

Legislative  
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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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7 November 2024

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43<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi  
7 novembre 2024

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 November 2024

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 novembre 2024

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prières / Prayers.*

### ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that in name of His Majesty the King, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

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

### TIME ALLOCATION

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Essex.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, the order for second reading of Bill 220, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act be immediately called and that 30 minutes be allotted to debate with 10 minutes for members of His Majesty's government, 10 minutes for members of His Majesty's loyal opposition and 10 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That, at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill 220 without further debate or amendment; and

That, upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall immediately be called; and

That the Speaker shall immediately put the question on the motion for third reading without debate or amendment; and

That the votes on second and third reading of the bill shall not be deferred; and

That, if a recorded division is requested on the second or third reading vote on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Leardi is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, the order

for second reading of Bill 220, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act be immediately called and that 30 minutes be allotted to debate with 10 minutes for members of His Majesty's government, 10 minutes for members of His Majesty's loyal opposition and 10 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That, at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill 220 without further debate or amendment; and

That, upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall immediately be called; and

That the Speaker shall immediately put the question on the motion for third reading without debate or amendment; and

That the votes on second and third reading of the bill shall not be deferred; and

That, if a recorded division is requested on the second or third reading vote on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

Agreed? Agreed.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT (QUARTERLY ALLOWANCES), 2024 LOI DE 2024 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS (ALLOCATIONS TRIMESTRIELLES)

Mr. Downey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 220, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 220, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

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

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I want to start by saying I've had the absolute privilege over the last several decades to knock on doors, not just in Ontario and all corners of Ontario—rural and urban and otherwise—but also across the country, whether it be Nova Scotia or New Brunswick or Newfoundland—Mount Pearl, to be exact—and other places across the country as far west as BC.

There is a theme when you knock on doors. People are generally receptive. You expect that there might be hostil-

ity at the doors during elections; that is not actually the truth. People are receptive and they do want to hear from you. They want to hear what you have to offer as a party for your candidate. I find that when people come door-knocking for the first time, volunteers come and they're nervous. What's going to happen? Well, what's going to happen is you're going to talk to your neighbours. You're going to talk to your neighbours and your friends and other people that you know.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I love door-knocking, but there's one that stands out in my mind, in 2018. It was up Highway 11, a fairly busy space, so you have to drive door-to-door. I went up to this house, and I can visualize it even now: A young mom came to the door and she had four kids. There was one standing beside her, one on the hip, one on the leg and one behind the gate at the top of the stairs. The lady said to me, "I don't vote." I said, "Why don't you vote?" She said, "Because my vote doesn't matter. Nobody wants to hear what I have to say." I said, "I'm standing in your doorway because I want to hear what you have to say." I won't drag you through the whole conversation, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how she voted. But I do know this: She had an impact in two ways.

I ran into her later at a shopping mall. She saw me; I wouldn't have recognized her, to be honest. She came up to me and she said, "I voted." I went, "That made my day." So not only did she have an impact by voting—and I don't know for who; I didn't ask her. I probably should have. I'm a bad politician that way sometimes. But she also had an impact because her vote went to support whoever she voted for, with a small subsidy, with a small additional level of support that would play out over the next four years. That's not to be underestimated.

I ran into another fellow, also in 2018. He said, "I've never voted in my life." I said, "Well, how old are you?" He was 38. I said, "Why don't you vote?" He said, "I just never have. I just never got around to it." You can tell the punch line: I ran into him later—I did recognize him; he was about 6 foot 4 and a little more distinct. Well, he did vote for me, because he told me that, so that subsidy, of course, played out as well. It's a way for some people to make their vote matter, even if they don't know that it matters, and every vote does matter.

That's another thing, "My vote doesn't matter." It does matter. I can tell you, if you ask former Premier Ernie Eves, in the race where he won by six votes, he'll tell you every vote matters. And I can tell you, everybody who ran in a close election knows every single vote matters—not just in the ballot box in this case, but to help support a healthy democracy, to help support exactly what we're doing here.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I don't have an issue with having my ideas debated. I have confidence in my issues. I have confidence in my positions. I know the other parties do too, and the stronger the opposition is—the stronger all the oppositions are—the stronger we will be, because we need to have a good strong democratic debate, not just here, but at the doors and in our communities. If we're not doing that, we're not at our best.

I can tell you, from my practice when I was doing corporate work and real estate work, if I had a sloppy lawyer on the other side, it would often make a mess of the file. But if I had a strong lawyer, somebody who was experienced and knew what they were doing, we could get down to business and find out the two things that actually need to be negotiated sorted out pretty quickly, and it was better for everybody.

#### 0910

Similarly, when we have a strong opposition, when we have strong people testing our ideas, if we don't have confidence in our ideas, then that's a challenge. But I do have confidence in the things that we do, and I'm happy to stand up and have that debate. But we need a strong institution, and I think this small amendment of time will contribute to that in some small way.

The other piece about "My vote doesn't matter." When I run into somebody in a riding, if I'm helping somebody—we all know the ridings that are likely to go one way or likely to go another. They have been that way forever. Now, it is not a total lock. MPP Dowie proved that point—that, after 95 years, you can make change, absolutely. The bad news for the opposition here today is that there's more of that to come.

However, there are perceptions in the ridings that a certain race will go a certain way, so the other parties that would receive support from constituents say, "What's the point in voting? It's going go that way." Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I had an experience—again, I'm speaking from my own experience in the riding. It happened to be a supporter of the Green Party, who said, "Look, I don't know if I'm going to vote. If I voted, I'd vote for the Green Party." They don't feel like it matters. But if they vote for the Green Party, that has an impact in building up the opposition. It helps Mr. Schreiner and others because it contributes to the democracy, and it helps with our development of ideas, the testing of ideas, the exchange of ideas. So that's very much what this is about, making sure that we're making every vote matter in one way or another.

We want people to vote. We want voter turnout to move up. We always want more voter turnout. We could do what other jurisdictions do; we could say, "You have to vote, or you will be penalized." That actually happens in some jurisdictions. That's not the route that we've taken, but we've said we will recognize your vote regardless of who you vote for, for participating in this democratic system that none of us here take for granted.

There are occasions where somebody comes to me and they've got the silver-bullet idea, and it's going to fix everything and they're going to do everything. I say to them, "Then get involved with whoever it is that you think is going to advance that interest and let's have that debate." But most people won't do that. Most people are busy taking their kids to hockey and dance and any number of things, and they don't have time or they don't have the resources to get involved. Well, this is an expression of that interest. This is an expression of their support and their interest in democracy and making things happen.

We watch elections. We're watching Nova Scotia right now to see how that goes. I wish my friend, the leader, good luck in that. I think Tim will do well, but it's elections and you just never know.

Here's the thing: Regardless of where elections go, it needs to be a debate amongst the parties, it needs to be a debate among the people actually knocking on the doors putting their name on a ballot and making things happen, and not properly resourced—whether it be private companies, special interest groups, whatever it is. We can't allow them to drown out the real ideas of the real people knocking on real doors talking to their neighbours and friends. That is core to what we're doing. We have to continue to support our system, to have this robust debate.

I have to say: Who knows when elections are going to come? Nobody here knows.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Probably you do.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Somebody's pointing and saying, "Probably you do." Every time I think I know what's going to happen in politics, something else happens. That was my operating assumption when I woke up this morning, and it will continue until the end of the day.

We're doing great things in this Legislature. We're building, we're attracting talent, we're attracting investment, we're growing the economy, we're supporting the most vulnerable in our community. We all agree on those things; we just disagree on how you do it.

I want to continue to have that vigorous dialogue to make sure that we're having vigorous debate and exchange of ideas. There are occasions where ideas come out of a place you never knew that they might, but they need to be debated in here and they need to be debated at the doors. All of that business takes resources. The small extension of time to continue the status quo is something that I think is healthy for our debate and for our system.

I look forward to continuing to work with the other members in the Legislature to have that vigorous debate and to get our collective voices out and let the best ideas win. Let's do it at the doors, but that takes resources and I look forward to hearing from the other parties on their perspective. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House, and today, on behalf of the official opposition, give our remarks on Bill 220—the amendment to the Election Finances Act.

First off, I would like to thank the government House leader and House leader's office and the other House leaders of the other parties. I think this bill and the speed at which it's going shows that when there is an issue that we can all work together on on behalf of the people of Ontario, we can. There are issues in this House that we philosophically completely disagree on and we'll fight, in my language, till the cows come home. But on things that are good—that we all agree are good for the people of Ontario, we can work together. This bill, this amendment is an example of that. I listened very intently to the

Attorney General and agreed with almost everything he said.

What's really important about our democratic system is that everyone can have a voice in that system. We have always, in the NDP, been in favour of public financing of the election process, as the Chief Electoral Officer initially suggested when the first version of this bill was brought in because the other side is—let's be frank, there are people in society, and they should have a voice, who have the financial wherewithal to donate, to help finance political activities. I'm not opposed to that, but there are large sectors of society who don't have that wherewithal, and everyone's voice should be heard.

We don't all agree in this chamber, often we don't, but everyone's voice is worthy to be heard. There isn't a day in this chamber that I don't learn something and that makes us all valuable. But the people we represent also need to be able to have that voice. Public financing gives everyone who votes a voice because your vote is attached to a small sum of money that goes to the party for which you share a belief. As a result, that party can share that belief during the election campaign and share that belief in this House, whether it's as a government or opposition or independent or third party. That is incredibly important.

Make no mistake, in our modern world, elections—for a party to tell people what they believe could be done to improve the province or change things in the province, it costs money. Let's make no mistake about it. I agree with the Attorney General that there's nothing like knocking on a door, but even knocking on doors takes finances to get to that door, to get the signs in front of those doors, to put ads. It takes money. If that money only comes from those who can afford to donate to the political system, then perhaps—and I'm not saying it always happens—those views are amplified and the whole democratic system loses as a result.

**0920**

This was an easy subject for us to agree to. We have always been in favour of public financing for the electoral system—will always be in favour. Quite frankly, we were a bit surprised that this issue came up, because, at points, the government has actively campaigned against it, so it's also an example that people can change their minds, and that's not a bad thing. That's actually one of the things that this House is about too. We don't often change each other's minds, let's admit it. But in this case, someone has, for the better.

I agreed wholeheartedly with what the Attorney General said—just the one point about how they're going to form the next government, I might not agree with that. But we all do knock on doors, we talk to people, we put forward our views and we believe in our views. If I didn't believe in what the New Democratic Party stands for, I wouldn't be standing here, because the people wouldn't have voted for me based on those views. Because I think one thing that people can tell pretty quickly is who believes what they're saying and who doesn't.

Despite the fact that I disagree with many of the things the government believes, a lot of people voted for the

government in the last election, and might not in the next election—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** See, obviously the government doesn't agree with me on that, and that's fine.

**Interjection:** You know they're listening.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** They are listening.

That's also the great thing about being able to stand in this House and express the views of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane, but, in this case, the views of the official opposition and most of the people of the province who elected the official opposition. Often, the NDP pushes issues—I'll give an example: doubling ODSP, because people now are in legislated poverty. When your only income is ODSP, you know what? You don't have any money left over to donate to the political process. You don't. Regardless if we have differing views about whether it's enough or not, there is not enough to donate to a political party because you're worried about your rent, whether you'll have enough to eat. But those people also have as much right to a voice in this House as someone who has a big business, and I don't begrudge either. Public financing goes part of the way to giving everyone who votes a voice, and everyone who votes—the more people we can get to vote, the bigger the voice and the stronger democracy.

I hope everyone shares this with me: One of the things I love to do the most, probably more than door-knocking, is going to schools and talking to students about democracy, and that question always comes up, “Well, does it matter if I vote?” My take is a bit different. I say, “Well, it matters if you don't,” because—this might not be popular, what I'm about to say, but political parties don't know how you vote, and that's a great thing, but they can keep track of what demographics vote, and, quite frankly, if a demographic tends not to vote, sometimes policy isn't aimed at that demographic. So the more people we can get to vote, the better it is.

Single moms aren't the highest voters, because they've got a lot going on. But if that single mom knows that if she votes, her voice adds to whichever political persuasion she is, that's a step forward in democracy. This is an extension of a bill that provided that step. This bill was about to end, and together we have agreed to continue this practice. For that, we are very supportive and I'm very thankful that I've had this opportunity to express our views.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'll be sharing my time, in the spirit of this morning, equally with my colleague from Guelph. I just want to say we'll be supporting this measure. The per-vote subsidy, we believe, is a very democratic way of ensuring that we can fund elections. There should be a balance between that and the limits that we put on giving to our particular parties, to try to get that right. It's a very democratic way of doing things. Everybody gets shares equally, depending how many votes that they have.

There are some inequalities in this system. That's the way it is; I'm not saying that has to change. You know, we

got more votes than the NDP in the last election, but we're smaller over here. But with this, here's what will happen: We're actually going to get a little bit more money than them, because more people voted for us—not a lot—and that's a good thing. That means those votes—

**Mr. John Vanthof:** We're going to try to change that.

**Mr. John Fraser:** You're going to try to change that? Have at 'er, buddy. We're going to try to change that as well.

I like to say this, and this is a good morning because we're all agreeing on this: I share more in common with all of you than the differences that we have. The differences that we have are bigger, but they're not deal-breakers, folks. We're all in this thing together and doing this subsidy the way we're doing it this morning is equal and fair, and so we'll be supporting it.

I'm very happy to have had the patience of my colleagues to my right—or to my left, or somewhere in between—for the little poke that I took at them. Hopefully, we can take a bigger poke at you next time.

Look, this is all fuelling speculation about an early election. I think when you call an election early, you have to have a reason and there has to be a ballot question. The question on everyone's minds is, what's the ballot question going to be? The ballot question will be: Is your life any better now than it was six years ago? Is your health care system any better than it was six years ago? Do more people or less people have a family doctor? Are wait times shorter for surgeries and diagnostics? Are we funding take-home cancer drugs? Is your health care system better? I think that that's going to be the ballot question in the next election, whenever that's called. That's what I hear at the door. That's what I see in terms of the government records. Do you think your health care system is any better six years later, objectively? That's going to be the ballot question.

When 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor, and that number is going to grow to 4.4 million in 2026, that's a serious issue. That issue is important, primary care, because you need to stay healthy and it's pretty hard to without access to primary care. When you're not healthy, you need to know that you're not healthy. That's hard when you don't have primary care. You have to go somewhere else, like a walk-in clinic or an emergency room. We've heard the Premier talk about emergency rooms and how not to take little Johnny if he's got a cut, but if he needs stitches, you better take him.

That's the question of the day. Since we're talking about elections, I don't know when it's going to be. People on the other side probably know when it's going to be. But when we have an election, in which the per-vote subsidy will be in effect, the ballot question in that election is, is your health care system better than it was six years ago? Is it working for you better than it did six years ago? Is your family getting what they need? That will be the ballot question. That will be the question that people ask us at the doors, because they already are.

**0930**

I don't want to give my colleague from Guelph too much time, so I'm going to count it down right to five,



because we're talking about being equal and sharing here, and if I give him extra, it might be like it's a bias of some sort. So it's coming up, Mike. I'm going to give you six seconds. There we go.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** The member from Guelph.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'm honoured to speak in favour of Bill 220. I appreciate the extra five seconds that the member from Ottawa South provided.

Speaker, one of the main reasons I got involved in politics was to improve and strengthen our democracy. And one of the reasons I chose to get involved with the Ontario Green Party is that it was a party that talked about getting big money out of politics and talked about reforming our democracy by bringing in proportional representation so the composition of the Legislature would reflect the democratic will of the people.

One of the reasons I've always supported public-based per-vote funding is because it shifts the funding and power from large donors and special interest groups to voters and the people. I think that is more democratic, and I think we only have to look south of the border to see the corrosive effects that big money has in politics. I am so grateful in Canada that we don't have elections dominated by billionaires and millionaires because we have spending limits and campaign donation limit systems in place, unlike what the US has.

But I also want to say that I listened to the radio this morning, on one of the radio shows where I'm on one of the panels, and the panellists were speaking negatively about this particular bill. And I want to remind those folks, I want to remind the public listening today that prior to per-vote funding in Ontario, we had a pay-to-play system that essentially meant that the party of the day was assigning funding targets to their ministers in particular. You had big-ticket events where people were forced to pay large sums of money to be able to have access to people in government. I remember being the leader of a non-profit organization, and one of the things we struggled with was, should we attend these fundraisers? Was it even the right thing to spend money on? But how else were we going to get access to government unless we did that?

So I just want to say I'm grateful—I'll be critical, but I'm also grateful—that the Premier of the day, Kathleen Wynne, recognized that that system was wrong. I want to give her credit for actually calling me into her office and helping rewrite our fundraising laws in Ontario.

When I went into her office, I said that there are three principles that should apply. First of all, we should eliminate corporate and union donations to political parties in this province because people should donate to politics, and politicians serve people, not special interests or corporate interests. The second thing I said is we have to dramatically lower donation limits to create an even playing field for voters across the province. The third thing I suggested is that we have public per-vote funding so that everybody in this province who votes has an opportunity to direct their donation to the party they choose.

Like the Attorney General, I've knocked on many doors over the years and had many people tell me, "My vote doesn't count." I think if we change our electoral system, we can help solve that problem. But at the very least, having public funding provides an answer to say, yes, your vote does count; at the very least, you're able to direct a donation to the political party you support.

To Premier Wynne's credit, she brought in those changes. I want to say that it heartens me to hear all parties saying they're going to support this legislation. I want to thank the government for bringing it forward, but I also want to say there needs to be a balance. I believe that political parties should fundraise. I think fundraising should be a part of our democratic system. It's an opportunity for people to make a contribution to the party they support.

But I also want to say, when this government first took office, donation limits were \$1,200. You could give \$1,200 to a candidate, \$1,200 to a riding association and \$1,200 to a political party, for a total of \$3,600. They changed that and raised it to \$1,650, which, if you do across all three, is a total of \$4,960.

Today they've raised it to \$3,375, meaning that a single individual can donate over \$10,000 to a political party, directing it to a candidate, a riding association and the central party. I think that balance is off. I think that balance is allowing big money to have a disproportionate impact in our politics. I think that's bad for democracy, and I would encourage the government to rebalance the way donation limits are set.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Downey has moved second reading of Bill 220, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, this bill is ordered for third reading.

ELECTION FINANCES  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(QUARTERLY ALLOWANCES), 2024

LOI DE 2024 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS  
(ALLOCATIONS TRIMESTRIELLES)

Mr. Downey moved third reading of the following bill:  
Bill 220, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act /  
Projet de loi 220, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement  
des élections.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Downey has moved third reading of Bill 220, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act.

It is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Orders of the day? I recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** No further business this morning.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:15.

*The House recessed from 0938 to 1015.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### DR. ASHA SETH

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** “Believing in yourself is extremely important ... Life is difficult and comes with its challenges, some small and some very big. But in order to overcome them ... we must believe we can.”

These inspiring words came from the honourable Dr. Asha Seth, Canada’s first South Asian Canadian female senator. Thank you so much.

With over 45 years of experience as a gynecologist, she has served families across Canada, delivering thousands of babies during her career. This past Family Day, Dr. Seth joined the residents of Mississauga–Malton for paint night where a resident recognized her as the doctor who delivered her baby nearly 40 years back. It was very heart-warming to see the deep connections she has created within our community.

Dr. Seth’s passion for eye health has been transformative. Serving as the national fundraising chair and a national board director for CNIB, she has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the critical importance of eye care and launched May as national Vision Health Month.

Dr. Seth is currently working on ensuring every child gets comprehensive eye testing at an early stage. With her loving husband Dr. Arun Seth and two accomplished daughters Angie and Dr. Anila her contributions remind us that people are bigger than their size and can have generational impacts.

Thank you, Dr. Asha Seth, for being an inspiration to the women in Mississauga–Malton and across Ontario. We pray for your health and well-being so that you can keep giving back to the community. Thank you, Dr. Asha Seth.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I rise today to remember the life and light of Breanna Broadfoot. Breanna was a young woman of 17 whose life was cut short by intimate partner violence. Breanna sought help. The accused was ordered by the court not to contact her. The criminal justice system needs to better protect women like Breanna.

Breanna’s family, Jess, Brett and brother Lucas, have turned unthinkable pain and grief into action. Lucas is mature beyond his years and is a strong voice for young women, but it should never be this way.

The city of London declared IPV an epidemic last year, joining AMO and over 100 municipalities across the province.

I also think of Cheryl Sheldon, turned away from one shelter—it was full—and even though she was directed to an open bed at another shelter, she never made it there. Her life was taken, lost to IPV.

Here’s what the government could do right now:

- provide multi-year base funding instead of project-based grants;

- ensure funding meets demand, because no shelter should ever have to turn away women escaping violence, and they also shouldn’t have to fundraise to keep the lights on;

- build affordable, non-market housing so women have a place to rebuild their lives after the shelter;

- make sure brave survivors of sexual assault are not denied justice; don’t set rapists free because of court backlogs.

I want to thank the amazing folks at London Abused Women’s Centre, Anova and Rotholme for the work they do to save and rebuild lives. You do the work of angels, and the government should pay you what you’re worth.

The time is now. The province must declare intimate partner violence an epidemic and break the cycle of men’s violence against women.

### REXALL PHARMACIST CARE CLINIC

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** I rise today to highlight an exciting addition to the great riding of Ajax that will help address the growing demand for accessible health care in our community.

A long-standing staple in our community, led by pharmacist manager Reza Ghaffari at Rexall, has recently added a new pharmacist-led clinic at the corner of Harwood Avenue South and Westney Road South. It’s a much-needed resource at a time when health care is top of mind for Ajax and beyond, aligning with our vision of providing quality care when you need it, where you need it.

By expanding the role of pharmacists, this clinic offers a variety of services, including treating 14 minor ailments such as sore throat, pink eye, shingles and more; in addition, supporting patients with medication management, health screening and vaccinations. This model supports our health care system by alleviating pressures at our hospitals and emergency rooms, ensuring that patients can access more care quickly and efficiently.

### 1020

I thank Rexall for their investment in our community and for helping to strengthen Ontario’s health care infrastructure. This initiative is exactly the kind of innovation we need to continue to ensure Ontarians have access to the care they deserve.

### INDIGENOUS VETERANS DAY

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Tomorrow, November 8, is Indigenous Veterans Day. This day was officially recognized for the first time in 1994, 30 years ago, in Manitoba. Over 7,000 First Nations people served in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War, and likely around 12,000 Indigenous people served during the 20th century's major conflicts. Over 500 of them lost their lives.

For those who returned, Indigenous veterans were not given the same recognition granted to non-Indigenous veterans. After World War II, Indigenous veterans returned home to a country that continued to discriminate against them. Many Indigenous veterans lost their Indian status because they participated in the military, and some saw their lands taken away and given to non-Indigenous veterans.

It is important that Indigenous Veterans Day exists, so that our veterans are honoured for their sacrifices, which came at great cost. I encourage everyone to educate themselves about the history of how Indigenous veterans were treated in Canada.

Kiiwetinoong today is full of many young people serving. We thank you for your service. Meegwetch to all Indigenous veterans for your service in the military and for helping to defend and protect democracy, here and around the world. Meegwetch.

### PAT FORAN

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I'm honoured to rise today to congratulate Whitby resident Pat Foran on his induction into the Order of Ontario. The Order of Ontario is the province's highest civilian honour. It's awarded to an Ontarian who has shown the highest levels of excellence and achievement in their field and whose impact has left a legacy in our province, our country and around the world.

As the trusted Consumer Alert reporter with CTV News Toronto, Pat has dedicated three decades to protecting and educating Ontario's consumers. His persistent and insightful reporting on consumer fraud has helped thousands of Canadians recover millions of dollars, proving his unwavering commitment to public welfare. Today, Pat Foran is one of Ontario's finest citizens, whose dedication exemplifies excellence in public service.

Congratulations, Pat, to you and your family, on a well-deserved induction into the Order of Ontario.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Ontario inherited a homelessness crisis of 21,000 people who were homeless across the province from the previous Liberal government. But since the Conservatives have been elected, that homelessness crisis has now exploded to 234,000 people homeless across Ontario.

There are tent encampments in every community across this province. It's a humanitarian nightmare for the people

in the encampments and for the communities around them. But the Conservatives have consistently voted down every solution the Ontario NDP has brought forward. They voted against building 250,000 non-profit homes, including co-ops and social and supportive housing. They voted against restoring rent control. They supported the renovation of seniors by the Chartwell corporation in Mississauga. That Chartwell corporation, actually, is taxpayer subsidized.

Now, the Conservatives are proposing to use the "notwithstanding" clause to strip Ontarians of their charter rights. Not many people understand that the "notwithstanding" clause strips us of our fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of movement and our legal rights, so that if we are arrested, we must be charged and we must be brought before a judge, and we cannot be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment.

These are the rights that this government wants to strip us of, and they're using the homelessness crisis as an excuse to use the "notwithstanding" clause. It's absolutely shameful. The solution to homelessness is to build housing, not to strip us of our human rights.

### VETERANS

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** In my community of Richmond Hill, we are blessed with many local heroes, men and women who answered the call of duty in wars, peacekeeping missions and during critical moments in our history. These veterans embody the true spirit of service, sacrifice, courage and resilience. They have fought, bled and sometimes died to ensure our peace and security so we could live freely and in a prosperous and just society.

We have worked hard to make sure that these brave men and women are never forgotten. We have displayed their banners throughout the town, each one with the name and story of a veteran, reminding everyone who passes by of the debt we owe them.

As a Canadian who immigrated from Hong Kong, I was especially moved by the stories of Canadian soldiers in Hong Kong during World War II. The stories of these men resonate deeply within me. These soldiers fought with dignity and courage, knowing that they might not return home. They sacrificed everything to defend not just their comrades but the values we hold in Canada: democracy, peace and freedom. Their bravery under impossible circumstances is something we must never forget.

### MARIE TRAINER

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I rise to pay tribute to Marie Trainer, a Haldimand county councillor and former mayor. Marie passed away last Thursday from complications sustained nearly two months ago, after being involved in a serious motor vehicle collision. The self-styled people's mayor was laid to rest Tuesday in the Hagersville area, where she ran the fields as a little country girl who enjoyed the simple but rich things in life, like being surrounded by family and friends.

I met Marie at the beginning of my political career in 1999. I immediately knew she was a force to be reckoned with. Widowed at a young age and left to raise three boys on her own, Marie stared adversity in the face and found new opportunities for herself. As a result, Haldimand county got the very best in service and in leadership.

Marie began her 40-year political career in 1985 as a councillor and served as mayor from 1991 until 2010. Last year, she returned to office in a ward by-election, and my goodness, it was as though the hands of time had been turned back. She was reinvigorated, determined to fight against the proposed city of 40,000 at the Nanticoke industrial park.

It was just a few weeks ago that Marie insisted she attend a council meeting from her hospital bed. It was this grit and determination I admired so much. I will miss the usual greeting of a hug, a kiss and then in a very calm voice, “Let’s get down to business.”

Rest in peace, sweet Marie.

### PERSONNES ÂGÉES

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Cet été, j’ai eu le plaisir de faire une annonce marquante pour soutenir les aînés francophones de notre région. Je suis ravie de partager que l’Association des francophones de la région de York, AFRY, et la Communauté du Trille blanc, CTB, ont reçu des subventions pour enrichir le bien-être et l’intégration sociale de nos aînés.

AFRY bénéficiera de jusqu’à 25 000 \$ pour son programme « Les aînés s’amusent! », permettant aux aînés de la région de York de participer à des activités physiques, culturelles et sociales au cours des sept prochains mois. Ce programme répond à un besoin réel d’activités de loisirs adaptées pour nos aînés francophones.

### 1030

La CTB recevra jusqu’à 21 800 \$ pour son programme « Engagement actif pour les aînés, » qui propose des activités éducatives et intergénérationnelles enrichissantes.

Ces initiatives illustrent l’engagement de notre gouvernement envers la vitalité du bilinguisme en Ontario et offrent des occasions précieuses d’inclusion sociale et de bien-être aux aînés francophones de Newmarket, de la région de York, et dans tout l’Ontario.

### GAYLE CHRISTIE

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** I rise here this morning to honour Gayle Christie, the former mayor of York, who passed away recently. I would like to welcome her daughter Rebecca Christie and her granddaughters Lauren and Ashleigh to the House today.

Gayle was a true community champion, representing the people of York in many roles: as a trustee, alderman, mayor and as a member of the Metro Toronto council. She was a trailblazer in the 1970s, as one of the first women to enter politics and the first to serve as mayor of York. Gayle was an incredible advocate—for infrastructure, for eco-

economic development, for youth education and employment, for community safety, for the most vulnerable, and, in particular, for the Yorktown Women’s Shelter. She was committed to public service, and she worked together with leaders from all political parties and across the private sector and the public sector to build a better community.

Speaker, everyone in politics on both sides of the aisle knew who Gayle was, and many had stories of her reaching out to them to help her constituents. Her determination and courage helped to pave the way for future generations, and they remain an inspiration to many here in this House today.

We know that Gayle’s legacy will live on and have a positive impact for many years to come.

On behalf of all the members, I want to extend my sincerest condolences to Rebecca and the entire Christie family today.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Kevin Holland:** It’s a great honour for me to introduce my neighbour and good friend Erin Arps and her colleagues Katherine Tuomi and Hema Merai, all from the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences.

Welcome to Queen’s Park.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, I’m very pleased to welcome our guests from the Ontario Federation of Labour this morning: Laura Walton, president; Rob Halpin, general secretary; Crystal Stewart, director of health, safety and environment. They’re all here to press for protection for workers from heat stress.

Welcome to the Legislature.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It’s a real honour today to welcome members of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation. I want to thank you for your powerful words in the media studio this morning and specifically welcome Chief Janelle Nahmabin, Councillor John Adams, Councillor Darren Henry, Councillor Sherri Crowley, environment coordinator Lynn Rosales, consultants Scott and Cathy Grant, consultant Sharilyn Johnston, council clerk Ashley Jackson and Councillor Marina Plain.

Thank you, and welcome to your House.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I would like to thank the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore for the kind words that he has said in this House.

I have three very special guests here today: the daughter of Gayle Christie, Rebecca, and two grandchildren, Ashleigh and Lauren.

Gayle unfortunately passed away in August. She was a remarkable woman. She was the former mayor of York and she was one of the very first people who helped me when I was seeking the nomination so that I could be in this House today to represent Etobicoke Centre. She has been a friend, an example for the community, and it has been a very terrible loss.

So thank you so much to the family members who are here today. She will always be remembered as one of the strongest women that I’ve had the privilege to know.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to welcome the Ontario Federation of Labour.

I also want to welcome, from Save the Minden ER, Patrick Porzuczek.

I also want to express my condolences to the family of Gayle Christie. She was a good friend and supporter.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone. I'd like to introduce my brand new constituency assistant, clever Colleen Staples. Please do not scare her off with your behaviour. She's in the House today for the first time.

I'd also like to acknowledge the representatives from Wasaga Beach, near my old hometown. I'm looking forward to seeing your vintage bus and joining you at lunch today.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I have a couple of introductions. First, I'll start with, on behalf of the member from Simcoe–Grey, the township of Wasaga is here today. They have a reception this morning at 11:45. Please come on down to that, and he'll have more to say for that.

Secondly, I'd like to introduce the mother of page Ali, Marilyn Buchanan, who is up in the public gallery today.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's really a pleasure to introduce and welcome the following visitors who are here at Queen's Park today with Aamjiwnaang First Nation for a media conference and rally to call on the government to take action on the toxic pollution that's harming their community's health. With us today are Chief Janelle Nahmabin, Councillor Marina Plain, Councillor Darren Henry, Councillor Sherri Crowley, Councillor John Adams, Aamjiwnaang environment coordinator Lynn Rosales, Kim Henry, Cathy Grant, Scott Grant, Shawn Crowley, Sharilyn Johnston and Ashley Jackson.

Thank you so much for joining us here today. Welcome.

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** Happy Thursday to you all. It is my pleasure to introduce to the House someone I thoroughly enjoy working with and who is here on her very first visit to Queen's Park: Haldimand county mayor Shelley Ann Bentley. Welcome to the House, Your Worship.

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

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** It's my pleasure to introduce a former municipal colleague, a councillor for Loyalist township and good friend, Mike Budarick.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I'd like to introduce the parents of Jakob, who is a page this period: Nada Grasic Finley and Greg Finley. Welcome to your House.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'd also like to introduce from Ecojustice here to support folks from Aamjiwnaang. From Ecojustice: Muhannad Malas, Elaine MacDonald, Ja'miil Millar and Seán O'Shea.

Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for supporting.

**M. Stéphane Sarrazin:** J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux élèves de l'École secondaire catholique

L'Escale de Rockland. J'ai eu la chance de m'entretenir avec eux ce matin.

Je suis vraiment fier d'avoir eu beaucoup de visites d'école de notre circonscription récemment. Je dois remercier le ministère de l'Éducation pour le financement du programme des voyageurs pour la démocratie.

Donc, bienvenue à Queen's Park aux élèves de l'école L'Escale de Rockland.

**1040**

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences: their president and CEO, Greg Toffner; the chair of the board of directors, Stephanie Shiplo; as well as Erin Arps, François Gallant, Kati Tuomi, Hema Merai, Christina Perris and Corinne Radake. They also invite all of us to a luncheon after question period.

I also want to welcome members of the Alliance for Advancing Recovery. Those are Kathy Armstrong, Manon LaFontaine, Steve Doherty, Dr. Eibisch as well as Veronique Parry.

And, of course, save the Minden hospital representative Patrick Porzuczek.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** On behalf of Minister Kerzner, MPP Laura Smith as well as myself, I would like to introduce some members of our community who are great supporters: Igor Korenzvit and his wife, Bonnie. Thank you and welcome to the Legislature.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** On behalf of the entire PC caucus, I would like to welcome the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences to Queen's Park. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I would like to introduce a special guest visiting the Legislature today. It is Kayan Sidhwa who is newlywed to Tanaz Sidhwa. Congratulations and welcome to Queen's Park. Great to have you here.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I'd like to welcome Sally Freitas and Doug Steele, board chair of Welcoming Arms, a charitable organization in my riding that, through their long-standing efforts, supports families across Aurora and beyond. I'd like to congratulate Sally, who was just appointed as the executive director of the organization. Congratulations, welcome to Queen's Park and thank you both for everything you do for our community.

#### REMEMBRANCE DAY

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** As provided for by the Remembrance Week Act, 2016, the House will now pause and observe two minutes of silence in honour of those who died serving their country in wars and peace-keeping efforts.

This will be followed by an opportunity for members to give remarks, with five minutes allotted to the official opposition, five minutes allotted to the government and five minutes to the independent members as a group.

I will now ask members to please rise.

*The House observed two minutes' silence.*

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

I recognize the member for St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Speaker, it is both a privilege and honour to stand here before you as we come together to remember and reflect on the sacrifices of our veterans.

Regardless of the differences that may exist between us in this chamber, we are united in wearing our poppies with pride. This is a symbol of respect, a symbol of remembrance and a symbol of our shared identity as proud Canadians leading up to November 11, the most significant day of recognition in our whole country.

As Canadians, from our smallest towns to our largest cities, we pause in silence on Remembrance Day. We gather at cenotaphs, at our local Legions, honouring the names of our heroes: our mothers, fathers, sons, daughters and ancestors, those who gave everything so we can live in peace and harmony and freedom.

This month holds a deeply personal meaning for me. My family has a proud military history. Both my grandfathers served with distinction during the Second World War and my father served in the Royal Canadian Navy. This rich military legacy has been woven into the very fabric of our family story.

Today, my son, Petty Officer First Class Jonathan Lindal, proudly serves with the Canadian navy. The tradition of service continues in our family, and I know many of you here share similar moments of pride.

This year, we reflect on 85 years since the start of World War II in 1939. Canadians played a pivotal role in this conflict. This battle, like many others, showcased the courage and the determination of our troops. These heroes carried Canada's values across vast oceans, from the beaches of Normandy to the liberation efforts throughout Europe.

Canada's military history is long and storied, and it is crucial that we acknowledge the roles played by Indigenous peoples here in our military history. The Six Nations Confederacy, along with other Indigenous allies, made crucial contributions during the War of 1812, particularly at the battle of Queenston Heights, which is still commemorated in Niagara every year. Too often, the military service of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada is not fully recognized. Their sacrifices, however, are just as significant, and we must ensure that their contributions are remembered and honoured.

As we commemorate our veterans, we also recognize that the face of military service is evolving. Today, many veterans are younger, having served in more recent conflicts as Afghanistan. We often think of veterans as those who served in mid-century conflicts, but what it means to be a veteran is ever-changing, shaped by the challenges of modern-day service.

The Highway of Heroes, a solemn route that carries home our fallen, serves as a reminder of sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. It stands as a tribute to the courage of those who served in difficult and dangerous conditions in foreign lands.

Warrant Officer Dennis Brown, a friend of mine and a St. Catharines-raised service member, paid the ultimate sacrifice during his time in Afghanistan. While his name and the names of some of our modern-day heroes may not be etched on our local cenotaphs, their legacy still lives on in our hearts and minds.

I am proud to work alongside individuals who have served in our Armed Forces. Their experiences and insights, shaped by the time in uniform, enrich our communities and our country.

I'd like to take moment to acknowledge one of our colleagues, the member from Kanata-Carleton, for her incredible 26-year military career. She made history as the first woman in Canada to qualify as an air navigator, the first woman to command an air force squadron, and served courageously in numerous battle zones. Thank you for your service and for being a trailblazer in your field.

#### 1050

We must also acknowledge the pressing issues faced by veterans today. Access to mental health supports, particularly for PTSD, remains a critical need. There are also ongoing calls for better support for affordable housing, career opportunities post-service and defining care for our aging veterans. These issues must remain a collective priority, transcending political divides. The freedoms we enjoy today came at a steep cost to the others. It is our responsibility to ensure that those who served are supported, now and well into the future.

As we gather across Ontario at cemeteries adorned with medals, each one representing courage, leadership and sacrifice, let us not forget the debt we owe those who served and those who continue to serve. From Legions to veterans' clubs, there are organizations dedicated to preserving the stories of our veterans. I encourage all of us to take the time to visit our local Legions and to talk to our service members, and to listen to the wisdom and experience they must share.

Finally, let us commit to carrying forward the values that our veterans protected with such courage. When you see a service member, take a moment to say thank you. These two simple words carry great weight, Speaker. To my colleagues here today: Whether your great-grandparents, parents or children have served, let us stand together on November 11 and say thank you. Lest we forget. We will remember them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Kanata-Carleton.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** This Remembrance Week, I'd like to use my time to reflect on service and sacrifice, and to express my thanks to all of the brave Canadians who have served and continue to serve our country. Freedom isn't free. Its costs are paid by our service members: not only a personal cost to their physical and mental health, but also a cost borne by their families and loved ones who support them and mourn them.

When faced with such high costs, we must all ask ourselves: Why? Why sacrifice so much? They believed in something bigger than themselves. They believed in the freedom that a functioning democracy can bring for all of

its people. This freedom must be protected today. It falls on all of us, the inheritors of this freedom, to defend the gifts that we have been given.

There are always those who admire authoritarian leaders, those who want to emulate them using authoritarian tactics and strategies to abuse the power with which they have been entrusted. They must be challenged. We need strong democratic processes and institutions, an empowered and independent press that serves the truth and that serves the people, not just corporate interests and the wealthiest among us. All must be defended, fought for and protected over and over again.

Remembering the sacrifice of those before us teaches us our duty to those still to come. Lest we forget.

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

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'm honoured to rise today to pay tribute to veterans and first responders who have sacrificed so much to defend our democracy and keep us safe. It's difficult to fathom the courage it takes for those young Canadians who served in the World Wars, Korea, Afghanistan, on peacekeeping missions and so many other conflicts. They deserve our gratitude and support each and every day.

I try to live by the words of Guelph's most famous veteran, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, who reminds that us we must not break faith with those who fought and died for our freedoms. All of us in this House and across our province and indeed our country have a duty and a responsibility to not break faith with those veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice to defend our freedoms and our democracy.

As conflict is on the rise around the world and democracy is being questioned, may we honour the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country by continuing to remind us of the stark reality of what it takes to defend democracy and freedom at home and abroad. On this day and every day, we must honour them. We must thank them. Lest we forget.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** In the coming days, we will all witness the spectacular colours, sounds and traditions of our regiments, veteran and military service organizations and squadrons like the sight and sound of a lone bugler playing the Last Post. The ceremonies and events afford us an opportunity to show deep appreciation for the priceless gift of freedom.

Haldimand–Norfolk has a distinguished military history whereby citizens have continually stood up to answer the call. They have all done us proud. We see them, we support them and we stand with them.

One of those people is my childhood friend Brigadier General Ryan Deming. He has been serving in the military since 1993. In a recent speech, he conveyed he has experienced humanity at its best and, unfortunately, at its worst. He's endured the complexity and managed chaos in theatres of war.

In closing, he said, "I wanted to serve, to do my part, however small, to make the world a better place so that my son, my nieces and their generation can be proud of the country we call home."

While it is difficult to find the words to truly convey the sincerest of appreciation, may we all go reminding ourselves that freedom comes at a cost, and we must never forget those that have fought and fallen to preserve the freedoms of our great nation. Tell your kids and grandkids of such men and women. And as we embark upon Remembrance Day, take the time to partake in events that point to the bravery of past warriors and tell their stories of their deeds.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

**Hon. Graham McGregor:** Good morning. It's an honour and a privilege to rise in the House today on behalf of the government of Ontario and our PC caucus as we recognize and pay tribute to Remembrance Day. Recognized annually November 11, we commemorate the end of hostilities during the First World War and remember the courage and sacrifice shown by all those who have fought to secure our freedoms, whether on the slopes of Vimy Ridge, the beaches of Normandy, in Korea, the Middle East or anywhere in-between.

Remembrance Day, originally referred to as Armistice Day, commemorates that first armistice agreement that ended the First World War on Monday, November 11, 1918. More than 650,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders served in that war. Over 66,000 perished, while more than 172,000 were wounded. Lest we forget.

Prior to the First World War, we lost over 7,000 brave Canadians who volunteered for service, alongside the British forces in the South African War, which took place from 1899 to 1902. Lest we forget.

From 1939 to 1945, during the Second World War, over one million Canadians and Newfoundlanders served in uniform, both here at home and around the world and, for over six years at war, more than 45,000 brave individuals in that Canadian uniform gave their lives for us while another 55,000 were wounded. Lest we forget.

**1100**

During the Korean War, from 1950 to 1953, after North Korean troops invaded South Korea, over 26,000 Canadians served on land, at sea and in the air during this conflict. Unfortunately, 516 Canadians lost their lives. Lest we forget.

More than 4,000 Canadians served during the Gulf War of the early 1990s in the Persian Gulf region as part of the coalition of countries to remove the invading forces of Iraq from neighbouring Kuwait. Lest we forget.

In Afghanistan, after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the US formed an international coalition to use force against the Taliban. Not only was this the largest deployment of our Canadian troops since the Second World War, and the longest conflict in Canada's history, lasting more than 12 years, but over 40,000 Canadians served our country during this time. Lest we forget.

And to all those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces, who have made significant contributions in dozens of peacekeeping missions around the world—lest we forget.

Now, every year on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, Canadians pause in a moment of silence to honour and remember the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve Canada during times of war, conflict and peace. It's up to us as Canadians to share that responsibility of keeping their stories and experiences alive and to remind the next generations of their sacrifices.

As a government, we remain committed to educating the next generation on the sacrifices and all that our Canadian Armed Forces do. We must empower and support those who have served courageously so that they, too, may find success and opportunity upon returning to civilian life.

Earlier this week, I had the immense honour and privilege of tabling the Honouring Veterans Act, 2024. I'm very proud that we got through third reading last night with the support of members of all political parties, of all political stripes—getting together to do the right thing. I'm reminded of the Christmas truce in World War I, where members of both sides put aside their differences because they remembered our common humanity and what's important. I think, although much lesser than that incident, our parties getting together, putting partisan politics aside to do what is right by our veterans, is something that every member of this House should be proud of, and I'm very grateful to the members of the NDP, the Liberals and the Greens for their support to make that happen.

We all have the privilege to serve our province and country, and why we have that privilege is because of the sacrifices paid by brave men and women who have defended this country at home and abroad. We can never properly thank them enough, but we can sure as heck try. It's incumbent on all of us, not just with the bill that we put forward, but to continue to work to make sure we're supporting, remembering and commemorating those who paid the ultimate sacrifices and also the almost 150,000 Ontarians who are veterans living in our province today—and growing.

On Remembrance Day, I encourage Ontarians to take the opportunity to honour and remember the 2.3 million Canadians who have served throughout our nation's history and the 118,000 who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Lest we forget.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I want to thank the members for their eloquence.

We will remember them.

#### TRANSIT RELIEF PROGRAM

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Kanata–Carleton on a point of order.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** Yesterday, I tabled a motion calling for Canadian Armed Forces reservists to not be excluded from Metrolinx's free transit program. I seek the unanimous consent of the House for leave to

move private member's notice of motion number 144 and that the question be put without debate or amendment. Thank you.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Kanata–Carleton is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for leave to move private member's notice of motion number 144 and that question be put without debate or amendment. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize again the member for Kanata–Carleton.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** Thank you, everyone.

I move that, in the opinion of this House, Metrolinx must ensure that active members of the Canadian Armed Forces reserve are not excluded from the program for veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces to receive free fares on GO Transit and the UP Express.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mrs. McCrimmon has moved that, in the opinion of this House, Metrolinx must ensure that active members of the Canadian Armed Forces reserve are not excluded from the program for veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces to receive free fares on GO Transit and the UP Express.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Point of order, Speaker: Our government has the deepest respect and gratitude for all members of our armed forces. The Minister of Transportation has directed Metrolinx to ensure that all past and present members of the Canadian Armed Forces can travel free on GO Transit. Reservists play a very important part in that.

I want to thank the member for Kanata–Carleton for bringing this motion forward today, and on behalf of our government, I want to thank her for her service.

#### WORKPLACE FATALITIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll recognize next the member for Ajax on a new point of order.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** We were saddened last night that one worker was killed and two were injured in an accident in North York during a sewer pipe repair. I ask the House to recognize a moment of silence in honour.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ajax is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment's silence in memory of the worker who lost his life in North York. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

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

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### HIGHWAY TOLLS

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is for the Premier. Last month, the Premier told AM 640 that his government considered buying back Highway 407. I've got to tell you,



this was surprising, Speaker, because this same government—his government, the Premier—voted against our motion to remove tolls for truckers on the 407.

So we wanted to find out a little bit more about that, and we filed a freedom-of-information request for the government's studies and their assessments of this Highway 407 buyback idea. It turns out, there aren't any—no studies, no assessments, nothing.

The Ministry of Transportation was unable to find a single record showing that the government had ever considered buying back Highway 407. So why did the Premier make this claim?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Our government has a plan to build. It has a plan to build highways across this province, whether that's Highway 413, whether that's the Bradford Bypass, Highway 7. And we have a plan: We've removed tolls off the 412 and 418 that, unfortunately, the Liberals put in place and the NDP supported to keep in place until this Premier and our government removed those tolls.

1110

We need to continue to expand our capacity across this province, and that is why this government continues to put forward these plans. It's unfortunate that the NDP don't want to support building more highways across this province. There hasn't been a single project that they haven't voted against.

We need to get people moving across this province, and we'll continue to come in with a plan that supports the entire province and builds for the future.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'm not sure that was an answer at all to my question, actually, Speaker.

But look, taking tolls off of trucks on the 407 is a simple measure that makes a lot of sense and would relieve congestion right away. But with this government, what's good for people always seems to take a back seat to the interests of insiders and lobbyists, no matter the cost. We have no costing on Highway 413, no opening date on three major LRT projects and a \$100-billion estimate for a back-of-a-napkin tunnel scheme.

Whenever the Premier comes up with some on-the-fly idea, no matter how much it costs, it becomes these ministers' and this government's, I guess, responsibility to defend that. So why won't the Premier show people the evidence and costing for his transportation decisions before he spends the people's money?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Speaker, here we have the NDP once again—that was the same party that opposed the transit plan that this Premier put to the people of this province six years ago. They call that “back-of-the-napkin.” Guess what? We've got shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line. We've got shovels in the ground on the Scarborough subway extension. We're building LRTs across this province.

The NDP lacks the vision for this province. They're not different than the Liberals who for 15 years did absolutely nothing, built absolutely nothing in the province. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker. They will find every excuse in the book to get in the way of building progress for this province.

The voters spoke loud and clear when we took these questions to them on June 2, 2022. Those members over there know they lost members in key ridings like Brampton and Peel region. We swept those ridings. Why? Because they believed in our vision to build highways, to build transit.

The NDP is too focused on appeasing special interest groups who want us to stop building. We won't take any of that. We won't listen to them. We're going to continue to get shovels in the ground and build our transportation projects.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Here's the thing, Speaker: Life in Ontario under this government has never been more expensive or exhausting in our history.

Removing truck tolls was just one simple way to save some people time and money, but they voted against it—they voted against it. It was only when the Premier got any kind of pushback that he said, “Oh, I'll look into buying back the 407.”

But our research, our freedom-of-information request, shows that never happened—that never happened.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Government House leader, come to order.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** We need the Premier to set the record straight and make his choice. Will he stand up for truckers and commuters and remove those costly tolls, or is he going to keep protecting the interests of the private company that runs the 407?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for drivers and truckers every single day of the year. Let's look at the record of the NDP—voted against removing taxes off of gas. We just, last week, extended that through the fall economic statement. The NDP has an option to support that measure that has been put into the fall economic statement for an extension. Will they do that? I don't think so, because they've voted against it every single time.

When we took off the \$125 sticker fee on our vehicles, what did the NDP do? They laughed. They didn't support it. They've never had a tax that they haven't supported.

Our fight against the carbon tax that punishes hard-working families every single day when they're taking their kids to hockey practice, basketball practice and when they're taking their kids to school—those members over there have stood—in fact, they have stood to ask us to

increase the carbon tax to the highest we've ever seen it. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP don't stand for drivers. The NDP don't stand for building progress in this province. They've voted against every single one of those measures. They continue to oppose everything this government does when it comes to building infrastructure, to building transportation. But guess what? We're going to get shovels in the ground. We're going to keep putting more money back in the pockets of hard-working families. And we will build this province for the next 10, 20 and 50 years so people can enjoy the infrastructure that we are putting forward.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** The hard-working families that this government likes to talk about have never had to struggle more than they do right now under any previous government. It is unbelievable.

I'm going to go back to the Premier, because the evidence that insiders and lobbyists are calling the shots with this government keeps piling up. Yesterday, we learned that key emails and records related to the rerouting of the Bradford Bypass and all of the associated costs around that are missing—disappeared.

The senior Conservative staffer in question in the Minister of Transportation's office was none other than Ryan Amato. People will remember that name because he's the same former staffer who is currently refusing to hand in his emails from the whole greenbelt affair.

I want to ask the Premier: Did staff in the Minister of Transportation's office delete emails?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** The Bradford Bypass, Highway 413, Highway 7—our \$28-billion plan to build highways was put to the people of this province in the most transparent manner. In fact, those members right there know that very well because they've lost three members of their caucus in Brampton in their opposition to Highway 413. And guess what? They've lost the last three by-elections and they still haven't learned.

Every single time they stand up and oppose progress in this province, it's a shame. We have a plan to build. We have a plan to invest \$70 billion over the next 10 years to build public transit. The Ontario Line will take and move 400,000 people every single day—a line that the people of Toronto have been asking for for decades, and guess what? Those members over there have voted against it every single time. They want us to go back to the 15 years of the previous Liberal government where they built absolutely nothing in the province. They gave us the worst gridlock. They left us a bankrupt province.

But our government is committed to building. We're committed to building for the next generation, the next 50 years. We have a vision to support jobs. We have a vision to continue building. We'll build Highway 413, we're going to build the Bradford Bypass and we're going to ensure we continue moving Ontario forward.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, this is a really important issue, and I'll tell you why: It's because the rerouting of the Bradford Bypass wasn't based on any evidence that anybody can find. But thanks to this government's decision, the value of certain parcels of land associated with that rerouting suddenly skyrocketed—land that happened to be owned by some of the same Conservative insiders that were involved in benefiting from the greenbelt scheme. In the few records that do exist out there, staff in the Minister of Transportation's office said this request to look into changing the route came directly from the Premier.

Can the Premier clarify what direction he gave to the Minister of Transportation's office?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Let me clarify the direction the people of this province gave this government on June 2, 2022: Build Highway 413 and build the Bradford Bypass. This is exactly what we will do. It doesn't matter what the NDP or Liberals try to do to oppose that. Every piece of legislation that we bring forward in this House is to move those projects faster because we know people are stuck in gridlock. We know, because of the inaction of the previous Liberal government building nothing in this province for 15 years—no transit, no highways, no roads—it's our government that's moving forward on this ambitious plan: \$100 billion between highways and public transit to build.

The NDP and Liberals will oppose it every step of the way, but we're going to continue to get shovels in the ground and we're going to continue to build because Ontario asked us to do that. The people of this province asked us to build, and that's exactly what we'll continue to deliver on.

Whether it's the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, whether it's Highway 413 or the Bradford Bypass, all of those projects are getting built and we're going to get shovels in the ground.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** On this side of the House, we think that transportation decisions should serve the interests of the people, not the interests of the Premier's friends and donors. That's the thing.

It looks like these changes to the Bradford Bypass route were a test drive for the tactics they used to try to carve out the greenbelt. High-ranking staff taking very specific instructions from the Premier directly, major changes in government policy, directed again by insiders—and all the evidence scrubbed from the record.

This is the kind of shady business that undermines Ontario's credibility—

*Interjections.*

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

I'd ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Withdrawn.

This is the kind of questionable business that undermines Ontario's accountability, undermines the public trust, and it isn't going to get a single person home faster.

I'd like to ask the Premier: When is he going to clear the air? Or is this just going to be another one of those cases where the Premier cuts deals, insiders cash in and it's the people of Ontario stuck carrying the bag?

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

Minister of Transportation to reply.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can try to spin it whatever way she wants, but guess what? We're building Highway 413 and we're building the Bradford Bypass. These are critical projects in this province. They've been on the books for 20 years. The Liberals did absolutely nothing. They didn't want to build in this province.

We are in record gridlock today, Mr. Speaker. The city of Toronto ranks as the highest gridlock almost in the entire world. In North America, we are the worst—the top three in the world. And guess what? It's because of the inaction of the Liberal government, supported by the NDP. Now what do we have the Leader of the Opposition trying to do? Trying to get in the way of public transit, trying to get in the way of highways.

That's a shame, but I'm not surprised. They're beholden to special interests that don't want anything built in this province, whether that's housing, whether that's transportation, whether that's the hospital projects that we are building across this province—over 54 projects that they have opposed in their own ridings in their own communities—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. It's getting a little noisy in here, and I'll remind the members that if they ignore the request of the Speaker to come to order, the next stage is, of course, warnings, and if they continue to ignore the Speaker, they will be named.

Start the clock. The next question.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Reporting reveals that the Premier personally asked the Ministry of Transportation to look at changing the route of the Bradford Bypass through the greenbelt. This request was conveyed to Ryan Amato, who was, at that time, this minister's director of stakeholder relations. It's highly unusual that the Premier would ask a staffer to make such a significant change to the route of a major highway without consulting the minister herself.

We know that the route was changed. So my question, through you, Mr. Speaker, is: What did the President of the Treasury Board know about this request when she was the Minister of Transportation and when did she know it?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply for the government, the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Mr. Speaker, the Bradford Bypass will save commuters 35 minutes each way. That is the progress that those members are trying to oppose. What a shame. They lack a vision for this province. They lack a vision to build Ontario. That's why they will remain on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are going to build Ontario for the next 50 to 100 years. We're building important infrastructure projects. Unfortunately, the Liberals did absolutely nothing in their 15 years to do anything to support the growth of this province.

We're investing in critical infrastructure, like the 413, like the Bradford Bypass. That project alone will support over 2,000 jobs during construction. That is the type of progress they want to eliminate in this province. They are losing construction workers every single day in their opposition to these projects. Whether we're talking about tunnelling, whether we're talking about the Bradford Bypass, Highway 413, these are good-paying jobs that those members over there oppose. But this government will continue to build for the future.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Many important questions remain unanswered, and I'm sure that the President of the Treasury Board has those answers, if she would stand up. Freedom-of-information requests turned up almost no records on major highway decisions that will cost taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. This paints a picture of a Minister of Transportation who was intentionally looking away.

Again, I ask the President of the Treasury Board, through you, Mr. Speaker: Why is a staffer whom the Integrity Commissioner described as "untrained and unsupervised" making decisions about changing the route of the Bradford Bypass instead of this minister herself?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** The decision was made by the people of this province when they elected us on a historic majority mandate for our second term. That was a mandate to build the Bradford Bypass. That was a mandate to build Highway 413, Mr. Speaker. Those members over there should look at their caucus. It's shrinking. They have lost three by-elections because they continue to oppose projects that will support everyday Ontarians.

We're going to be creating thousands of jobs, good-paying jobs, whether it be through building Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass or \$100 billion invested in both public transit and highways across this province. They are opposing good-paying jobs. They are opposing progress in this province. But that doesn't shock me; they're beholden to special interests that don't want anything built. Whether it's a hospital, whether it's a highway, whether it's public transit, they will always oppose progress in the province of Ontario. But we will continue to get—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

The next question.

## ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Dave Smith:** My question is for the Minister of Energy and Electrification. The Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is making life more expensive for families and businesses all across Ontario. People in my riding of Peterborough–Kawartha are burdened with higher costs for everything from groceries to home heating and vehicle gas. I have people in North Kawartha who have to travel at times 40 or 50 kilometres just to get their groceries and they pay more because of the carbon tax.

Speaker, the independent Liberals and the opposition NDP may be happy with the status quo, but our government knows that Ontarians have had enough. They want solutions, not tax hike after tax hike after tax hike, and they definitely don't want an additional tax for municipalities.

Can the minister please explain how the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is impacting Ontario families and what our government is doing to protect these families from the escalating costs?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I want to thank the member from Peterborough for standing up for common sense in this House. We believe that the Liberal carbon tax is making life unaffordable for the people of Ontario. In fact, 25% of energy bills in this province now are being driven up as a result of the carbon tax. Some \$25 billion is taken out of our economy because of the Liberal carbon tax. And because of the former Liberal policies, people in this province—working families and seniors—pay \$1,000 more each and every year.

We know that we must prioritize affordable energy. It's why we introduced the Affordable Energy Act, which codifies in law that this government will use competitive procurements, not ideology, to ensure we have the lowest rates available to incent investment and keep rates down for our families. The Affordable Energy Act is an enabler of conservation initiatives. It expands nuclear energy and it ensures that we keep the lights on and the rates low for the people of this province.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Thank you to the minister for that response. Manufacturers, farmers and small businesses are being forced to deal with rising operating costs driven by higher Liberal taxes. The Liberal members in this House and their federal colleagues don't seem to understand that higher taxes are hurting working-class people. In fact, they've even suggested another 1% retail sales tax.

All of this sets people back. That's why Ontario families and businesses are looking to our government for an affordable energy future, with nuclear energy playing a critical role. They want government to prioritize affordability first and foremost.

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Can the minister please outline how the government will advance non-emitting nuclear energy to keep energy affordable and reliable for Ontario families and businesses?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Nuclear energy was the pivotal enabler of what allowed our province to displace coal energy a decade ago. We need non-emitting nuclear energy to ensure we deliver an affordable energy future for the people of Ontario.

But let's reflect on what transpired over the past years in this province. It was the Liberals and the NDP who started and stopped the Darlington nuclear station. It was the Liberals who tried to put an end to the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station that produces 2,000 megawatts of non-emitting, clean power for the people of Ontario, for the two million families who depend on it—4,500 jobs depend on Pickering alone.

We know that we are leading the largest nuclear energy expansion on the continent because it is affordable and because it is clean and because it produces reliable, 24/7, enduring power that our economy requires. We are going to continue to invest in non-emitting sources of energy so we can deliver affordability for the people of this province.

## ADDICTION SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Algoma Public Health reported that the opioid death rate in Sault Ste. Marie is the highest in all of Ontario: over 64 deaths per 100,000.

Mayor Shoemaker had this to say: "Timmins was perennially higher than us and when they got a supervised consumption site, things seemed to stabilize and improve for them. We were in the process of preparing a supervised consumption site, we didn't ever get one—that's in my view why our stats didn't improve."

What is the Premier doing to keep the people of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma alive right now?

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Speaker, the member makes reference to drug injection sites. Let me tell you, we have heard the message loud and clear from the mothers and fathers of the province of Ontario. They are tired of stepping over needles when they walk their children to school. They are tired of seeing their children exposed to drug activity. They are tired of the violence that the drug injection sites attract. They are tired of the drug activity and trafficking that the drug injection sites attract.

That is why this government is imposing a 200-metre protection zone around every school and every child care facility in the province of Ontario, because we don't want drugs and we don't want used needles anywhere near the children of the province of Ontario.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Speaker, throughout northern Ontario, opioid deaths are sky-high. Thunder Bay and

Timmins will lose their consumption and treatment sites. In Sudbury, where this government refused to fund the consumption and treatment site, overdose deaths continue to rise non-stop.

I will be attending a funeral on Saturday; one more of my friends died of an overdose. Every single day, seven people in Ontario die from this opioid overdose epidemic. So I ask the Premier, what is the Premier going to do now to keep northerners alive?

*Interjections.*

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

The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** The government has and continues to make investments in ensuring that we build a system of treatment and recovery, not just in southern Ontario but in northern Ontario as well. In fact, the Addictions Recovery Fund opened—54% of the funding went to northern Ontario. It went to cities like Thunder Bay, like Sudbury, like Timmins, like Sioux Lookout. Those investments so far have opened up 280 beds through the Addictions Recovery Fund. It has created 10,000 treatment spots for individuals that didn't exist before. And our government is continuing to make those investments with the HART hubs that will be opening, hopefully, very soon as well.

The continuum of care belongs in the community. Everyone wants treatment and recovery, not to be kept on a substance and continuing to use. They want to be treated, and that's what we're doing.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. My home of Windsor–Tecumseh is the place that drives Ontario's economy. It's home to hard-working families and a thriving auto sector because of our government's leadership and investments. But the success we see in Windsor–Tecumseh isn't just built here at home, it's also deeply tied to trade with the United States. This trade supports good-paying jobs in Windsor's factories, warehouses and small businesses. It fuels our local economy and keeps our workers employed.

Given how interlinked Ontario's economy is with the United States, the people of my riding have watched the US election with uncertainty about what this will mean for the future. Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to ensure that Ontario-US relations continue to thrive with a new administration south of the border?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Well, we can start by following the Premier's foot forward on offering congratulations to President-elect Trump and Vice President-elect Vance.

We have a long, enduring and very important relationship with the United States. It's built on our strong economic ties. It's built on our shared values and our integrated supply chains, which are most important to the member from Windsor. There are millions of people on

both sides of the border who are counting on us here in Ontario to build on these opportunities: our manufacturing, our critical minerals and our energy. These are the issues that will be most prominent to the Americans.

We'll be back in Washington in December. We'll be back in Washington in January. And if you listen to Premier Ford, he will tell you: bet big on Ontario.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Our government has shown that we will work with elected officials of all political stripes. Since we took office, we've seen a Republican President and a Democrat President. Now, the political makeup of the Senate and the House of Representatives has changed numerous times. Governors and Legislatures of states that are key trading partners to Ontario have also changed. But one thing that hasn't changed is our government's ability to work with everyone we need to, to ensure Ontario's economy continues to thrive.

Can the minister please expand on the importance of the Ontario-US economic relationship and highlight what else we are doing to ensure this relationship continues to remain strong?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** We have, as I mentioned earlier, such a long and storied history with the United States. It is now built to the point where we do \$500 billion a year in two-way trade.

The interesting point of that is not only are we the Americans' third-largest trading partner—Mexico, China and us—the fact is, it's almost two-way. It's almost fifty-fifty, compared to one-way in Mexico and one-way in China. It is a two-way trade here. But not only is it \$500 billion a year in two-way trade, we are the number one trading partner to 17 US states. We're the number two trading partner to 11 more US states.

The Premier talks about adopting a Can-Am, Canadian-American, approach. Speaker, again: continue to bet big on Ontario.

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** To the Premier: Every year, workers in Ontario are hospitalized because of heat stress. Some of them may die. They deserve protection from injury and death. Today, our party will be introducing a bill to provide workers with on-the-job protection from heat stress and stroke.

**1140**

The Premier could increase protections for workers right now. The OFL supports this bill. Will he vote for it?

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

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Worker safety is a top priority for our ministry. Every worker in Ontario deserves to be safe and protected from workplace hazards, including heat stress. Under OHS, employers and supervisors have a duty to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker, including the protection in hot environments.

The employer should establish a heat-stress control plan for the summer to manage job risk associated with high temperatures and humidity. Our ministry provided \$250,000 in funding to the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers to develop a stress-test tool kit to support workers to address the heat conditions in their workplaces, assess the risk for heat stress and be proactive to take steps to protect workers.

Every worker in Ontario has the right to refuse work they believe to be unsafe and are encouraged to report their conditions to health and safety.

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

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** The member knows full well that precariously employed workers, and even workers with relatively secure jobs, are not going to risk their livelihood by refusing to work when it is too hot to work safely. Worker protection must be proactive and be the responsibility of the employer, who has the ability to provide these protections and safeguards.

Will the government support our legislation to protect the lives of workers today?

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Ontario continues to have a strong health and safety record, and our ministry is committed to maintaining these standards for all workers in our province. We have a preventative, proactive approach to prevent workplace hazards and enforce OHSA for the protection of safety of all. Our strategy for occupational health and safety programs, Prevention Works, aims to continue to support Ontario, and we remain a leader in occupational health and safety.

We will continue to protect workers and make sure our province remains the best place to work, live and raise a family.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Mr. Speaker, here in Ontario, the most prosperous province in the country, there are 2.5 million of our neighbours without a family doctor, and that number is only getting bigger. This Conservative government has increased the provincial debt by over \$100 billion, so we have to wonder where all that money is going.

In Ottawa, there are at least 160,000 residents without a family doctor. Residents like Theresa, who spent years on wait-lists for a doctor to help manage her yet-undiagnosed medical issue. She finally got rostered; three months later, the doctor promptly left Ontario for greener pastures somewhere else in Canada. Theresa is now spending her time bouncing between walk-in clinics and putting her employment in jeopardy while she awaits yet another family doctor. There are millions of stories like Theresa's.

In the most prosperous province in the country, with a government that spends billions like it's Monopoly money, why are so many Ontarians like Theresa stuck without a family doctor?

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Of course, people like Theresa need primary care and deserve primary care. We want to provide that to everybody in Ontario. In fact, approximately 90% of the residents in Ontario have access to primary care and are connected with primary care. Some of that is provided by the fantastic nurse practitioners in the province of Ontario.

I note, once again, a Liberal member has stood up and refused to acknowledge that nurse practitioners actually deliver primary care. I don't know why the Liberals don't have any recognition of nurse practitioners, but let's talk a little bit more about that. There are 296 interprofessional primary care teams in Ontario with nurse practitioners, serving four million clients. Why won't the Liberals recognize that? What have they got against nurse practitioners? Nurse practitioners are delivering great care, patient-focused care, team-based care. We believe in that. Why don't the Liberals?

*Interjections.*

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

Supplementary question?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Mr. Speaker, do you know what? This government will blame whomever they want. They might even go back and blame Tommy Douglas for creating medicare, Mr. Speaker. But they've had six years to get it done, and the problem is worse now than when they started: 2,000 people getting health care every day in the hallway; 200,000 people waiting for surgery or a diagnostic procedure; 11,000 of those people dying while they wait.

In the Premier's own backyard, in the great state of Etobicoke, there are 93,000 people without a family doctor. That's one in four residents of the Premier's riding without a doctor, Mr. Speaker. By the time the next election is scheduled, those 93,000 people will join over four million Ontarians without a family doctor.

The government has had six years to get it done and make things better, but it's only gotten worse. Can the Premier tell us, and all residents of Ontario, why he thinks we should give him even more time to make it worse?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Transportation will come to order. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order. The Minister of Long-Term Care will come to order.

The Premier may reply.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, maybe the member from Orléans could answer the question: Why did their party, when they were in power—they cut residency spots, as we've increased them by 40%. You never built any medical schools, and we have TMU, we have York, we have U of T. We've added seats in a northern university and in Ottawa, right in your own backyard.

Why didn't the previous Liberal government build a new hospital in your area? Because you never did. We are building the second-largest hospital in Canada in their area.

I want to know, through the member: Why did you fire nurses? Why did you fire nurses under the Liberal government? As we brought on 80,000 new nurses, 30,000 more nurses in colleges and—

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

Stop the clock. The Premier will take his seat. And I'll remind the Premier to make his comments through the Chair when he's answering questions. Thank you very much.

Start the clock. The next question.

## VETERANS

**Mr. Tyler Allsopp:** My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Our government has deep respect and gratitude for the extraordinary courage and tremendous sacrifices our veterans have made in service to our country. But, Speaker, we also recognize the complex challenges veterans often face when transitioning back into civilian life. Many of them continue to face significant hurdles finding stable, meaningful employment, including in my riding of Bay of Quinte, as we're host to CFB Trenton and all the great men and women who serve there. Today and every day, thank you for your service.

Our government must continue to support Ontario's veterans and ensure they have access to the resources they need to build rewarding, long-term careers after their service. In light of these challenges, Speaker, could the minister tell the House what our government is doing to support our veterans and to facilitate their successful integration into Ontario's civilian economy?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ajax and parliamentary assistant.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you to the men and women that serve our country. Ontario's veterans have a wealth of skills that can directly be translated into so many sectors within our economy. Part of this is our skilled trades. Our ministry is committed to creating clear pathways for veterans into these roles.

We're investing millions in creating opportunities and pathways for our veterans, our heroes. For example, our government is investing \$3 million over three years in Helmets to Hardhats Canada, a registered non-profit organization that provides second career opportunities in the construction industry to those in military—safety and training. They provide peer counselling for serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans and military families.

This investment will help hundreds of Canadian Armed Forces members transition into civilian life and prepare for rewarding and new careers in the construction sector. Services will help fill a gap in Ontario's employment and training resources while addressing the unique needs and experiences of veterans—

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

And the supplementary?

1150

**Mr. Tyler Allsopp:** I want to thank the parliamentary assistant for highlighting these crucial supports for our veterans and for all the great work that she does.

While job training is invaluable, we recognize that veterans often need more personalized assistance to navigate the intricacies of Ontario's job market. Adjusting to civilian life can present unique challenges, and it's essential that our government provides resources that are relevant, effective and directly informed by the veterans' own experiences and insights. By involving veterans in these discussions, we can ensure that Ontario is delivering meaningful support that will allow our veterans to not only secure employment but also grow, thrive and advance in their chosen careers over the long term.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please elaborate on our government's efforts to engage directly with veterans to help us identify which career development resources are most beneficial to them?

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you to the member again for that question. It gives me the opportunity to highlight our government's unwavering support for veterans and their families.

We know that, for veterans, transitioning into civilian life—and, for their families, relocating in Ontario—can bring unique challenges, particularly when it comes to employment. Our government has taken real, decisive action to address these challenges through comprehensive consultations. We have listened directly to the veterans and military spouses about the employment barriers that they face.

We have implemented the Soldiers' Aid Commission, which is also essential in our strategy for providing critical financial support to veterans and their families who need it the most. Whether it's housing, specialized equipment, mental health resources or employment support, we're making sure veterans have access to the resources necessary for a stable, successful transition to civilian life.

## AIR QUALITY

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch, Speaker.

*Remarks in Anishininiimowin.*

The chief and leadership from Aamjiwnaang First Nation are here today. Aamjiwnaang has endured more than a century of environmental racism, as industrial pollution has turned their land into one of Canada's most polluted areas.

Speaker, Aamjiwnaang has asked the Lambton industry meteorological alert air quality regulation to be updated for years now. Can the minister explain why these regulations have not been updated?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I'm pleased to answer the question as Acting Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks this morning.

Our government's dedication to protecting human health and the environment is clear, particularly when it comes to First Nations and our shared goals. I can tell the member, through you, Speaker, that Ministers Khanjin and Rickford spoke with Chief Plain in April of this year, have addressed the concerns of Aamjiwnaang and will continue to do so, and welcome further consultation and participation and exchanges.

In fact, we introduced a new regulation to set out strict benzene emissions limits for INEOS and introduced the ability for the province to levy fines for exceedances. We took immediate action last spring to hold the company responsible by issuing four provincial officers' orders requiring them to address benzene exceedances. In early May 2024, we issued a notice of suspension and amended the facility's environmental compliance authorization. They are out of business, and they will remain out of business.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** The regulations have not been updated. That's the issue today.

Speaker, for decades, both Ontario and Canada have ignored the severe impact of pollution on the health of Aamjiwnaang. What they do is, they sidestep their responsibility by claiming the issue falls outside of their jurisdictions.

Again, Aamjiwnaang are here because this government needs to take the real steps to address the industrial harms threatening the ways of life of their people. Will this request be honoured or ignored?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: As the Acting Minister of the Environment, I can say clearly that we recognize Aamjiwnaang First Nation's long-standing concerns about the impacts of air pollution in their community, and we share the same goal—the common cause—of a clean environment. That's why our ministry continues to meet with that community on a regular basis to discuss these concerns and ensure they are addressed appropriately.

In April 2024, we added two additional real-time benzene monitors at priority locations in that community to ensure 24/7 air monitoring to support the community. We are fully committed to working with that First Nations community and all First Nations communities, local health agencies and industries, on timely resolutions to air quality concerns. This is a common cause for all. We are all in this together. Count on us to continue to dialogue and work toward solutions.

## HEALTH CARE SOINS DE SANTÉ

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** When I was first elected, back in 2020, the very first person to walk through my office door in Ottawa was someone looking for a family doctor. Four years later, my office is only getting more of those calls every day.

Just recently, I had an elderly couple contact me, obviously very distressed, because their doctor was leaving the profession due to burnout. This couple requires regular care and medication renewals to help manage the serious health conditions they're dealing with. Now they're worried they won't be able to get those medication renewals and the care that they need on time. This situation is only one example of a long list of people who struggle, who worry and who are asking me to try to convince the government to do whatever is necessary to ensure access to timely care.

It's been six years since the government was elected. Will the Premier please tell the 22,000 people in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier and the 2.5 million people across Ontario who do not have a family doctor when they will finally be able to get the primary health care service they need—

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** When the Liberals ran the government, they reduced the number of doctors being trained in the province of Ontario. We're not going to repeat that mistake. They also caused nurses to get laid off and fired. We're not going to repeat that mistake, either. Rather, what we're going to do is continue connecting people to primary care.

Approximately 90% of everybody in Ontario has a connection to a primary care provider. That is according to CIHI, which is the statistics agency that records those facts. CIHI also says that Ontario is doing better than any other province in the country. We're doing better than Alberta, better than Manitoba, better than Saskatchewan and better than all of the other provinces.

But Mr. Speaker, we're not going to stop there. We've hired Jane Philpott, a recognized expert in the field, to continue this progress in connecting people in the province of Ontario to primary care.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Minister of Colleges and Universities will come to order.

Supplementary question?

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Monsieur le Président, pouvoir communiquer clairement avec son médecin est tellement important pour des raisons qui sont très évidentes. Malheureusement, pour les francophones en Ontario, trouver un médecin capable de leur fournir des soins dans leur langue est vraiment rendu difficile.

L'exemple le plus simple auquel je peux penser, c'est ma mère de 80 ans qui comprend un peu l'anglais, mais



jusqu'à un certain point. Elle ne pourrait pas décrire ses symptômes dans la langue anglaise. Le risque, pour elle, c'est de ne pas pouvoir avoir accès à un médecin bilingue ou francophone et elle pourrait donc être victime d'une erreur de diagnostic ou d'un traitement inapproprié. C'est le cas d'un nombre important de Franco-Ontariens parce que nous n'avons pas un système robuste qui permet d'identifier des médecins capables de travailler en français.

La ministre des Affaires francophones est responsable de l'offre des services sous la Loi sur les services en français. Peut-elle nous dire comment le gouvernement compte s'assurer que chaque Franco-Ontarien peut trouver un médecin de famille francophone ou, au moins, bilingue?

**M. Anthony Leardi:** Monsieur le Président, comme j'ai dit, nous n'allons pas répéter les fautes et les erreurs du Parti libéral. Nous n'allons pas répéter ces fautes et ces erreurs. Nous allons continuer à entraîner des docteurs dans la province de l'Ontario, y inclus des nouveaux docteurs dans les universités comme le « Northern Ontario School of Medicine », où les docteurs vont aider les personnes du Nord à accéder aux soins primaires.

1200

J'aimerais ajouter que, dans la ville d'Ottawa, nous allons ajouter 6 400 personnes qui peuvent trouver des soins primaires dans la ville d'Ottawa, ce qui est très important, parce que ce sont des personnes qui ont besoin de soins primaires, qui peuvent accéder aux soins primaires dans la clinique qui s'appelle « Ottawa Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic ».

#### HATE CRIMES

**Ms. Laura Smith:** My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Hate has no place in our province, but sadly, it continues to rear its ugly head time and time again. Whether it's anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism or any form of hatred, it leaves deep scars on our communities.

Ontario is home to so many people of so many backgrounds and beliefs. These differences make us stronger, not weaker.

But when people feel unsafe in their place of worship, cultural centre, or college or university, it shakes the very foundation of our society. Ontarians deserve better. They deserve to practise their faith and live their culture without fear. That's why it's so important for our government to act.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how our government is taking action to protect faith-based and cultural communities from hate?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant and the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** My colleague is right. Hate has no place in Ontario, and our government will not tolerate any form of hate in our province—very simply, no tolerance for intolerance. Everyone—regardless of their faith, how they worship God or where they came from—

deserves to feel safe and secure at our province's places of worship and cultural organizations.

For example, after the tragedy of October 7, we began to see the concerning rise of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Working with our local Jewish and Muslim communities, our government acted swiftly, investing an additional \$20 million in the anti-hate security and prevention grant program in 2023 and 2024 to ensure Ontarians can practise their faith safely, securely and free from intimidation, harassment or hate.

Speaker, these are more than just dollar amounts. We continue to see the real impacts of this grant in local communities across Ontario: 1,682 unique faith-based and cultural organizations have been funded through this grant, with the majority of them reported that the grant helped provide an increased sense of safety for their places of worship and reduced incidents of hate—

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

And the supplementary question?

**Ms. Laura Smith:** People should not have to look over their shoulder when they're praying or celebrating their culture. Far too many people still face these threats, harassment and violence simply because of who they are, where they come from or how they worship. Places of worship, cultural centres and colleges and universities should be sanctuaries where people feel safe and welcome.

Sadly, certain individuals attempt to disrupt this sense of safety, and we need to ensure that every Ontarian, no matter their faith or background, can live without fear. Our communities have called for more supports to protect these spaces.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please tell us how this grant will continue to support our communities and help them stay safe?

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I appreciate my colleague's concerns. Our government remains committed to working with our local communities to ensure places of worship are protected and that those who are attending feel safe and secure.

That's why I'm glad to share that on October 31, applications opened for this year's Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant and will be open until December 2.

Speaker, this grant has served diverse communities across our province, including Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Indigenous, Sikh and LGBTQ organizations. Funding from this grant has been used on a variety of safety initiatives, including installing security cameras, better locks and doors, reinforcing windows, undertaking security assessments and more. There is a clear need to continue providing the resources to safeguard these institutions, and our government remains committed to doing just that. We will not stop working to build a stronger, safer and more thriving province where everyone is able to freely and securely worship and express their faith.

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** My question is for the Premier. Speaker, construction of the Finch West LRT has not been

easy for my community. Over the many years, there have been delays; lane closures within active construction; never-ending traffic disruption, both vehicle and pedestrian accidents, including a tragic fatality; a collapsed underground parking garage; a daycare flooded with sewage; and more. As you can imagine, the news that construction of the Finch West LRT has finally ended was greeted with exhausted relief by my community. But there's still no opening date.

When will the Finch West LRT be open so we can get Finch moving?

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

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** It's incredibly obvious that when the Liberals and the NDP were in power, they built absolutely nothing. They had a chance to build rapid transit. They had a chance to build our highways, and they simply failed to do so. Our transit riders got stuck on a regular basis. The Finch LRT will be giving those in northwest Toronto what they wanted for a very long time: a transit system that offers more choices to travel on their own schedule. It will connect the Finch West subway station to Humber College, and it will reduce the TTC bus traffic on Finch Avenue West, particularly during peak travel times.

I'm happy to say that testing is currently on schedule, and we hope to have an update for the people soon. We will keep building—

*Interjections.*

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

The supplementary question? The member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** While this Premier continues to have his temper tantrum on Toronto—stripping away municipalities' decision-making powers and wasting taxpayer dollars unnecessarily ripping up bike lanes—he continues to fail at the very basics of completing our Eglinton LRT, which, if ever opened, would actually address gridlock in our community of St. Paul's. This Premier has had over six years to finish this transit project cutting across our midtown and Little Jamaica community.

Recently the Premier told the media he'd get involved "as a last resort" if delays persist. Then despite the project being absurdly over budget and years delayed, he continued to literally fanboy over the Metrolinx CEO, Phil Verster—literally.

So, Speaker, my question is to the Premier: Will this Premier stop fanboying over failed management and give my community residents and small businesses transit that works?

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** The Eglinton West extension will bring even more rapid transit to communities all along Eglinton Avenue from the east end of Toronto and into Mississauga. This seven-stop subway project will support as many as 4,600 jobs annually and establish connectivity with the airport employment zone, Canada's second-largest employment hub.

Our government is focused on rapidly building the transit projects that Ontarians need, and our plan is working. Tunnelling is halfway complete, and under Premier Ford's leadership, we are full steam ahead and getting it done.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There are a number of members, apparently, that have points of order.

We'll start with the government House leader, under standing order 59.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Under standing order 59, Speaker: On Monday, November 18, a government bill will be introduced. In the afternoon, there will be opposition day number 3.

On Tuesday, November 19, both in the morning and in the afternoon, there will be second reading of a government bill to be introduced; and at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, November 19, there will be private member's notice of motion number 135 in the name of the member for Burlington.

On Wednesday, November 20, both morning and afternoon, it will be second reading of a government bill to be introduced. During afternoon routine proceedings, a government bill will be introduced; and at 6 p.m., private member's notice of motion number 136 in the name of the member for Markham–Unionville.

On Thursday, November 21, both in the morning and in the afternoon, it will be second reading of a government bill to be introduced.

## NO. 2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Toronto–St. Paul's has informed me she has a point of order.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I ask that we stand and observe a moment of silence to remember the members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, the largest Black military unit in Canadian history. Their service went back to the American Revolution and continued through the War of 1812, the rebellions of 1837 and 1838 to the start of the First World War.

I ask that we remember these veterans and honour them and their efforts in spite of the racism they experienced here at home and overseas. Today, the city of Toronto will unveil a Heritage Toronto plaque in honour of them at St. Andrew's Church.

Lest we forget.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Toronto–St. Paul's is seeking unanimous consent of the House for a moment's silence in memory of the No. 2 Construction Battalion. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

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

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, the member for Kitchener Centre on a point of order.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I just want to welcome Ashwin Annamalai and his mom and dad who are visiting. He's a wonderful leader, always speaking up, fighting against racism in our community, fighting in support of climate action and action to address the housing crisis for the next generation. Thank you for all you do for our community, and welcome to your House.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** It's my pleasure to rise to welcome to the House a mayor from my community, Brian Smith—welcome, Mayor Smith and his team. They're here to work with the province. We had an excellent meeting this morning on moving his municipality forward, and I want to invite everyone to the event in room 230 to celebrate Wasaga Beach.

I'd also like to recognize, Speaker, the birthday of our government House leader and invite him to come and join the celebration.

## DEFERRED VOTES

REDUCING GRIDLOCK, SAVING  
YOU TIME ACT, 2024LOI DE 2024 SUR LE DÉSENGORGEMENT  
DU RÉSEAU ROUTIER ET LE GAIN  
DE TEMPS

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

Bill 212, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and other transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les voies publiques, les expropriations liées aux projets d'Internet à haut débit et d'autres questions relatives au transport.

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

*The division bells rang from 1214 to 1219.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask the members to please take their seats.

On October 23, 2024, Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of Bill 212, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and other transportation-related matters.

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

## Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hamid, Zee	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Shereef

Bouma, Will	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Piccini, David	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pinsonneault, Steve	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pirie, George	Yakubski, John

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

## Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Jama, Sarah	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Karpoche, Bhutila	Vanthof, John
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Vaugeois, Lise
Clancy, Aislinn	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
Collard, Lucille	McCrimmon, Karen	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 63; the nays are 37.

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

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 6, 2024, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

## LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** It is now my responsibility to ask the pages to assemble.

I am very glad to have this chance to say a word of thanks to our legislative pages. Our pages are smart, trustworthy and hard-working. They're indispensable to the effective functioning of this chamber and we are indeed fortunate to have had them here the last three weeks.

To our pages: You depart having made many new friends, with a greater understanding of parliamentary democracy and memories that will last a lifetime. Each of you will now go home and continue your studies, and no doubt will contribute to your communities, your province and your country in important ways. We expect great things from all of you. Who knows? Maybe some of you

someday will take your seats in this House as members or work here as staff. But no matter where your path leads you, we wish you well.

I will ask all members to please join me in thanking this great group of legislative pages.

*Applause.*

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

*The House recessed from 1225 to 1300.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### HEAT STRESS ACT, 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 SUR LE STRESS DÛ À LA CHALEUR

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 222, An Act to protect workers from heat stress /  
Projet de loi 222, Loi visant à protéger les travailleurs  
contre le stress dû à la chaleur.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Toronto–Danforth like to briefly explain his bill?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Thank you, Speaker. As you're well aware, workers in Ontario are getting sick from, and in some cases dying from, heat stress. They need—they deserve—protection. The Ontario Federation of Labour has been working with me on a framework to provide that legislative protection. This bill incorporates that framework.

## PETITIONS

### HEALTH CARE

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it's entitled "Stop Ford's Health Care Privatization Plan." It is signed by many people from my region of Thunder Bay–Superior North who are very concerned with the lack of funding, particularly for family health teams, in our region. I fully support this. We know that funding needs to be going into public health care and not being poured into for-profit health care.

That is the basis of this petition. I thoroughly support it and will hand it to page Graham.

### HEALTH CARE

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This petition is titled "Stop" the Conservative government's "Health Care Privatization Plan." I'm proud to stand and support this petition. Essentially, community members in Toronto–St. Paul's and across Ontario are concerned because 2.5 million Ontarians don't have access to doctors and they're having

to clog up our emergency rooms. That's, of course, if you have an ER that's open in your community.

The people who have signed this petition are asking the Conservative government to invest handsomely in our public health care system. They're also asking the government to remember that mental health is also part of our health care and that we have to take a whole-person approach, a whole-community approach, to keeping people healthy, well and safe in their communities.

I absolutely support this petition. I'm affixing my signature to it and I will hand it over to Ziggy.

## TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to thank the many Londoners who signed this petition calling on the Legislative Assembly to bring back real rent control. Speaker, as you know, buildings that were constructed in Ontario after November 2018 are exempt from any rent control requirements. We're seeing a lot of people in London who are moving into one of these newer units and have a lease agreement for a year, and then they get a notice of a huge rent increase that they can't afford.

This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to protect tenants from those predatory rent increases and pass legislation to make sure that all renters can live in affordable homes, safe from those untenable increases in rent.

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

## TAXATION

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I have a petition about the carbon tax. We know that this is a tax that is adding to inflation and raising the cost of living for many people. These are concerns in my riding. Many people have come to me with it. We know that the impacts of it are disproportionately affecting middle-class and lower-income families across Ontario, and this really is making the situation worse for many people that way.

Therefore, we urge everyone in the Legislature of Ontario to step forward and oppose the carbon tax that the federal Liberals have put on us, because it is making life more difficult for the people in Ontario.

I fully endorse this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Rishabh to take to the table.

## ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I have a petition here entitled "Save the Ontario Science Centre." Speaker, I have to say that I've had hundreds of signatures from my constituents, and I know that the Ontario Science Centre petition online has gathered over 100,000 signatures from Ontarians across the province.

This petition is, of course, calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in repairs for the Ontario Science Centre. It is a beloved institution. It is a heritage

site. For 50 years, it has helped children develop curiosity, a love for science.

This is a world-class science and cultural institution, and the current plan of the Conservative government is to demolish it. It's an architecturally significant landmark, as well. The new science centre would be half the size. This is also a community hub, serving the communities of Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park—communities that were not consulted about the plans for the science centre.

Speaker, revitalization of the Ontario Science Centre is something that is worth investing in. It wouldn't cost as much as the government's current plan does. So, again, we really need to make sure that we don't lose what we have and that we invest in the repairs and we save the Ontario Science Centre.

I could not agree with this petition more. I will affix my signature to it and send it with the page.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This petition is entitled “Affordable Housing.” Essentially, it's a petition from community members in St. Paul's and across the province who are disappointed with the fact that so many folks in Ontario can't afford to live, whether that's as a renter or as a family making the biggest purchase in your life, your new home.

It is calling on the government to clamp down on speculators, frankly, who are taking away opportunities for people in St. Paul's and across Ontario to live comfortably and with pride in a home that they can be proud of.

This petition is also calling for the government to repair Ontario's social housing stock and to commit to building new, affordable homes. We know that the government has failed at their own housing targets to date.

I am very supportive of this petition titled “Affordable Housing.” I will affix my signature to it and hand it to Kellen for the tabling.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** It gives me great pleasure to be able to summarize this petition for the benefit of the assembly. It deals with critical minerals.

In summary, it's calling upon the government of Ontario to prioritize the development of critical minerals in the province of Ontario, and that's for the purpose of strengthening our economy and building towards a sustainable future. It makes reference that critical minerals are essential for economic growth. It also references the fact that resources for emerging technologies, such as electric vehicles and renewable energy systems, are available right here in the province of Ontario.

1310

In summary, it also refers to the fact that our great mining wealth in the north can be married to the mighty manufacturing power of the south to further Ontario's economy, which is now the number three trading partner for the United States of America, after China and Mexico.

I can't say enough about how important it is for us to develop the mighty manufacturing power of the south and marrying it to the critical mineral wealth of the north. I don't know if there's ever been a better place or a better time to get the north and the south together, heading in the same direction, and developing the electric vehicle manufacturing industry in the province of Ontario, which has now attracted over \$45 billion.

I can certainly, certainly endorse this petition. I will affix my name to it as soon as I find a pen, and then I'm going to give it to page Rishabh, who will deliver it to the table.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition is titled “Double Social Assistance Rates.” I want to thank Julia, my constituent, who is from 100 High Park, for collecting signatures on this petition.

There are so many Ontarians who rely on social assistance, both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Unfortunately, under successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, the rates for social assistance programs have barely increased. As a result, recipients are living far below the poverty line. This is legislated poverty.

We talk about the cost-of-living crisis. We're talking about inflation pressures. What about folks who have been receiving amounts that have barely increased since 1995? I mean, we're talking about decades. We really need to ensure that if we want to see people live healthy lives, if we want to take pressure and burden off of downstream places, like in our health care system—particularly the emergency departments—people need to have enough to live on. People need to be able to house themselves with dignity. People need to be able to feed themselves and their families.

This petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately double social assistance rates so people can live dignified lives. Recently, Raise the Rates coalition was at Queen's Park, and this is one of the first steps that they have asked the Legislative Assembly to take action on, on social assistance rates.

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

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I'm really glad we're able to summarize, because I forgot my glasses, so I can't actually even read all the details of this petition. But it is about calling on the federal government to prioritize public safety.

We have a lot of auto thefts, especially in the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore—and right across, really, our province. I hear about it in Brampton. We now have a minister in charge of bail reform and auto theft. This petition is signed by a lot of constituents, not just in my riding but around the province, because it is important that

we make sure that those who are offending just don't get out on bail to re-offend over and over again.

Safety is paramount in all our ridings. I know this is something we can all agree upon. We want to make sure that people feel safe in their own homes and are able to park their cars in their garage or in their driveway, and not worry if it's going to be there the next day.

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition of calling on the federal government to introduce comprehensive bail reforms and prioritize public safety. I'm going to give it to Keerthana and thank her—it's her last day, so. I'm going to give it to her. I'm certainly going to sign this because this is a great petition.

### TUITION

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This petition is a petition that was sent to us from Justin McLaughlin—he's actually in Kitchener. He's simply asking that this government not balance the budget of post-secondary schools on the backs of international students who are paying triple or more in tuition fees.

Justin and thousands of others who have signed this petition are asking for a permanent increase, frankly, to the core funding for post-secondary institutions, ensuring that that's indexed to inflation. They're asking for respect and equitable treatment for international students. They're essentially saying that the government cannot balance the books of post-secondary institutions on the backs of international students who are coming here to Canada, many of whom have to get more education on top of the vast education they have because their credentials are not recognized here in Ontario.

I absolutely agree with this petition. I've affixed my signature, and I'll hand it over to Jaimie for tabling. Thank you.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition is titled "Make Affordable Housing a Priority." Housing has never been more expensive than it is today, both to own a home or to rent an apartment. Consecutive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have failed to make housing a priority. What is happening right now is that people are facing bad-faith evictions. They're being pushed out of their homes, out of their communities. People need deeply affordable rent-geared-to-income, co-op housing—all of these options are not available.

So this petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to do four main things: (1) to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario's social housing stocks; (2) to commit to building new affordable homes—and we need them, we need lots of them quickly; (3) to crack down on housing speculation; and (4) to make rentals more affordable by bringing back real rent control measures.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Lily. Thank you.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

Orders of the day? I recognize the member for Essex.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Essex is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

Therefore, as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I declare that, in this room, it is 6 o'clock.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Using my immense power.

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### CUTTING TAXES ON SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE LES IMPÔTS DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Bowman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 195, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to increase Ontario small business deductions / Projet de loi 195, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour augmenter les déductions accordées aux petites entreprises exploitées en Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation. I recognize again the member for Don Valley West.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I am delighted to rise today to debate Bill 195, the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act, 2024. I also want to thank the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, for their support and, in particular, Ryan Mallough, who is here today in the gallery for this debate.

Small business is a very important economic engine in our province. With over 500,000 small businesses employing over three million people, they play a crucial role in the Ontario economy. They employ two out of every three private sector workers in our province. They bring community engagement, innovation, prosperity to our towns and cities. They enrich our local culture and drive competition. Unfortunately, these businesses are increasingly being left behind by this Conservative government who chooses to focus instead on their insider friends, including, for example, the big-box retailers who recently got the business because they shuttered independent ServiceOntario operators.

**1320**

The fall economic statement was an opportunity for the government to recognize the important role small businesses play in job and wealth creation in this province. But

instead, the measures were a disappointment to families and small businesses, who are getting a one-time payoff that will help with rent for one month but not the next.

The small business sector was referenced only a handful of times in the 200-page document the government produced, and there were no new tax cuts. There were no new measures to support the small business sector, and just a reminder of the one timid step this government took since being elected in 2018—which, according to a recent survey conducted by the CFIB, are falling short of the expectations among a large majority of businesses. In fact, nearly three quarters of the survey's respondents cited a high tax burden as a reason why they would advise against someone starting a new business in Ontario right now. High costs, high debt levels and high interest rates are also making it tough for small businesses to keep their doors open and get ahead.

So when the government boasts about having reduced the small business tax rate from 3.5% to 3.2%, it's clearly not enough. In fact, the Conservative government has won an award recently for being tied with Quebec, for an award you don't want to win: They're tied with Quebec for having the highest small business tax rate in the country.

In Ontario, under the Ford government, we are opening fewer small businesses. More are closing under this government. Business closures are up while new business openings are down. This trend started in COVID, but in fact it continues to get worse under this government. In fact, there were 1,500 more business closures than openings so far in 2024. Business insolvencies are 28% higher as of August this year compared to last.

I hear from my constituents in Don Valley West who are small business owners who are struggling. They're working hard to keep their doors open, serve their customers and their communities, to provide for their families and pay their employees.

I recently talked to Emma, who runs a small business in Don Valley West called Code Ninjas, in the education sector. Here is what she said about Bill 195: "As someone who runs a business that serves families and children in our community, I believe that this bill is a much-needed initiative that will greatly benefit not only small business owners like myself but also the families who rely on our services.

"The economic challenges we have all faced in recent months have been difficult, especially for small businesses. In the education sector, we've seen a marked decline in enrolment, with several families having to reduce their children's recreational programs due to job loss or rising living expenses. At the same time, we are faced with rising labour costs and operational expenses. Despite these pressures, we have made the decision not to raise fees for our programs in order to continue supporting families during this difficult time.

"This is where your bill becomes particularly important. By cutting taxes on small businesses, it will help alleviate some of the financial burdens we face as business owners, enabling us to reinvest in our businesses, retain

staff, and continue providing valuable services to the community.

"Small businesses play a crucial role in the livelihood for countless people.

"Stephanie's bill marks a positive move towards supporting their growth and success."

The Leaside Business Park Association, a mighty engine of jobs and economic activity not just in my riding but across the city of Toronto, had this to say: We are "pleased to support" Stephanie's bill. The bill, "if passed, would offer much-needed support to small businesses as they deal with rising costs, high debt and stagnant consumer demand. This tax relief would also allow businesses to invest in their employees and innovation, helping them keep their doors open and grow for the future, contributing to both their success and that of the Ontario economy."

That's why, right now, I'm working to get tax cuts for small businesses. With this bill, I'm proposing to cut Ontario's small business tax rate in half, from 3.2% to 1.6%. Currently, the 3.2% rate is paid on the first \$500,000 of active business income, and beyond that threshold, income is taxed at the general corporate tax rate of 11.5%. I'm proposing that income threshold would be increased to \$600,000. Taken together, those two measures would save up to \$17,900 per year in taxes for a small business—nothing to sneeze at.

Speaker, this bill has gained wide support from organizations representing small businesses, and I urge the government side to listen to what they have to say about why passing this bill is important.

This is from the CFIB, from Ryan Mallough, who, again, is here today, and Julie Kwiecinski: "On behalf of our 38,000 Ontario small business members across all sectors, we urge you (Minister of Finance) and your government to support private member's Bill 195.... Lowering the SBTR (small business tax rate) would allow employers to further invest in their employees, expand their businesses and grow Ontario's economy. It would also encourage start-ups and new businesses to risk taking the plunge on a new enterprise."

From the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, who also supports this bill: "Small businesses are still struggling, and the Ontario chamber welcomes tax relief proposals such as this one."

From the Brampton Board of Trade, they say, "The Brampton Board of Trade supports tax relief measures such as Bill 195, which offers much-needed support to small businesses facing rising costs. This relief would allow businesses to reinvest in innovation, enhance employee training, and fuel sustainable growth to be competitive." That's from Vijai Kumar Singh, manager of government relations at the Brampton Board of Trade.

Another one here from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario: "The measures in Bill 195 ... answer" TIAO's "call for small business tax relief as tourism operators continue to grow their visitor numbers while seeing the cost of business rise due to inflationary pressures, high interest rates, supply chain disruptions, and labour shortages. TIAO urges swift passage of Bill 195 to

deliver the expanded capacity it would offer small tourism businesses and visitor destinations across the province.” That’s from Andrew Siegwart, president and CEO of TIAO.

Speaker, I also have support from a small business outside my riding, in Eglinton–Lawrence, who prefers to be identified by her initials, S.S. She says, “Small business is the backbone of financial security. Stephanie’s bill is a positive step forward to supporting the growth and success of small business.”

So it defies logic and, in fact, good economic policy why this government isn’t offering meaningful tax relief to small businesses. In fact, while the government talks a lot about another tax in place here in Ontario—because they scrapped cap-and-trade—they have delivered no tax cuts for corporations in six years.

In 2010, the Liberal government reduced the general corporate tax rate from 14% to 12%, and then again in 2011 to the current rate of 11.5%. So it’s not surprising that it’s a Liberal MPP, under the leadership of Bonnie Crombie, who is proposing this tax cut here today. Make no mistake: When it comes to tax cuts, the only thing this government can brag about is its failed promise to deliver them.

I’ve just described the calls for a tax cut from those speaking on behalf of small businesses. It also defies logic why a foreign-owned spa has the ear of this government and local Ontario businesses don’t. It defies logic that this government has not supported small businesses with this measure, which would cost about half a billion dollars, while they spend billions to help a foreign-owned spa and shut down small business independent ServiceOntario operators to deliver that business, via a sole-source contract, to an American big-box retailer.

It’s very clear: This government does not treat small business as a priority. If they did, they would have delivered meaningful tax relief in even just one of the six budgets they have tabled. They have not. While they drive business to big-box retailers, they close down independently owned ServiceOntario operators. They raised up to \$1 billion in taxpayer money to get beer in corner stores a year early; that could have paid for two years of this small business tax cut.

They are spending over \$2 billion to pave over Ontario Place and build a parking lot for a foreign-owned spa. They waived \$2 billion in penalty fees from the 407. That would pay for another four years of the small business tax cut. We don’t know how much they’re planning to spend on Highway 413 that their own staff from the Ministry of Transportation says will save only seconds. Experts estimate it will be in excess of \$20 billion. That would pay for 40 years of this small business tax cut. This government can afford this measure, so it’s puzzling to me: Why haven’t they done it?

**1330**

Supporting Bill 195 today is a chance for the Conservative government to directly support small businesses, to correct what is at best an oversight in their six budgets and seven fall economic statements, and maybe at worst a

deliberate omission. Speaker, we see where their priorities are. They make it very clear. Supporting small businesses is a priority for me, our Liberal caucus and Bonnie Crombie, our leader. I am urging the government to pass this bill and make small businesses one of their priorities, too.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Further debate? I recognize the member from Toronto Centre.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** It’s always an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the good people of Toronto Centre. I’m very pleased to rise today to speak about one of my favourite topics, small businesses. Especially as a former small business owner, I can tell you that I really do know first-hand how hard it is to make ends meet, whether it’s paying your very high commercial taxes, unpredictable surging property taxes or, of course, just the cost of goods. It’s with that pride that I’m able to speak about Bill 195, a bill that actually takes one step—yet a very important step—towards reducing the regulatory burden on small businesses and minimizing the taxes that they have to pay.

It is an honour that I’m here today to talk about this important issue. We know that small businesses are in every single community across Ontario. We have 437,891 small businesses. That’s about one small business for every 37 Ontarians. Can you imagine the numbers, Speaker, and what that does? Small businesses are the economic driver of our economy. They are really the heartbeat of every community, and we gather in those small businesses. They are cultural spaces. They are the spaces where we come together and we support each other, and we know the owners and oftentimes the workers there by their first names.

Despite the importance and the immense value that small businesses bring to Ontario, we have seen now a government that is not doing enough to support small businesses. What we see is continued high levels of red tape, high taxes and unpredictable rents that continue to really disrupt the economy when it comes to small businesses. We need to recognize that in Ontario, we need to have a comprehensive small business strategy that will actually incorporate the arts and culture and weave that with sports and tourism. That’s what we need to do in order for us to make the main streets go.

Small businesses, as we all know, are crucial to Ontario’s economy. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—the CFIB, a very regular friend that we see in this building—small businesses represent 98% of Ontario businesses. They employ over three million people. That is half of Ontario’s workforce. And small businesses are responsible for over 40% of Ontario’s GDP, a real testament to the power of small businesses.

Beyond these particular contributions, we also need to recognize that we see small businesses oftentimes organized in business improvement areas. That’s when we see small groups of businesses clustered together on main streets to drive innovation, to brand their community, to make it go and become a vibrant space and neighbourhood for everyone. Small businesses and the BIAs play a very



important, pivotal role in Ontario's economy, and they allow us to foster a sense of belonging.

BIAs are on the forefront of local events and initiatives. They make Ontario's towns and cities come alive with their arts and cultural festivals, their sports tournaments and their tourism campaigns. We need to recognize that they are very important when they come to the forefront as being eyes on the street. They keep our community safer, because they're always open when everyone else is closed, and they keep each other safe. That's why we need to support small businesses. What we're seeing in Ontario is more challenges, challenges such as a small business tax rate that is simply one of the highest in Canada. It has placed a heavy financial strain on entrepreneurs, and as a former entrepreneur, I can tell you, Speaker, it is never easy opening up a business in Ontario, and the government has not been listening to small business owners in the way they need to.

Small business owners such as the ones in my community have shared their significant stories with me. They talk about the challenges they have with having a labour workforce that doesn't meet their needs currently. I know that it means a lot to these small business owners, especially the ones that are family-owned. They are handed down from fathers to sons, mothers to daughters. I want to particularly give some feedback, and also some praise, to some of the local small businesses in my community.

I want to thank the St. James Town Steak and Chops butcher shop. If you haven't been there in Cabbagetown, I'll tell you, they are excellent. Royal Home Hardware and Building Supplies, again in Cabbagetown: Their staff will greet you with the biggest smile, and they seem to know every answer to every question, no matter how small and how insignificant. The best butter tarts are found at the Epicure Shop in Cabbagetown. I grab my burgers from the pub at O'Grady's on Church Street in the Village. I want to thank the team at Ho's, the barber shop—specifically Philip and Mohammed; they keep this head of hair from growing too wild—and so many more.

Speaker, when they tell me what they're struggling with, it is oftentimes the high cost of doing business in Ontario. And they share with me how challenging it is, how incredibly challenging it is, when the taxes are so high. So doing everything we can to reduce that burden on them is really a benefit to all of us, because I've talked to you and shared with you how important it is for small businesses and their immense contributions to the economy.

In 2023, CFIB produced a survey where they talked to 50% of the small businesses amongst their membership. Their members really highlighted the regulatory red tape that they have to go through in order for them to operate in Ontario. They talked about the immense health regulations and licensing requirements, and how difficult it was for them to make ends meet while trying to also meet the bureaucratic requirements. They are deeply invested in their communities. They want all levels of government to work together, to not point fingers at each other, to address

the issues of community safety. They're not interested in hearing this Premier talk about writing a letter to Ottawa about something; they want them to sit down and meet and find ways to work together to support small businesses. That is what small businesses want. They want processes that are streamlined, and they want greater financial support from the province.

Commercial rent is something that we have to talk about. We have not seen any changes to the Commercial Tenancies Act in 40 years. Yet we know that the Better Way Alliance—a pragmatic and progressive organization, a fair-minded business association in Ontario—has brought forward a resolution and a solution that will actually help us, and that is creating commercial rent control, taking a look at that legislation and finding some form of predictability for business owners, because we know that business owners need a predictable, stable environment to operate in Ontario. They need us to bring down the cost of retail space, because we know that occupancy cost on any ledger is one of the largest amounts that a small business has to pay. The more rent they pay, the less they're able to pay their employees. The more rent they pay, the less they're able to invest back into their business, whether it's investments in new equipment or expansion.

That's why it's so important for us to address that issue, and I'm hoping to do so. I have introduced a motion specifically to ask this House to consider the feasibility of bringing in commercial rent control. That is a motion I tabled in June. At the first available opportunity, I will be bringing that forward for debate.

#### 1340

It is vitally important for this House to support this motion. This motion, although it does not go exactly where we want it to go right away, is worthy of support. It takes us one step further in reducing the tax burden for small businesses, and we know that businesses are faced with high levels of debts that they've never seen before. They face the highest level of debts right now in Ontario, and they are calling on this government to listen and to work with them.

They're not interested in sound bites; they're not interested in government announcements that are repeat, stale announcements. They're interested in newer ways for this government to step forward to support them. They have watched, while this government has championed big corporations, multi-millionaires and billionaires, how they have supported big-box retail and chosen to protect them during the COVID pandemic while they shut down small businesses on Ontario main streets.

The businesses will not forget that. They are still angry, and their debt loads are still higher than ever before because of the way that this government treated them during the COVID pandemic. They tell me that the debt that they carry today is born from the COVID pandemic. We had the largest lockdown in the world on small businesses, and so they know every day, as they pay down their debt and those interest rates, that this government has failed them. They know that the government needs to do more, and they have said as much.

They want the government to prioritize small business, especially when it comes to culture. We now have a government that has eliminated the word “culture” from any of the ministerial titles. The arts and culture sector, which is broad and significant and a major contributor to our tourism strategy—they know that this government has closed the doors and windows on them. They’re very worried that Ontario’s culture sector, which is a huge contributor to the economy, to Ontario’s vibrant economy; it’s the calling card when we speak and greet others that come to Ontario—that this government has abandoned them.

Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I hope that we can all work together for a stronger, safer, more prosperous Ontario.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** We only have 12 minutes during PMBs to speak, and unfortunately, I have to share my time with three other members. So I’m only going to get four minutes in on this, and really, it does deserve a great deal more than four minutes.

I find it really interesting that a Liberal member is stepping up and saying that we need to cut business taxes, because when we did that and cut it by 8.7% to bring it down to 3.2%, they voted against it. It wasn’t something that they felt was important. When we offered up other support services, like the capital cost allocation and making it so that you could claim all of that in one year, rather than having to spread it out over multiple years, so that it allowed for more cash flow, they voted against it. They didn’t see the value in small businesses.

We can look at what happened historically. They didn’t see the value in businesses in Ontario because 300,000 manufacturing jobs left the province as a result of policies that the previous Liberal government had done. What we’re seeing now, with other changes that we’ve made, is more than 200,000 employers in Ontario are seeing a benefit because of the changes that we made to WSIB. WSIB premiums rose under the previous Liberal government. That is actually a tax on business.

What we were able to do was we were able to reduce those costs without having any reduction in supports for workers. What a novel concept: reduce the cost of business and still provide more supports for employees—something that they chose not to do in all of their time.

We saw increases in taxes the entire time that the Liberals were in power—15 years of it—and we saw consistent raising of taxes.

This government has not raised a single tax. In fact, we’ve lowered taxes across the board, and we’re seeing the economic advantage to Ontario as a result of that. By reducing the amount of tax, we’re seeing businesses coming back; we’re seeing businesses start to thrive.

We recognize that there is more work to do, that it’s still difficult for a lot of people of Ontario, and that’s why you have to take a holistic approach to it.

And one of the keys that we’ve done with it is by reducing red tape. We’ve reduced the cost of doing

business in Ontario by more than a billion dollars per year simply by government getting out of the way. I have said this repeatedly: The government’s job is to regulate to the point of integrity, but not to the point of interference—we were at far more than interference under the previous Liberal government, and we’ve been able to reduce that.

I don’t think there is anyone in this province who’s going to come forward and say, “By reducing the burden on businesses and individuals, we’ve harmed the people of Ontario.” We’ve made it better. We see more than 800,000 people working today who were not working in 2018, when we were first elected.

These are all a result of the policies that we have put forward, because they have been intelligent policies, progressive policies that have been about building the economy. And we will continue to do that because we recognize that the people of Ontario deserve to have the type of life that they want. They deserve, more than anything else, to make sure that the money that they earn stays in their pocket for them to decide how to spend—not for governments to take it and make a nanny state and tell them how it should be spent. That’s not the approach that we take, and it’s not going to be any advice that we’ll take from the Liberal Party.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** It’s an honour to rise and have an opportunity to speak to the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act put forward by my colleague from Don Valley West—legislation that, if adopted, would cut the small business tax in half. This will help save small businesses up to \$18,000 a year. In fact, all of the small business owners in the heart of Orléans and across the province that I’ve spoken to welcome the opportunity to save \$18,000 a year.

This, of course, is not the only tax our Ontario Liberal team has proposed to cut. We have proposed providing families with a tax credit for sports and extracurricular activities that they put their children in. This is an important tax cut because, obviously, it will allow more kids to play sports. But as kids play more sports, what do they need? They need to buy cleats, and they need to buy water bottles, and they need to spend money in the local economy, providing more opportunities for small business to benefit from their participation in sports.

Moreover, last fall, when this government was complaining and writing letters to the Prime Minister, we proposed that they actually take action to provide tax relief to families. We proposed that the government cut HST from home heating—a tax cut that, had they implemented it, had they taken our advice last year, would have saved Ontario families hundreds of dollars. That’s money that they would have had last year, that’s money that they’ll have next year, and that’s money that they would have had every year going forward. Madam Speaker, I think that my family is a pretty average representation of families across Ontario. I pulled up my energy bills this afternoon, and that tax cut would have saved our relatively average family \$300 last year. It would have saved our family about \$300

next year and every year going forward. That is a tax cut that this government did not support.

Imagine, Madam Speaker, what an Ontario family could have done with an additional \$250 or \$300 in their collective family pocket. Well, I anticipate that they might have used that money and bought some products and services from local small businesses, providing even additional support to the small businesses in our communities that we rely on. But, of course, this Conservative government voted against that particular tax cut.

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Not surprisingly, the government who has ballooned the provincial debt by over \$100 billion in just six years is also voting against tax cuts that would help families and small businesses. When small businesses are doing better, when they pay less tax, when local families have more in their pocket to spend on small businesses, do you know what happens, Madam Speaker? More people in Ontario have a job, because those small businesses hire our friends and our neighbours, and many of those small businesses hire young people in our community.

Given that they're voting against tax cuts and they're ringing up the biggest debt in the history of Ontario, it's not shocking that unemployment in Ontario is actually up under this government. Unemployment in Ontario is up since this government took office. There are, in fact, 100,000 more Ontarians unemployed today than the day the Premier and this government got elected.

In addition to that, youth unemployment is up. Many small businesses hire young people in our community to serve our neighbours and our friends. Youth unemployment has gone from 11.6% to 15%. Not only are more people unemployed, but they're also unemployed for longer. Long-term unemployment is up dramatically. What's long-term unemployment? Long-term unemployment is unemployment for 27 weeks or more. Since this government has been elected, long-term unemployment has almost doubled, going from 44,000 to 80,000 people.

Tax cuts give families more money in their pocket, which allows them to spend more money in the economy, which allows them to go to small businesses and give them patronage. When small businesses also have more money in their pocket because they're paying less tax, they can use all of that additional revenue, all of that tax support, to hire more of our friends and neighbours, putting more money into the economy.

That's why Ontario Liberals are the tax cut—

*Interjections.*

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

I recognize the member from Milton.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 195 from the independent member opposite.

I've run a few small businesses throughout my career, mostly during the time of the previous Liberal government; my wife runs a successful small business now that she started during the time of this government, so my family has direct experience that we can use to contrast.

So, Speaker, let's go over a quick history lesson—and we don't have to go too far back. Let's go six years before 2018. Ontario was a very different place. It went through many, many drastic changes, and none of them good. Let's take a quick recap, shall we? During those 15 years, Liberals chased away many jobs and shuttered businesses; 300,000 manufacturing jobs left our province. They impacted workers but also our hard-working small businesses. I can go on and on, but hydro rates drove away businesses. They hurt small businesses, and they hurt consumers and families.

Under the Liberals, they increased tolls—they put tolls on Highway 412 and Highway 418—they increased fees on aviation fuel, they increased the beer tax, they increased the wine tax, they increased drivers' licence fees, they raised the Employer Health Tax. I cannot even begin to tell you how many businesses I talk to that left because of the regulatory burden and red tape they added. They stood against providing new opportunity to small businesses time and time again; for example, through alcohol modernization that we brought in.

It seems like they haven't learned their lesson, because they want Ontarians to once again go through the same thing they did over 15 years under their rule. Today's Liberal Party is no different, and you can see that they support the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax.

I spoke with a farmer during the campaign on 15 Side Road in my riding; his cost of taking goods to the auction has gone up by \$150 per trip. He can't pass that on to the consumer, Speaker, and he's thinking about taking a retirement because he just can't make enough money because of the taxes that Liberals have imposed, at both levels.

Bonnie now wants to create a new sales tax on the people of this province. Can you imagine that? Through this time of crisis, when we're cutting taxes and trying to get more money in people's pockets, they want to add another tax on small businesses and people. To make matters worse, they want to increase licensing fees on small businesses.

Speaker, Ontarians know better than anyone else that governments should be working for them and not against them. So that was a mission under which the Premier and this team set out to accomplish in 2018 after a painful and destructive 15 years. Our mission to cut taxes and fees increased instead of raising them, and as the Premier often mentions, we're probably the only government in recent history that has never raised a tax. We've only cut taxes on consumers and small businesses. Our mission to rebuild the economy is supporting workers and businesses by making it easier and more affordable to create powerful investments.

Let me tell you, Speaker, our government has been here for small businesses since day one. We've enabled nearly \$3.7 billion in cost savings and support in 2024 for small businesses. That's \$3.7 billion with a B. We've reduced the small business corporate income tax rate to 3.2%. We're leading the way through the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. We've cut red tape for

small businesses, we've cut the gas tax since 2022 and we've continued to fight against the Bonnie Crombie-supported carbon tax.

We've lowered high business education tax rates, providing \$450 million in annual savings for over 200,000 employers. We've supported cuts to WSIB premium rates without reducing benefits. And we've created new jobs for small businesses through alcohol modernization that they've opposed every step of the way.

Under the Liberals, Ontarians will always pay more just to live their day-to-day lives. But under this government, we're continuing to build a better Ontario for future generations. We're balancing the budget. We're continuing to support workers and families by keeping costs down.

Speaker, we're building a better Ontario.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** It's kind of a dream come true, speaking about small business tax—how this government is supporting. It's an honour to speak on this bill and thank you to my colleagues who are talking about it. In fact, the member from the Liberal Party, I love your comment: The Liberal Party is trying to help small business. We look forward to when we have our next budget and there's going to be a lot for small business and every business. I'm sure you're going to vote in favour to honour what you just said.

Madam Speaker, let's talk about small business. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. In fact, 98% of all companies in Ontario are small businesses—they're people like me and you. Two million Ontarians supporting these businesses is not just a priority; it is a core commitment of this government.

I'll tell you about some of the businesses that I visited during the summer, Madam Speaker:

—Nye Manufacturing, Mark Nye: a great business—they manufacture for the agricultural industry and into the construction industry;

—Sonora Foods: manufacturing 480 million tortillas in Mississauga–Malton;

—MasterNet: providing their service throughout the country;

—Downsview Kitchens: 75% exports, bringing more revenue for our province of Ontario;

—OIC Foods: the best samosas you can get;

—HKC Construction;

—Triple A Cheese: Stefano, what a wonderful business you've built;

—Signifi Solutions;

—De Boer Tool;

—Avion, Paul Chana;

—Wire Logix, Santos and Anna.

Madam Speaker, on a regular basis, I make sure I at least visit three to four businesses every week. Why? Because we want to help them, we want to support them, we want to know what they need. Every time I go and visit them, they tell us, "Thank you. Thank you for what you're

doing. Keep going. Thank you for all the help that you've provided so far, whether it is reducing WSIB premiums, whether it is making sure of the elimination of unnecessary regulations and having a resulting \$9 billion in annual cost savings." All of it is through the Digital Main Street or reducing the high Business Education Tax by \$450 million. "Keep doing what you're doing." That's what we hear all the time.

Madam Speaker, do you know what they need? They need opportunities. And that is what this government is doing—since 2018, thanks to all the small businesses, thanks to all the workers in Ontario, thanks to everyone who has worked hard and increased the revenue of this province from \$150 billion to over \$200 billion so that we can invest back into our province.

I'm proud to stand with the small businesses, not only in Mississauga–Malton, but across our province, as we work together to build a prosperous future for all of us.

To conclude, I want to say thank you to all small business owners. You're the backbone of this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** The member has two minutes for a reply.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Toronto Centre for their positive remarks about the bill.

I would also like to help the member from Peterborough–Kawartha—who has 7,500 people without a family doctor, by the way—to better understand the bill. Just to be clear, the 11.5% is the corporate tax rate for income over \$500,000 today. The 8.3% that the member referenced is the reduction in the tax rate that small businesses enjoy, up to a level of \$500,000. So the tax cut was—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** No, you said an 8.3% tax cut.

That actually is wrong, Madam Speaker. They actually cut the small business tax rate by 0.3% in 2020. That's the last time any tax cut was done by this government.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** The current corporate tax rate of 11.5%, as I mentioned, was cut by the Liberal government several years ago.

Speaker, I also want to add some remarks from John Kiru, the executive director of the Toronto association of BIAs, who I also spoke to recently at my event where I hosted small businesses from my riding to thank them for their contribution. He actually provided support for this bill, as well—so, resounding support from across the Toronto business community for this bill.

The CFIB has talked a little bit about the red tape reduction that this government takes credit for—and I will say I'm happy to take those cuts. The problem is that they actually have no evidence to back up the number that they keep talking about. I've asked them for it; it doesn't exist. The CFIB, actually, has said that small businesses bear a disproportionately high burden of the red tape cost, paying up to five times more per employee than larger businesses.

So while red tape reduction is welcome, there is absolutely significantly more to do.

A tax cut would actually be a tangible, measurable way to put \$17,900 back in the pockets of small businesses.

I urge the government to support this motion.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you for the enthusiasm.

Thank you to the member.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Bowman has moved second reading of Bill 195, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to increase Ontario small business deductions.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Point of order? I recognize the member from Toronto Centre.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I am not feeling 100%. I'm fighting a cold—tail end. Don't worry; I'm not too contagious.

Speaker, during my remarks, I actually flipped the words around and said that the word "culture" disappeared from the ministerial title. It's actually "heritage"—the word "heritage" has disappeared from the ministerial title.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Noted.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 18, 2024, at 10:15.

*The House adjourned at 1404.*









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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	