselves into that vendor to make sure that they get the necessary supplies, prioritizing palliative care patients, prioritizing people who need those necessary pieces of equipment. And we are seeing improvements. But I am not going to apologize for something that the vendor has done. We need to make sure that today, right now, it is focused on the patient and making sure that they get those supplies. We'll continue to do that work.

And I hope that the next time we expand home care in the province of Ontario, your party—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for St. Catharines, come to order. The member for Windsor West, come to order.

The member for Nickel Belt, supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad the minister recognizes that this crisis in home care is her responsibility.

There are other crises in health care.

A year ago, Catherine from Cornwall had her prescription renewed for a full year because her doctor was retiring and he knew full well that a walk-in clinic would not renew it. She has spent the last 11 months trying to find a doctor with no success. Ask the MPP for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; he knows all about it.

My constituent Yvon died of cardiac arrest last spring at the age of 60, two years after retirement. Yvon's doctor retired in 2020. His wife, Stasha, is absolutely certain that he would still be there if he had had access to a family doctor.

Will the minister admit today that she has also created the crisis in primary care?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: In the 2023 budget, we invested a billion dollars in home care—you voted against. In the 2024 budget, we invested \$2 billion in home care, which you voted against. Our additional investments mean that over 700,000 people are now accessing home care in the province of Ontario who were unable to prior.

You will hear in today's financial economic statement an investment and expansion of a Learn and Stay program that has been incredibly successful for nurses, for our northern Ontario paramedics, for lab techs. We're now expanding that program to physicians who choose to study family medicine in the province of Ontario.

The investments that we are making, whether it is in the short term, the long term or in the medium term, mean that,

finally, we have a government and a Premier who is investing the necessary money to ensure that our home care and our health care is there for the people who need it across Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. David Smith: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

Costs keep rising in Ontario in terms of groceries, gas—everything is more expensive, and the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is making it worse.

Our government has not raised taxes, and we are working to keep costs down for families.

The previous Liberal government raised taxes year after year after year. They raised taxes on everything.

Unlike the Liberals and the NDP, our government believes that we should work to make life easier for the people of Ontario.

Can the minister please share what our government is doing to help put money back in people's pockets?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the member for that question.

Our government is focused on making life easier for the people of Ontario. Whether it's building new transit and highways to make it easier to get around or taking steps to save people money, we are focused on ensuring that Ontario remains one of the best places to live, work and raise a family.

1110

The previous government's record is clear. They introduced a provincial carbon tax. They raised fees on drivers' licences. They raised fees on Drive Clean. And they raised the gas tax, making it more expensive to fill your tank.

Our government has taken a different approach. We cut the provincial carbon tax. We froze drivers' licence fees. We removed the fee on the Drive Clean program. And we have cut the gas tax by over 10 cents a litre.

Speaker, our PC government, under the leadership of this Premier, will continue to put more money back in people's pockets and save families money.

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

Mr. David Smith: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his answer.

Our government needs to make life easier for families and business in Ontario. But when families need help, Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals keep voting against saving people money. They are out of touch, elite and expensive. When they were in power, they ignored Ontarians.

I know the Premier and our government are taking action to save people money.

Can the parliamentary assistant share more about what our government is doing to make life more affordable for people in Ontario?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you again to my friend from Scarborough Centre.

It's disappointing that the Liberals and the NDP refuse to support common-sense solutions to make life more affordable. They voted against the One Fare program. They voted against removing double fares for transit riders between GO Transit and local transit agencies. The One Fare program saves the average commuter \$1,600 per year. When she was mayor of Mississauga, Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie raised Mississauga transit fares for students, for adults and for seniors.

Speaker, the difference couldn't be more clear. We're standing up to save families money. The NDP and the Liberals want to make life more expensive.

My colleague is right; the Liberals and the NDP could not be more out of touch.

We're the only party fighting to keep costs down for the people of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: While our kids are in schools with floods, crumbling ceilings and lead in the drinking water, this government is forcing school boards to print and post signs at schools promoting the government. They're even making school boards pay for the signs with funds that could be going to fix the schools or, you know, getting the lead out of the drinking water.

How can the Minister of Education justify this scenario to taxpayers, who expect their money to go to safe and healthy schools for our kids, rather than to self-promotion by a government in trouble?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Markham–Unionville and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Billy Pang: I thank the member for the question.

My ministry consistently allocates almost \$1.4 billion each year to school boards to renew and improve their school facilities. These investments are making a difference on the ground in schools—such as HVAC improvements, roof repairs, and renewal of building electrical and plumbing systems.

Unfortunately, while we were making the necessary improvements in schools, boards were not even spending all the money we were giving them, leading to hundreds of millions of dollars being carried forward each year. This practice was not a good use of our tax dollars, and as a result, we had to introduce time limits for spending school renewal allocations.

The members of the opposition should be thanking us for ensuring that taxpayer money is now being used efficiently rather than defending fiscal waste—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Mr. Billy Pang: We are ensuring that our public dollars are being used efficiently, while also ensuring that students can continue to learn in a safe and secure setting.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This isn't the first time we've seen such incredible disrespect from this government. Last year, the Auditor General criticized the Minister of Education for spending over \$4 million in taxpayer dollars on partisan ads. According to the Auditor General, these ads put forward claims that lacked context or evidence. The government spent this money while kids didn't have mental health supports, education assistants, or even teachers.

Why does this government constantly think they can use public money for self-promotion instead of where Ontario residents want to see it go—towards supporting our kids?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My colleague has explained that it is not a new requirement to have Ontario Builds signs on capital projects like new schools and renovations. But what the member opposite failed to mention is that these are the same school boards that spent \$38,000 on Blue Jays games. They wasted \$145,000 on a lavish trip to Italy.

The opposition party can play politics on the issue, but what we are focused on is building schools. We're focused on building child care spaces.

I want to thank the Minister of Education for announcing two new schools in my riding of Brampton West.

We're focused on making investments. We're focused on building medical schools. We're focused on building hospitals.

Do you know what these blue signs mean? These blue signs mean we're making investments.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Hsu: We hear countless stories from the 2.5 million Ontarians this government has left without a family doctor.

Two constituents in Kingston and the Islands who served with the Canadian Forces were left with no family doctor when they finished their service. One is a teacher who was sent overseas for a two-year posting and, when they returned, couldn't get re-rostered with their local clinic anymore. Another is a discharged CF member who has mental health complications, uses walk-in clinics, but struggles with having to explain their mental health history over and over again every time they see a new doctor.

I ask this government, why is this okay?

Will the minister make a way for people who have served with the military to have family doctors when they finish serving their country?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite raises an important issue, and I'm happy to take that away and see what we can do. But I also have to ask him to look in the mirror.

Look at your party's history. You were a party that cut 50 medical seats, which now means that almost 350 physicians who could have been trained in the province of Ontario are not here.

Do a compare and contrast. While you were cutting medical seats while you were in government—we have expanded. We've expanded medical seats in every single

medical school in the province of Ontario—almost doubling them in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. We have now announced, and next September we will have, a medical school in the city of Brampton.

The contrast between what you did while your party was in government and what we have been able to do in six short years and will continue to do with the announcement now, and ensuring that Dr. Philpott is leading primary care expansion in the province, that's getting—

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: This doesn't have to be so partisan.

I once attended a dinner to recruit a New York family doctor to Kingston. What might they have heard? Well, OHIP billing hasn't paid for inflated costs. And then, this government lowballed doctors during the latest fee negotiations, making an offer the arbitrator called "completely unrealistic." What else did they hear? Well, the system makes doctors spend hours phoning around their networks, begging specialists to take their patients, handling the deluge of faxes on meds checks or minor ailments, or tracking down a missing fax the hospital sent to the MPP's home phone by mistake. This New York doctor might have been swayed by the 5,000 Ontario family doctors who walked away from family medicine.

Why won't this government just fix the system and get more family doctors for the 2.5 million who don't have one?

Interjections.

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

I'm sure that's an interesting conversation under way between the member for Ottawa South and the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, but question period is still under way, and I'd ask them to wait until after question period is over, perhaps, to continue the conversation.

Start the clock.

The Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: With the greatest of respect—the member opposite just admitted what hadn't been done in the previous Liberal government.

1120

Yes, we are absolutely dealing with this. We have been seized with it since Premier Ford came into office. Expansion of medical schools; expansion of seats; expansion to ensure that our residency students who want to practise in Ontario, who want to have a seat in Ontario, will now have that as a result of this afternoon's fall economic statement—we are absolutely getting this done.

Frankly, if the two parties opposite had actually done their planning and work, we would not be in this position and we would not have to be rebuilding the way we've had to.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

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

Across Ontario, we know there is a housing crisis. Communities are growing. Young people, families, and new Ontarians all need places to call home. But building homes is only part of the answer. We also need the right infrastructure to support those homes—roads, schools, and especially water systems—because without the proper water and waste water infrastructure, new housing cannot happen. It is one thing to approve housing, but it's another one to ensure those houses have the infrastructure they need.

Can the minister please update the Legislature on what our government is doing to ensure municipalities have the water systems in place to support new housing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton West and parliamentary assistant can reply for the government.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member for the question.

I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to rise in the Legislature this morning to speak about what our government is doing to accelerate housing starts, particularly with our Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund.

Our government was re-elected with an even larger mandate on the commitment that we would get housing and infrastructure built. Through the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, we are doing just that. Our \$970-million investment for water and waste water is paving the way for all municipalities all over the province—and we hear the good news every day.

For those municipalities that haven't applied yet, I have got good news for you: The second intake of applications is currently open; the deadline to apply is 4:59 p.m. on November 1, 2024. If your municipality wants to build, our government will stand side by side with them, get shovels in the ground and get it done.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for the response.

In every part of our province, we see the need for more homes. We know that our communities are ready to grow, and we know that they need the right support to make it happen. Local leaders are telling us they are ready to build and people are eager to move in.

But we know that building homes is only one part of the plan. Without the right funding for the essential infrastructure, they are limited in what they can do. Water and waste water systems are not just extras; they are necessities for any new home to get built. This funding can make all the difference, bringing jobs and homes to these communities.

Would the parliamentary assistant please share how this funding is impacting local economies and helping municipalities keep housing costs low?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member for that supplementary question.

Minister Surma and Premier Ford had the privilege of spending their busy summer travelling across Ontario,

seeing first-hand how this funding will positively benefit municipalities and Ontarians.

Just this past Monday, Premier Ford announced \$34.9 million in funding, which will help build over 3,300 homes in Greater Sudbury. We know these actions get results, and so does Mayor Lefebvre of Sudbury, who told our government, "This \$35-million" investment "is a truly historic infrastructure investment in Greater Sudbury—the largest one-time funding commitment we have ever received from the province."

When Minister Surma was in Vaughan to announce \$35 million which will support the construction of 20,000 homes, former Liberal leader and current Vaughan mayor Steven Del Duca said, "We are in the midst of a housing affordability crisis, and this is an all-hands-on-deck moment for all leaders. I look forward to continuing to work with the provincial government to build a bright future."

Speaker, what every municipality that received funding had in common was these municipalities want to build—

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

The next question.

MISSING PERSONS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier.

It has been over two weeks since Logan went missing from his home in Havelock-Belmont-Methuen—a vulnerable, autistic 18-year-old who has other needs, including ADHD and anxiety.

Over a year and a half ago, I stood in this House and introduced a critical and vital private member's bill: Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act. Bill 74 is at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, stalled with no action. It has been there since March.

Premier, when are you going to bring back Bill 74, pass it, and help missing persons like Logan be located close to home?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Through you, Speaker, to the member: I understand private members' bills can be a bit of a frustrating process.

I had a question the other day from the member from Carleton, and I quoted a stat that, when I first came into the Legislature in 2010, I was told: that, since Confederation—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Steve Clark: If the member will allow me to answer her question—when I was first here, I was told by legislative research that, since Confederation, about 3% of private members' bills actually make it into legislation.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Steve Clark: If the member will allow me to answer—I've had private members' bills pass. I've been pretty lucky, because I made a decision that, rather than playing politics on the floor about standing committees,

I'd actually roll up my sleeves, walk across the floor and talk to the minister involved and ask how we can work together. I was successful. I made some decisions.

I say to the member, you can make those same decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: I can't control what happens on the government side.

All I know is that the former government House leader promised a family that this would be passed, that this would become law, that this would save lives. Unfortunately, the new House leader does not see it that way. He would rather play politics.

Thankfully, as of this morning, Logan has been found—16 days after he left his home. Many in the community were unaware that Logan was even missing. The OPP used every tool they had available; an alert was not one of them. Bill 74 would have brought another option, a localized and swift action to alert those who may have seen Logan within those two weeks. It would have been another tool in the tool box to ensure our most vulnerable people have those around them looking out, on high alert.

Premier, I'm thankful that Logan has been located. This could have happened sooner.

When are you going to pass Bill 74 so all tools are available when vulnerable people go missing in our communities?

Interjections.

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

The government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member: On behalf of the government, we're so pleased that Logan has been found and is safe. We want to thank all of the first responders, everyone who worked on this. It's a real testament to how the system works. I'm very pleased that Logan has been found.

Again, I've said to the member, there are ways to work collaboratively on private members' bills. I know the numbers are not in their favour. But I can say, for myself, my private member's bill—I tabled it three times. I amended it three times. I sat with the minister. I sat with—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I was able to have that collaboration. I hope that the member will take my advice.

Again, on behalf of the government, we want to say to Logan and his family, we're so pleased that the outcome is what it is. We want to thank the first responders for doing such a great job.

HEALTH CARE

MPP Andrea Hazell: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Today, the government will release their fall economic statement. This will be their sixth one since 2018—six,

Mr. Speaker. Six statements—and what do they have to show for it? Well, 2,000 people a day are being treated in emergency waiting rooms, hallways and stairwells; ER wait times have increased by 48%; 11,000 people died waiting for surgery or diagnostic procedures; and 2.5 million Ontarians do not have a family doctor.

In my riding, seniors tell me they are scared to get sick because they see the state of the ERs.

1130

So if this government has had five chances to show they care about health care, why should anybody believe them the sixth time around?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member opposite for allowing me to do a bit of a recap of what has been happening in the last six years—rebuilding a health care system that was, frankly, ignored under previous NDP and Liberal governments.

As I've said previously, two new medical schools in Brampton, in Scarborough and York region—and in York region, they are going to actually practise and train family physicians' focus.

Every single medical school in the province of Ontario now has additional seats available for students who want to practise and train in the province of Ontario—expanding the number of residency seats available in the province of Ontario.

The first year I was elected and appointed to the Ministry of Health—directing the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to quickly assess, review and, ultimately, license internationally educated physicians.

Mr. Adil Shamji: And you didn't act on their recommendations.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I know the member opposite doesn't want to hear this.

The truth is, we are making investments that you and your party ignored for far too long.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East will come to order.

Supplementary question.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's back to the Premier: I understand what this government's priorities are, based on the information I just received—and it's basically even not the 32,000 residents in Etobicoke North who do not have a family doctor.

Six statements—let me tell you what the government has to show for it. An \$8.3-billion greenbelt giveaway; a criminal RCMP investigation; \$1 billion just to get booze into corner stores a year earlier; negotiated one of the worst deals in Ontario's history, spending \$2 billion of taxpayers' money to sell off Ontario Place to a foreign-owned spa—all of this while 1,200 ERs were closed in 2023; 200,000 people are waiting for tests; 11,000 deaths, waiting for addiction treatment.

This is the state of health care in Ontario. Today, will he finally make health care a priority, or will he continue

to focus on his friends instead of the people of his province?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Oh, Speaker, I'm not done; facts matter. So, 50 capital build expansions, including in Scarborough Health Network, a community that has been ignored for far too long—we're making that investment in the Scarborough Health Network. We're making sure that students who want to practise and train as primary care practitioners, as clinicians, as nurses, are getting those opportunities in Scarborough.

And then when I think of our February announcement—78 new or expanded primary care expansion teams across Ontario.

We are getting it done because we are making the investments in our young people, in our students, in our capital projects, in our hospitals, in our community care and, yes, even in hospice—because we understand that health care is a system. When I had the opportunity to go and announce the first hospice in the province of Ontario and Canada that will, indeed, be on First Nations land—that's getting it done.

SENIORS' SERVICES

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Seniors in my riding of Essex are looking for ways to stay active and involved in the community. They want to stay socially connected because they know that social isolation is enemy number one. They want to have access to programs and services that are specifically designed for seniors, and they want to have those programs close to their homes in Essex county.

Can the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility please tell the House what our government is doing to help seniors stay active and socially connected?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Essex for that very important question and for working so hard for seniors in Essex.

We just recently issued the quarterly funds of over \$3.8 million to the 316 seniors active living centres across Ontario. That is why we are able to open two brand new centres in Essex this past year. This funding makes sure that our seniors in Essex and all over Ontario have programs and services that keep our seniors fit, active, healthy, socially connected, close to their homes and in their communities, and so they can avoid social isolation.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that answer. It's exciting to know that the government of Ontario is providing programs and services to help people in my riding.

Seniors need to know that the funds for those programs and services that we're talking about are going to be there for them in their communities and close to their homes. I'm talking about communities like Amherstburg and Kingsville and Belle River. Those are places right in Essex county. Seniors in these communities are looking to the

government to commit to the funding, not just today, but also in the future.

Will the minister please tell us how much money those seniors active living centres will receive, and will that funding stay in place?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Mr. Speaker, thanks to Premier Ford, I can assure the member that seniors active living centres will continue to receive the funding needed so that seniors receive the programs and services they deserve. This is why every seniors active living centre is now receiving up to \$50,000 a year, up from \$42,000 last year. This shows that we are not only committed to maintain the funding, but we have expanded funding for these important centres. These seniors centres are doing great things for our seniors.

Thanks to our leadership, we are getting it done for seniors in Essex and all over Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

ENERGY POLICIES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thanks. Interesting, though, because this week I received a letter from a constituent in the neighbouring riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan asking me to lobby for the same heat pump rebates offered to Kenora and 16 other Ontario municipalities. The grants are \$5,000 for above-ground and \$10,000 for ground-source heat pumps.

If people in Kenora, Barrie, Ottawa and Toronto are being offered these subsidies, what is stopping the province from offering the same heat pump subsidies to all communities in Ontario?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for the question.

The member has accurately defined a problem that is solved in the Affordable Energy Act. I would encourage the members opposite to read the legislation that's tabled in this House. You would think they would vote in favour of it, because what the act does is, it gives the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, the capacity and the legal ability to provide efficiency programs to every region of Ontario—not just constrained to regions which currently represent 30% of the population.

So if the member is urging the government to help all families access heat pumps or conservation initiatives or home renovations, then they will announce today support for the Affordable Energy Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: If this is accurate, hurray. I look forward to being able to tell the people of Marathon, who asked me—they would like to see their community switch to heat pumps as a way to reduce their carbon footprint and reduce costs.

It is puzzling that there were 17 communities offered those rebates when so many other communities were not

offered anything. I don't know what's so special about Kenora, for example. In communities on the north shore of Lake Superior and many other communities on Highway 11 and going as far north to Nakina, heating is provided by electric baseboards, oil, propane or wood, and they could all benefit enormously from a transition to heat pumps.

So I would like to hear—let's hear a yes. It sounds like it could be a yes. Will it be a yes? Will the government provide the same opportunities offered to Kenora to all other communities in Ontario?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Energy and Electrification.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the member asked rhetorically, "What's so special about Kenora?" I would argue there are a lot of special things about northwestern Ontario. Every region of Ontario is worthy of conservation.

The driver behind the Affordable Energy Act is to reduce the bills, after they increased by 300% under the former Liberals. I think the member and I would agree on the disastrous record that we cannot go back to.

The difference, though, between the opposite New Democrats and Conservatives is, we're standing up against the carbon tax, which exacerbates, which compounds the problem in northern Ontario as prices increase, because it's expensive to use, yes, oil for home heating this winter.

So if the objective is to lower bills, if the objective is to expand conservation to all regions, not just to 30%, then I urge the members to put money where their mouth is and vote for the Affordable Energy Act.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development.

Communities in the north, like my own of Sault Ste. Marie, have some challenges. As we like to say, sometimes we have to work twice as hard to get half as far in the north—and, certainly, specifically in my community of the Soo. This is not an area that was treated so fondly in the past by the NDP-Liberal coalition, who once referred to places like Sault Ste. Marie as a "no man's land," or northern Ontario as "no man's land." I know we have some challenges. We recognize there are challenges.

Perhaps the minister can tell this House what some of the steps are and some of the specific investments our government is making to help people in the north who face some of these very specific challenges and struggles in the area.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and the member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the member for his question and his tireless advocacy for the north. It's very much appreciated.

Upon being elected in 2018, the Ministry of Northern Development went through a strategic redesign of the

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. The new and improved and revamped NOHFC now serves more business owners, more communities and more Indigenous workers than ever before. Under the Liberals, about 1% of the NOHFC investments went to Indigenous businesses and communities. I'd like to announce that, thanks to our revamping, we are proud that last year, we had a business quarter where 20% of the investments went to Indigenous businesses and communities.

The NOHFC fosters economic growth, job creation and workforce development throughout the north, benefiting communities of all sizes, both rural and urban, including Indigenous communities.

Since June 2018, the NOHFC has invested more than \$841 million in 6,894 projects in northern Ontario.

We are going to continue making strategic investments across the north so that families can thrive and live their best lives.

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

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I just wanted to welcome Victoria Eghomwanne. She is visiting from Brampton to watch the fall economic statement today—happy to have her here.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to take a moment to introduce my OLIP intern Ayesha Ali. Well, thanks to Minister Cho, the secret is out: Today is the fall economic statement and Ayesha's birthday, so happy birthday, Ayesha.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

BUILDING ONTARIO FOR YOU ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO POUR VOUS (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 216, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 216, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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 minister care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Speaker, I look forward to speaking to this bill during my ministerial statement.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1485997 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2024

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr51, An Act to revive 1485997 Ontario Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It's always an honour to rise.

I've developed a tradition—I think this is my eighth FES, fall economic statement—to acknowledge someone, and I'm going to acknowledge Peter Bethlenfalvy. Now, before you think I'm being a little immodest here, that's my father's cousin who will be visiting this weekend from Brussels, from Europe. He works for the International Organization for Migration and he's had a long career with the European Union, so welcome to Canada, Peter Bethlenfalvy—and, of course, to my dad, who is watching right now.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Premier Ford and our entire government, it is my honour today to present to you Ontario's 2024 fall economic statement. As you are aware, the statement serves as an update on the government's previous spring budget and, Mr. Speaker, the news is good. But just as importantly, this statement serves as an opportunity for our government to lead with real action for Ontarians.

Despite the progress we have made as a government over the past six years, the province still is facing enormous challenges, from historic population growth and geopolitical uncertainty to the persistently high cost of living. But thanks to the efforts of Ontario workers and businesses, helped by real leadership from the government with a long-term plan, we can afford to enhance our plan to build so that we can meet these problems head-on, because, today, Mr. Speaker, we are in a position to do more. We are in a position to build more, and yes, we're in a position to put more money back in the hard-working pockets of Ontario taxpayers.

Here's why, Mr. Speaker: Ontario's finances are in better shape today than they ever have been in decades. Earlier this year, Ontario received a credit rating upgrade, reversing a trend of downgrades under the mismanagement of the previous Liberal government. We have slashed our deficits, and, in fact, this year we have received a credit rating upgrade, reversing a trend of rating downgrades. Those deficits that are slashed have allowed us to project a deficit this fiscal year of \$6.6 billion, an improvement of \$3.2 billion from the budget, followed by a \$1.5-billion

deficit, and then, Mr. Speaker, this government will balance the budget.

Now, this lower deficit came thanks to a number of different factors, including higher revenues, lower borrowing and, of course, lower interest on debt and lower deficits. In fact, our interest on debt, relative to revenues, is currently at its lowest level since the 1980s, and our debt-to-GDP ratio, which is a measure of our fiscal health, remains at the best level in about a decade.

This is very good news for Ontario taxpayers. It means that when the province needs to borrow, we can do it at a lower cost. In fact, Ontario now has the lowest borrowing costs of any province in Canada, saving taxpayers \$1.2 billion that we are now able to reinvest back into the people of Ontario.

Getting to this point is the result of strong fiscal management, and it was not easy, nor was it automatic. Now let's dare to compare the Ontario of today to the Ontario we inherited. All you have to do—and I'm going to ask for a little audience participation—is to tell me whether this is good or bad.

Let's start with a simple one. Under the Liberals, 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in the province. Red tape held back investment, energy costs soared and fees and taxes on businesses were high. Tell me, is that good or bad?

Interjections: Bad.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Now, let's compare. Our government has saved business almost \$8 billion and cut red tape for businesses. We've attracted \$44 billion in auto and EV-related investments over the past four years that will help create over 14,000 jobs. How about that? Is that good or bad?

Interjections: Good.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals champion the carbon tax, which is increasing the cost of groceries and other goods across the province. Tell me, good or bad?

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Work with me here. Bad.

Interjection: Very bad.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Very bad, very bad.

As for us, we've cut the gas tax by 5.7 cents a litre and 5.3 cents on fuel, and I'm proud to announce we'll once again be seeking to extend this gas tax cut until June 2025.

Interjections: That's good.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I agree with them. They said this is good. I agree.

Or, Mr. Speaker, the tolls: The opposition support road tolls. They tolled Highways 412 and 418 in Durham. Good or bad?

Interjections: Bad.

1310

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, we eliminated the tolls on the 412 and 418, and we'll be banning any new banning tolls on provincial highways, including the Gardiner and the DVP. Let me answer this one on behalf of the residents of Durham and all of Ontario: That is very good indeed.

The previous government increased fees: aviation fuel fees, beer tax, wine tax, driver licence fees. They made life more expensive for everyone. Good or bad?

Interjections: Bad.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: We've eliminated licence plate stickers and renewal fees, introduced One Fare for GTA transit riders, frozen tuition fees, frozen park fees and have returned almost \$12 billion back into the pockets of individuals and families.

Today, Mr. Speaker, our commitment to affordability continues. Ontarians, like Canadians, are grappling with the aftermath of inflation, high interest rates and the federal carbon tax. While we didn't create this crisis, make no mistake: The Premier, I and our entire government are determined to do something about it.

Now, there are only a certain amount of levers that a provincial government can pull to address high inflation or high interest rates, but we do have options. With our new, stronger fiscal position, we can now afford to provide real relief for families to help them in a time of challenge. We know that people aren't looking for some money back in time for next year's taxes; frankly, that's too late. They need real support, and they need it now. That's why our government is moving forward to provide an extraordinary payment of \$200 to every single eligible taxpayer in Ontario. If you file your return, you'll get a payment, and we're providing \$200 per child under the age of 18, meaning a family of five will receive \$1,000.

Mr. Speaker, I'm under no illusions that this will relieve all of the affordability pressures facing Ontario families, but it will help. It's real support, and most importantly, it allows the people of Ontario to choose how they can use this money to best help themselves. In fact, this year Ontario families are saving almost \$12 billion through our policies of keeping taxes and fees low and giving more money back to the hard-working people of this province.

Our stronger fiscal position also allows us to continue to invest in building a stronger economy, for our plan very much remains a plan to build. Earlier this spring, we were all excited to be part of Honda's extraordinary, historic \$15-billion investment in our EV supply chain, a truly generational investment. This builds on the billions of investments that have come before, whether Stellantis in Windsor, Volkswagen in St. Thomas, Goodyear in Napanee or countless others, because it's investments like these will help rebuild our economy and create more jobs.

As the one-stop shop for those looking to make business in our province, Invest Ontario has helped attract over \$4 billion in investments that are expected to create over 4,000 jobs. To keep that momentum going, we're allocating an additional \$100 million to Invest Ontario to secure more strategic investments in a number of key industries, one of them being the life sciences.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that Ontario is actually the largest life sciences hub anywhere in Canada? That's yet another sector ripe with opportunity for growth, opportunity that we're seizing, which is why we're investing an additional \$146 million in our government's life sciences strategy, to help fuel growth in the entire sector and our entire economy.

Economic growth is happening everywhere, from east to west, from south to north. As a matter of fact, we are the first government to make steady progress in working with northern Ontario First Nations to unlock that awesome potential of the critical minerals in the Ring of Fire. We're doing more to power this economic renewal with new sources of energy.

Today, under the leadership of the Minister of Energy and Electrification, we are pursuing the largest energy procurement in the history of Ontario and leaving nothing off the table: nuclear; hydro; renewables; natural gas; biomass, including the long-term refurbishment of the Pickering generating station.

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Now that's something I would applaud.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's economy needs to keep growing and our energy supply needs to keep growing because our population continues to grow. This growing population—a file mismanaged by the federal government—has put incredible strains on our housing, on our health care, on our highways and on our transit system. That is why our plan is a plan to keep building the roads, keep building the highways, keep building the transit we need to get drivers out of gridlock and back to their homes.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade has estimated that the cost of traffic and congestion in the GTA alone is \$11 billion a year. That's a significant cost. Others are choosing to make the problem even worse by further congesting our streets by ripping up roadways to build almost-empty bike lanes. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's why we're retroactively putting in place new rules that will require municipalities to seek provincial approval before ever installing a bike line that would reduce traffic.

We're choosing to act, where the previous Liberal government failed to do so. We're going to get it done. Let me just list a few things: the 413; the Bradford Bypass; the Ontario Line; two-way, all-day GO; the 401 west; the 401 east; the QEW skyway; Highway 7 from Markham—wait for it—to Pickering; and now, a new feasibility study to relieve the most gridlocked highway in North America by building a tunnel under the 401.

We will leave no stone unturned to help Ontario drivers get out of gridlock and get back home and invest in Ontario's future.

This list, of course, wouldn't be complete without our government's unprecedented investments in our health care sector. While our spring budget included record investments to build and expand and upgrade more hospitals and grow the pool of available medical professionals needed to staff them, this fall we're extending the Learn and Stay Grant to help encourage medical students in Ontario to work as family doctors in their communities. And we're making changes that put our residents first when they apply to medical schools in Ontario, because the more doctors who come from here, the more likely they are to stay here.

While we lead Canada in the number of doctors per person, there is more work to do. That is why we have

appointed Dr. Jane Philpott to lead our new primary care action team. We're building healthier communities because we want to build healthier families.

But we recognize that sometimes many families face unique challenges on their way and their journey to parenthood. Barriers to entry such as high costs and long wait-lists keep many families from accessing helpful fertility programs. That's why we're moving forward with an investment of an additional \$150 million to expand the Ontario Fertility Program and help more Ontarians realize their dream of having children of their own.

I'd be remiss not thanking my many colleagues in this House: Natalia Kusendova, Christine Hogarth, Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Caroline Mulroney—many people in this House—the Minister of Health, and not least of which, the Premier of Ontario, who supported this program and this investment.

We have more work to do and a lot more to do to make things happen. That's why we're leveraging the most ambitious capital plan in provincial history, with over \$191 billion invested over 10 years so that future generations have strong infrastructure.

We're increasing the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund by \$100 million for 326 predominantly small, rural and northern municipalities. You need the will to see the big projects through and you need the workers. Just last month, our government announced \$26 million for a new LIUNA training facility in Vaughan, part of our \$224 million Skills Development Fund Capital Stream. That's in addition to our investment of \$260 million in the latest round of the Skills Development Fund Training Stream that will add on to the nearly 600,000 workers we've already retrained and re-skilled.

1320

Our government has now introduced five—count them—five Working for Workers bills designed to promote safer, fairer, more accessible and more rewarding options for Ontario workers. One of the most important things we can do for all workers and all Ontario families, quite frankly, is ensure that they can live and work in safe neighbourhoods free from harassment and free from crime. That's why we're cracking down on auto theft; cracking down on violent crime, including violence against police officers; cracking down on hate crimes against schools and synagogues; cracking down on an epidemic of illegal drug use, including the opioid crisis. The response from others has been to turn a blind eye to these problems. If they will not lead, we will.

Premier Ford is continuing to lead national calls for the federal government to stop dragging its feet on bail reform that will keep violent offenders out of our neighbourhoods and behind bars. You know what? We're investing in new tools to combat the scourge of gang violence and auto thefts. We will be shutting down—and banning—drug consumption close to schools and child care centres. Let's keep the consumption of drugs away from our kids and get people the treatment and recovery they need.

The thread connecting all of our actions is clear: This is a government that listens—this is a government and then

acts. We're a government that doesn't say, "cannot," and instead asks, "Why not?" This is what leadership looks like and that is what you can count on from this Premier, this government and all of caucus to do. We're going to continue building Ontario. Let's do it together. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to start a new tradition. I'm going to dedicate my response to the fall economic statement to my parents Allan and Sheila Wood in Peterborough, and Mel and Carol Chesson in Almonte. They are seniors who are concerned about health care in this province. They are concerned about affordability, and as seniors, they are not alone. We have them at the centre of our attention as a party, I can tell you that.

This fall economic statement indicates that this government is so disconnected from the people of Ontario, and the proof is in the numbers. Our leader has said that disappointment is the only thing that this government can deliver, not meaningful solutions to your struggles—we agree. For families that are truly in pain, literally, waiting for medication in home care or the anguish of not having mental health supports for your child or your parent, did this mini budget address this crisis? It did not. Even when we proposed a mental health solution in this House earlier this week—30,000 children are on a wait-list waiting for mental health supports—30,000.

This government, though, couldn't find money to address this crisis, but they sure could find \$650 million to subsidize a European spa's parking lot at Ontario Place. That's all you need to know about the priorities of this government. The inconvenient truth, which this Premier seems to be allergic to: Ontario is now a have-not province. We received \$570 million this year from the Trudeau government in equalization payments. Can you imagine? Can you imagine Ontario, the economic engine of this country, going cap-in-hand to Justin Trudeau to ask him for some financial support? That is the state of affairs under the leadership of this government. Listen, we shouldn't be here, because we actually have the capacity to meet our needs, if you invest appropriately, if you invest in the future.

Housing starts: We can all agree, housing is a crisis in this province. People in Waterloo region have called it a humanitarian crisis, and it is, across this entire province. Housing starts are down, from 87,000 to 81,000. You're not going to meet your target of 125,000 new housing units. You will never, if you continue on this pathway, ever meet the 1.5 million new homes that Ontario needs. Your stubbornness on not addressing the need for non-market housing is a true failure of leadership.

I do want to also remind the government that while you're subsidizing the Ontario Place European spa, 28,000 people in this province are waiting for supportive housing, right? What is this government's plan, Speaker? The "notwithstanding" clause, as if you can make people, human beings in this province disappear.

This government appears distracted, quite honestly, by their own incompetence, talking about paper bags at the

LCBO and the \$100-billion fantasy tunnels, which, given this government's propensity for alcohol, maybe turns into a funnel. Who knows, Mr. Speaker?

Meanwhile, emergency room wait times are up, if you have an emergency room in Ontario, if one is open in rural or northern Ontario. Hallway health care has doubled under this government. They doubled the Liberals' terrible record. Talk about overachieving. Liberals used to call these promises "stretch goals." Well, you have over-achieved. You've doubled the number of people each day in a hallway.

The government loves to tell us that life is better in Ontario than six years ago, but for who? Well, we know who is benefiting from this government. You have to have access to the Premier and to his cellphone number to access contracts, and it's definitely not the people that we're elected to serve. How can you not see this and how can you not see the people across this province, especially if you have a child with autism—73,000 children are on the wait-list for autism services. An aging parent who requires specialized care? Not in this fall economic statement. If you're one of the 2.5 million Ontarians that does not have a doctor, does this document deal with this? Absolutely not. If you live in rural Ontario and don't have access to a doctor, to an emergency room, or if you're up north and you're pregnant, you have to drive 800 kilometres to access medical attention. This is the Ontario that you brag about.

You had an opportunity with this fall economic statement to course-correct. It's astounding to us, on this side of the House, that you missed this opportunity. I want to say that the 234,000 homeless people—this is your record that you are bragging about. Nothing in this fall economic statement addresses that need. Speaker, honestly, even when you look at the small increase, it's actually to address the remedy for Bill 124. This government went to court and spent \$4.3 million to defend an unconstitutional piece of legislation. Those are your priorities, and that's a shameful record for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the minister's fall economic statement. It's not a pretty picture in this Premier's Ontario: 2.5 million people without a family doctor, including 30,000 in my riding and 32,000 in the Premier's. His friends get a billion dollars—and nursing agencies—from taxpayers. We've got 120,000 more people unemployed under this Premier than under the last one, who actually decreased unemployment by 1.6%. Rent is up 83%. Food bank use is at an all-time high. And this government, despite its chest-beating, has actually added over \$100 billion to our net debt. We owe more money per capita than ever. Once again, the Conservatives did not take the opportunity to fix their 2018 promise. It remains a broken promise to deliver a middle-income tax cut.

1330

They did not deliver a tax cut to small businesses; instead, we have a slowing economy, a decrease in jobs,

and, according to StatsCan—again, despite their chest beating—only 5,000 manufacturing jobs have been created in this province since this Premier took office. The real picture is they have tunnel vision.

I do agree with the minister on one thing: There is more to do. Too bad it's not more for you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, I join people desperately searching for a home they can afford, a doctor they can visit, access to mental health care in saying that billionaires and millionaires do not deserve a \$200 cheque from this government.

This government has abandoned young people who are leaving Ontario because they can't afford to buy a home, full-time workers who cannot afford the rent, people who are experiencing homelessness in unprecedented numbers, because this government is saying no to housing and yes to cheques for billionaires.

This economic statement fails to solve hallway medicine, fails to end legislated poverty for people with disabilities, fails to build infrastructure to protect us from the climate-fuelled floods that hit the GTA this summer, fails to build homes people can afford.

The people of this province deserve better. That's what the Ontario Greens are fighting for.

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Suzanne Leblanc from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It's called "A Future for Child Care in Ontario."

You know, Speaker, that without child care, people can't work; people can't go to work. The child care centres are presently forced to limit the enrolment into the child care spaces because of staffing shortages. There is a huge disparity between the number of people who need child care and the number of child care spaces available. Experts estimate that Ontario needs as many as 65,000 new child care workers to meet the demand for \$10-a-day child care. Where in this economic statement is the strategy to recruit and retain a stable workforce in child care? Where is the promised salary grid for early childhood educators and child care workers so that people feel respected in the work that they do?

Everybody who has signed this petition wants immediately established an early years and child care workers advisory committee to develop recommendations to make sure that the staffing shortages are worked upon, and that the salary scales are actually adopted by the government of Ontario and they are fairly compensated for the important work that they provide.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Sophie to bring it to the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'm going to use a few more seconds to remind the members

that we need to summarize the petition without getting into a lot of additional editorial comment about the merits of the petition. You can also indicate the number of people who have signed the petition, but the standing order is quite clear, and I'm going to ask members to adhere to the standing order.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I have a petition here from Dr. Sally Palmer that is signed by 27 Ontarians. The petition asks the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP. It outlines a few reasons for this, including the fact that the current rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line, and it describes how small increases to ODSP have still been insufficient to lift people above the poverty line, particularly given the rate of inflation in recent years, and the rising cost of food and rent.

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with Dimitri.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition signed by over 600 people, originated by Roger Hardy and Jim Brown, regarding the former Highway 67 by Iroquois Falls. The previous Conservative government downloaded provincial highways to municipalities of over 5,000 people. Later, Iroquois Falls fell below 5,000 people, and quite frankly, they can't afford to maintain what is now known as a municipal road. It's obvious it doesn't belong to the municipality. It shouldn't be part of the municipality, and because this road has been downloaded, the municipality can't afford to fix the things they should fix.

This petition is asking the province to re-upload the municipal road and put it back into Highway 67, along with the other municipal highways that they've downloaded, so municipalities can actually afford to do the things they're supposed to do.

We fully, wholeheartedly agree. Thank you for this time, Speaker.

ADDICTION SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Madame Nicole Sabourin, from Hanmer in my riding, for this petition, called, "Northern Ontario's Opioid Overdose Crisis is a Public Health Emergency."

As you know, Speaker, first responders in my community respond to a minimum of five to six overdoses on every single shift. In 2020, there were 268 overdoses that EMS responded to, including 83 deaths. In 2021, those numbers continued to go up. On average, it's two people in Sudbury who die from an overdose; the Greater Sudbury per capita overdose death rate is two to three times what it is in the rest of our province.

The city of Greater Sudbury, as well as the communities around, is asking the provincial government to save lives,

to declare the opioid overdose crisis in northern Ontario a public health emergency, and to commit to funding comprehensive, evidence-based health and community initiatives, as well as infrastructure so that we can prevent all of these deaths.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Marie-David to bring it to the Clerk.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Rob Walker from my riding for these petitions. It's called, "Supportive Housing."

Did you know, Speaker, that there are 2.6 million Ontarians living with a disability that requires different levels of support? Ontarians living with disabilities are at a way increased risk of institutionalization due to the lack of supportive housing. The new housing starts are either not accessible or too expensive for people living with a disability, so they are asking this government to look at accessible supportive housing, allowing adults with different levels of ability and disability to live independently.

In my riding, we have the Lorraine Street project, which is 40 units. The federal government has given money to build, but they are asking this provincial government to fund the services in those new units, and I hope they'll come good.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Marie-David to bring it to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled, "Double Social Assistance Rates." There are about 900,000 people who rely on social assistance in Ontario, and the Ontario Disability Support Program only provides about \$1,200 and Ontario Works only provides just over \$700. This amount is not enough for people to live. As you know, it's not enough to pay for housing, even—housing is very expensive—and so, with these rates, we're keeping people in legislated poverty.

There's so much work that we need to do on the social assistance file, but let's start with doubling social assistance rates. I have this petition here that is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to double social assistance rates immediately so that people can live dignified and healthy lives.

1340

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is titled "Fix Ontario's Family Doctor Shortage," and of course, it's directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and this Conservative government. Point blank, it's telling this government that 2.5 million Ontarians do not have family doctors. Some of those folks live in my community of Toronto—St. Paul's.

What it means is that they are relying on wait-lists—or should I say walk-ins, actually, is what I meant to say. If they can't get a walk-in, then the next bet is Sunnybrook Hospital, where they spend many hours in the ER if they don't have a family doctor.

This petition is asking for the government to implement a strategy to help doctors help patients. That includes getting more doctors, but it also includes providing doctors with the support health teams that they need so they're not wasting dozens of hours a week on paperwork but are instead in front of patients, where they need to be as primary care providers.

I absolutely support this petition. I will affix my signature to it, and I will hand it over to Nikki.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I too have a petition here entitled "Fix Ontario's Family Doctor Shortage."

Right now in Ontario, 2.2 million residents do not have access to primary care, which puts their health at risk. We know that without proper access to primary care, more people end up in emergency rooms, which are already stretched thin and which are already overcrowded. We have hallway health care in our hospitals.

We really need to take an upstream approach, and that is by ensuring that every Ontarian is connected to primary care and also to ensure that primary care providers are supported with the resources and that they have the capacity to take on more patients. We also need to ensure that we're not wasting the time of primary care providers through unnecessary paperwork and putting too much burden on them.

We can do that work by hiring additional staff to take on that portion of the primary care provider's responsibility, the administrative portion.

Finally, I've been knocking on doors in my riding, and I have met so many family members, parents especially, who are very worried about their kids aging out of their pediatrician care and then not having access to family doctors.

This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urgently implement a strategy to increase the number of staff support to primary care providers and to ensure that primary care providers can spend their time treating patients and that every person is connected to primary care.

ORGAN DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the members of the International Union of Operating Engineers who sent me this petition. It's called "Saving Organs to Save Lives."

Did you know, Speaker, that we have about between 1,500 and 1,600 people in Ontario that are on a wait-list for an organ transplant?

Every three days, somebody dies waiting for a transplant because there are no organs available. One organ donor can save up to eight lives, and that could have

an impact on up to 75 people, depending on the type of transplant.

If you ask, over 90% of Ontarians support organ transplants, but only 36% have signed their cards.

When Nova Scotia implemented presumed consent, the number of organs available increased dramatically.

The people who have signed the petition are asking this government to support my bill—it's called presumed consent—so that we have more organs available to help the people that are on a wait-list.

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Ali to bring it to the Clerk.

CAREGIVERS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is entitled "Create a Caregiver Support Benefit." There are 3.3 million Ontarians who have been an unpaid caregiver. Some 300,000 Ontario caregivers have said that they have experienced financial hardship, felt the burden of the caregiving responsibility and have had to dip into savings in order to provide care. There are so many people who act as caregivers who have no access to direct financial support. They have to either leave their job or do reduced hours. Some have had to leave school in order to provide care.

This petition is calling on the Ontario government to pass motion 94, which is before the House, to create an Ontario Caregiver Support Benefit that will provide paid direct financial benefit to unpaid caregivers in Ontario. This motion has the support of the Canadian Cancer Society, MS Canada, Community Living Ontario and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, and they're all asking for the Ontario government to create this support benefit.

I fully support the petition and will affix my signature to it.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition that's been certified by the table and signed. It's a petition regarding the Ring of Fire. It basically acknowledges that it's a critical resource for our province; it provides a number of things to various industries: clean tech, manufacturing. It basically acknowledges as well that there will be significant job creation and economic growth. At the end, what they're asking Ontario is that we harness the economic potential of the Ring of Fire on a timely basis.

I'm very pleased to present this petition to the Legislature. I'm going to affix my signature, because I agree with it wholeheartedly, and I'll send it to the table with page Graham.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend various energy statutes respecting long term energy planning, changes to the Distribution System Code and the Transmission System Code and electric vehicle charging / *Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur l'énergie en ce qui a trait à la planification énergétique à long terme, aux modifications touchant les codes appelés Distribution System Code et Transmission System Code et à la recharge des véhicules électriques.*

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

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Today I stand before you to discuss a critical piece of legislation that promises to shape the future of our great province. The Affordable Energy Act was introduced by our dedicated Minister of Energy and Electrification, Minister Lecce, alongside parliamentary assistants Sam Oosterhoff, John Yakabuski and Rudy Cuzzetto.

This represents a very pivotal moment in Ontario. This bill is not just a response to our current energy demands; it is a bold step toward a sustainable and prosperous future for all Ontarians.

As we look around, it is clear that we are at a crossroads. The world has experienced unprecedented energy demands driven by population growth, technological advancements and the electrification of our economy. Ontario is no exception. Energy demand in Ontario is soaring as we build homes, welcome historic international investments and electrify our economy.

I just want to say, Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the MPP from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

We are poised to become a leader in clean energy, and the Affordable Energy Act is the key to unlocking that potential.

This is not just a challenge; it is an opportunity—an opportunity to position our province as a leader in clean, affordable and reliable energy. This is the vision of the Affordable Energy Act.

If passed, the Affordable Energy Act will set the stage for Ontario's first-ever integrated energy plan. This groundbreaking initiative will coordinate all energy resources, ensuring that we meet the soaring demand for energy while ensuring energy remains affordable.

In addition to Ontario's first-ever energy plan, this legislation, if passed, would prioritize reliable, affordable and zero-emission nuclear power generation to effectively meet future demand. Unlike the Liberals, who planned to shut down the nuclear energy plant in Pickering, our government is leading the largest nuclear expansion on the continent, including Bruce and Darlington, which creates 12,000 skilled and well-paying jobs, especially in the Durham region. The nuclear industry employs approximately 65,000 jobs and continues to grow with advancing the creation of SMRs, which will provide power for 1.2 million homes.

1350

It is a time to move beyond the piecemeal approaches of the past. This legislation is timely and necessary. As our province continues to grow, so do our energy needs.

Families and businesses alike are feeling the strain of rising energy costs, and it is our responsibility as elected officials to ensure that energy remains affordable and accessible. This is not merely an economic issue. It's a social imperative. We must ensure that no family is forced to choose between putting food on the table and keeping the lights on in Ontario.

The Affordable Energy Act will enable the government to implement Ontario's first-ever integrated plan. This plan is designed to align our diverse energy resources with our pro-growth agenda. This is not to be exclusive of clean energy. This is an integrated plan that embraces all forms of energy. By prioritizing clean and affordable and reliable energy through the use of nuclear power, solar, gas, we are taking a giant leap towards securing our energy future while addressing climate change.

Our commitment to sustainability is not just about meeting today's demands, it is about laying the groundwork for future generations. Unlike the previous Liberal government, which burdened families with costly energy experiments driven by ideology, our government is committed to practicality and affordability. The failed Green Energy Act left many Ontarians struggling with skyrocketing bills, an average increase of over 300% for many households. This will not be repeated.

Our commitment is clear: Affordability is our number one priority. Our government, in contrast, is focused on affordability and sustainability. We understand that Ontario must emerge as a global leader in clean energy, and Ontario is at the forefront. The Affordable Energy Act is a testament to that vision. We continue to work on not just supplying energy but making energy a commodity, with a vision to not just supply Ontario, but to sell that energy across North America.

This legislation will allow us to harness the full potential of our energy resources while ensuring that we do so in a way that is environmentally responsible. It reflects our government's understanding that economic growth and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand. It does not have to be one or the other. We're committed to investing in the technologies of tomorrow, and we recognize that clean energy is not just the future—right now, it is the present.

The legislation is not merely about today's concerns, but about the concerns of our children and our grandchildren. We're making generational decisions that will ensure Ontario emerges as a global leader in clean energy. By investing in technology and infrastructure, we're not only providing reliable energy for our residents but also creating jobs and revenue for Ontario families.

In contrast, the previous government's approach led to energy poverty for many. Families were left struggling to keep the lights on, and businesses were faced with insurmountable costs that caused them to pick up shop and move across the border. With the Affordable Energy Act, we are changing that narrative. Our focus on affordability and sustainability will put money back into the pockets of Ontarians, helping them thrive in their everyday lives.

Furthermore, the act serves as a catalyst for innovation in our energy sector. By aligning our energy resources and

strategies, we will foster a landscape where new technologies can flourish. We'll encourage investment in clean energy solutions, making Ontario an attractive destination for companies looking to pioneer in this field.

As we transition to a low-carbon economy, we also must ensure that we are providing training and education for our workforce. The energy sector is evolving, and we must equip our people with the skills needed for the jobs of the future. This bill recognizes that investing in human capital is as vital as investing in infrastructure.

As we move forward, we recognize the vital role our Indigenous communities must play in our energy sector. Many Indigenous groups are already leading energy projects across Ontario. Our government is committed to meaningful engagement and consultation with these communities as we develop our integrated plan. The Watay Power transmission project, for example, is a landmark initiative that will connect 18,000 people in 16 remote communities, estimated to avoid 6.6 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year—the equivalent of taking 35,000 cars off the roads.

In conclusion, I urge all members of this assembly to support the Affordable Energy Act. This landmark legislation is not merely about energy; it is about the future of our province. It's about ensuring that Ontarians can live comfortably and thrive in a rapidly changing world. Let us put aside partisanship and work together for the greater good of all our constituents. By passing this bill, we will be making a statement that Ontario is ready to meet the energy challenges of the 21st century. We will be declaring our commitment to affordability, sustainability and innovation. Let us create a future where energy is not a burden but a pathway to growth and prosperity.

I'm proud to stand with my colleagues, and I turn it over to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy and Electrification, it's a real honour to rise this afternoon to support Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, that we introduced last week, together with the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries and the parliamentary assistant from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Yesterday, they spoke about our plan for the future of energy in Ontario, and this afternoon I'd like to add a few points about this very important bill. I also want to thank the former minister, Todd Smith, for his leadership on this file over the last three years.

Speaker, as the minister said, before we look forward, it's worth taking a moment to look back at the record of the previous Liberal government. In her 2015 report, the Auditor General warned us the planning process for energy had broken down under the Liberals and they were making decisions without considering the whole energy market or long-term costs and benefits. They signed over 33,000 contracts to buy expensive power that Ontario didn't need, for over 80 cents per kilowatt hour, when nuclear power was available for just six cents. Then, they lost billions of dollars exporting energy to the US and

Quebec, sometimes actually paying New York and others to take the surplus power.

Under Liberal mismanagement like this, the Auditor General reported that Ontario's consumers were having to pay for electricity that was overpriced by up to \$170 billion. Speaker, that's roughly the size of the GDP of Portugal, Greece or New Zealand. For a typical Ontario family, this meant that the power bills were thousands of dollars higher than they should have been every year. Premier Wynne herself admitted many seniors were forced to choose between heating and eating because of the Liberal government's mistakes. And, like the associate minister said, I met some of our people at the doors.

On November 30, 2016, the Auditor General warned that the Liberals' cap-and-trade carbon tax would cost families and businesses \$2 billion more each year, with much of it sent to California for little or no environmental benefit. She wrote, "These funds may be leaving the Ontario economy for no purpose other than to help the government claim it has met a target."

In fact, it was worse than that. As electricity rates skyrocketed, Ontario, which has one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world, lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, including many well-paying jobs in the auto industry, and many jobs went to American states like Ohio and West Virginia, where over 90% of their energy came from coal. Speaker, driving manufacturing out of Ontario down to the coal states was never the answer, either for our economy or for the climate, but this was the Liberal policy for 15 years.

1400

In 2017, the former Liberal Minister of Finance—who I defeated in Mississauga–Lakeshore—said that assembly line manufacturing was just "a thing of the past" in Ontario. Later that year, the Auditor General warned us that the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan would cost Ontario up to \$93 billion, and the Liberals were using "inappropriate" accounting to keep these costs out of the provincial budget and hidden from voters. And, Speaker, I could go on.

As University of Toronto Professor Michael Trebilcock said, "The Liberal record on energy is one of the biggest boondoggles in the history of Ontario." But, Speaker, back in March, just outside this chamber, Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie told Colin D'Mello that these Liberal energy policies were "a great program." Speaker, Ontario will never go back to the failed Liberal energy policies of the past, and that's what Bill 214 is about.

Over the past six years, we've cut taxes, energy costs and red tape. We've made Ontario open for business again, adding over 860,000 manufacturing jobs here in Ontario. We've made Ontario a leader in electric vehicle and battery manufacturing with over \$45 billion of investment from global automakers like Honda, Stellantis and Volkswagen.

Two weeks ago, I joined the minister in my riding at Johnson Electric, a global leader in auto parts manufacturing for electric and hybrid vehicles. We announced that, because of these investments, the IESO expects Ontario's demand for electricity to grow by 75% by 2050.

Speaker, it's never been more important to ensure that Ontario has a long-term energy plan that considers the whole energy market and long-term costs and benefits until at least 2050. And for the first time in Ontario, that's exactly what Bill 214 would do. It will help us deliver the power we need, keeping both costs and emissions down, and without an expensive, job-killing carbon tax.

Speaker, our plan includes the largest expansion of clean nuclear energy in North America, including the first small modular reactors in the G7 at Darlington, which are on schedule and on budget. Much of the early progress is happening in Mississauga–Lakeshore at Candu Energy. I welcomed the Premier and the Minister of Energy for a tour earlier this month.

But, Speaker, people across the country and around the world are watching Ontario closely. Earlier this month, I joined Alberta Minister Nathan Neudorf for a tour of the Darlington SMR site, and I've met with officials from Europe, including the French ambassador.

Hatch, another great company in Mississauga–Lakeshore, is working to improve and expand Ontario's hydroelectric plants.

Our plan also includes the largest battery storage procurement in Canadian history, and just last Wednesday, I was honoured to attend the grand opening of e-Zinc's new 42,000-square-foot facility in Mississauga. I want to thank their CEO, James Larsen, again for the tour and for everything he's doing to develop cost-efficient, long-term energy storage.

Speaker, last Monday morning, the minister was in Toronto to announce that our government will reduce costs for future homeowners by making it easier to connect new homes to Ontario's clean electricity grid. I couldn't attend, Speaker, because at the same time, I was speaking at the groundbreaking for the district energy system at Lakeview Village in my riding, on the site of the old OPG coal plant.

Back in August, the Premier and I announced a \$35-million investment right next door to expand the G.E. Booth Wastewater Treatment Plant to enable 47,000 new homes. Now, in partnership with Enwave Energy, we're using the waste water from the plant to provide high-efficiency, low-carbon power to our new lakefront communities. This system will be the first of its kind in Ontario and the largest in Canada.

Some 23 years ago, Minister Elizabeth Witmer, a PC MPP, came to this site to announce Ontario's coal plants would be closed, beginning with Lakeview. And now, we're building one of Canada's most sustainable new communities at the site, including 16,000 new homes and 1,600 affordable or attainable units. I know that Bonnie Crombie is still livid about this, but our government is moving ahead, supporting the construction of thousands of new homes near transit so that more young families and new Canadians can afford to own a home in Mississauga.

Last Thursday, the minister spoke about our vision at the Empire Club, to leaders from across the energy sector and across the province. After losing investments and jobs to the US and China for 15 years under the Liberals, there

was a real excitement and hope in the room about our vision for Ontario as a clean energy superpower, and about our focus on affordability. One of the executives at my table, who had travelled from Essex, said he's seen more progress in the last six months than in the last 20 years, another reminder that earlier this year, when Bonnie Crombie came to the Empire Club, she spoke about her plan to raise taxes. But again, Ontario is never going back.

We are moving forward and building for the future, and Bill 214 will be an important part of our future. I want to thank this minister for doing what he's been doing over the last six months. I've never seen this much action happening in a ministry since I've been elected. I want to congratulate him, and our whole team all together, for what we're doing to build the new energy grid that we need to continue keeping our investments here in Ontario and building the economy we need.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to both presentations, particularly the part about the green energy plan from the Liberals. I was a farmer when it was announced and I can remember, I was at a conference when it was announced—and that you could get 80 cents per kilowatt for a solar panel, and I was paying at the time eight cents per kilowatt for hydro. I thought, "This is not going to be good for the province."

But at least I had the numbers. Both members talked about how they want to do it more economically, but at what point are Ontarians actually going to see the numbers, the true cost, whether it's solar, whether it's wind, whether it's nuclear? It's one thing to say it's going to be more economical, because we've heard that from the Liberal government too, and it wasn't.

When are we going to see the numbers? No one is going to buy into any kind of business deal unless you see the numbers, and you're dealing for the province, so where are the numbers?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As we've said, we are procuring 5,000 megawatts of power and we're going to open it up to everyone. We're going to have solar. We're going to have wind. We're going to have bio. We're going to have every type of energy available to compete in that market, and we're looking for the best price, as well. That's going to be very important.

You remember the Green Energy Act under the Liberals. They were sending money to California—Ontario taxpayers' money to California, not keeping it here in Ontario. We were losing 300,000 jobs. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development, who has been able to attract over 860,000 new jobs here in Ontario because of our energy prices. We're competitive now and we're going to keep being competitive as we move forward. But we're going to build the grid as we need that to move forward as well.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: I wanted to correct one of the statements that the member for Ajax made. She called the plan referred to in this bill Ontario's first-ever energy plan. That's wrong, because Ontario had a long-term energy plan in 2017, and I think what's happened is that this government has delayed for so long that they've even forgotten history, or maybe had to make it up.

So what is the result of this delay? The result of this delay is that things cost a lot more. All sorts of heavy equipment cost a lot more. We are behind the United States when it comes to lining up for a procurement, because they passed the IRA Act and we're just getting started now. If you talk to industry, all sorts of things, whether it's transformers or equipment for transmission, is all more expensive, so why did this government delay?

1410

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before you respond, I just want to remind the member that use of the term "making it up" is not acceptable.

Response?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I know the member wasn't here at that time; we were paying people 80 cents a kilowatt hour compared to six cents for nuclear, and we're still paying those contracts that we have.

I'll be honest: One of my councillors in Mississauga-Lakeshore is on that plan. He's getting 80 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity when, right now, we could be paying six cents a kilowatt—can you imagine deals like that? Then you were wondering why we lost all the manufacturing here in Ontario. They were leaving. At the time, I was working at Ford Motor Co. Ford did not want to stay here. Even Chrysler—Sergio Marchionne said that Ontario was not a jurisdiction to build vehicles in anymore.

I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development again for bringing all these jobs back to Ontario.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member for Mississauga-Lakeshore for his comments. I was around during that terrible mess. In fact, the Green Energy Act and the unfair hydro act brought in by the Liberals were among the reasons a lot of us wanted to run, because it was insanity in Ontario. I think the Liberals signed energy contracts costing Ontarians, the Auditor General said, \$37 billion more than was necessary. What bothered me was they put it on the backs of future generations, who were going to have to pay for these ill-considered contracts. I don't even know how a Liberal can stand in this House and talk about energy.

What I wanted to ask you was if you could elaborate on why it's so important that our plan focuses on affordability as an important factor in energy.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for her question, and I want to thank her as well for all the great work she does in her riding.

Just think about it: If you can get electricity cheaper, that's where you would attract companies to go. If I was a manufacturer, like in the auto industry, I would go to the cheapest jurisdiction where I could get electricity. Now, I

wouldn't want to go to a coal state like the US has, so if you want to protect the environment at the same time as building your industry, you have to go to a place where you have clean electricity.

Ontario is a leader in clean electricity. That's what we want. We want clean electricity, and at a low cost, to attract more companies to Ontario to build and pay taxes, at the end of the day, so we can fund all our programs that we have in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Over the weekend, I was in far northern Ontario. I know there's an energy crisis. I say that because, as soon as we landed in that community, a fly-in First Nation, their power had been out for five hours. Later on in my visit, the power came on after about seven hours.

What really struck me at that time was that—I went there for the funeral—when I walked into the church, I saw three caskets. There's a suicide crisis that's happening, there's an energy crisis, there's an infrastructure crisis, there's a housing crisis.

Can this government tell me how this bill impacts people living in Ontario, but specifically how this bill responds to the issue of energy poverty and the energy crisis that's happening in northern Ontario?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for his question. If we can get northern Ontario off diesel fuel with SMRs and clean energy, that will help the whole community at large. Not only that, but that will bring well-paying jobs into the community, and that's what we want. We want everyone to have a well-paying job in the energy sector. It is one of the most important sectors right now.

I was in Europe this summer, and I'll tell you this: Greece, Romania, Poland, everyone is looking at Ontario right now as we're building the first full-scale SMR in the world right here at Darlington. This is unbelievable. We are the leaders in nuclear energy, which will supply electricity for everyone in Ontario and across the US as well. We're going to be exporting our electricity across North America.

Thank you very much for that question.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Mississauga-Lakeshore for his remarks, particularly mentioning the citizen from Essex who came up.

I remember not too long ago—actually, it was long ago, 2014—that Minister Chiarelli mentioned that we were going to get a new power line to Leamington and Kingsville in 2015. It is now 2024, it's finally being actioned under this government, and it shows the need for an integrated electrical strategy.

This bill has the integrated energy plan being described. I'm hoping you might be able to elaborate as to what that plan looks like, to give us some great assurances down the southwest that this government gets it and gets the need for energy in the southwest.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member as well for that question. My uncle immigrated to Windsor, I

many years ago, and he worked at Ford and Chrysler there for many years. Windsor is one of the leading automakers in Canada. Having dependable electricity is so important to companies like Ford, Chrysler—Stellantis now—VW, because without stable electricity, they will not invest in this province.

Having stable electricity that we are going to build forward—we're going to build 88,000 megawatts of electricity across the province of Ontario. That's doubling our grid right now. By doing that, we keep attracting companies, which will keep people working in the province of Ontario and in Windsor as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's all the time we have for questions.

Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House, particularly to talk about an issue that is critical to the future of Ontario, which is our energy system.

I would say the bill before us, Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, is not really a plan. It's not really laying out what the government's going to do. It's a plan to present a plan. Despite the fact that this is such an important issue for our future, for our economy and for our workers, I'm disappointed with the lack of detail and, certainly, the lack of transparency that is in this bill.

Let me start by acknowledging that our energy needs are growing. It's absolutely the truth. We know that. We all know that our energy needs are growing and that we, more than ever, need a government that's serious about tackling our energy in all parts of it; that they will be tackling our energy needs and our energy grid, keeping in mind affordability, keeping in mind reliability and keeping in mind sustainability.

When I talk about affordability, I'm not just talking about the mega costs that these projects will entail, I'm talking about centring a bill around the people in the province of Ontario that are struggling to pay their energy bills that we know. We just had a fall economic statement that provided, really, no relief to people that are struggling to pay their bills. Maybe they're going to get a one-time \$200 election cheque in January, but that's not sustainable, and that won't address the ongoing costs that people in this province are burdened with.

In the last six years, people have seen their grocery bills skyrocket, and their housing costs, their energy costs. They have to now pay user fees to access medical services. The very fact that we are looking at an energy bill that doesn't ground this in affordability for the people in the province of Ontario is deeply disappointing.

In fact, I will go on to explain this, but the bill says that it "may" consider affordability—not "shall," but that this bill "may" consider the issue of affordability. I'm stunned to see that, because it seems to me that that should be one of the primary factors when it comes to spending the kinds of hundreds of billions of dollars that this plan entails. These billions of dollars come from where? Who's paying for this? We know who's paying for it. We, the taxpayers of Ontario, are paying for it.

The people in the province of Ontario already feel like they're not getting what they've already paid for. They pay

their taxes. They've had downloaded costs on their residential or property taxes because of the cuts in services from this government. The people in the province of Ontario, they're doing their part. They're paying their taxes, what they have to, but the government is failing to deliver back what they are owed.

They owe a health care system that allows them to actually have a doctor, to go to emergency or call an ambulance when it's needed. Some 2.5 million people in the province of Ontario don't have a primary health care provider.

1420

For a government that's failing to deliver on the most basic, fundamental needs—education, healthy schools, schools that don't have roofs falling in or lead in the water—to embark on this needed, yet ambitious plan with no transparency, no commitment to affordability and no commitment to addressing climate change, is really a disappointing failure on the part of this government. I don't know why I should be disappointed—colour me eternally optimistic, but here we go.

Let's just start with the fact that, as I've said, we know that the energy needs in the province are changing, that's true. We also know that in Ontario we have the kind of skill, we have the kind of expertise—in fact, we export this expertise in our energy sector and we should be proud of that. We have all the ingredients we need to ensure that we have an energy grid that will continue to support us in the way that we expect, but also that we will be set up to participate in a thriving economy that also addresses the low-carbon future that is around us, the low-carbon future that the entire globe is moving toward. Any serious plan needs to address the shift to non-emitting sources and stop the over-reliance on gas as we face climate change. That's not addressed in this bill.

When it comes to large infrastructure projects, I'm sorry to say, and I'm sure that many will agree with me—maybe not on the other side of the House, but almost every other person in the province of Ontario. When it comes to spending on big infrastructure projects, this government's track record, especially when it comes to financial transparency, is really, really sorely lacking.

And so, while we, again, need a bill like this, we need it to be a good bill, and this is not a good bill. This bill not only takes us in the wrong direction when it comes to addressing our existential need to decarbonize our grid and to move to a low-carbon future, it also is taking us in the wrong direction when it comes to transparency and taking the politics out of energy-planning decisions.

I'll talk about my experience with the Liberals' role in politicizing energy policies from the previous government. It's really quite shocking to see that this government is just taking a page right out of the Liberals' books when it comes to lack of transparency, lack of accountability and making political concerns the key feature of decisions that are made in this file and not the focus on the people of the province of Ontario.

Because we have seen this government time and time again push legislation through this House that takes away

any kind of guardrails for the people of the province of Ontario for accountability. We have seen bills that have taken away people's right, when it comes to the Environmental Bill of Rights, to be consulted. We have seen the government give themselves enormous powers to expropriate property without justification, without the need to go to court to make the case when they are expropriating people's property.

We've also seen a government that has really been deeply focused on protecting themselves from any accountability. I don't know—I've lost track—how many bills they've rammed through this House where they've given themselves immunity from prosecution. What comes to mind is the Premier's promise to put an iron ring around the senior citizens in the province of Ontario, but what ended up happening was he put an iron ring around the for-profit providers that had horrible mortality in their for-profit homes—

Mr. Joel Harden: Put an iron ring around their profits.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —yes, put an iron ring around their profits—and then introduced legislation in this House that protected them and gave them immunity from any consequences for their actions. So, really, a “trust us” government this is not. This is especially serious when it comes to something as serious and complex and as expensive as managing our energy needs in the future.

The question for all of us is that we need to get this right. How do we get this right? Do we just take this behind closed doors? Do we just allow one minister to make the decisions? Because that's what this bill does; it gives the minister unilateral power to make decisions in this energy field.

So the question for all of us is, do we trust this government to make these decisions? My answer is no, and I'm sure 99% of the people of the province of Ontario, given this government's track record, would say, “No, we do not trust this government, not only on transparency but on proper fiscal management.”

To move to 2050 and for us to successfully decarbonize our economy, the IESO has put the price tag at about \$400 billion. That's a lot of money, and that is only just for the baseload system. It doesn't include conversion costs for individual households. It doesn't cover the costs that you and I might incur to get off fossil fuel gas, to buy a heat pump, to insulate our homes. That cost is not included in here.

We have a global energy transition that's under way and we know that electrification is a central theme, but this government, again, in this bill, does not talk about renewables. It's not in here. There's no discussion. I mean, I know they keep saying that it's an all-above response, but it's not in here.

Last year, 83% of the world's new energy supply came from renewables, but so far, this government has not signed one contract for renewables in this province. While, again, the government is saying, “Trust us. We're going to focus on renewables. We're going to have a balanced approach”—it's not in the bill and there's no mechanism for transparency.

Part of the reason that we're focused on transparency and affordability is because we know, with numbers like this—billions and billions of dollars—if we get it wrong, it's going to cost taxpayers. It always does. It always does. This government has no compunction to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on whatever fever dream the Premier has when it comes to his new tunnel vision. We not only can't afford expensive energy; we can't afford to get it wrong. We can't overbuild. We can't under-build, absolutely, so we can't lose economic opportunities. But if we overbuild, who is paying for that? Not the government—it's the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

How would we know that the government is taking into account the costs that will end up on the shoulders of the taxpayers? Again, in this bill—and while the government says over and over again that they're committed to affordability, I should note that the bill says the minister “may,” not “shall,” consider affordability in developing his plan. So he may consider it. It depends what mood he's in. It depends what lobbyists happen to be bending his ear.

If this was a government that was truly concerned with affordability for taxpayers, why isn't it in the bill? Why don't you say, “We absolutely shall. We will centre this plan on the cost that will be borne by the taxpayers”? I'm pretty sure, given my short time here—six years here or seven years; they seem like dog years, actually—but for each year that I've been here, I've seen this government time and time again. If it's not in a bill—

MPP Jill Andrew: It ain't going to happen.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It ain't going to happen, right? If it's not in black and white—actually, even if it is in a contract or in a bill, if they don't like it, rip it up.

We know that, right off the bat, the government has already given themselves wiggle room by saying “may,” not “shall.” Just repeating the word “affordability” over and over and over again doesn't mean it's actually happening, and people know that. They don't need you to tell them things are affordable. They know at the end of the month that they're coming up short. People know.

People are actually so upset and cynical about this \$200 cheque that's coming. Do you know why? They know they need it. They know they're going to cash it. They know they need to put it in the bank, but they also are not fooled by this. They know that this comes at the cost of health care, housing. They know that their kids' schools are suffering, and this \$200 is a drop in the bucket, but they need a drop in the bucket.

But what they actually need is a government that's not going to spend \$3.5 billion on a one-time cheque, that will actually be a responsible government and make sure the basics that people expect from their government—I mean, you're here to make sure that when people go to a hospital, they can be seen. A government should make sure that a woman in northern Ontario can deliver a baby less than 800 kilometres away. These are basic expectations of a government, and you are failing to meet those basic expectations at the same time as you are spending big.

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This government currently has the largest sub-sovereign national debt in North America.

I remember Minister Fedeli, when I first was running for election, talking on *The Agenda* to Deb Matthews, and being shocked at how the Liberal government manipulated the books as they did, to take costs off-book. I also remember the minister saying, “Oh, I understand why you’ve done that now: because if you didn’t do that, your debt-to-GDP would be 40%, which is a rate where people start to get pretty antsy.” And guess what this government’s debt-to-GDP is? The minister will know full well that it is 40% and climbing. So you are awash in debt. You’re spending big, but you are not spending it on the people of the province of Ontario. So don’t come forward with a bill like this, a patronizing bill that says, “We have your best interest at heart,” but you don’t have the courage to put the word “shall” in the bill.

When it comes to climate impacts, the climate crisis, climate change, I still am not 100% sure they think that’s real. I mean, they might say it, but their actions would say otherwise. Does the government think that people are going to be at risk from climate change? Who knows? You certainly wouldn’t know it from this bill.

Can we here on this side of the House—not the bizarre world, but here on this side of this House—acknowledge that our climate is changing? The world’s weather is changing fast, and the consequences, as we see around the world, are really devastating to people, especially to low-income people, people who can’t escape, people who are told to evacuate when there’s a hurricane, but don’t have the means to evacuate. They don’t have a car; they have nowhere to go. Who suffers the most impact? These are low-income people who are already struggling.

So you would think, again, if this was a government that centred the concern and the well-being of the people of the province of Ontario, that they would take climate change seriously. In Canada, insured catastrophic losses have risen from around \$456 million to approximately \$2 billion last year, according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada. Ontario insured losses related to severe weather climbed to \$1.2 billion in 2022 from \$400 million. These are huge costs. These are big numbers. And who’s paying those insurance costs? We are. We either can’t get insurance, because we’re in a flood plain, or our premiums are going through the roof.

A reliable energy plan, an actually responsible energy plan, would make sure the effects of climate change and extreme weather that we know are coming, that we actually see, are here. We saw it in Ottawa. We’ve seen it in other communities, the flooding. Would that these things were central to this bill, but that is not the case. Any credible, serious plan in the year 2024—we’re well into this millennium—would focus on non-emitting sources and stop the overreliance on gas as we’re all struggling to confront climate change.

Also, this is a government that has put no money into adaptation. How are people now, with increased insurance costs, struggling to adapt their homes and businesses,

struggling to adapt to flooding that they see impacting their mission critical systems—how are businesses dealing with their insurance costs? We know that the more extreme the weather gets, this will continue to degrade our infrastructure and will cost more money. Who’s going to pay for it?

The FAO, in fact, said—well, the FAO had a number and it was extraordinary. The government looked at the cost and said that the problems we see are only going to get larger, including insurance costs, grocery costs and other related costs. So this was ignored completely in the plan. The government has continued to list gas as an option for the plan at the same time as the IESO says that they plan to use a lot less gas by the mid-2030s. So why not use efficiency now, why not use conservation now, and avoid building homes with gas for a future where we’re going to be less reliant on gas?

So, very quickly in the one minute I have left—and I’m sorry I didn’t get to this—why is this government going down the path of the Liberals? There’s no government transparency, no accountability in this bill.

I can tell you that when I first got elected, I sat on the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. MPP Robin Martin sat on that. We had many members here who sat on this committee and some of the things that they said were—Doug Ford called this the biggest political cover-up in Ontario history, which was Kathleen Wynne’s hydro plan. MPP Martin said, “Were your efforts motivated by fear, backlash at the ballot box?” We had the member from Sault Ste. Marie, Ross Romano, who said, “The purpose of our committee was to ask a lot of questions” that we “wanted answers to, and I’m confident we asked those questions.”

Finally, Minister Fedeli, in fact, said—and this is one of the best quotes, if I can find it. Oh, Minister Fedeli said it’s not just about Liberal deficit but transparency and trust, and I agree. So why are you going down the same path as the Liberals? You saw where they ended. This bill lacks transparency and people don’t trust you in this province, especially when it comes to such a huge file.

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

I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for her comments on Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act. She said a couple of things that took my attention. She first starts talking about—she admits and understands and accepts that the demand for electricity is going to grow exponentially here in the province of Ontario. Then she talks about that we have to have non-emitting sources, but I need to know where this party is on nuclear, because we already get the majority of our electricity from the nuclear fleet here in the province of Ontario. So if we’re not going to refurbish and build new nuclear here in the province of Ontario, including SMRs, how are we going to get to that point where we can actually supply the power that needs to power Ontario’s energy growth? I’d ask the member for that, please.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There are a few things in there that I can agree with. How's that? I've already admitted full on that our energy needs will grow in the province. Just the EV industry itself will require these kinds of investments.

Also, friend of mine directed me to something called Gridwatch, which is really a quite fascinating app. It shows the mix of energy sources at any given hour in the province. For example, currently between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. on October 30, 48.7% of our energy came from nuclear, 18.1% from hydro and 8.8% from gas. So it's in the mix. We're going to need to rely on all of these sources of energy. We already do, but my question to you is, at what cost? People have already spent way more than they need to on this energy file, and you need to come clean with the costs.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: It's probably my fault I missed it in the member's speech, but I'd like to ask my honourable colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas whether she plans to vote for this bill at second reading?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for the question. We take our role here as parliamentarians very seriously. This is a bill, as I said, that's touching on a very critical and important part of our future, and I would say the jury's out. When you look at a bill here that has so many holes in it and is lacking in so many places, I would say that's a decision that we need to take very seriously, and I would say, unfortunately, the experience that I had dealing with the Liberal legacy of when it came to your role and Kathleen Wynne's role in the Fair Hydro scheme, that we're still paying for—we're still paying \$7.5 billion a year to cover the cost of that plan. You would understand why we would take our decision very seriously, because it's not our \$7.5 billion that we have to spend every year for the Liberal cost of the hydro system. It's the taxpayers.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you to our member for a wonderful presentation.

I'm interested in clean, safe, affordable energy. And in St. Paul's, when we talk about climate change and we talk about saving our environment, making things easier for people in St. Paul's or across Ontario, infrastructure is a really important part of that. I think that can help us in championing a lowering of our carbon footprint.

In St. Paul's we want to see the Eglinton Crosstown LRT completed. If we have good, safe transit that can get people from A to B, that actually gets thousands of cars off our roads along Eglinton, and that certainly would help us with the climate crisis, frankly, that we're in.

I think the question I have to the member really comes down to: What's this going to cost? Do you have any concerns, to our member, that there seems to be no price tag attached to this project?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do I look concerned that there's no price tag attached to this bill? Oh, yes. I have serious concerns, and so I should. I'm glad you brought up the Eglinton Crosstown. Let's look at the Ontario Line.

So this was a project that was supposed to cost \$9 billion and now it's ballooned to over \$20 billion, with no completion date in sight—absolutely no completion date in sight. And all we need to do, if we want to talk about transparency or lack thereof—let's just look at Metrolinx. I know my colleague here reminds me how many times, how many VPs, how many presidents—

Mr. Joel Harden: Too many.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Too many. They're not transparent and the government hides behind them.

This government will be accountable. They hide behind Metrolinx. Metrolinx hides from us. So when I talk about costs overruns, parting with the taxpayer dollars in this government, and lack of transparency and accountability, Ontario Line and Eglinton Crosstown jump out to me as two horrific examples that the government should be learning from.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Madam Speaker, our government's agenda is about an all-of-the-above approach to energy planning, including nuclear, hydro-electricity, energy storage, natural gas, hydrogen and renewables. Ours is choosing growth and affordability. Ours is vision-centred for the needs of the family, and we're going to remain on this road relentlessly.

So my question to you is: I listened very respectfully to your submissions, but I'm wondering what's the tangible plan? What's your tangible plan to real results and provide something for the community that actually is effective? Because this is our plan.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for the question. I would put the same question back to you: What is your tangible plan? Because it's not before us. What is your costed plan? It is not before us. How much money do you expect the people of Ontario to pay for this plan? We do not know.

We heard about SMRs as part of our future. When will they be online—10 years, 20 years? How much will those cost?

These are significant investments in technologies that—I agree, we should be looking at all the technologies that can deliver affordable and reliable, but our continually relying on things like Enbridge and supporting Enbridge and forcing people to be on gas when they don't want to—that would not be part of our plan. Our plan would include evidence-based planning, transparency, accountability, and it would be centred on the ability of Ontarians to pay their energy bills.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House. Thank you to the good member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her excellent presentation on Bill 214.

We all know that climate change is before us. We recognize that governments have a responsibility to put forward a serious energy plan, one that actually meets the moment and the specific challenges of the day.

I am very interested in making sure that our energy plan is driven by certain principles such as affordability,

reliability and sustainability, and in this plan that the government has put forward, we're seeing an erosion of that.

So, my question to you, member, is, why? Why is the bill making it optional for the minister to put forward an energy plan as opposed to it being, currently, right now, a mandatory requirement? Can you speculate on that?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm glad that you pointed that out. I mean, the fact that this government is not required to present a plan to the people of Ontario—they've taken away their responsibility to make sure that experts can look at this plan, that there were hearings so that people can weigh in on the impact. This government does not have all the answers.

When it comes to energy, we have energy workers, experts in this field. We have the Professional Engineers Ontario who are on strike because they don't trust your government's reliance on evidence when it comes to the construction projects that you had before us.

So I don't have the answers to why. I can only speculate that this continues to be a government that doesn't want to be accountable and that knows that whenever they need \$100 billion or so, what are the taxpayers going to do about it? Nothing. They can't. They're not going to be able to do anything about it.

My idea is that they don't feel any compunction to be accountable to the people who elected them and to the people who pay their bloated salaries, and to the people who pay for their mistakes when they don't consult the experts. Why? They could answer that better than I can. It's crazy that all this power is centred in one minister's office. It gives one minister so much power to direct energy planning in the—

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'm very happy to have the opportunity today to speak to an energy bill, Bill 214. I'm going to start by dispensing with two of the three sections of this bill, schedule 2 and schedule 3.

Schedule 2 is about allowing the cost of new electricity infrastructure to go on, for example, the rate base, to reduce upfront costs of new homes, potentially, or electricity upgrades or connections for industrial power. These are the things that are needed. I'm glad to hear the minister speaking about distributed energy resources. That's something that I haven't heard about before. That is covered by schedule 2; it will be facilitated by schedule 2. So I'm glad that the minister is talking about that.

Schedule 3 is about, I would say, to simplify, creating a separate, simpler regulatory regime to allow us to roll out electric vehicle chargers. We know that that's something that's in our future.

My main concern with this bill is in schedule 1, about the idea of planning. I understand, I think, what the minister is trying to do when he calls it the "integrated resource energy plan," because lots of different parts of our economy are connected by, or interact through, energy. Energy makes our economy run. This is why we're trying to have an integrated plan.

But we actually don't have a plan. That's my first concern. I think they have concepts of a plan, this government. Just to give an illustration for people who may be listening to me, when this government took power, they pulled out electric vehicle chargers and removed electric vehicle subsidies. But then they pivoted, a massive pivot, to electrical vehicle production. It's going to be a big part of our economy going forward. I'm looking forward to that. But it just shows that the government didn't really know what they were doing until a bit later. They didn't have the plan.

As I mentioned earlier, there was a long-term energy plan in 2017 that was put together inside the government, and it's important to have a plan inside the government because—think about it—it's not just power plants, transmission lines and the consumer of electricity. What policies you have about transportation affects energy. What policies you have about housing and where to put it, and what regulations you follow when you build housing, that affects energy. What policies you have about education and making sure we have skilled workers, that affects energy.

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They're all tied together, so I understand why energy planning is best done inside the government and not with an outside agency that's only, for example, focused on our electricity system. I'm glad that the government is returning to whole-of-government planning for energy.

I do want to go back to the delays. I think the minister must realize that after this government has delayed for years, everything costs more. It could be turbines or fire engines, even, or school buses, transformers cost more. All sorts of heavy equipment cost a lot more.

The United States has also passed the Inflation Reduction Act. It's all about procuring a whole bench of renewable energy and other things to electrify their economy. But, because we delayed, we are behind them in line to buy things. Even Canadian energy experts have been hired away to work in the United States.

The supply for heavy equipment is tight. If you talk to people in the industry, it is very tight. And the government's delay in responding to future increases in electricity demand—and I have to say that the 2017—this is from the previous government—long-term energy plan has graphs in it which point out that energy demand is going to go up. It means Ontario, because we haven't got started with a plan, are left to pay dearly for whatever is left on the store shelf, if I can draw that picture, when we start buying the infrastructure that we need to electrify the economy. The people who generate power or provide the hardware, they all know that.

I'm going to move on from planning now and talk about the goals and objectives of this plan that is still to come. Because Bill 214 amends the Electricity Act, and when it amends the Electricity Act it eliminates any mention of climate change or greenhouse gases—just removes them. My message to the government is, "Hey, Conservatives, it's okay to talk about climate change. It is a real danger. Maybe you don't believe that, but it is a real danger."

It's something that the government should be protecting us from. Maybe Conservatives don't care so much about protecting people, but you can't ignore climate change. This is something that we need to be protected from and the government has a very important role.

I want to move on now to how the government will do the planning itself. Because in the existing Electricity Act the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, which runs our electricity system, is given the role of creating implementation plans for the government's what used to be called the long-term energy plan.

This legislation changes that. The IESO is not going to be putting together implementation plans; instead, the Ministry of Energy will issue directives to the IESO. It's kind of like what's happening now. But they're going to be issuing directives on this big, comprehensive plan that I think, if I understand the minister correctly—and I think what should happen—is going to incorporate the interaction of all sorts of parts of our government and of our economy that depend on energy.

Is the government prepared with the expertise to prepare this plan and its implementation inside government? Because it's got to be ready to give clear, granular directions to the IESO to carry out its plan.

There is an advantage to having whole-of-government planning inside government. You get to think about how different parts of our economy interact. You can be sensitive to political considerations—we're a democracy, after all. But I would like to know, and I don't know because the minister hasn't addressed this, how the government plans to avoid, if I could say it in a strange way, too much politics. I mean regulatory capture: How does this government plan to avoid regulatory capture, avoid too much influence of lobbyists over what the government's plan is and how it implements it and what instructions it gives to the IESO to carry out this plan.

Here's another aspect of the same question: In the past, if you look at the Electricity Act, the goals and objectives of energy planning were technologically agnostic. In other words, it didn't favour any particular technology as long as the objectives were reached—affordability, reliability and sustainability. This bill amends the Electricity Act so that some technologies are mentioned but others are not. For example, hydroelectric power just is not mentioned, but other technologies are mentioned. Why is that? Technology changes, economic conditions change, geopolitics change. Because we don't know what's going to happen in the future, we should always have a plan which lets the best technology win in the long term. It's important to not let a political government just pick favourites.

I want to give the minister some advice. I know the minister wants to look at all different parts of Ontario, but it's also important to look outside of Ontario. For example, the minister has talked about Ontario being an energy superpower—that's great—and he's talked about exporting electricity. If you're going to do that, then your integrated plan has got to look at what's happening in New York, Michigan and Ohio, all three of these states that could be potential importers of electricity from Ontario.

They have their own nuclear power mandates. They're moving towards building nuclear reactors or reactivating old reactors, producing a lot more baseline power. They also have clean energy standards. In about 15 years, almost all of their electricity has got to be clean, no fossil fuel emissions. So we also have to plan for and ask the question: How is Ontario going to sell its nuclear baseload or fossil-fuel-generated electricity when surrounding customers like your New York, Michigan or Ohio are moving towards their own nuclear energy and clean energy standards? This big plan has got to take into account what other jurisdictions will do.

A couple of housecleaning things at the end, if I may. I support the ability to finance the cost of new electricity infrastructure and having the flexibility, perhaps, of incorporating it onto the rate base. Whether it's for homeowners or a neighbourhood that's upgrading its grid to respond to electrification—or it's some manufacturer that needs transmission to set up an operation in Ontario.

I also support the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It's one of these things—it's very important to try to avoid chicken-and-egg problems whenever you're rolling out a new technology. We know that the future of personal transportation in Ontario is not going to be gasoline-powered vehicles, so the better, the more easily, the more cheaply we can roll out electric vehicle charging infrastructure the better, so I'm happy to support that.

I hope I did not embarrass my honourable colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas a while ago by asking her how she's going to vote for the bill, but, since I asked her that question, it's only fair that I answer the question myself. I will be voting for this bill, not because I agree with it, but here's the biggest thing: This bill does some things—we are running out of time to deal with climate change, and as we delay and delay it's going to be more and more expensive to protect ourselves from climate change, so I'm happy to help this move on past second reading. I agree with this bill in principle. I look forward to the committee stage.

I'll challenge the minister here in the time that I have left. At committee stage, the minister has the intent of creating an integrated—that word, “integrated”—resource plan. This means listening to all sorts of different parts, not only of the government but of Ontario. I challenge this minister—I hope the government members here pass this on to the government—to not use time allocation on Bill 214 when it comes to committee. I challenge the minister to allow witnesses from all parts of our society, our economy, all parts of our province to come here—or maybe, we travel and talk to them in person and hear what they have to say. Because if it's going to be really an integrated resource plan, let's go and listen to people in all parts of Ontario about how they fit into Ontario's energy economy, how they're affected by other parts of our economy, so that we can really have some good public feedback and have a good integrated resource energy plan.

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That's my challenge to the minister. I normally wouldn't make it, but this government has time-allocated

a couple of bills, I believe it's Bill 194 and 197. I don't want to see that happen to such an important bill as Bill 214.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for his address today. I will start out by saying great news that you are going to support it. I don't know if you speak for the other members of the independent Liberal caucus at this time, but I hope that's the case.

I hope in some way, it's a kind of a confession. That, in fact, your Green Energy Act—which, you were not here and I accept that—

Mr. Steve Clark: He supported it, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'm sure he did support it.

But the Green Energy Act was the most egregious, misguided piece of legislation in Ontario's energy history. Nothing led to a bigger crisis in electricity for the people of Ontario, who had to make the choices between heating and eating—and your former friend, George Smitherman, came across the aisle to me and said it was going to cost a dollar a month. Now that you have understood that we are looking forward to building Ontario, and giving Ontario the electricity it will need to support that bill, the Green Energy Act was wrong and you're confessing.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I love the questions from my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—I hope I got the order right. It's a beautiful riding. I used to live in the riding and last year, I went to Barry's Bay a couple of times. I worked at Atomic Energy of Canada, as the member knows.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Green Energy Act. I'm going to attack one of the points that have been made over and over again, and incorrectly, I may say. When we pay 80 cents per kilowatt hour for the FIT contracts, you weren't paying for energy. You were paying for establishing a supply chain for the racks for solar, figuring out how to do insurance, companies setting up business, utilities setting up the regulations—all sorts of things had to be worked out. That's what we're paying a small amount in the first year or so, for the first movers. I had a contract for solar power. I didn't get that, because I came—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to add a chapter to my friend upriver from me—his question here, because I think the other thing I would like to hear my friend from Kingston reflect upon is not just the terrible decision to privatize the growth of renewable energy, which is effectively what my friends in the Liberals did with the microFIT and FIT programs.

The other thing they did was privatize Hydro One. The Premier of the day said it was the only way we could responsibly build the green infrastructure—\$1.8 billion. It was the only choice. But what we did with that decision is hamstringing the ability of municipal utilities who, right now, are asking this government—they would like to have a

decentralized generation of renewable power. Now, we're dealing with the privatization—and I was shocked then, and I'm shocked now, to know that it was Liberal Party donors and cash-for-access fundraisers that have the biggest benefits.

I'm wondering if the member could also reflect on the terrible legacy that left for those of us who care about the planet and want to build renewable energy.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Thank you for the question from the member for Ottawa Centre. Actually, I'm quite proud that the private sector participated in building out renewable energy. For example, in Kingston, a lot of people got together and said, "Hey, you know what? When we start to have solar panels and wind turbines and other things like that, the people who work on the transmission lines, Utilities Kingston, are going to have to change their protocols, their training is going to have to be different." So a bunch of people got together and put together a new training program that St. Lawrence College was able to deliver.

There grew a whole community of people who are interested in solar energy, wind energy or geothermal energy—by the way, we just built a really nice apartment building in downtown Kingston using geothermal energy. I think that the private sector in Kingston did a great job of moving forward with our energy economy towards the 21st century.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The Green Energy Act, in 2009, was introduced by an MPP at the time, Minister George Smitherman, and under the Liberal policy, municipalities were not allowed any say in whether or not energy projects were established in their municipalities. In fact, in my municipality, which at that time was Anderdon township, which was opposed to such projects—Anderdon township got amalgamated into Amherstburg. It was opposed to such projects, and they didn't have a say. They couldn't stop any project that was going to go ahead, and that led to things like solar panels being installed on agricultural land.

My question to the member is this: Would he like municipalities to have the power to consent to these projects, or would he like to do what George Smitherman did, deny municipalities any say whatsoever?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I now have an opportunity to respond to two things: solar power on agricultural land. There is new technology, and I hope this government thinks about the fact that technology is always changing.

If you put solar panels in agricultural land—there is a whole field called agrivoltaics. For example, you may put solar panels out and you don't get full sun, but there are certain things, like leafy vegetables that will grow bigger leaves when they're not in direct sunlight. I think that this government should be looking at piloting agrivoltaic projects because there could be a lot of potential there. Don't stick to just static policy because technology changes.

I do think that we should be consulting communities. I was a community person working in energy. When the

Minister of Energy was doing communications for Prime Minister Harper, I was working in community energy, and I like being consulted.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: The Liberal government cancelled two natural gas power plants, I learned: one in Mississauga and one in Oakville. Rumour has it these were cancelled for them to save political seats. They costed these two cancellations at about \$230 million, but a final report from the Auditor General of Ontario actually found that the cancellations cost about \$950 million, which, of course, was shouldered by ratepayers of the day. This was all caused by the Liberal government. This little stroll down memory lane, I guess, is really to highlight why we shouldn't be politicizing energy planning.

I ask the Liberal MPP from Kingston, how important is it that the PCs learn from the Liberals' mistakes and act with full transparency on all energy plans and actually show us the numbers if clean, safe, affordable energy really is their goal? Essentially, we don't want the PC government to take a page out of the Liberal government's playbook. Why do you think that's happening?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I believe in learning from my own mistakes—no argument with me from learning from mistakes. But I will say that, yes, we do need numbers. One way that scientists sort of check somebody who puts forward something they haven't really thought about is to ask about the numbers to force them to reveal about whether they've really thought about something they've proposed.

This government says they have a plan, but they don't actually have a plan. When that plan comes out, which they say is going to be next year, it better have a lot of definite numbers. All the government has now is just, as our presidential candidate south of the border has said, "concepts of a plan," and that's not enough.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to follow up on my previous question. I understood from the member's answer—he'll correct me if I misunderstood—that he's not entirely opposed to putting solar panels on agricultural land because, in certain circumstances, agricultural land and solar panels might actually produce some kind of vegetable, which the member talked about.

If I have understood that correctly, then my question is this. If the member is not, at least under those conditions, opposed to putting solar panels on agricultural land, then the question is this: Should there be any prohibition whatsoever on putting solar panels on any agricultural land at all?

1510

Mr. Ted Hsu: I think it's very important to protect prime agricultural land, and I think solar panels are part of that. This is a point of, I think, major difference between myself and this Conservative government, which doesn't seem to care about prime agricultural land. The greenbelt scandal is just a big example of that, where it seems that

they don't mind taking prime agricultural land and using it for development and not caring about the future, the long-term future, that the minister keeps saying that he's thinking about.

When I was in high school, I had a geography teacher. His name was Rick Price, and I owe him a lot because he talked about how we were losing prime agricultural land, back in the 1970s. A lot of that land is now called Mississauga, greater Toronto, so we've lost a lot of agricultural land. We've got to protect it.

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'll be splitting my time with the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler.

Speaker, there has been a lot of talk here about the Liberals' record in energy, and we all agree. I remember, I was leading our party's charge in the gas plant scandal, where a billion dollars was wasted, but I think back—more than energy, I just think back to where the province was under the previous Liberal government. They created a really toxic business environment that drove investment and jobs out of the province. They made a printed-and-delivered economic report decision to get out of manufacturing in Ontario. Six times in the opening of it, of their economic report—thankfully, it was their last economic report—they talked about how they wanted to get out of manufacturing. And the real reason, Speaker, was because they raised costs for manufacturers across the board, including energy costs, which, as you've heard throughout the day, skyrocketed under the Liberals by 300%.

Our manufacturing capacity was hollowed out. Businesses were shuttered. Three hundred thousand manufacturing jobs were lost. Our auto sector was literally on the brink of collapse. All of this had to do with the fact that they raised energy by 300%. I'm looking across the aisle. I think there's only one member from the NDP who was here back then in the days of this 300% increase. Were you here then?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Oh, two members, then. I correct myself.

We all well remember the days of 300%. I remember Xstrata Copper, up in Timmins. They were the single-largest user of energy in the entire province, and Xstrata Copper left, crossed the border into Quebec, took 450 jobs away from Ontario. It was a really tragic day, and they said, "We've had enough. We cannot afford energy here in Ontario." They were sort of the canary in the coal mine of what was going to happen in Ontario. The fact that these manufacturers were leaving—and that's the past.

I said to you that the auto sector was on the brink of collapse. Think about Ontario and Australia, both heading over this auto cliff. Australia went down, gone from the auto business. They don't make cars anymore. They decided to throw the towel in. When we got elected, we heard the devastating news from writers, news that announced in 2019 that global automakers planned to spend \$300 billion and zero of it was coming to Canada.

Again, the automakers here—I remember former Premier Wynne sitting next to then-chair of Fiat Chrysler and trying to ask him if he's going to expand, and he looked at her and said, "Expand? We're lucky if we even stay. You have made Ontario the most expensive jurisdiction in all of North America for energy and for doing business." She pleaded with him again, and his answer was, "You've got to cut costs." But they didn't hear that. Instead, they just continued to increase costs. So we get to that point where Reuters announced this \$300 billion and not a penny was coming to Canada.

Premier Ford, our government, we stepped in, got into power, and we said, "Here's what we're going to do: We're going to pull on every lever that we have to lower the costs for businesses." One of the first things we did—I've said it in this House many, many times—was we reduced the cost of WSIB, what some people would call workers' compensation, by 50%. That's a \$2.5-billion savings annually to businesses. The next thing we did is we put in what's called an accelerated capital cost allowance—a pretty fancy way of saying you can write off your new equipment in-year. It's a billion-dollar savings. Then, we reduced energy costs for industrial and commercial clients by an average of 16%. That is a \$1.3-billion-a-year savings.

Interjection.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, there you go. The sound of one hand clapping; I love it.

We look at our red tape reduction bills, which all of our caucus have put forth ideas and supported. It's over a billion dollars in annual savings. Add it all up, Speaker, we're now saving \$8 billion a year. That has resulted in the attraction of tens of billions of dollars in the tech sector, over \$5 billion in life sciences and an unprecedented, unheard of \$46 billion in new auto and EV investments just over the last four years.

To put that in perspective, here in Ontario, population 15 million, we've landed \$46 billion. In the entire United States, they have landed \$119 billion, which is an unbelievable comparison that we have that kind of might, that kind of manufacturing might, and that confidence. A lot of it has to do with our clean energy grid, the fact that we've lowered the cost of energy, as well as lowering the cost of doing business across Ontario.

You remember Reuters saying that we were getting zero, and I've just shown you that we've landed \$46 billion? Well, Bloomberg has released their report that ranks us as the number one on their global EV battery supply chain rankings. So we went from zero to now number one in the world.

Interjections.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, that is clap-able. There you go.

We're dethroning China for the first time since the rankings were introduced. This is a new chapter and now we have Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, and that ensures that Ontario will have the energy capacity it needs to continue to drive this economic growth.

Every time we're around the world attracting a company, like the one we just announced at their brand new building in Woodbridge two days ago—we lured them here from South Korea—

Interjections.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, here you go again.

When we sit with these companies, we come back here in the Legislature, we meet with the Minister of Energy, we meet with the Minister of Mines and we meet with the Minister of Labour. We make sure that we have the right people for this company, the right minerals should they need it for this company. But really, do we have the energy for them in the area that we think they're going to go in? We've always worked hand in glove. It is an all-of-government effort to be able to do that.

Unlike the Liberals, who prioritized ideology over affordability and reliability when it came to energy, our government continues to ensure that we will be a global leader in clean, reliable energy, while keeping costs down for families, and we'll leverage our competitive advantage in nuclear energy so that we can land even more job-creating investments across every corner of the province, Speaker.

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Today, there was an article in one of the southwestern papers that talked about our landing the \$1.6-billion Asahi Kasei investment. The article said, and I'm going to have to quote: "Having access to 110 megawatts of electricity was on the must-have list" when choosing a site for this investment. Asahi also noted that they had "huge power requirements, and they wanted it to be green. A lot of the power sources in the US are not green ... and are still using a lot of ... coal." They "wanted to stay away from that."

Speaker, that's what we're doing. That's what this bill is all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Smith): I'm recognizing the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Back in 2015, 2016, 2017—before that—I was working full-time as a crown, managing my career, and I had also just bought my first house in 2015, which was a little wartime fixer-upper. So I know that, technically speaking, back then, I would have been feeling the weight of my own hydro bills, as I was the one paying for them and taking care of the entire property myself.

But here's the thing: Even though I was indeed paying those bills, I wasn't actually paying attention to hydro rates. Energy policy wasn't something I was interested in. Politics, frankly, wasn't something I was interested in. And even if it had been, it absolutely felt like something that was just so far out of my hands. It was something that I couldn't change or influence, and so I had no reason to follow it.

Fast-forward a few years to when I was elected and somewhat startled to find myself as a parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Energy and I was immediately briefed on hydro rates, and I felt like a little bit of a fraud, having to learn about it, as I had never paid attention before. But what helped was realizing that my own

background of feeling very disconnected from these issues actually put me in the same shoes as many other Ontarians.

Politicians talk a lot about families and businesses when they talk about energy, and I, every so often—I know, technically, when we talk about families, we're talking about households, but sometimes I like to hear politicians talk specifically about young adults, young Ontarians or single Ontarians. So I know that my feeling back then of not paying attention—even though it was such an incredible thing that it, frankly, brought the Liberal government down—means I'm not the only one that felt that way.

So for people like me, people that were younger, young adults or single Ontarians now—even right now, we're busy focusing on our jobs, our dogs, our dating lives, all while managing monthly expenses, and energy policy doesn't exactly feel like a priority, as it just can be part of the background noise of politics. And yet, as Ontarians living under the previous government learned, that background noise can actually hit us pretty hard if energy rates get out of control.

And that's why I was sort of talking to this group of people specifically today, because it does matter to you. Hydro rates jumped something like 70% between 2008 and 2016, which, back then, really would have hit younger Ontarians and single adults that are living on single or entry-level incomes quite hard.

So why does this bill matter to you? First, it's going to keep your energy bills manageable and expected. That's one of the most important parts of this act; it's why "affordable" is in the name. It's designed to keep those costs predictable, manageable. Ideally, when you're paying your bills, we want it to be a boring chore and not a horror show. If you're renting an apartment or have recently bought a home or even if, like many, you're still saving for your own place, energy bills shouldn't be the thing that makes your life unaffordable and, ideally, they shouldn't be something that you even really have to worry about or think about. The goal is that you can just go about your life without suddenly getting hit with a surprise increase.

The complex contracts and set rates that exist under the Green Energy Act made it nearly impossible for consumers to either influence or understand their rising bills, which I know led to a lot of frustration and distress.

The second reason this act is important and relevant to this group that I'm talking about is, it is going to help those of you who are trying to get into the housing market. As we know, housing right now is already expensive enough, and the last thing that anyone needs are extra costs that are adding to the price of a new home. One of the ways that this act helps is by making that last mile of energy connections more affordable. For those who were less certain as me about what that was, when we're talking about the last mile in energy, it's the infrastructure that you need in order to bring power from the main grid to individual homes or an apartment complex. If you have a subdivision, it's the power lines and the underground connections that are necessary to reach that new home.

Traditionally, developers have had to cover those costs up front, which makes it a lot more expensive and those costs end up being passed down to the people that buy the homes.

The act helps us by letting developers spread those last-mile costs over a longer period instead of front-loading the entire cost, the whole cost, onto a new project, which helps keep prices a little bit more manageable. Again, for those of us who are hoping to buy a place or just starting out in the market, those kinds of changes do make a big difference. They're small and practical steps that may not grab headlines, but they do help in chipping away at the cost of housing.

Fourth, another reason that this may help you, which I think we could talk about more is, it could help save your life or the life of somebody that you love. Here's another reason why it matters to that group of people—because of how often nuclear is specified in this act, and that's medical isotopes. Medical isotopes aren't just any medical advancement, they are produced right in our operating nuclear power plants, plants that are already working to keep Ontario powered.

To me, that's one of the most fascinating and unique things about the energy file and energy profile in Ontario, and it should be top of mind for many people in the House today as we have the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council visiting us.

Ontario is actually a world leader in producing medical isotopes, thanks to our nuclear plants. They're essential in modern medicine for sterilizing equipment and for unique cancer treatments. Again, for young adults, this isn't just about an opaque power bill. This is about something that's contributing to putting Ontario on the world stage as a leader in medical isotope technology. These techniques and procedures and isotopes could save your life, they could save the lives of your parents and keep it incredibly relevant.

Another reason, again, for that group of people is EVs. I know a lot of people who have bought—well, in my circle particularly—Teslas, but they're buying Teslas because they're having to commute incredibly long distances to work because they can't afford to buy a house where they actually work, and it's cheaper to live somewhere else and commute, which is great, but you can really only make EVs work if you have reliable ways to charge them and you know where to find places to charge them. This act, of course, clears away a lot of the red tape about EV charging stations, making it faster and easier to expand our infrastructure.

For people that are looking for sort of direct and practical ways to cut transportation costs but still have to commute by vehicle, this is again an important aspect when it comes to making EVs of all types a viable choice for people buying their next car.

Also, this act is, to me, a great example of good government policy, and it's exactly the type of thing you should expect from your government. Again, as somebody younger, somebody on your own, if there's one thing that I've learned in my role as an MPP, a parliamentary

assistant and a politician, it's the importance of consulting experts.

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The Affordable Energy Act isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. It's built from listening to people who understand the realities of energy policy inside and out. It's the product of speaking with energy economists, industry leaders, stakeholders and regular people that deal with these challenges every day. I believe that the extensive consultations are why this act does include everything from nuclear energy to renewables, like wind and solar. It's ultimately about making energy affordable and sustainable, which takes insights from all across the field.

Again, ultimately, why does this act matter? It's because the purpose of this act is to make—energy is something that ideally, if you don't want to, you don't really have to think about. If you don't know that much about energy policy, that's fine. The idea is that you don't need to worry about it. It's set up so that you can just live your life without worrying that your hydro bill will suddenly jump.

So again, ultimately, this is about building a more stable and affordable Ontario so that your energy costs don't sneak up on you. If you're trying to get your first place, or save, or just manage monthly costs, this act is here for you, and it's about creating a foundation for affordable living in Ontario so people can focus on the things that matter to them.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. When you did the contract for the Ontario Line, which went to Hitachi, you lowered the Canadian content requirements from 25% to 10%.

Can you please explain why the government is investing less in Ontario manufacturing?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'm not sure what that has to do with the energy bill, Speaker. But I'd be happy to share with the member the various terms of the contract and the fact of how much construction is being done here by Ontario workers, how much concrete, how much steel is being purchased, so that the overall contract has a huge Ontario spend and a huge Ontario build. All of that, I recall in this Legislature, the then Minister of Transportation outlining in great detail the benefits to Ontario companies for that contract. But again, I'm not sure what that has to do with this, but I hope that helps.

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: I thank the members for their participation in today's debate. I do want to ask the minister: Look, you're somewhat responsible for changing the game with regard to electric vehicle and electric battery production here in the province of Ontario. As a result of that, that is contributing to what we know is going to be a tremendously increasing demand on electricity in this province, which the IESO has said is going to be 75% by 2050.

Now, to get there, is it possible to even dream of getting there without expanding our nuclear fleet here in the

province of Ontario that currently always provides over 50% of our power? Without expanding and refurbishing our nuclear fleet, can we even get there?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for an energy question; I appreciate that.

I would say every single contract that we have signed, we have made very certain that the energy that will be required to supply to those businesses is either here or coming. You simply cannot do that without expanding our nuclear fleet.

We are so proud when we're overseas, and we boast, that we are the first G7 country and jurisdiction, here in Ontario, to be providing small modular reactors—one is under construction; three more are planned. Around the world, that is just absolutely amazing news because the companies fully understand that the province of Ontario and the people of Ontario are absolutely committed to bringing the right amount of nuclear energy.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The minister talked a lot about different contracts and what went into them, which is where my other question came from. It is on the record that the content requirement was lowered from 25% to 10%.

Be that as it may, I'm interested that the minister of economic development often brags about cutting WSIB payments by 50%, and yet we know that there are so many injured workers who are forced onto ODSP when they should be covered by WSIB. It's a real question to me whether that is a—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Sorry. I'm going to ask the member to have her questions relate to the topic we are debating this afternoon.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The minister himself, in his notes on this topic, referred to the WSIB, so that's where it's coming from.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member, and I ask the minister to respond.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Certainly, I can respond to yet another type of question. WSIB premiums to businesses have been reduced by 50%, which saves the business community \$2.5 billion. However, not one change has been made to the benefits of the beneficiaries. Only the premiums are reduced. The benefits have not changed, Speaker.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I really appreciated both the conversations that were happening from both the member and the minister. I was very intrigued by the minister's conversation about Ontario's positioning versus Australia's just a few years ago and how we were rated as a province.

I did want to thank him for coming to my area and helping assist on a \$155-million investment on Hanon, for a compressor component that has to do with expanding the EV sector. We're really excited about this. It's going to

generate an economy, and jobs and expansion in our province.

How do you envision these enhancements in our community growth making Ontario an even more attractive place to live and work? Because it feels like we're on the brink of some really positive opportunities.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to correct something I had said earlier in my speech. The dollar volume we are at in EV and auto is \$45 billion. I was thinking of a couple of great announcements that are coming up when I said a new number, so I have foreshadowed some great news coming to the people of Ontario.

On that note, that's really what it's all about: the fact that we've got this clean energy here in Ontario. Think about our competition in a battery plant. They could go to Kentucky, except it's only 6% clean energy; they could go to Indiana and get 7% clean energy; or they can come here to Ontario and get over 90% clean energy. It's 94% when we were looking at it with Volkswagen. The fact is that those companies can purchase the clean energy credit to make a 100% clean-energy battery. This is very, very key. Our clean energy is such a massive supporting factor when we are luring these businesses to Ontario.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. I appreciated his comments about the history that we both experienced in this place under the previous Liberal government and the disastrous financial impact of the cost of the Liberal government's politicized energy policies or the billion dollars that was spent on the gas plant scandal.

The members across the way have talked about the importance of transparency and using evidence, so my question is: Why does Bill 214 then give the minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council more power to direct energy system planning and policies bypassing the independent OEB and the public consultation processes that the OEB oversees?

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Hon. Victor Fedeli: We really do both recall those days. I chaired our party's role in the gas plant scandal. We saw what happens when you put solar power at 80 cents a kilowatt hour and sell it for eight cents, at the time; when you go out in the market and attract wind power and pay them 26 cents.

The very, very next thing they had to do was build these gas plants to back up for the days that the wind didn't blow and the sun didn't shine. For political purposes, the then government cancelled the billion-dollar contract, told the Legislature it was \$230 million. We know that that was not correct. We got the Auditor General involved, proved that it was a billion dollars in terms of the actual costs, and were able to save the taxpayer that kind of money.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for his presentation earlier, mentioning about affordability. While the previous government worked so hard to make our lives

unaffordable, may our minister share more with us how this bill can help us to live a more affordable life?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): In 10 seconds, Minister.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In those 10 seconds, I would also say that the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas talked about the debt-to-GDP at 40%. I would suggest she and others look at the document that came out today, on page 3 and page 8. Her statements were incredibly inaccurate.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few thoughts to Bill 214, An Act to amend various energy statutes respecting long term energy planning, changes to the Distribution System Code and the Transmission System Code and electric vehicle charging.

I will take them in reverse, as in I will start to talk to schedule 3, the amendment regarding the electric vehicle charging, because those comments will be quite short. Basically, with the amendment in Bill 214, they would give themselves—the minister, Lieutenant Governor—more power to direct energy system planning and policies, but it would exempt the distribution and retailing of electricity for electric vehicle charging from application of the Electricity Act, the Energy Consumer Protection Act and the Ontario Energy Board Act. I have a problem with that. The Energy Consumer Protection Act needs to be reinforced, not taken away.

I will give you an example. My sister drives an electric car. My sister lives in Quebec, just across the bridge from Ottawa. In Quebec, they are guaranteed a charging station every 30 kilometres if they're in town, maximum 50 kilometres if you're outside of a big centre. The province owns the charging station, and the cost of charging your electrical car is basically the cost of the power that you use when you charge your car. Everybody who has the app knows where it is etc.

My sister came and visited me in Ontario while I was at Queen's Park, so she came to my apartment. I rent a place at Bay and Bloor. There are charging stations in the building where I live, in the parking which is underneath the building, so she drove her car down. She had driven from about Ottawa—as I say, she was just across the bridge—to my apartment here in Toronto. She recharged her car while we were going out for supper and having a good time. I asked her, "How much does it cost compared to buying fuel? How much does it cost?" It cost her \$24.30 to recharge her car. She said that the same charge in Quebec at any charging station would have cost her about \$4.30. There's a \$20 add-on. The charging station in my building is privately owned. They charge whatever they want, and what they wanted was \$20 more than what it really costs to charge her car.

When I see, in schedule 3, that schedule 3 exempts the distribution or retail of electricity for electric vehicle charging from the application of the Electricity Act, from the application of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, then I'm wondering, next time my sister comes and visits

me, if this bill has gone through, is she going to pay 40 bucks to charge her car in the charging station in the basement of the apartment where I rent? Because what we are doing is taking away any oversight, any accountability, any consumer protection.

Let's face it, if your car has run out of energy—you have an electric car and the battery is dead—you will pay whatever they charge to charge it again, otherwise, you're stuck there, your battery is dead. You need to—one time with my sister, she needed to go back home, see her husband, her kids, her grandkids, whatever.

If you have no consumer protection in place, what do you figure will happen? I can tell you what will happen. In northern Ontario, in my riding, I'm really proud to say that I now have one charging station in all of my riding. I'm the seventh biggest riding in Ontario. Everybody in my riding drives because we have no public transit, and we have one charging station at the watershed. We're really proud. We're one ahead of where we were, so we now have one. I don't think that's enough. There are 84,000 people who live in Nickel Belt, and we cover, I don't know, 550 kilometres from south to north. Anyway, we need more than one.

If there is no consumer protection, what keeps this one charging station from charging you \$100 to charge your car? You have no choice. The next charging station is 300 kilometres north or about 250 kilometres south in Sudbury or in Timmins. We need consumer protection. Why would you do something like this? How can you on one side make investments to bring electric vehicle production and battery production and all of this in Ontario, but at the same time, leave Ontarians who own electric vehicles at the mercy of for-profit companies who will charge what the market can bear, the exact same way that gas companies charge what the market can bear? In my riding, the closer you are to a mine, the higher the price of gas. Why? Because miners make good money, drive big trucks and need gas.

I go 50 kilometres west of my riding toward Espanola, and usually the price of gas is about 20 cents cheaper. I go about 50 kilometres east of my riding to Sturgeon Falls, and usually the price of gas is about 40 cents, sometimes 50 cents cheaper than what we pay in Nickel Belt. It's not because of transportation. It's not because of tax. It's because they sell at what the market can bear and apparently, in Nickel Belt, we can bear a high market, so they charge us.

We need consumer protection. We need it for gasoline, but we also need it for electric vehicle charging stations. I hope the members on the other side will consider making amendments to schedule 3 of Bill 214, because to actively say in the bill that you will exempt the distribution and retailing of electricity for electric vehicle charging stations from the Energy Consumer Protection Act means that there is nothing left to protect consumers from being gouged by whoever owns those charging stations.

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This is wrong. We want Ontarians to buy those new vehicles that are going to be built in Ontario, made in

Ontario. The batteries will use the minerals from where I'm from. All of this falls apart if you go to recharge your vehicle and you're charged 100 bucks for something that would have cost you \$4.30, had you been across the bridge in Quebec to do the exact same thing. I hope the government will consider making changes.

The other thing I want to talk about has to do with the schedule for distribution. That's schedule 2. Schedule 2 amends the Ontario Energy Board Act to allow for the Lieutenant Governor to make regulations to amend the electrical distribution system code and the transmission system code with respect to cost allocation and cost recovery etc.

Why I'm interested in schedule 2 is that I have this beautiful community in my riding called Biscotasing. Biscotasing has been there since—I think it was first created around 1800. It's on the Budd train—I think you know this, Speaker—a little train that goes through northern Ontario. It has been there for a long time. It is beautiful. This is on the shore of Lake Biscotasi. They are off the grid. So although it's a community that has been there for a very long time—you go up Highway 144, you go to the east of Highway 144 and all the little communities, Shining Tree, Westree, the watershed, they all have electricity. You go west of Highway 144, at the watershed, you have Iamgold, a brand new mine that is mining gold and the name itself says it.

So hydro was able to increase the distribution. There's extra power coming from Timmins all the way to Westree, from Westree all the way to Iamgold, the mine sites and all of this because they use a ton of electricity. A little parentheses: Everything there is automated. There's those huge trucks, like three times my height. They are all self-driven; they are all electric trucks. It's amazing.

Anyway, all this to say that they use a lot of electricity for the mining of gold at Iamgold at Côté Lake. They were able to bring electricity to the mine. There's 1,800 people that work there. They sleep in bunkers—that's another story, but they were able to bring electricity.

Biscotasing on the same side, on the west side, it's very close to the new mine, but, in 2024, a community that is in between Sudbury and Timmins, where we have the poles, they have phones and the lines are all there, but they're still off the grid? How could that be? How could it be that, in 2024, in a community that's not that far away, that has hydro lines going by, we are not able to get them connected to the grid?

Schedule 2 amends the Energy Ontario Board Act to allow the Lieutenant Governor to make recommendations to amend the electrical distribution system code and the transmission system code: It will be even less likely that the good people of Biscotasing will be able to be connected to the grid. This is Ontario. This is 2024. No offence to the member from Kiiwetinoong who has more than 12 of his communities off the grid—from Biscotasing, if you go up a little wee bit, you will see the transmission line going by. It's not that far. It's feasible. If Bell Canada was able to bring the telephone in, why is it that Ontario Hydro has not brought electricity? Now it will be even

harder. We are working really hard to try to bring electricity. It will be even harder to get that done. So have I got some reservations? I'm not opposed to the end goal of what the bill is trying to do. We want affordable energy in my riding, like in everywhere else.

I can tell you that the biggest energy user in all of Ontario is in my riding. We do use a lot of electricity. It is Glencore. Glencore is the second-biggest mining company in Ontario; Vale is the biggest one that everybody knows. Glencore is the one located in Falconbridge. The smelter at Glencore is run with electricity. At Vale, they use some electricity, but they also use natural gas. They use other forms of power to do the smelting.

Smelting is when you bring the temperature of the rocks to thousands of degrees, to melt the rocks so you can get the ores, the nickel, the gold, everything else out of it. We have two of those in Sudbury, one run by Vale, one run by Glencore. Glencore runs its smelting operation with electricity only. They are the biggest electricity user in all of Ontario. So do they care about affordable energy? Yes, they do, because for every one cent per kilowatt more that they pay—they showed me the math and everything—it turns into millions of dollars more for them.

Do they care about an Affordable Energy Act? Yes, absolutely. Are they afraid that Ontario won't be able to continue to supply power at a price they can afford? Yes, absolutely. Mining is a competitive business. They sell nickel on the international market, but you still have to be competitive in order to do this. They do extract other minerals as well, not solely nickel, but I'm telling you this because this is something that matters to northern Ontario an awful lot.

Then I will talk about schedule 1. I told you I would go "3, 2, 1." Schedule 1 is where the minister "may"—or may not—"issue an integrated energy resource plan setting out and balancing the government ... goals and objectives" that respect various listed energy matters. We always had a long-term energy plan in Ontario. It was mandated by law that the government of the day had to have it. Now, rather than the bill saying that there "shall" be a long-term energy plan, it has been changed to "may ... issue an integrated energy resource plan."

Energy is something very important. It is also something that costs a lot for each and every one of us; for every small, medium or large business. A lot of them look at the long-term plan to decide if they will do an upgrade to the smelting operation, to the crushing, to the milling etc. Now, if this is gone, it's always the same. Businesses need long-term plans in order to be able to make investments. That often takes a long time to put into place—not only a long time, but a lot of money.

Now, if we see that those are going to be taken away, that brings insecurity to some very important businesses in northern Ontario—as I say, some of them; one is the biggest electricity user in our entire province. The other mining operators—and I have many through Nickel Belt; there are mines all over Nickel Belt—are all big electricity users that are able to raise money, most of them through the stock market and through other means, to do long-term

projects based on long-term energy plans because the cost of electricity is a huge, huge factor in whether the mining operation will be successful or not successful, as in bringing revenues to the shareholders. It takes a lot of money to open up a mine. It takes a lot of money to operate a mine. One of the big costs is the cost of energy.

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We have been able, in my riding, to see expansion of mining, upgrading through the Clean AER Project at Vale, through all-electric new mines that are being built so that you don't use diesel on the ground anymore. Diesel particles are really hard on people's lungs. Once you bring electric vehicles on the grounds, it's a lot safer for the people who work there and it's a lot easier to keep the air safe to breathe. But all of those investments are based on a long-term plan, and now we have a bill that says the minister "may," when it used to be the minister "shall."

I realize that I only have a few seconds left on the clock. I wanted to talk about the availability of heat pumps in my riding. We don't have natural gas. We heat with oil; propane, if you are able to get propane delivery; or electricity. When the bill goes from \$700 to \$1,000 a month because you're heating with electricity, having a heat pump makes a huge difference.

Everybody is wondering why is it that certain areas of Ontario have support to make the transition to heat pumps, and other areas of Ontario don't have? But you know what, Speaker? If you put the map as to who is represented by a PC MPP rather than an NDP, it's almost the same map as to who gets access to the support for a heat pump and who doesn't. I will stop there.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for her address today. We know more about Nickel Belt today than we did yesterday and that's always good, to have that opportunity.

I do want to ask the member—because she talked a lot about the energy demand at Glencore. We understand that that facility is a massive consumer of electricity. But your party has been somewhat conflicted in my time here. I know you were here when the Green Energy Act was passed as well. Our plan, through this Affordable Energy Act, is about significantly increasing our penetration of nuclear—and the expansion of our nuclear fleet, both through refurbishment and new build. We're talking about an electrification all across Ontario. You're talking about heat pumps. Heat pumps will use electricity.

Where do you stand on our increase and our expansion of nuclear here, in the province of Ontario, to be able to supply and provide that power for Ontario's future?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have been using nuclear power in Ontario for a very long time. It supplies more than half of the electrical power that is presently available to Ontarians. The Affordable Energy Act has to be—affordability has to be part of this.

I have yet to see—and I don't think any of us have seen—a plan from beginning to end that would show us, "Here is how much it costs for infrastructure. Here's how

much it costs for running this. Here's how much it costs for the waste." None of us have seen this.

I'm a New Democrat. I want to make sure that we make decisions that are fiscally responsible. Show me a costed plan that will say what you're about to do that will bring us affordable energy. We are all for affordable energy.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Thank you. I know that the bill emphasizes the prioritization of nuclear power generation and meeting future needs in Ontario. The First Nations in the Land Defence Alliance are concerned about the possibility of a nuclear waste facility being built near Ignace, Ontario, without their consent.

Are you aware of any commitment from this government that can help upholding the right to free, prior informed consent of First Nations as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I so wish that I could say yes to that question, but I can't. A month ago, we had this meeting at Nairn Centre. Nairn Centre has a mine waste depot that has uranium in it, and the Ministry of Transportation was planning to bring more naturally occurring radiating material to the dump. They held a public meeting. At the public meeting they said they had consulted with all of the First Nations. Then the First Nations chief—I forget her name, it'll come to me—came to the microphone and said, "I have been the chief for the last 12 years. You have never consulted me. You've never talked to me."

Behind her was another chief from a First Nation that was there who said, "How can the Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Transportation who were there say that they consulted with them when they didn't know they were in the room?" There were like hundreds of people. They came to the microphone and said, "You have never consulted with us." It was a duty to consult that was not honoured, and it was said in a public forum by two of the chiefs that were impacted by this—

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

Mr. David Smith: I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt. My question is, how can the opposition claim to be part of the cure about affordable housing, cost of living, helping families put food on the table, yet turn around and oppose this bill that will do exactly that?

For the people of Ontario, do they truly believe they can talk about affordability while standing in the way of policies that will lower energy costs, support economic growth and put more money in the pockets of Ontarians? How can they reconcile them with their action which would do nothing but hurt the very people they claim to stand up for? Where is the plan to deliver real tangible results for the people of Ontario?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have a responsibility as legislators to make sure that we have accountability, that we have transparency, that we protect the public. There is such a law right now that is called the Energy Consumer Protection Act. It exists exactly for this, so that it helps

make life affordable. It helps make sure that all of the private, for-profit players within the energy system are held to account but, in this bill, in schedule 3, it will exempt the distribution and retailing of electricity for electric vehicle charging from the Energy Consumer Protection Act.

Do we want the charging station? Yes, we do, but there needs to be accountability. There needs to be transparency, and they need to be kept under the Energy Consumer Protection Act, otherwise the vehicle charging stations may charge you more than it is to fill up your truck with gas—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: That's how you protect people.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much for your presentation. I was curious about what you were saying about heat pumps and how heat pumps would change people's electricity bills in your riding. Could you talk a little bit about heat pumps and whether this bill addresses that and what you'd like to see this government do?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. I represent a northern rural riding. There are 33 little communities in Nickel Belt. None of them are big enough to have a mayor, an election or anything. They have a local services boards. They're small; they're small northern communities. We don't have natural gas. We heat our houses with electricity. If you're lucky enough and the truck is able to come and deliver propane or oil, you do that.

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People care about the environment. They know that electrical heating will be better—less greenhouse emissions and all of this—but to have a heat pump installed in your home is very expensive. But once you have it, you will go from \$1,000 a month in electricity to heat your home to \$200 a month in electricity to heat your home. It makes a huge, huge difference. They would like to have access to a little bit of help. You're talking people on fixed income who've owned their homes for a long time. It would be a game-changer.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Madam Chair: We were talking about costs. According to the OEB, nuclear is 10.1 cents per kilowatt, gas is 11.4 cents per kilowatt and wind is 14 cents per kilowatt. So nuclear—obviously the most efficient and cost-effective—is a positive step. We talked about it being clean; nuclear is zero emissions. Do you support nuclear expansion?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We want affordable energy for all. We've had nuclear energy in Ontario forever, before I was born and probably after I will be gone. It is part of what we have.

Moving forward, we really have to cost things out. You will remember—I don't know if you will, but I remember on my electricity bill—having it added on, because the building of the Candu nuclear cost a whole lot more than

what had been set forward. Costs doubled, actually. So if you move forward, you have to have a good fiscal plan to show that this is how much it's going to cost, and you've

done the work and you've done the planning to make sure that you get to this. None of this has been done so far.
Report continues in volume B.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
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Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
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Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
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Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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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	
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Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
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Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
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