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of Ontario



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Lundi
25 novembre 2024

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 November 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 novembre 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's great to rise this morning to talk about some of the great work that our government is doing.

Under Premier Ford's leadership, with the support of the great Minister of Transportation, our government is committed to addressing congestion and improving travel times across Ontario through Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act. This legislation focuses on managing the impact of bike lanes in high-traffic areas to enhance efficiency on our roadways.

In Toronto, bike lanes on major streets like Bloor Street, Yonge Street and University Avenue have contributed to significant delays. While cycling infrastructure remains vital, our primary responsibility is to ensure the efficient traffic flow in our busiest corridors. With gridlock costing the Ontario economy \$11 billion each year, it's time to take meaningful steps to address congestion and improve commute times for all Ontarians.

Speaker, we understand the importance of safe cycling infrastructure and are committed to redirecting bike lanes to less congested routes. This approach ensures all road users can travel safely and efficiently. This is part of our broader plan to reduce congestion, which also includes Highway 413, a critical project that will ease traffic and reduce commute times for those in Peel region.

Speaker, with Bill 212, we're building a stronger, more efficient Ontario—a province where people spend less time in traffic and more time with their families, at work or in their communities.

We're getting it done. We're reducing gridlock and we're improving drive times across the province of Ontario.

PUBLIC PROTEST

Mr. Joel Harden: Liberty, to cite a famous expression, is the soul's right to breathe. But if that soul can't take a deep breath, our laws are too restrictive. Sadly, Speaker, I fear that's what's happening right now in my beloved city of Ottawa.

For the last 13 months, Palestinian human rights events in our downtown have been peaceful without an incident. They involve families, including seniors and children.

But six people have been arrested in the last week—some, unfortunately, violently arrested. The portable sound system folks have used was just confiscated. The release conditions of those who've been arrested, in my opinion, are an affront to charter rights. They are ordered to abstain from social media activity on issues of the Middle East and to avoid human rights assemblies. Speaker, I believe this is wrong, and I will be raising this with my colleagues in government, the Solicitor General and the Attorney General.

1020

Politicians do not direct the police—I want to be clear—but we are responsible for shaping policy on public safety and ensuring our civil liberties are protected. The rules for protest in any community in Ontario cannot simply change overnight. We have to set realistic expectations for our safety and our civil liberties. I am filing a formal complaint with the civilian members of our local Ottawa Police Service Board, and I invite members of Ottawa who share my concerns to do the same.

MIRACLE ON MAIN STREET

MPP Zee Hamid: I rise today to highlight the incredible work done by an amazing foundation in my riding of Milton. The Tiger Jeet Singh Foundation is an incredible Milton-based charity started by wrestling legends, humanitarians and philanthropists Tiger Jeet Singh and his son Tiger Ali Singh. Their foundation, in partnership with Halton regional police and the Downtown Milton BIA, is excitedly preparing for their 16th annual Miracle on Main Street festival on December 7.

Miracle on Main Street is an engaging, fun-filled and inclusive holiday festival with amusement rides, vendors, stage performances, concerts, pony rides and more. But even more heartwarming is that our community gathers in the spirit of generosity and kindness. Last year, the Miracle on Main Street drive raised over \$1.1 million in combined donations and sponsorships. That meant that thousands of children in Ontario received Christmas gifts who otherwise might have gone without.

As a resident of Milton, it is my honour and privilege to have attended the Miracle on Main event for many years. Each year, I have been deeply moved by the generosity, compassion and sense of community. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Tiger Jeet Singh Foundation, all of the sponsors, donors, business partners, volunteers and attendees.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Jessica Bell: Today is the international day to end violence against women. Violence against women is a worldwide issue and it affects us here in Ontario where, on average, a woman or a child loses their lives every six days because of men's violence.

I want to recognize the organization, Wrapped in Courage, who is here today in the Legislature. I want to recognize the countless women who have survived abuse and violence. I want to recognize the survivors and advocates who are demanding action.

Last April, we made history. We convinced the Ontario government to support a bill declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic. But since then, progress has stalled. On the first day of the fall session this year, a simple motion to pass the bill was struck down. Every day of inaction puts lives at risk. Nearly 100 municipalities have declared intimate partner violence an epidemic, and provinces like Nova Scotia and BC are leading the charge. Ontario needs to catch up.

This November 25, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we are calling on the Conservative government to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. Lives are depending upon it.

I invite you to a vigil tonight, in support of our cause and this cause. It will be hosted at 6 p.m. at Queen's Park.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I always enjoy attending the royal winter fair and this year was no different. Held annually in Toronto, it's when the country comes to the city for just a few days of celebration of everything agriculture. In fact, it's become the largest indoor agriculture and equestrian event in the world, and it's a place where Canadians can exhibit our world-class agriculture products and livestock.

It also recognizes and celebrates those Canadians who have raised the bar in the agriculture and agri-food sector and demonstrated outstanding leadership in their local communities. One of the most prestigious honours at the fair is the Woman of Excellence in Agriculture Award, and I'm proud to say that this year's winner is Oxford's own Sue Hilborn.

Sue has been involved in agriculture for over 50 years, attended the Royal Agricultural College and recently completed her 33rd season at RedBarn berries and veggies in Woodstock with her husband Don. She is a long-time vendor at our local farmers' markets, as well as a big supporter of shopping and buying local. It's always great to see her and Don when I visit the Woodstock Farmers' Market; their fruits and veggies are some of the best around. She's also involved in many local agricultural and charitable organizations, such as 4-H and VON Sakura House, our residential hospice.

Congratulations, Sue, on being this year's winner. Thank you for your dedication to agriculture and making Oxford a better place.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Every week, my constituents come to my offices and ask when the Northern Health Travel Grant will finally be updated. Last April, the government promised to bring coverage up to date with the cost associated with travelling for health care, but we're still waiting for these changes to take effect. These updates are long overdue and people in my community are relying on them.

There are families in my riding who have postponed medical appointments because they cannot afford the travel. One family had to travel to Ottawa four times this year, spending thousands of dollars of their own money because the travel grant doesn't even come close to covering their costs. I wish I could tell these families that the update is in force and that they can book their flights to take their kids to surgery in Ottawa or plan to drive their parents to an appointment in Timmins, but the truth is the government is not following through on their promises.

Speaker, how many more will be forced to dip into their savings or go into debt just to access health care? It is unacceptable for someone in this province to pay to access health care that every Ontarian is entitled to. We deserve a health care system that works for us, not one that makes us pay the price for living up north. My constituents need more than empty promises; they need action, and they need it now.

BUSINESSES IN ESSEX

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, today I want to tell you about a great place called McGregor, Ontario. McGregor is the home of Wolfhead Distillery, where you can taste and purchase fine distilled products such as premium whisky, apple caramel whisky, coffee whisky liqueur and banana caramel vodka.

McGregor is also the home of the region's newest grain elevator, established by South Essex Grain. This state-of-the-art grain elevator will be able to process 30,000 bushels of wheat or other grains per hour and contributes to Ontario's fantastic agricultural output.

Also in McGregor is Walker Aggregates, which is expanding its quarry operations to continue supplying our builders with important aggregate to build Ontario's highway and other key infrastructure.

Finally, in McGregor, you can buy a vast variety of Ontario-grown and Ontario-made products, including meat, dairy, baked goods, fresh produce and more at the Farm House Market. It's local food grown for locals at the Farm House Market.

McGregor is a vibrant town making important contributions to Ontario's economy and it is located in the beautiful county of Essex.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

Mr. Ted Hsu: Saturday, I spoke to a Queen's University student who has started paying income tax and feels a

new perspective on tax cuts—or paying billions to build Highway 413 that will be sheltered from an environmental assessment by Ontario's current government.

How do you get political parties to listen? Make a promise to vote. Students, you're getting an Ontario stuck with unaffordable housing while other provinces are building faster. You're hit with inflation, but you'll pay a lot more into the Canada Pension Plan than you'll get out. There are less of you to support retirees. Your government has to help you be more productive to make up the difference. Make a promise to vote.

Students, your education was damaged by the pandemic. There's a shortage of child care and educational assistants, and you feel the cuts from the underfunding of universities and colleges by the current government. Promise to vote.

People aren't working together because they're angry. Leaders have given us social licence to be uncivil, and, to top it off, you've been handed a long-term threat to civilization: an earth that's heating up and the enormous cost in damages and breakdowns that come with climate change.

Ontario can do things to help fix all of these. Make all political parties adjust when you promise to vote.

1030

CAMBRIDGE SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'm honoured to stand before you today to share a few highlights from the Cambridge Santa Claus Parade. The Christmas parade is always a reminder of the incredible sense of community in our region. This year was no exception. It was heartwarming to see the citizens of Cambridge come together to celebrate the spirit of the holiday season.

The smiles on the children's faces and the energy that lit up the streets showed just how important these events are in bringing our community together. In fact, I only saw one unhappy face. He was dressed in all green and was calling himself the Grinch.

The Cambridge Santa Claus parade had an astonishing turnout. Thousands gathered along the streets, making it one of the largest crowds I've ever seen for a Santa Claus parade.

Many thanks to all the volunteers and people that participated. Their energy was contagious, and I'm looking forward to doing it all over again in the Ayr Santa Claus Parade.

Reflecting on these events, I'm reminded of the incredible community we have in my riding. These festive parades are another example of the support that the people of Cambridge provide each year at this time of season.

JIM AITCHESON

Mr. Matthew Rae: Today, it is with great sadness, I rise to mark the passing of the mayor of Perth South, Jim Aitcheson. Jim dedicated much of his life to serving the

community he loved, leaving a lasting impact on Perth South and Perth county.

For over 18 years, Jim served on Perth South council, serving as councillor, deputy mayor and, most recently, mayor. He also served for 13 years on Perth county council, serving as warden for three terms. Jim led the county through the difficult COVID-19 pandemic.

Jim also served on the board of Quadro Communications, playing a pivotal role in bringing fibre optic Internet to Perth South.

For many years, Jim was a steadfast public servant who worked to ensure the voices of rural Ontarians and our agricultural sector were heard.

Beyond the political life, Jim was involved with the Optimist Club of Downie since 1981 and received the Ontario Volunteer Service Award in 2010 for his work.

Thank you to his wife, Lori, and children, Tracey, Kelly and Greg, for sharing Jim with us for so many years.

It was always great to chat politics and farming with Jim. He will be missed by many across Perth county and Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome executive director Marlene Ham and all her colleagues from OAITH to the Legislature as we mark the first day of the 16 Days of Activism and their Wrapped in Courage campaign to end gender-based violence. I look forward to meeting with them. Thank you. Thank you all for everything you do in our province. Welcome to the Legislature.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome all the women and allies who are here today for the Wrapped in Courage campaign on the international day to end gender-based violence. From Hamilton, we have Erin Griver and Sharan Kaur from Inasmuch House, Mission Services of Hamilton; Tessa Mcfadzean from Good Shepherd; and Nawal Vajeed from Nisa Foundation. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: Welcome Cyndi McLeod, Diana Mockute and Anish Dwivedi from Global University Systems, a network of 40 higher-education institutions brought together by their shared passion for accessible, industry-relevant qualifications and graduate success.

They have a reception in room 228, during lunch. I encourage everybody to join.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a number of introductions today, so please bear with me. I would like to begin with Leigh Sweeney, who is the executive director of Bernadette McCann House in Pembroke, a facility providing safety and support for those experiencing abuse and intimate partner violence. She is here today to join in the Wrapped in Courage campaign. Thank you for your service and your dedication over so many years, Leigh.

I would also like to introduce the second most important rock in my life next to my wife, Vicky: my executive assistant from my constituency office, who has never been

here before in over 20 years, Laura Lapinskie, for the first time at Queen's Park.

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She deserves a medal more than that standing ovation, I can assure you.

Also for the first time—I don't know when I will get another chance; I know I'm taking time—but I have here today our son Lucas Yakabuski; his wife, Meredith Stokes; and their absolutely gorgeous, adorable and beautiful—our granddaughter—Ruby Alice Yakabuski for the first time at Queen's Park.

I would be remiss if I didn't reach out and wish my big brother Frank Yakabuski a happy 72nd birthday today.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to issue a warm welcome for David Lepofsky, chair of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance; Ruth Ann Onley; Roberto Lattanzio, executive director of the ARCH Disability Law Centre; Bruce McIntosh, founding president of Ontario Autism Coalition; Nora Green, retired special education teacher; and Thea Kurdi, built environment accessibility design specialist, who are all here for the AODA open public hearings taking place in room 351 this afternoon from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome all OAITH members who are here today for kicking off their Wrapped in Courage campaign, with a special shout-out to Sly Castaldi, executive of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: I would like to welcome, from Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services, Melanie McFadden and Natasha Dobler. Thank you for your service to our community.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: On behalf of MPP Taylor for Hamilton Mountain, and on this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in the middle of an intimate partner epidemic, I want to welcome to the House members from the YWCA: Daniela Giulietti and Amy Deschamps. Welcome to your House.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: It's an honour to rise here today and welcome the members of OAITH who are here at Queen's Park for Wrapped in Courage. And I want to give a special shout-out to the Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region and all the stakeholders that are doing the fight every day to push back against gender-based violence. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Rob Flack: It's a great pleasure to introduce, from Second Harvest, Lori Nikkel and Winston Rosser. Throughout Ontario, they rescued and redistributed 40 million pounds of food worth \$155 million to non-profits.

I would also like to welcome to Queen's Park the members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance. I think everyone knows the reception tonight from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. is one of the best of the year. I'm sure it will be well attended. Welcome to Queen's Park all.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Jennifer Gauthier, executive director, from Birchway Niagara, and Cyndi McLeod, CEO and president of the University of Niagara Falls Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

MPP Andrea Hazell: It is my honour, also, to welcome to the House this morning members from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Thank you for all the good work that you do. Welcome to your House.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's my honour to introduce David Lepofsky, my constituent, here for the AODA meeting and ARCH. Welcome to the Legislature.

MPP Jill Andrew: I, too, would like to welcome members from OAITH. I would like to welcome Marlene, Abby, Amber and Melissa.

I'd also like to welcome Kendall Trembath, from Saakaate House; Sly Castaldi, from Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis; Tessa Mcfadzean, from Good Shepherd Hamilton; Carla, from Women's Habitat of Etobicoke; Erin, from Chrysalis House; Christy Savage, from Nelson House; Melanie, from Pavilion family resource centre; and Abi, the president of Redwood.

I want to give a special thank you to Rebecca, from Embrave Agency to End Violence, located in Peel region, who spoke profoundly about the lack of shelter space in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members not to make political commentary when they're introducing their guests.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to the Ontario Legislature, and I look forward to meeting with them early this afternoon.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is absolutely my pleasure to introduce Carla Neto, executive director; Lina Almanzan, director of philanthropy; and Alicia Whyte, who is manager of programs and client services from our amazing Women's Habitat in Etobicoke. Thank you, ladies, for what you do every day. I love you.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very proud to rise today and lend my voice to the welcomes, as well as a very special acknowledgement of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

We have in the House, obviously, many members of OAITH. We want to say thank you for all the work that you do and to welcome you into the House.

This morning, I was joined by a number of legal clinics—13 of them in total. They work under the coalition banner of Your Way Forward and I want to recognize their good work across Ontario. They are: law assistance of Windsor, Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic, Community Legal Assistance Sarnia, Durham Community Legal Clinic, Northumberland Community Legal Centre, Peterborough Community Legal Centre, Community Advocacy and Legal Centre, the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Justice for Children and Youth, the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto, Scarborough Community Legal Services, the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic and the South Asian legal clinic.

Now, Speaker, I will persevere to name the lawyers that are in this House today: Douglas Kwan, Genrys Goodchild, Rosalea Thompson, Laura Murphy, Karen Andrews, Michelle Choe, Scott Baird, Gurmat Randhawa, Karine Chan, Christy Tang, Kerr Harvey, Ameerah McClean, Alicia Lam, Alisha Riley, Miriam Roger, Mary Birdsell, Samira Ahmed, Imbisat Chaudhry, Zara Mercer, Tamar Witelson, Mallik Fernando, Eileen Liu, Patrick Gillespie, Amy Slotek, Arnaz Zamani, Aissa Nauthoo, as well as Viviane Kone. Thank you very much and welcome to your House.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I wish to welcome to Queen's Park today members of the Bowmanville Rotary Club, founded 100 years ago in 1924. Among them today here are Bernard Sanchez, Rob MacIver, John Burns, Pauline Calvert, Joe Solway, Gord Wallace, Rebecca Grieve, Steve Burnett and Rachel Boyd.

Mr. Joel Harden: Joining all the welcome to the folks from OAITH and your amazing work—nice to see so much purple in the House today.

I also want to thank folks from the disability rights community for being here. I particularly enjoyed meeting, earlier today, with Rahima Mulla and your daughter Farrah. Rahima, thank you for everything you do to make our city more accessible and safe. We appreciate you.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today I would like to welcome members from Armagh House and Embrave, two transitional homes in Mississauga–Lakeshore. Thank you for being here today.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the official opposition, I would also like to welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance and their latest addition, Mr. Steve Peters.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I'd just like to take a moment to thank all of our constituency staff. I have mine joining us here today: Saroj Gandhi, Ranjit Bassi, Kam Sandhu, Aftab Sehgal and Samooh Hourieh. Welcome to your Queen's Park.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors. We had a wonderful discussion this morning about efficiency, cost certainty and something this government would do well to learn about, which is how to deliver projects on time and on budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members not to make political comments while they're introducing their guests.

MPP Zee Hamid: I'd like to welcome page Macarius Kamel, from my riding of Milton, and also congratulate him on being the page captain today. He is joined by his proud parents, Sameh Kamel and Silvana Kamel, as well as his aunt Youanna Salama and his wonderful teacher Lynn Nolan-Fox. Welcome to the House.

MPP Jill Andrew: I would also like to say welcome to David Lepofsky from AODA Alliance and all the disability advocates who are here fighting for a society that fits everyone. Thank you very much.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House today representatives from Louisiana Pacific

Building Solutions: Bob Hopkins, their vice-president and treasurer, here from Nashville, Tennessee; Kevin Betcher, director of signing operations from Swan Valley, Manitoba; and Tim Yanni, manager of regional forest resource departments, here from beautiful Sault Ste. Marie. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to our meeting later today.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to welcome to the House all of the disability advocates, and I want to give a special welcome to Rahima Mulla and to Nora Green, who have been working on disability advocacy for a number of years. Thank you for all of your service.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to introduce, in the west gallery today, Cyndi McLeod, the CEO of Global University Systems, from Niagara. Accompanying her is Anish Dwivedi, Diana Mockute, Ehsan Safdari and Boris Podlubniy. Welcome to Queen's Park. I think they have a reception today in 228 at noon.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: From the Association of Ontario Midwives, I would like to introduce Diane Simon, a Mi'kmaw midwife and the data and health policy analyst for the Indigenous Midwifery team; and Donika Stonefish, policy analyst for the Indigenous Midwifery team, from Walpole Island First Nation. Meegwetch for joining us today.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I wanted to welcome the parents of page Anuva today: her mom, Surbhi, who is here; her father, Manu; and her brother, Arnav. Welcome to the House.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: I was beginning to pull a hamstring getting up and down so much. I'd like to welcome the leadership team from my constituency office in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. They're up behind me. They always have my six, as they do every day. They do fabulous work: Julian, Tony, Jane, John, Allyson and our new co-op student, Francis. Welcome.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'd like to welcome the mayor of Cambridge, Jan Liggett, who will be here shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, would like to welcome a very special guest to the Legislature: the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments, and Speaker in the 39th Parliament, Steve Peters. Welcome back. It's always good to see you.

WEARING OF SCARVES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler has a point of order.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Speaker, if you seek it, you will fund unanimous consent to allow members to wear purple scarves in recognition of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses Wrapped in Courage campaign to end violence against women.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Dixon is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear purple scarves in recognition of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses'

Wrapped in Courage campaign to end violence against women. Agreed? Agreed.

I understand the Leader of the Opposition has a point of order she wishes to raise.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. Good morning, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent for the House to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Stiles is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario. Agreed? I heard a no.

VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand there's a second request.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence in memory of the lives lost to intimate partner violence in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Stiles is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in memory of the lives lost to intimate partner in violence in Ontario. Agreed? Agreed.

I'll ask members to please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Intimate partner violence is growing exponentially in the province of Ontario. Just this year, there were at least 42 reported cases of intimate partner and gender-based violence—specifically deaths—right here in Ontario. A teenage girl, a whole family in Harrow, a 62-year-old woman in London—these are not one-offs; this is an epidemic.

Ninety-five municipalities all across this province and six other provinces have declared intimate partner violence an epidemic. Why won't the Premier declare intimate partner violence an epidemic?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable colleague for their question.

Violence against women and girls is a horrific crime. Our government has zero tolerance for it, which is why we have been very clear—which is why we supported the bill that was put forward by the opposition, so that we can

continue to review, hear from experts, some of our partners who are here right now, who are doing wonderful work to support women and girls and families across the province. We have made a commitment to make sure they have the supports and resources to continue to provide those supports to families. We are investing \$1.4 billion annually to make sure that those supports and services are available to families across the province. We partnered with the federal government on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

We will work with any partner, any level of government to stop violence against women in our province, once and for all.

Interjections.

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, 34 women were killed just this year between January and June. That's an average of five women killed every month.

What survivors and advocates want is to hear from this Premier a declaration that this is an epidemic, because that would mean more resources. That would mean the government is treating this crisis with the urgency that it deserves.

So I want to ask this Premier right now to stand here and tell me: How many more people have to die before this government declares intimate partner violence an epidemic?

Interjections.

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

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Intimate partner violence is horrific—it is. We do all know that it is horrific and every time a woman's life is taken short because of an abuser, we all feel it. That's why I'm going to say this number: 1-866-863-0511—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: You see, Mr. Speaker, what the members of the NDP don't understand is that isolation—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: —is a strategy that abusive people use to keep women in abusive relationships. As the members opposite keep making really damaging and scary statements that the government is doing nothing, they are further contributing to the isolation that many women are staying in, and we have to stop that.

We are investing billions of dollars to keep women safe. We need women to know that they do not need to suffer in silence. There is a number they can call, the Assaulted Women's Helpline, to get support from the many organizations that are there working hard: 1-866-863-0511.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, no, sorry; here's the thing. Try this number out for size: 800 women. Eight hundred women went to Ottawa's Interval House and had to be turned away because they did not have space. So you can call the 1-866 number, and I hope women do, but I want to tell you something—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to tell you something: Right now, more women than ever before are stuck at home unable to leave their abusers because there is no room for them in the shelters.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: More women are forced to stay living with their abusers because rent is skyrocketing. They cannot leave because of the cost of living. We are living in a crisis; it is an epidemic.

Will the Premier do the right thing, once and for all? No more studies, no more committees—declare an epidemic and do the right thing today.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

This is a very sensitive and important issue that the House is discussing at the moment. I would ask members to listen to each other's response or question, as the case may be.

Start the clock. To reply: the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, once again, I want to reiterate: No woman or girl in this province should ever be subjected to violence. We have passed legislation and have made investments and made it very clear: We will work with any level of government, any partner that will help us to prevent and end violence against women in our province.

That's why Minister Williams and I joined the federal government and we signed on to the national action plan to end violence against women in the province. That partnership came with an additional \$162 million to help our wonderful partners who are doing great work in every community in this province to prevent violence from happening in the first place, to support survivors. Mr. Speaker, that support is augmenting the \$1.4 billion that we're investing in the supports and services in the province.

No woman or girl in this province should be left behind. We will work with any level of government, including my colleagues in opposition. This is not a political issue, Mr. Speaker. We all need to—

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

The next question.

1100

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, it seems like in this province the only people who get what they're looking for are people who pony up the cash at these guys' fundraisers.

Tonight is the night that the Premier and the Minister of Transportation are going to hold court at a \$1,000-a-ticket closed door fundraising event. That's right.

Last week, we learned that the trucking association told their members they were going to present a tally of tickets sold to the minister in the hopes that he would actually listen to their concerns. No organization should feel like they need to make a political donation to be heard by any government.

Will the Premier cancel this sketchy fundraiser, give the truckers their money back, and take a meeting?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: The reason the Leader of the Opposition knows when the fundraiser is and what is being charged and will know who has donated is because we have a very open system. There are fair rules, with transparency and accountability throughout the system. And of course every donation is recorded and publicly available so voters can scrutinize the money.

Mr. Speaker, last week I congratulated the member opposite for the \$1.1 million that she raised in the summer. It's really incredible.

So it's an interesting request from the member of the opposition to cancel fundraisers. I wonder if her colleague up in Sudbury, Jamie West, is going to cancel his. Oh, no, that was November 2 that one happened. There are others coming, but I'll answer more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the members to refer to each other by their riding name or their ministerial title as applicable.

Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, the Attorney General knows perfectly well they're ministers of the crown, right? What we've got here is a quid pro quo kind of situation, which—they know perfectly well what they are doing.

The Ontario Trucking Association has a very reasonable and legitimate ask: They just want better oversight to make roads safer, something that members of this House, by the way, have been very clear in advocating for.

Why is it so hard to get this government to listen without some kind of quid pro quo? You should not need to donate to a political party to get good things done in this province. That's the truth.

Will the Premier and the minister return the donation from the truckers' association and just take a meeting?

Hon. Doug Downey: The number of meetings that I took and that my colleagues took while we were in recess—hundreds each, Mr. Speaker; of course with no fee for that because that's our job.

The member opposite waxes eloquent—well, eloquent, sort of—but here's what I've learned in time, Mr. Speaker,

as sort of a life lesson: I learned a long time ago that people often accuse you of doing things that they would otherwise do themselves, and so people that gossip to you generally will gossip about you. I think what the NDP are afraid of is the kind of activity they would get up to if they were ever on this side of the House.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, I guess they're not going to cancel it, but there's no surprise there. We had the mental health mixer with the minister responsible for mental health and the health minister. We had a private colleges soiree organized by the former minister of colleges herself. We had the greenbelt fiasco. Where does it end?

It has never been more clear, though, what is going on here, because you've got the Conservatives' chief fundraiser, their bag man, Tony Miele, giving the ministers quotas. There's another fundraiser tonight with the Solicitor General—1,500 bucks a pop—and a breakfast with the health minister coming up for \$1,000. Man, that's got to be some crazy-delicious muffin. Who can afford that? Private health care companies, that's who can afford that.

So I want to ask the Premier again: How many more government policy decisions are you going to sell off to the highest bidder?

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm loath to advertise it, but the leader of the Liberal Party is having a \$3,300 fundraiser in December. I'm not hearing the prop-up NDP saying anything about that. Mr. Speaker, you know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Doug Downey: I can't even hear myself, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I can hear you. I'd ask you to continue.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Look, there are rules, there's accountability, there's transparency. We all have the same rules to abide by. Whether you're in the Legislature or you want to be in the Legislature, people have the ability to participate. There is complete transparency and accountability, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of system we should have. That is the kind of system we do have.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. The government wants to block lawsuits arising from people being injured and killed because of the removal of the Bloor, Yonge and University Avenue bike lanes. It shows the Conservatives know full well that incidents of injury and death are going to go up. It's like this government is willing to risk the lives of Ontarians, but they're not willing to risk being sued over it.

My question is to the Premier. What are you going to say to the families who needlessly lose a loved one on these roads?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much for that question. Every single time in this House we've put forward measures to make our roads safer—we've brought forward legislation that brings in the toughest penalties against anyone that is contravening our Highway Traffic Act as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: Let's make it safer. That is why we are saying it doesn't make sense to rip up some of our busiest roads in the entire city to accommodate a very few percentage of people that use their bikes. It is better for them to use secondary roads, which is also safer for them as well.

We've got to get this city moving. Toronto ranks as one of the worst in all of North America, the third-worst in the world. It's about making sure we get this city moving again. It's about making sure that everyone is safe on the roads. And Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to get it done.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question: the member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The fight that this Premier and Minister of Transportation have picked against bike lanes seems to be vendetta-driven rather than data-driven. The government has pretended this was about improving congestion, but as reported by the Trillium: "A draft of a briefing document prepared for the Ontario cabinet" shared that "prohibiting bike lanes doesn't solve traffic congestion and ... often has the opposite effect."

Not one of the people allowed to come to committee spoke in favour of this initiative, not one. Instead, they came with terrible stories of death on our roads.

Why is the Premier hell-bent on ripping up well-planned municipal infrastructure when he knows it will worsen congestion, cost untold millions and, worst of all, cost the lives of vulnerable road users?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear here: Ripping up the busiest roads in Toronto—not only in Toronto; in Ontario, in North America. Ripping up lanes, 50% of the lanes, and accommodating a very small percentage of people makes absolutely no sense at all. That's why Toronto ranks as the worst in North America for gridlock, according to the TomTom study—the third-worst in North America. The policies that the city has been putting in place just do not work. That's why we're stepping in, and that's why we're going to get this city moving again.

For 15 years, the previous Liberal government did absolutely nothing. They didn't build any public transit. The NDP opposed every single one of our public transit projects. They opposed highways—the 413, the Bradford Bypass—the Ontario Line, which will move 400,000 people every single day. Both the Liberals and NDP opposed that. They don't want anything done in this city or in this province. But we're going to get shovels in the ground, and we're going to get it done.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Rick Byers: My question is for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Ontario is a great place to live, work and raise a family. But for far too long, under the previous Liberal government, red tape made life harder for all Ontarians. Small businesses struggled with outdated rules and regulations. Families trying to start new projects or access services faced delays and frustrations because of overly complicated processes and paperwork.

The impact of unnecessary red tape took time and money away from the things that mattered most, like creating jobs, lowering costs and growing Ontario's economy. Governments should make life easier, not harder for the people and businesses in our province.

1110

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House how our government is cutting red tape and helping our economy?

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for that question.

Our government is committed to addressing the challenges faced by people, businesses and families across this province. The Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, our government's 14th red tape package, is an important step towards addressing these challenges, making everyday life in Ontario easier and more affordable. That's because this bill, if passed, will provide \$20 million in annual compliance cost savings, including saving people and businesses 56,000 hours. That's more time and money back into the pockets of Ontarians.

These savings are in addition to the work our government has done saving people and businesses over \$1 billion annually and freeing up 1.5 million hours of unnecessary red tape since 2018. We will continue to get it done in this PC government.

Mr. Rick Byers: It's encouraging to hear the minister talk about the important work our government is doing to make life easier and more affordable for businesses and individuals across Ontario.

We know that affordability challenges didn't just appear overnight. They were the result of years of inaction and patchwork failures by the previous Liberal government. For 15 years, they drove up costs and added burdensome regulations, making Ontario the red tape capital of Canada.

Our government must continue to demonstrate leadership and strengthen Ontario's standing in the global economy, while creating the conditions for people and businesses to thrive now and into the future.

Speaker, could the minister please explain what our government is doing to fix the disastrous and costly legacy left by the previous Liberal government?

Hon. Mike Harris: I'll tell you, under the leadership of the Ontario Liberals, it became known—like you said—as the red tape capital of Canada, costing businesses \$33,000 annually. That's more than any other province in Canada.

Now, Speaker, the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax supported by the Liberals and their NDP allies is adding more to the cost of living to families across this province.

While they focused on making life harder, our government is getting it done. We froze fees for driver's licence

knowledge tests. The Liberals—what did they do? They piled on costs.

We are cutting red tape for housing and infrastructure development. The Liberals created endless delays and chased over 300,000 good-paying jobs out of this province.

We are saving the people and businesses of this province over \$1 billion in annual compliance cost savings. The former Liberal and NDP coalition's total regulatory compliance costs were \$15 million a year in 2017.

We will not go back. We are only moving—

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

The next question.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the Premier.

Twenty years ago, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act passed, with the goal to make the province accessible to Ontarians with disabilities by 2025.

Unfortunately, the rate of progress has been glacial. The 2019 report by former Lieutenant Governor David Onley described the state of inaccessibility of the province as “soul-crushing.” In 2023, the latest independent reviewer of the AODA, Rich Donovan, told this government it would not meet the legislated deadline to achieve full accessibility by 2025 and that Ontario has an accessibility crisis.

With the deadline only a month away, does the government agree that Ontario has an accessibility crisis?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Mr. Speaker, Ontario is meeting, achieving and exceeding the AODA standards each and every day. All 444 municipalities in Ontario have accessibility plans to meet the goals of the AODA in their own communities.

This year, school boards received \$1.4 billion for AODA improvements. We have built the standards of the AODA into the Ontario building code. All new GO Transit stations, train platforms and bus stations adhere to the AODA. We have delivered over 2,200 accessible buses to municipalities.

The province is making historic investments to make Ontario more accessible today and for the future. We are getting it done, Mr. Speaker.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Students with disabilities face crushing disability barriers in school and university. Patients with disabilities face multiple barriers in our health care system. In 2022, your government received final reports and recommendations from the K-12 Education, Post-Secondary Education and Health Care Standards Development Committees, but not one of these reports has been implemented.

Premier, can you tell us today when your government will enact the promised health care and accessibilities

standards recommended by experts almost three years ago?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the question again. Our government is working really hard for accessibility and that is why 88% of Ontarians believe Ontario is now accessible and 86% rate public space positively for accessibility. This is because we are the government that built AODA standards into the building code. We are the government that created the Skills Development Fund so people with disabilities can find meaningful jobs and training. We are the government that is seeking 50 new hospitals, 60 new schools—projects all exceeding accessibility standards. We are the government that has been a champion for accessibility.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Electrification. For years, Ontarians have been burdened with expensive energy bills. They felt the impact of high energy costs in their wallets. Families struggled to get by, with many choosing between heating and eating. Seniors on fixed incomes had to cut back. Small businesses fought hard to stay open because of expensive energy bills. This is the Liberal legacy of a broken energy system. Their bad policies left us with high costs and limited options for far too long. Ontarians want affordable, clean and reliable energy, and they want investments in renewable sources to cut costs, protect the environment and grow the economy.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is helping to make energy more affordable for everyone?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Markham–Unionville for being a champion in this House against the Liberal carbon tax and assure him that the Affordable Energy Act helps remediate the issues he has cited. Families a decade ago paid the highest energy bills on the continent because of an ideological, failed experiment under the Liberals that they want to bring back to the people of Ontario today under their leader—a plan that will send many families back as they pay higher bills and a carbon tax in this province that they cannot afford.

That's why, in the Affordable Energy Act, we commit to do what the Liberals didn't, which is signed procurements based on competition. They signed 33,000 contracts above market, paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour when they could have used nuclear power at nine to 10 cents a kilowatt-hour—a total abdication of leadership and responsibility, and families today pay the price.

The legislation before this House ensures that affordability and competition in our procurements are the way forward. It also commits to conservation expansion that all families in all regions can save money, reducing the bills for the people in this province.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Energy is the backbone of our economy and our way of life. For decades, Ontarians have

relied on a system that was supposed to provide affordable, reliable power, but under the Liberals, we saw skyrocketing costs and policies that hurt families and businesses.

1120

Today, the world is moving forward. Countries are investing in new technology and looking for smarter ways to meet growing energy needs. Ontario has a unique advantage: We have resources, talent and innovation right here at home. With the right leadership, we can use those strengths to make energy more affordable and meet future demands. Ontarians deserve to know that our government is planning for the future.

Speaker, can the minister please share how our government is using Ontario's nuclear advantage to ensure affordable, reliable energy for years to come?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Ontario's clean energy advantage is driven by our nuclear fleet. I'm proud that our government is expanding nuclear energy in this province, because we need another four and a half cities of Toronto being added to the grid by 2050. We must act with urgency and really look to the future with a generational plan to build affordable energy for our kids and our grandkids.

Yes, we are refurbishing Pickering and Darlington. We are extending the life of those assets for another 30 years. We are expanding Bruce Power: another 5,000 megawatts of clean non-emitting power, enough power for five million homes. But that will not be enough. We need to lean in with more net new nuclear energy expansion and other forms of energy expansion so that we secure affordable, reliable energy for the next generation.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

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

On November 12, CBC reported that in 2022-23, 56% of criminal cases were withdrawn, stayed or dismissed simply because our courtrooms are understaffed and underfunded by this Conservative government. In 2022 alone, 1,326 cases of sexual assault were disposed of before their trial date.

This year I introduced Lydia's Law, which would increase transparency in the handling of sexual assault cases so we can ensure funding is going to the right places in the justice system. On May 14, the day before Lydia's Law was due to be debated in this Legislature here at Queen's Park, the government silenced debate by sending this bill straight to committee, silencing survivors in Ontario. Lydia's Law currently sits at committee, where it languishes—yet another failure of this government.

To the Premier: When will this government return Lydia's Law to the House for debate to ensure that survivors of sexual assault get their day in court, at the very least?

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: It's the power of language. She says, "Sent to committee to languish," and we expedited it going to committee. This is a very serious issue, and over the summer, the great member from our party, who has spent so many hours putting together a review of what's been happening in the system—the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler has spent the entire summer, along with the committee, hearing from stakeholders, hearing from others about what's happening with intimate partner violence. So to suggest in front of our guests here today that nothing is happening is not an accurate reflection of what's really going on.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have more to say in the secondary part, after the next question.

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

MPP Lisa Gretzky: That subcommittee is separate from the justice policy committee—and you know it, because you control the committee. You could call that bill back any time.

Like the government stalling Lydia's Law, over seven months ago, I brought forward Bill 173, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act—again, sent to committee separate from the subcommittee. At that time, there had been 17 femicides in a five-month period. As of yesterday, there have been 59, six of them last month alone. That's 42 additional reported femicides while the Conservatives delay a declaration. Those are just the IPV and gender-based cases that resulted in death; it doesn't include survivors, current victims or children.

Nova Scotia recently passed an NDP bill like mine and declared IPV an epidemic. They did it in one day. Nearly 100 Ontario municipalities have declared IPV an epidemic.

Speaker, why doesn't our Premier believe IPV is an epidemic, and how many women and children have to die before he does?

Interjections.

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

I remind the House to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform to come to order.

To reply for the government, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Bill 173 is not languishing. My parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, has been working very closely, actually, with the member from Toronto Centre—the only one who seems to be taking interest in actually doing the work in committee because the members who have been yelling over there have not shown up to committee to actually participate.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the first round had over 80 members of the community who had been working in this sector participate and give their suggestions, advice and recommendations. The second phase is ministries working

and talking about what we're doing in government, and the third phase is hearing from the victims. That work is going to be happening next.

We want to encourage all people who have something they want to share at committee for us to hear to put their name forward and to be a deputant or to delegate. The work is being done and—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock for a moment. I'm going to ask the House to come to order.

We have a tradition in this House not to make reference to the absence of members in the chamber. I think it's reasonable to request that there are no references to the absence of members from committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order—and I would ask members not to do so.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Where were you?

Miss Monique Taylor: Okay, where were you?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I just said it is not helpful to make reference to the absence of members from committee. Please don't do it.

We can move on. Start the clock.

The member for Orléans.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are dealing with one of the most challenging economic and affordability crises in generations. Grocery prices are up. Utility prices are up. Home prices are up and up. Wait times for health care are up. The number of Ontarians without a family doctor, including 100,000 in the Premier's backyard of Etobicoke, are up. At one million people, the number of Ontarians using a food bank is up.

But that's not all. Government spending is up. Government debt is up. Government tax collection is up and up.

If the high-tax Tories are spending more than has ever been spent, borrowing more than has ever been borrowed and taxing more than has ever been taxed, while Ontarians can't access emergency rooms because they're closed, don't have a family doctor and can't see one, and can't afford to buy their groceries, can the Premier explain if this is really what getting it done looks like?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, remind me which party put up the carbon tax to make life more unaffordable. Was it the Conservative Party? Was it the NDP opposition? Was it the federal Liberal Party supported by the NDP? Absolutely. And what's making life more expensive for Ontarians and Canadians? The carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. Taking money out of their pockets—that's what they're doing.

This government, on the other hand—

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: That's something the previous Liberal government didn't do. They increased the

debt-to-GDP. They increased the debt; their credit ratings went down.

The only difference between us and them is that our debt-to-GDP has improved, our interest expenses have gone way down, and we got an upgrade from the credit rating agency. So we're doing it differently.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, come to order. The member for Ottawa South, come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Stephen Blais: The number of Ontarians using food banks and the number of Ontarians without a family doctor aren't the only things that are up. The number of Ontarians without a job is up. When the Premier was elected, the unemployment rate was 5.9%; it's now 6.8%. Mr. Speaker, did you know that under this Premier, 130,000 more Ontarians are unemployed than when he was elected? Sadly, but not unsurprisingly, those aren't the only metrics that are up.

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Something else, unfortunately, has gone down. Business confidence in Ontario is at an all-time low, so much so that in the past 12 months, Ontario has lost 28,000 jobs in construction, and Ontario has lost 8,400 jobs in manufacturing, all while those numbers are up in BC, Alberta and Quebec.

How is it that the government that is spending like none other, borrowing like none other and taxing like none other can't get Ontarians a family doctor or a job?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, I look at the economy, and when we took over—\$800 billion. Do you know what it is now? It's \$1.13 trillion. The economic pie has grown—\$330 billion. That means more jobs, more money in people's pockets. That means economic prosperity to fund the world-class services that we have in this province.

When they had the opportunity, when we tabled cutting the gas tax, putting more money in people's pockets, the taxpayer rebates, \$200 cheques, which way did they vote? They voted against it. When they had an opportunity to help the hard-working people of Ontario, they said no. Luckily, the people of Ontario have a government that says yes, a government that works hard to put more money in their pockets.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education.

Bullying is a serious issue in our schools. It hurts our children, their mental health and their ability to learn. Parents are worried about what happens to their kids at school. Teachers are asking for more support to deal with bullying. And students need to feel safe when they step into their classrooms.

We hear stories all too often about the harm caused by bullying, whether it's in the hallways, on the playground or online. These are not just isolated incidents.

We know that every child deserves to feel safe and respected. Parents and communities want to see action.

Can the minister please share what our government is doing to address bullying and create safer schools for our children?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question.

And to the member from Whitby: I want to recognize his tireless advocacy, on behalf of his own granddaughters and all children across Ontario, to protect them from the harms of bullying in our schools.

Speaker, we are the government that is listening to parents and making the necessary investments to protect and promote a healthy learning environment for our students. That's why our government has taken decisive action to strengthen formal guidance to school boards through changes to PPM 144—bullying prevention and intervention—to align with the realities of today and create safer schools for our students.

For the 2024-25 school year, the ministry is providing \$4.6 million in funding to school boards and organizations to prevent bullying and cyberbullying, by promoting safe school environments, which complements our successful cellphone and social media ban in classrooms. This funding will strengthen connections among students and promote safe, respectful and inclusive schools.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, bullying isn't just about name-calling. It's about kids feeling like they don't belong. It's about fear, isolation and being singled out for who they are.

We've heard from parents who are heartbroken about the struggles their kids face. We've heard from teachers who see the pain and hurt in their students but need more tools to help. And we've heard from students themselves, asking for change and support.

Bullying can take many forms, whether it's words, actions or even silence in the face of discrimination. No child should feel unsafe because of their culture, religion, gender or who they are, or who they love.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, can the minister please share how our government is standing with students and ensuring that every child feels safe, supported and included in Ontario's schools?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: As a mother, I have witnessed bullying and had to deal with the fallout and the long-term negative impact it has had on children's mental and physical health. That's why I stand here today to reconfirm my commitment to the students of Ontario. If you're a student who is facing hateful comments because of your culture, your religion or nationality; if you're a student who is being bullied or treated unfairly because of your skin colour; if you're a student who is facing slurs because of your sexuality or gender; or if you are a student who feels isolated or like you don't belong, I want you to know

that this government, my ministry and Premier Ford are here for you.

Speaker, everyone—teachers and students—deserve to feel safe, supported and included in Ontario's schools, and parents know this government will never stop fighting for their children's rights to go to school free from hate and bullying.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: The city of Guelph is having to allocate half a million dollars to EMS services to address the fallout from closing its safe consumption and treatment site—a closure that this government is forcing. We're hearing the same concern from municipalities across this province: Shutting down these critical sites will increase pressure on emergency services and hospitals, worsening an already strained system.

Can the minister explain why this government is putting lives at risk by taking away overdose prevention services and adding an even greater burden to our front lines?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, this government has introduced a new program. It's called the HART hub style of service. HART stands for Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub. If you have an addiction, you can go to that HART hub and seek services, which services might include counselling; they might also include medical services. Those HART hubs are very important because they are going to put people back on the track to recovery, not like the drug injection sites, which attract crime, which attract more drug trafficking and which attract needles—needles that are left in our parks, needles that are constantly being found by schools, needles that are being found by child care centres.

Mr. Speaker, the mothers and the fathers of the province of Ontario do not want these drug injection sites anywhere near the schools in Ontario. That's why we've introduced legislation to impose a 200-metre protection zone around every school in Ontario so that we don't have any more of these needles being left in our children's—

Interjection.

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

The supplementary question?

MPP Jamie West: Everyone in Sudbury knows of the Crosses for Change. This is an overdose memorial with hundreds of crosses on the corner of Paris and Brady.

The first cross was for Myles Keaney. Denise Sandul put it there for her son, and she put it where his body was found. But Paris and Brady wasn't where Myles's body was found. Her first memorial for her son was across from an EMS building, but Denise moved it when EMS met with her and explained to her how many overdose deaths they see and how it affected the mental health of their members.

Today, Myles's cross at the Crosses for Change is joined by hundreds of others. My question is, how many

hundreds of other crosses should Sudbury erect before the Premier takes overdose deaths seriously?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: A tragic death such as that is certainly a tragedy, and anybody who is suffering from addiction needs to have treatment and should seek that treatment. We encourage people who are suffering from an addiction to seek treatment for their addiction.

One of the places they'll be able to go as a result of the initiatives introduced by this government is a HART hub. Once again, HART hub stands for Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub, where a person can go to get treatment for their addiction, where they can get back on the road to recovery. These are great places for people to go to, Mr. Speaker.

But we don't want drugs being trafficked near injection sites, which is what is currently occurring. What has happened at these drug injection sites is an increase in violence, including gun violence and including knife violence. The mothers and the fathers of Ontario do not want these drugs near their schools, and we're taking action to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If members repeatedly ignore the Speaker's request to come to order, they will be warned.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier.

All across Ontario, families cannot afford to pay the rent, because rents have skyrocketed since your government was elected: A two-bedroom apartment in Kitchener has gone from \$1,485 to \$2,282 a month; in London, from \$1,309 to \$2,190; in Toronto, a shocking 40% increase in the last two years alone, to \$3,308 per month.

This government's policies are resulting in unaffordable rents for working families and people cannot find an affordable place to live. This disproportionately affects women experiencing intimate partner violence, presenting a barrier to escape because they can't find a safe, affordable place to live with their children. But your government keeps saying no to building deeply affordable, non-profit and co-op housing.

Today, I give the Premier an opportunity: Will you say yes to funding, with public dollars, deeply affordable, non-profit and co-op housing?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The member knows and I'm sure the member will agree that when we took office, some of the policies of the previous Liberal government had made it very difficult for people to get shovels in the ground. In fact, purpose-built rentals were at the lowest point in the history of the province, and we knew we had to take steps very, very quickly to increase that supply.

That is why we have done things like remove the provincial portion of the HST from purpose-built rentals.

We've exempted them from development charges. We've removed parking minimums along transit corridors. We actually are seeing the results of that. We have the highest level of purpose-built rental housing in the history of the province.

At the same time, we worked with the federal government to help them better understand the needs of the province of Ontario when it came to affordable housing. The previous agreement signed by the previous Liberal government with the National Housing Strategy wasn't meeting our needs, so we reformed that agreement so that we can do the exact same things the member is talking about.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Let's be clear: With this government's policies, no minimum wage worker in any community in Ontario can afford average market rent. Ninety-three per cent of the deeply affordable homes built in the province of Ontario were built before 1995; that's when the government stopped supporting co-ops and non-profits. And yet, this government continues to say no to non-market solutions. That's why people are leaving Ontario. That's why women who are facing intimate partner violence are struggling to be able to find a safe, affordable place to call home.

If the government is not going to say yes to building deeply affordable, non-profit and co-op housing, will they at least say yes to legalizing six-to-11-storey buildings along major transit and transportation corridors, where builders tell us that will reduce their build times in half, so we can at least build more market rental homes?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm glad to hear that the member opposite isn't completely opposed to building market homes, because we understand how important that is. Of course, we have a transit-oriented community program across the province of Ontario. We've reduced costs, including parking minimums, along those transit corridors, so that we've reduced the costs by about \$100,000 per unit along those corridors. We've reduced the GST or the HST portion of it to get more homes built.

Ultimately, the fundamental thing that we can do is get more supply online, because when you add more supply in the way that we are doing, the highest levels in recorded history in the province, you will start to see the rents come down, in fact, as supply is increased.

The member, I'm sure, is happy to know that the rents have started to decline in the province of Ontario, in particular here in the city of Toronto, so we are making progress. But I agree completely with the member opposite: The only way we're going to see true progress is if we unleash the opportunity to build even more homes across the province of Ontario. I look forward to his support of the actions that we're going to take to ensure that we can get that done even quicker.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: My question is for the Solicitor General.

Across Ontario, families are worried about rising crime. They see it in their neighbourhoods, they hear it on the streets, they see it in the news and they see it in their daily lives. Parents are concerned for their children's safety as they go to school. Seniors are worried about going out alone. Businesses are struggling with the impact of theft and vandalism. And people are asking for action.

Speaker, crime not only hurts victims, it tears at the fabric of our communities. People in my riding want to know that our government is standing up for them and taking bold steps to make our streets safer. Can the Solicitor General please tell us how the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act will help keep families and individuals safe?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Speaker, show me a government that has prioritized public safety, and I will show you our government, led by Premier Ford, that does it morning, noon and night; that leads by example; that has a plan that's amazing to put more boots on the ground, by having over 2,080 new people who want to serve as constables go to the Ontario Police College; that's fighting auto theft hard with \$51 million; that's getting the violent and repeat offenders off our streets, a \$112-million investment; and most recently, coming forward with the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act.

Mr. Speaker, we will not stop in keeping Ontario safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Families across Ontario and my riding want to feel safe. They want to know that their children can play outside without fear. They want to know their homes and neighbourhoods are secure.

But crime is changing. Organized groups are behind thefts, scams and violence, and people want to know what's being done to stop this. People want to know how our government is taking action to prevent crime before it happens. Communities need our government's support and strong leadership. They need solutions that go just beyond reacting to crimes. They need investments that make our neighbourhoods safer and help our law enforcement tackle crime.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General please explain how our government's proactive measures under the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act will help address crime before it starts?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: The Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act is another pillar that follows the Community Safety and Policing Act and other measures that we have brought forward that send a message across Ontario that we will not tolerate violent and repeat offenders. As I've said before, if people feel they have to act in a criminal way, we have room for you.

But, Speaker, last week, Bonnie Crombie finally says we need to have meaningful bail reform, but she refuses to call dear leader in Ottawa that it's time to get it done there. It's time to take us seriously. It's time to step up at the borders. She should call the Minister of Public Safety in Ottawa, and she should meet him at the border and see that our guns are coming in. It's unacceptable. Our government, under Premier Ford, will not stop.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the Premier. Today marks 230 days since this government promised to pass Bill 173, to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. This morning, lawyers from 13 legal clinics across Ontario came to Queen's Park, including those from Your Way Forward. They came to share their legal opinions about what this declaration will do for survivors in Ontario. The lawyers assert that the intimate partner violence declaration is not just symbolic, but that it would "profoundly strengthen survivors' access to justice by compelling courts, tribunals and administrative bodies to consider intimate partner violence when reviewing the facts of a legal case."

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This government isn't working for survivors when they deny survivors the specific legal tool recommended by the legal experts to obtain access to justice.

This morning, this government for the fourth time denied the opportunity to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. Why do Conservatives continue to wear their purple scarves while breaking the promise to survivors?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, let me make it very clear once again to all my colleagues in this chamber: When it comes to violence against women and children, we are focused on action. This is a serious issue, and it requires actions—actions that deliver concrete and tangible results for women, for girls and families who are experiencing gender-based violence.

Some of the programs and supports that I mentioned earlier—that includes the emergency shelters, counselling, a 24-hour crisis line, safety planning, transitional housing supports backed by \$18.5 million of annual investment to help women escape abusive situations.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask my honourable colleagues across: In budget 2024, we increased funding through this sector by \$5.5 million; in addition, \$4.5 million for Victim Quick Response Program. Unfortunately, my honourable colleagues across voted against these initiatives, so I'm asking my colleagues across to join us together in working together to—

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

Supplementary: the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: This Conservative government has said no to our motions calling for real affordable housing, including supportive and transitional housing. This government has ignored the crisis in our shelter system. Embrace Agency to End Violence in the Peel region has had to turn away 500 women this year alone. There are no beds. Hundreds of women and children are being turned away from shelters and left with no choice than to go back to unsafe housing with abusive partners.

No matter what this government pats themselves on the backs for during their dog-and-pony show IPV phase 2 committee hearings, if the woman or child is dead, Speaker—if they are dead, there is no tomorrow.

A hundred municipalities have declared intimate partner violence. My question is to the Premier: Will this Conservative government declare IPV an epidemic today so Ontario can release life-saving funding and resources necessary to address this public health crisis—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Thank you. The member will take her seat.

Stop the clock.

The member will please take her seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. I'm reluctantly going to warn the member for Hamilton Mountain and the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I've warned three of you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to name the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'm going to name the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

Mr. Calandra, you will leave the chamber.

Mr. Calandra was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Andrew, you're going to leave the chamber for the day.

MPP Andrew was escorted from the chamber.

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

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

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: This is a very—it's an emotional conversation that we're having here because we know how impactful violence against women is, not just on the women but for their children, for their families and for their community. All of our hearts are in the right place. We all want to do the right thing and want to do the things that are going to really make Ontario the safest place for women to live, without the fear of violence and intimidation and all of that.

I just want to encourage everybody to really pay attention and be a part of the work that is happening in committee, because it is being led by a crown—the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler. She is doing amazing work with the member from Toronto Centre. We want to make sure that everybody has their time to speak and be a part of this committee.

Again: 1-866-863-0511. That is the Assaulted Women's Helpline—

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

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products. Ontario's forestry sector is a long-standing cornerstone of our economy. It is not just about wood or paper; it's about jobs, families and communities. Rural and northern communities rely on forestry operations to keep their economy strong.

Sadly, this critical industry is facing growing pressures. Rising costs from the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax hurt forestry businesses across our great province. This tax increases the cost of transportation, equipment and energy—things no forestry operation can avoid. Because of this regressive tax, families in this sector worry about the impacts of layoffs and plant closures. It's clear that the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax hurts hard-working Ontarians in the forestry sector.

Can the associate minister please explain what our government is doing to support Ontario's forestry industry and protect these vital jobs?

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the member for Simcoe–Grey for that important question and for the great work he does in his riding.

The health and sustainability of our forests are essential to the environmental well-being of Ontario's resources. Responsible stewardship and sustainable development of Ontario's forests are the heart of what my ministry does. The forest industry in Ontario generated \$18 billion in revenue from manufactured goods and services in 2020, and supported more than 148,000 direct and indirect jobs in 2021.

My ministry implemented the forest sector strategy to support this vital part of Ontario's economy. It will create opportunities to further economic prosperity and generate high-quality jobs while supporting Indigenous, rural and northern communities that depend on the forest sector.

Our plan will continue Ontario's history of sustainable development and position the province as a world leader in making and selling forest products from renewable, sustainable and responsibly managed forests.

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

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for St. Catharines has informed me she has a point of order she wishes to raise.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for letting me rise here today on a point of order.

Today I would like to wish my colleague, my wingman, Jamie West, MPP for Sudbury, a very happy birthday. Jamie, I would say I feel the need—the need for speed. Happy birthday.

VISITORS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: One of my constituents arrived halfway through question period today. I want to have a

warm welcome for Denise Mansur, who is a strong, successful Black woman entrepreneur—owner of Ms. Meri Mak clothing and Meri Men's clothing in downtown Guelph. Welcome, Denise.

Mr. Chris Glover: I also want to wish my colleague from Sudbury another happy 39th birthday.

I also want to welcome to the House a good friend of mine, Diane Simon, and also her friend, Donika Stonefish, who are with the Association of Ontario Midwives. Welcome to your House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West has a point of order.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I just want to remind everyone in the House that there is a picture with OAITH, all the shelter and service providers, on the grand staircase right after question period.

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

The House recessed from 1200 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL
POLICY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption. I will hand this to page Elissa.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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): Shall the report be received and adopted?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): At least 12 members having stood in their places, we are now going to have a 30-minute report-stage debate on the motion for the adoption of the report on the bill, as amended, pursuant to standing order 38(b). In this debate, each recognized party is allotted 12 minutes, and the independent members are allotted a total of six minutes.

I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre to start off the debate.

Mr. Joel Harden: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate.

The reason this debate needs to happen, Speaker, is that I fear this House does not have the information it needs to

make consequential decisions on road safety that involve serious injury or even, sadly, death.

Here is the context, and the Minister of Transportation knows this context very well: The last collision statistics we have in Ontario indicate that in 2023 there were 49,106 collisions due to reckless driving that involved serious personal injury or death. Speaker, 49,106—that's a rate of 134 people per day. There are 124 people in this House—there's a rate of injury and death that is worse than the amount of people when this House is full. That should be cause for concern.

My concern as a serving member at this committee is that we did not allocate sufficient time to hear from residents of Ontario. There was more interest to participate in delegating to this bill than any other bill I have ever seen in the history of my six years here at Queen's Park. And yet, we had one truncated day, when most witnesses came from this great city of Toronto and a couple from my city of Ottawa. This is so much bigger than that. What about the safety of roads in the north? What about the safety of roads in the southwest? What about the smaller communities? What about the city of Kingston, or what about the city of Waterloo—both of which have passed motions asking this government not to implement this bill. Why didn't we allocate sufficient time to make sure that those people could contribute to our study of this bill? The government has time-allocated this bill. I will say for the record—I said it at committee; I want to say it here too—the member for Kitchener Centre, because of the rules of time allocation, was not allowed to advocate for her constituents at committee. So I am gravely disappointed.

The government knows I disagree with them on the policy of the bill. That's fine. That's one thing. But the process for research and public consultation to this bill was deeply, deeply, deeply flawed.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Undemocratic.

Mr. Joel Harden: Absolutely. The member for Waterloo says it was undemocratic. She is right.

I want to note for the record, Speaker, that last night, as I was making my way down here from Ottawa, I heard word that a cyclist was killed in the city of Brampton.

I was reading a report, which I'll talk about later, about Karl Mann, a 65-year-old cyclist found dead at the side of the road on September 26 near Bridlewood, a community in Kanata.

These tragedies are continuing to happen, and my fear is that this government has not opened up the consultation process widely enough for us to figure out how this bill could reduce critical injury and death. We know it is happening right now, and we can actually do something about it in this House. We could follow the leads of jurisdictions like Quebec, the city of Montreal, which has actually created dramatic improvements in road safety because of protected road infrastructure.

When the minister talks about moving vulnerable road users onto secondary roads, what he's actually saying is that he's happy to move people into more crowded road places than the places that professionals have installed to keep us safe.

So are we serious about road safety or not? Are we prepared to consult or not? I submit at this point, Speaker, that the answer is no.

I'll go to the member from Oshawa.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to stand in my place and beseech this government to slow this down and be thoughtful about what they're doing and the harm that they are going to be causing.

We are fresh out of committee. We had spent not enough time in committee on Bill 212. Some know it as the bike lane bill. Others know it as "the 413 doesn't have any environmental oversight" bill—whatever. We did not have the opportunity to make this bill any better, and I wish that the government would have slowed down and listened to people. We had record numbers of people who wanted to come before committee. We had 10 pages of the single-line people and agencies who wanted to present at committee, but because of the time allocation motion, which is fancy for the "shortening of process" motion that the government put forward, we had, what, 15 we got to choose, and of those, the government members would have had to choose people to come before committee. Do you know that not a single one of them supported the initiatives that the government was bringing forward? Not a single one came to committee and said that. So if they're going to tell us that those folks existed—they didn't even have time to get their ducks in a row to come to committee or to make a submission. So the process was flawed.

Also, Speaker, I have had the opportunity to be here for 10 years, and, most days, I hope to continue, but I'll tell you, in all of those years of doing committee work, and even on the days that we scramble to get amendments through the House—or amendments to committee, to be able to debate them. This government didn't have the nerve to take their very substantial 11-page amendment that actually gives them permission to rip and tear, to rip out the bike lanes, to not allow others to maybe reimburse if they feel like it, all of those things—11 pages that no one got to see during the committee process. It was the afternoon before we had to debate it in clause-by-clause. No one got to weigh in. No one got to see this amendment. I think it would be unparliamentary for me to call them chicken, but that's what I'm inclined to say. I'll withdraw.

Speaker, the process has been unfair and a mess. It just speaks to the minister and Premier's drive to do whatever they want.

Breaking down this amendment, which I'll be happy to do later—it gives this minister wild powers, yes, to rip out the bike lanes, which they had told us were coming, to disallow future bike lanes. But there are also sections in here where it gives the minister an opportunity to—if a municipality doesn't jump through the hoops in the exact amount of time, they may or may not reimburse them; things like that. That is not how you build relationships and partnerships with your municipal partners.

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This is also a bill about the 413. There were people who really wanted to come and talk about the 413 and this

expedited process that would exempt it from the Environmental Assessment Act, from the Planning Act, from the greenbelt plan. There wasn't space for those folks at committee.

I am glad to be able to take this opportunity to tell them to slow it down and do better. But this fight isn't over, even if they are rushing us through this time.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm pleased to be speaking about this bill today.

The Bloor, the Yonge and the University Avenue bike lanes are in the riding of University–Rosedale. Health care workers, high school students, the thousands and thousands of students who go to the University of Toronto, parents—these bike lanes are regularly used by people in my riding and surrounding ridings so they can get from A to B quickly and safely. That is the goal of the bike lanes.

I, like my colleagues, was very surprised and shocked to see the last-minute, 11-page amendment to Bill 212. The bill came into committee bad, and it came out of committee terrible, quite frankly. The amendments give the Conservatives authority to remove the entirety of the Bloor, Yonge and University Avenue bike lanes. They give themselves permission to not necessarily pay back municipalities for all their costs. And they insulate themselves from lawsuits. So it's A-okay if someone gets killed on these roads because a bike lane is removed, but it is not okay for this government to get sued because of the actions they're taking—very, very interesting priorities there.

We had a record number of people sign up to speak; we had a very limited number of people who were available, who actually could.

We had the city of Toronto come out and say this is actually reducing injuries and deaths on these streets, and it has actually led to an increase in cycling traffic.

We had the local BIA come out and say it has actually led to an increase in customers, based on Moneris data—so not made-up fantasy stuff, but credit card data.

We had people come in again and again, telling us they've lost a loved one as they were cycling to get to work or just for recreation. They're devastated by it. They don't want that devastation to happen to anyone else.

Did the government listen? No, they didn't.

It is a fantasy to think that three bike lanes in downtown Toronto are the reason why this entire region has some of the worst congestion times in North America. The Bloor bike lane is not the reason why the 401 is jam-packed, and people know it.

If this government is serious about addressing congestion in the GTHA, it is high time this government invests in transit operations, which this government is not doing, so people can—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Whoa—

Ms. Jessica Bell: No, no. You're investing in capital, but you're not investing in operations.

All of the entirety of the TTC's routes—

Mr. Steve Clark: Making it up over there.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Oh, yes, “making it up”—are not as fast as they should be. People are waiting for a long time for the bus. Fares are very expensive. So people are choosing to drive because the TTC and transit systems are not as fast and reliable as they should be, and that's on this government.

I've also found the Minister of Transportation's comments very dangerous—the comments that cyclists should just go on side roads and that somehow they don't deserve to quickly take the quickest route to where they want to go. The reason why is because it fuels this divisive culture war between cars versus cyclists, and it gives licence to a very small number of drivers who give themselves permission to more aggressively drive around cyclists, which will result in more people dying. It is completely unnecessary. This government has a responsibility to govern for everyone.

I urge this government to focus on the issues that people care about. Fix congestion. Invest in transit. Look at the health care crisis we're facing. Put more funding into schools. Solve our affordable housing crisis. Stop these divisive games.

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

Next, I'll recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I think many of the comments that you've heard from the opposition really sum up pretty much what they stand for when it comes to building Ontario, which is in opposition to everything that this government does. The members talked about public transit, the members talked about congestion, yet they have voted against every single one of our measures that we have put forward to support and build public transit and highways across this province.

Let's look at this bill closely. This will help speed up Highway 413, this will help speed up the Bradford Bypass, and those members opposite and the Liberals oppose that, which is a shame. We've seen record gridlock across this city, and they don't want those projects to be built fast.

Then you look at the NDP and you look at why construction unions are leaving them in droves. Nobody wants to support them. It's because they oppose every form of building in this province, whether it be public transit, whether it be highways—everything, they are opposed to.

The Ontario Line, a project that will move 400,000 people—most of that line will service NDP-held ridings. Some 400,000 people a day will move on that—28,000 cars off the road—and those members will vote against it and oppose that. I think that's a shame.

The cost of not building is far greater.

The members opposite continue to have this mentality that you shouldn't build in this province. That's what the Liberals did for 15 years—they built absolutely nothing, and the NDP helped and supported and propped them up, unfortunately.

When we talk about GO Transit and expanding all-day, two-way GO, the members opposite vote against that. They don't support our investments into that. They just want the status quo, and that's very unfortunate.

Now let's go to the policy of bike lanes in this piece of legislation. We are removing three bike lanes that have caused an enormous amount of congestion within the city of Toronto. We see it every single day.

Bloor Street: Let's take that as an example. Ripping up 50% of our infrastructure, 50% of roads, to accommodate a very small percentage of people who use them—does it make sense? Ask the businesses on Bloor Street. I urge the members opposite to drive through those areas.

They just don't want people in cars. They're so far from reality, it's not even funny. They want nobody in cars. They think everybody can just jump on their bike, ride around all year. But a reality check, folks—there's a northern Ontario, there's a southwestern Ontario. There's a province here that is far greater than just the downtown core of the city of Toronto, and people need to move. And guess what? Probably this week or next week, we're going to get snow, and these bike lanes are going to be even less used—and it's going to make even less logical sense to tear these up to accommodate a very small percentage of bicycle riders across this.

We have a duty to get people moving. We want to get this city moving. We know that we are seeing record-breaking congestion because of a lack of development in the past 15 years by the previous Liberal government.

This government is about building. This government is about investing. It doesn't matter how much the NDP want to oppose our progress in the building of public transit or highways in this province. We're going to keep going. We're going to keep getting shovels in the ground, and we're going to build for the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's bad enough that the government fast-tracked this bill through time allocation and limited the amount of public input that's being allowed, which I think is one of the reasons that people are deeply concerned about debating the committee report on this bill, especially when the government brings forward amendments at the last minute that basically say that if you're a vulnerable road user, a cyclist in Toronto—you don't even necessarily have to be a resident of Toronto.

My seatmate here from Kitchener Centre cycles up University almost every day from the GO station, when she commutes in.

If you are injured, if you're killed—you're not able to sue the government for putting your life at risk. What does that tell you about this government's priorities and how much they care or don't care about public safety? We know that the biggest barrier to more people cycling is safety concerns. And this government is basically saying with these amendments to this bill, "We don't care about your safety. As a matter of fact, if your safety is threatened and you want some legal recourse for that, we're not even going to allow you to have that step."

1320

Let's talk about transparency and access. Let's talk about people being able to come to committee and talk about this bill.

Let's talk about drivers like myself. I drive my electric vehicle into Queen's Park pretty much every week. I drive along Bloor a lot, and I drive up University a lot. Every time I'm commuting here, I look at the cyclists going past me, and as a driver, I say, "Thank you, cyclists. Thank you for choosing an affordable option for you and an option that reduces gridlock for me, because it's one less vehicle on the road"—and now that's being taken away.

When I go along Bloor Street and I go to support businesses along Bloor—especially the Bloor Street BIA. They tell me—like what's happening in jurisdictions all over the world—that when you bring in safe cycling infrastructure, cyclists shop local. They support local businesses. They benefit the local economy.

As a matter of fact, sales along Bloor Street, particularly in the Annex region out through the High Park region, have gone up. They don't want to be a thoroughfare. They actually want to be a neighbourhood where people stop and shop locally. Having that cycling infrastructure there is good for businesses and good for the local economy.

The member talks about gridlock. I would suggest that the member travel the 401. I come in from Guelph to Toronto all the time on the 401. When the 401 widening between Toronto and Milton was completed about a year, year and a half ago, it was fantastic. My commute time went down for about three months. And now, it's pure gridlock again. We have 75 years of data that shows that when you build new highways and expand existing highways, it leads to more gridlock.

That's exactly what's going to happen with the 413, which is why I don't think they want an environmental assessment or any expert analysis on 413. They know it's going to show that it's going to make gridlock worse. As a matter of fact, they're actually denying an environmental assessment on 413.

Toronto, this summer, experienced \$4-billion worth of flood damage. If you're going to build a highway over the headwaters of two of the major rivers coming into Toronto, you're actually going to increase flood risk.

I would say we shouldn't even build the highway. But if the government is going to insist on wasting \$10 billion to \$13 billion that isn't going to benefit anyone else in the province and force people from Bracebridge and Sudbury and other places to pay to remove bike lanes, at the very least, they should do an environmental assessment to make sure we mitigate flood risk. That didn't happen either.

Instead, we're fast-tracking this bill through without proper assessment and analysis.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to this committee report.

Here's the bottom line: This government is in a hurry to pass this bill—lightning speed. We all know the Premier wants it.

Here's the thing: It's about public safety. Cyclists have genuine concerns; they need to be listened to. They need alternatives.

The government is in such a hurry that it's indemnifying itself. It's avoiding liability for a decision that it's making really quickly. It's going so fast.

Here's what I wish, Speaker: I wish that the government and the Premier had the same sense of urgency for taking action on intimate partner violence. I wish they had the same sense of urgency for finding a family doctor for the 2.5 million Ontarians who don't have a family doctor. I wish they had the same sense of urgency to end hallway health care. I just wish they had the same sense of urgency for things that are important in health care and education for all Ontarians, but sadly, they don't.

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

The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy reported the following bill, Bill 212, as amended.

Ms. Scott has moved the adoption of the report. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1325 to 1330.

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

The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy reported the following bill, Bill 212, as amended.

Ms. Scott has moved the adoption of the report.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian
Anand, Deepak	Holland, Kevin	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Barnes, Patrice	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bouma, Will	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Saunderson, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Learidi, Anthony	Scott, Laurie
Byers, Rick	Lumsden, Neil	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Dowie, Andrew	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Piccini, David	Tibollo, Michael A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy
Hamid, Zee	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew	Yakabuski, 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

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom

Bourgouin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Bowman, Stephanie	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Shaw, Sandy
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Collard, Lucille	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 60; the nays are 30.

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

Report adopted.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 194, An Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures / Projet de loi 194, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 visant à renforcer la sécurité et la confiance en matière de numérique et modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui concerne les mesures de protection de la vie privée.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 29, 2024, the bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

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

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 6, 2024, the bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA GESTION DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Mr. Graydon Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 228, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors / Projet de loi 228, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur le stockage géologique de carbone et modifiant diverses lois concernant les incendies de végétation, la sécurité des ressources et les arpenteurs-géomètres.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Graydon Smith: The Resource Management and Safety Act proposes amendments to the Surveyors Act, the Forest Fires Prevention Act and the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act with respect to various matters to enable the use of modern technology and to increase community safety.

The act also enacts the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024, to allow the ministry to regulate geologic carbon storage.

PETITIONS

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors (Bill 189: Lydia’s Law).” I asked about this particular piece of legislation this morning. This has been signed by thousands of concerned residents in Waterloo region and, in fact, across the province.

The fact of the matter is that this bill is not being dealt with by the IPV committee. This bill was sent to justice, where it is languishing. To add insult to injury, this bill never got debated in this House, even though 1,326 sexual assault cases got thrown out of court and disposed of without survivors actually having their day in court.

I just want to make the point that it is very difficult to get a sexual assault case into the court system. In fact, the test mark for these cases is profound. So not only did these people, primarily women, experience sexual violence; they are again victimized by the court system which is supposed to deliver justice to them.

On this day, when we’re wearing purple and we’re acknowledging that sexual violence is prevalent in the province of Ontario—this is the day to call Lydia’s Law and debate it here in this House, giving sexual assault survivors their voice back in the province of Ontario.

1340

I will affix my signature. It’s a great petition. And I will give it to page Juliet.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition to present today. It’s really a petition of complaint. It’s signed by people complaining about the fact that there are municipalities ripping out automobile lanes and replacing them, in the most inappropriate spots, with bicycle lanes.

It’s further complaining about the fact that such unreasonable behaviour is leading to automobile congestion, such as the automobile congestion that occurred last night in Toronto, when professional hockey players couldn’t get to their game because they were caught in gridlock.

In summary, it calls upon the Legislature of Ontario to immediately remove bike lanes along Bloor Street West in Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I support this petition. I’ll sign it. And I’m going to give it to this page, Elissa, who I’m sure will be dutiful and bring it to the Clerk’s table at the centre of the chamber.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I’m here to deliver a message from the people of Waterloo region. Farmers in Wilmot have had their land unfairly threatened to be expropriated for an unknown cause. This has caused a lot of alarm. These are intergenerational farms. The people of Waterloo region want a fair and transparent process, and they’ve asked us to protect our precious farmland.

I support this bill, and I thank those who have signed it. I will affix my name and pass it to page Maadhav.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, with five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s loyal opposition, five

minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, and five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Agreed? Agreed.

Statements? I recognize the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Today is the day that we come together to remember the lives lost to intimate partner violence, to violence against women, and to stand in solidarity with the countless others who continue to live in fear.

We remember women like the 14 women who were killed at École Polytechnique in 1989 simply because they were women—it's near and dear to my heart; I was a university student then as well.

We honour the memory of so many other women—Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam and Anastasia Kuzyk, whose tragic deaths in Renfrew county exposed systemic failings that still put lives at risk.

We remember Carly Stannard-Walsh; her children, Madison and Hunter; and Jennifer Polak, a caring mother of two who was taken from her children too soon.

Just last week, we mourned Parween Adel, a mother fatally stabbed in her own home in Oshawa while her kids looked on.

These stories and so many others remind us that intimate partner violence isn't just someone else's problem; it is a crisis in every corner of Ontario.

Speaker, back in April, hundreds of survivors and advocates joined us here at Queen's Park to demand action. Today, there are also many, many others who have joined us here at Queen's Park.

Back in April, we convinced this government to support our Bill 173 that would declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. Let's remember, that doesn't just come out of nowhere. That was the number one recommendation of the Renfrew coroner's inquest report. It was number one for a reason, because from that everything else follows. It's absolutely essential—something that 95 municipalities and six other provinces have already recognized. We saw that as a moment of hope, I will say. But since then, progress has stalled.

On the first day of this fall session, we asked for one simple thing: again, for this government to vote to pass that bill. Instead, they voted it down.

Today, again, we asked for unanimous consent to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in the province of Ontario. Again, the government voted that down.

Here's the thing: Every single day that this government delays, more women are trapped in violent homes. That's the truth. More children live in fear. More families are torn apart. Inaction isn't neutral. It is a choice, and that choice is costing lives in the province of Ontario. We know the solutions, and this is I think why so many of us on this side

have been so frustrated, along with survivors and advocates and people on the front line, by this government's attempt, frankly, to spin their wheels, to continue the consultation and the conversation. My goodness, how many more people have to be retraumatized before you get the message? There are actions that are there. There is a road map in the coroner's report. It is time to take action now.

I spoke a little bit this morning about some of the things—I want to reiterate and revisit some of the numbers.

Over 40% of women in Canada are going to experience intimate partner violence in their lifetimes. Last year alone, 58 women in Ontario were killed by men charged or deemed responsible for their deaths. This year, that number is on track to being even higher. It isn't just a statistic. It is an indictment of our inaction.

Just a few months back, I was in Harrow one evening, meeting with folks in that community. The next morning, while I was still there in Essex county, you could feel the ripple happening across the community as people started to hear about Carly Stannard-Walsh and her kids, Madison and Hunter, who were murdered in their home the night before by someone they should have been able to trust. If you've ever been around something like that happening in a small community—you can just feel it. Everyone is touched by it. Everyone has someone who knows someone in that family—the mayor, whose kids, I think, played soccer with them; the other folks in the grocery store who knew the kids, whose kids went to school with those kids. Everybody has a connection to the family. So the impact is massive. The tragedy is enormous. You can feel it.

These are not isolated incidents. I want to again remind the members opposite—you can call the Assaulted Women's Helpline. Please do—to anybody watching this right now, if you are feeling danger.

To the members opposite: 800 women contacted Interval House of Ottawa in the last year and had to be turned away because there was no room.

This is the story I hear over and over again in every corner of this province. It is getting worse because the housing crisis, the affordability crisis is getting worse every day, which means it is harder and harder for women and their families to escape their abuser, because there's simply nowhere else to go. Unless we start to approach this as the crisis that it is, as the epidemic it is, we will get no closer to saving the lives of those people.

Again, I want to ask the members opposite to work with us and declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. It is time to get to work.

1350

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member from Kitchener Centre.

Today, we stand on the brink of change. We gather not just to talk, but to ignite a movement—one that champions the rights of every individual and boldly confronts the harrowing reality of gender-based violence.

I want to take a moment to shine a light on the incredible work of OAITH. Their dedication to uplifting survivors and advocating for justice is a beacon of hope in our communities. They remind us that no one should face the darkness alone.

I have heard from women's shelters in my riding that there are no beds, and the waiting lists are up to months long. Where do you think these mothers and young women are waiting for beds? Where do you think they are waiting? I know for a fact, and I have spoken to many of them, that they are waiting in their cars. They're living in their cars until a space in a shelter becomes available.

All women's shelters across Ontario are facing the same challenges with providing beds for abused women. To me, this is an epidemic. Let's call it what it is.

It's our collective responsibility to bridge these gaps and create a society where safety, equity, justice and freedom prevail for all of us.

Let's also consider the stark statistics that underscore this issue.

In the past eight months alone, nearly one in five victims of femicide were reported to be under 18—very scary. This shocking reality is a call to action for all of us.

It's not just numbers; these are lives—mothers, daughters, sisters and friends who deserve our attention and our commitment to change.

Let's raise our voices. Let's call for action. I stand here in solidarity. I am with all of you to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. Together, we can shatter the silence. Collectively, we must continue the good fight. I have you. I am with you. I am one of you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I am honoured to be here today to speak up to end intimate partner violence, and I support the calls to declare it an epidemic.

As a social worker, I found, over the years, that the toxicity of the work I was doing and the wait-lists and the numbers of people referred for help kept getting greater and greater.

So I appreciate this opportunity to address some of the systemic issues that I think caused the increase in intimate partner violence.

Housing is a big deal. We are hearing that women who enter shelters stay there longer and longer than ever before. This holds kids back. It interrupts their schooling and exposes them to a lot of stress and trauma, and it keeps people from moving on with their lives. It might be a reason why they don't leave an abusive relationship.

I recall a mom in my riding with two kids, who said, "I'm going to stay until I get my housing." Well, she's on the housing list. It's going to take eight or nine years for her—and if you have a disability, maybe 15. This is unacceptable. We're locking a generation into experiencing the trauma and perpetuating the stress and mental health issues.

We need to be sure that people can afford a place to live. It's \$390 on Ontario Works—as a shelter allowance. That's not enough to get a room. We see families who are

scrambling together to rent a room, and it exposes their kids to whatever mess is in that house. I hear it all the time from folks who are working with kids who are abused. They are underhoused and put in more unsafe conditions.

We also have to address misogyny. All the work we're doing, all the trailblazers who came before us—all that work is being undone by the toxicity in social media. Look at what's happening down south. We are promoting people—a statute—who are perpetuating misogyny. Three out of the 10 most-used websites are pornography websites. They're toxic pornography, and they're increasing strangulation. St. Mary's in my riding came to my social work team to let me know that strangulation was up 20% to 30%. This is attempted murder. They're educating women on the fact that they could die from the inflammation of strangulation. This is commonplace in porn nowadays. We don't need to look in library books to find justice. We need to be concerned about what's in kids' pockets, because they are being exposed to porn in their schools at the age of grades 6 and 7, and it is becoming more and more problematic. Let's pay attention to the Andrew Tates out there and what our boys are being exposed to.

Let's fight for democracy—because the rise of misogyny is right up there for the erosion of democracy.

Please do what you can to raise the shelter allowance, so people have enough money for a roof and food.

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

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I want to say, on behalf of my colleagues and the Premier, that it is an honour to be in this House and speak to, on this day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the start of the 16 days of activism. I definitely feel, like a lot of people feel who have been working in this sector, that we have 16 days of activism, but we're working every day to talk about, to address and try to end gender-based violence.

There's not much I can say to those who have lost their lives at the hands of an abusive person, to take the pain away. It's horrific. It's a horrific experience not just for the children of the mothers whose lives were taken; it's horrific for their family, and it's horrific for the community. We all feel it, because women are the centre of so much.

It is my commitment—and it's something I committed to when I started working in this sector almost 20 years ago—to make lives better for women and people in Ontario, and I haven't strayed from that at all. In fact, being in government now has just made me more energized to make the systemic changes, to address those root causes. We often talk about what causes abuse—we have many conversations about that—but what I find is that we aren't investing enough in those root causes, those programs that really prevent these toxic environments from the start.

We have two programs right now, through my ministry, the Investing in Women's Futures Program and the Women's Economic Security Program—because at the

crux of this issue is the financial stability for many women. That is a major driving factor. When women are not financially stable, they are at high risk of being abused by their partner or staying in very toxic and damaging homes because they cannot afford to get away.

If you speak to a lot of women in leadership—I've found that many women in leadership can speak to somebody else who empowered them to go to post-secondary, who empowered them to see themselves as leaders in their community. That's what we want to do through these programs that we have and these investments—because I don't want any woman to have to choose staying in an abusive home because they can't afford to get away.

We have been investing significantly. In December 2023, we released Ontario-STANDS, which is Ontario's strategy to end gender-based violence. We committed \$1.5 billion over three years to this. We signed the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. That complement from the federal government of \$162 million is going right back into community. We just had the call for proposals that closed, and we had an overwhelming response to that—many organizations across Ontario wanting to see funded some of their programs that are new. I love that—especially the programs that are working with our boys and our men, because the emphasis should not be only placed on women to solve, right? We are going to be releasing the funding next year so that these programs can get to work and do the things that they need to do to help strengthen their communities. But that's just a piece of it. We're not going to stop doing this work.

I really do appreciate all of those who have come to committee and have been sharing their recommendations, their experiences. I look forward to the next phase, in which we'll be hearing from victims. We'll be hearing from many people who have experienced violence—women and men who have climbed themselves out of those really, really harmful experiences, to go down that journey of rebuilding and healing. That's going to be an important piece. We're not going to stop doing the work.

1400

I know all of us got involved in politics to make a change. We have many women in our party here, we have women in the Legislature here, who are committing their time to want to make a change and to want to see women follow in their footsteps. We often say, "If you can see me, you can be me," and that is empowering many of the women who were not interested in politics but came here and saw us women here speaking up and being active and making changes. That's inspiring another generation of leaders.

So, yes, we've got a lot of work to do, and I'm not going to even make light of that. We have a lot of work to do—because societal change takes everyone to participate in. But we're going to do that when we work together. We're going to do that when we sit down at the table.

Right now, for the 16 days of activism through OAITH—we talk about, "We're going to hold hands." I went to this event in Toronto on Friday at city hall, and one of the councillors, councillor 10, made us stand up and

hold hands. That was so symbolic, and it was so impactful. That's what we have to do. We have to hold hands and actually get the job done for every woman. Women out there experiencing the trauma of violence don't want to hear us arguing. They want to hear us and see us getting to work. So that's what we're going to do.

I want to thank all of those who are out there doing the work. We're with you. We stand with you.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. That concludes the statements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REDUCING GRIDLOCK, SAVING YOU TIME ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE DÉSENGORGEMENT DU RÉSEAU ROUTIER ET LE GAIN DE TEMPS

Mr. Sarkaria moved third 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I return to the minister for a statement.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Today, I am here to discuss the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act. This legislation has the potential to revolutionize the way we deliver priority highway projects in Ontario, and it would bring a common-sense approach to installing bike lanes on city streets to ensure they don't impede the flow of traffic.

Our government understands that drivers across the province are tired of being stuck in gridlock. They're tired of sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic, wondering when they will actually make it home. They're tired of missing out on important moments in their lives because they couldn't get where they were going on time. Our government is tired of it too. That's why, unlike the opposition, we're doing something about it. It's why we're building Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, the Garden City Skyway twin bridge. That's why we've tabled legislation that will allow us to build these and other priority projects as quickly as possible so we can keep Ontario families moving.

This act represents a bold new vision for the future of transportation infrastructure in our province. We can't drag our heels building new highways. We can't let costly delays get in the way when millions of drivers have already reached their breaking point. That is why our legislation would streamline existing processes to accelerate the construction of priority highway projects.

Earlier this year, the Get It Done Act received royal assent, ushering in new measures that would have made it easier for us to get shovels in the ground on the projects that matter most to Ontarians.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act is the next step on our journey to cut through red tape. We're doing this so we can roll up our sleeves and get to work on highway projects that will connect Ontarians to housing and jobs for generations to come. Not only will our legislation accelerate the construction of priority highway projects so we can get drivers out of gridlock as soon as possible, but it would also freeze driver testing fees, helping to ensure that Ontarians' hard-earned money stays in their pockets, right where it belongs. It would bring a common-sense approach to building new bike lanes, to ensure that traffic keeps flowing on city streets across the province. And it would demonstrate our commitment to make life a bit easier and more affordable for drivers as we carry out the work to build an Ontario for everyone.

If passed, this legislation would create a new Building Highways Faster Act, or BHFA for short. The BHFA would allow us to accelerate the construction of designated priority highway projects, similar to the way the Building Transit Faster Act has accelerated construction of priority transit project management. The legislation would help us move forward quickly to build Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass and Garden City Skyway twin bridge, as well as any other highways that are designated as priority projects in the future. Under the BHFA, the province would have the authority to request timely access to infrastructure owners' asset information. The BHFA would streamline property expropriations and create new penalties for anyone who attempts to interfere with the possession of crown-owned land or obstructs access to field investigations. It would also help to ensure we're taking decisive action to deliver for Ontarians who have spent far too many years stuck in gridlock.

I just want to speak to this a little bit more. We've seen the results of the Building Transit Faster Act. We've now got shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line. We've got shovels in the ground on the Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton West extension and the Hazel McCallion Line, all designated under the Building Transit Faster Act, which both the Liberals and the NDP voted against, which is unfortunate because these are historic generational projects that will move hundreds and thousands of people every single day. Their opposition to public transit is actually very unfortunate.

Let's now continue talking about Highway 413. This is a highway that will vastly improve the way people travel throughout the greater Toronto area. It's one of the most important projects that we are undertaking—a 52-kilometre highway that will connect the regions of Halton, Peel, York, running from Highway 400 in the east to the 401/407 interchange in the west. Drivers will save as much as 30 minutes per trip. I think all of us here can agree that an extra hour a day with our spouses, children, friends and loved ones is absolutely priceless. Imagine having five hours back each week to spend with those who mean the

most to you, rather than sitting in traffic, watching the time pass by. That dream will soon become a reality if this act passes.

I want to note, our government has made great progress to date on Highway 413. Preliminary design and property acquisitions along the 413's planned route are currently under way.

Passing this legislation will take our efforts to build Highway 413 to the next level. This highway will not only get drivers out of gridlock but will provide a significant boost to our economy.

During construction, Highway 413 will support approximately 3,000 jobs, including drilling and coring contractors, heavy equipment operators, steel and concrete workers, laboratory technologists, utility contractors, environmental specialists, and safety inspectors.

Building the highway will contribute \$400 million to Ontario's real GDP every single year. Think about that. It's about more than just getting people out of traffic. It's about generating significant economic growth now and for generations to come. It's about attracting investment in our province by developing and building transportation infrastructure that businesses will depend on to succeed in a competitive landscape. And it's about doing what's right for Ontarians.

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The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would exempt Highway 413 from the Environmental Assessment Act and create a new, accelerated process for the project. We will, of course, continue to apply rigorous environmental protections to the project with this act, but we'll get it done faster.

The fact is, experts have been studying this project for over 20 years. I've read report after report—reports that are collecting dust, sitting on shelves. But do you know what has changed in 20 years, Madam Speaker? Traffic.

As part of the accelerated assessment process for Highway 413, the Ministry of Transportation would prepare another environmental impact assessment report. This report would summarize Highway 413's potential environmental impacts, as well as the ministry's solutions for mitigating those impacts. The report would show that we're taking the appropriate actions to maintain strong environmental protections for the project. We will continue to work with the federal government through the bilateral federal-provincial working group. And we will consult with municipalities, Indigenous communities, members of the public and key stakeholders as we continue our work to build Highway 413.

If you've ever tried to drive north of the greater Toronto area or through Simcoe county or York region, you know the pain that drivers in those communities face—driver after driver sitting in gridlock as the arrival times on their devices increase minute after minute.

That is why our government has another solution: the Bradford Bypass. This 16.3-kilometre freeway will connect Highway 404 in the east to Highway 400 in the west, saving drivers up to 35 minutes per trip and providing more relief to one of the most congested

highway corridors in North America. Construction of the Bradford Bypass will contribute \$274 million to Ontario's GDP annually. It will support 2,600 jobs each year in the engineering, transportation, construction and supply chain industries. Work to build this highway is well under way. Our government has awarded a major contract to oversee the design, quality control, safety and delivery of the west section of the Bradford Bypass. We have already put shovels in the ground and begun construction on a southbound lane on Highway 400 that will connect to the Bradford Bypass. Recently, crews finished building a new bridge at Simcoe County Road 4 that will allow traffic to flow freely while construction of the bypass is under way.

We will continue to carry out our vision of slashing commute times in Simcoe county and York region by doing everything in our power to build the Bradford Bypass as quickly as possible.

Another vital project is the Garden City Skyway bridge. This serves as a crucial link between Ontario's international border crossings and the greater Golden Horseshoe. Every day, more than 100,000 vehicles travel across the skyway. Those include commercial vehicles carrying the goods Ontarians depend on every single day, vehicles bound for Niagara Falls and vehicles headed to the United States, among other destinations. There are few arteries that are as vital to international trade in our province. Given the critical role that the Garden City Skyway bridge plays in our transportation network and given the number of vehicles that depend on it each day, we need to do everything we can to keep traffic moving across the bridge faster, and we have a plan to do just that.

Our government is moving forward to twin the Garden City Skyway bridge. We are doing this by building a new Toronto-bound bridge over the Welland Canal, while rehabilitating the existing bridge, which will carry Niagara-bound traffic. And if the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, we'll designate the Garden City Skyway bridge twinning project a priority highway project, alongside the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are going to turbocharge our efforts to build highway infrastructure that will make life easier for millions of drivers and people each year. This legislation will bring us one step closer to getting it done. Our government knows these are the forward-thinking measures we need to improve the lives of Ontarians across the province. No one wants to spend their life stuck in traffic.

Our government is making historic investments in transportation infrastructure to keep people moving. Over the next decade, we're spending close to \$28 billion to build and expand the highways, roads and bridges that will connect communities across the province—like the projects I just mentioned, and so many more, in every corner of our province.

Madam Speaker, in 2022, more than 500,000 people arrived in Ontario. By the year 2051, the greater Golden Horseshoe will have a population of almost 15 million people. All of these new people will need places to live, and they will need ways to get around. If we do nothing to

build transportation infrastructure for the future, we know what to expect, which is what the previous Liberal government and governments of all stripes have left us: a province with drivers who are at a standstill.

The gridlock that's already clogging our roadways is costing our province \$11 billion a year in lost productivity, and right now it's predicted to only get worse. That means the amount of time Ontarians spend sitting in traffic when they could be with their families will only get worse. That means commercial vehicles that can't make deliveries on time—raising the prices of times on store shelves that families and businesses rely on.

The people of Ontario didn't elect a government to stand by while life gets more expensive for millions of families. We were elected on a promise to make life better and more affordable for the hard-working people who call this province home. And that's what the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act will allow us to do.

In addition to tabling this legislation that would allow us to accelerate the construction of priority highway projects, our government remains committed to embracing innovation to improve highway construction. That is why the Ministry of Transportation will study and assess the latest construction methods, leaving no stone unturned in our ongoing mission to improve efficiency, reduce costs and deliver quickly on the projects that will keep the province moving well into the future. We will evaluate the use of prefabricated materials and rapid bridge replacements to safely streamline construction of roads, bridges and highways across the province. When it comes to improving the lives of Ontarians, we're open to any option that improves our existing processes, anything that helps us deliver for families and businesses. And we'll continue to move forward with a vision and purpose as we build this province for the future.

Here in the GTA, drivers are all too familiar with the pain of being stuck in traffic every day. According to data obtained from TomTom—and published—Toronto drivers face the longest commutes in Canada and the third-longest commute times in the entire world. In spite of this, we've seen the city remove lanes of traffic to build new bike lanes. We're seeing this happen in other cities, as well.

When congestion has already reached a crisis point, when drivers are at their wits' end, removing traffic lanes to build bike lanes doesn't make sense. It only makes gridlock worse.

That is why the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, if passed, would introduce a common-sense approach to building bike lanes on city streets. Our government won't allow for the continued insanity that is bringing our streets to a standstill.

Even one of the most Liberal cities in the United States, San Francisco, is facing backlash and removing bike lanes.

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That is why our legislation would require municipalities to obtain provincial approval before removing traffic lanes to build new bike lanes. The province would establish a clear set of criteria for reviewing municipalities' requests to ensure we're taking a fair and

consistent approach to evaluating proposals. For example, we would like to know how removing traffic lanes will affect emergency response times. Will ambulances, fire trucks and police still be able to respond to emergencies in an effective and timely manner? How would removing vehicle lanes impact traffic volume? How would it impact road safety? Are municipalities accounting for cyclists only on the perfect cycling days or in the dead of winter? Are they taking that into consideration? These are some of the factors we'll consider when determining whether to approve bicycle lanes at municipalities' request. And if we determine that building those bike lanes would make congestion worse, they will not get built. It is as simple as that.

Our government fully supports bike lanes that reduce congestion and keep traffic flowing through cities, but these lanes need to be on secondary roads. And we are determined to put an end to bike lanes that make gridlock even worse.

As part of this process, we will ask municipalities to provide data on bike lane projects initiated within the past five years. We will be looking for information on how bike lanes have impacted road capacity, road safety and traffic volume. It will be a data-driven process. If we find that bike lanes have continued to cause traffic, we will take the appropriate action to address the issue.

We have seen first-hand the challenges on Bloor Street, on Yonge Street, on University Avenue, and the congestion that these bike lanes have caused.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Order.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It's unfortunate that the members opposite are laughing about that congestion and how horrible that has caused congestion to be.

In fact, I'm sure if the Liberals and NDP were given the option, they would turn the 401 into a bike-lane-only expressway.

Bike lanes should be part of the solution to gridlock, not be a part of the problem.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act aims to put an end to the chaos of bike lanes once and for all.

Madam Speaker, you know the weather in Ontario, the weather in Toronto. When it starts snowing, I have seen video evidence of more snowplows in these bike lanes than actual cyclists over a 24-hour period. That highlights the issues, and that highlights the problems that the members opposite refuse to accept. Ripping up 50% of the busiest lanes in Toronto—some of the busiest lanes, possibly, in all of North America—to accommodate a very, very small percentage of people, especially when we have a climate in which it gets very cold, in which it snows, and in which we have seen, especially, the Bloor Street west line be underutilized. When it is snowing, there are more snowplows than cyclists in a 24-hour period.

The fact is, gridlock is at a tipping point in Ontario. Our province has some of the worst travel times in North America.

Thankfully, we are continuing to invest in public transit—something that the previous Liberal government

and the current NDP government refuse to support us on. Whether it be the Ontario Line, whether it be the Scarborough subway extension, whether it be historic investments in GO Transit—almost 300 new trips per week announced this summer. And guess what? The Liberals and NDP have voted for increasing that accessibility in that transit across the province—that's a shame—especially on the Kitchener line.

We want to make sure that workers get home to their families quickly and on time. Our government won't sit back. We're going to work with Ontarians and relieve the congestion and improve the quality of life. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government will get traffic moving again by building priority projects, such as Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass and making sure we remove these silly bike lanes on the busiest corridors in our province.

Whether it's commuting to work by car or bus, or driving as part of your job, vehicles play an essential role in our daily lives and economic well-being. The opposition don't want people in cars. That's why they support carbon taxes. That's why they oppose reducing the fuel tax. But I think they should look at their own communities. They don't believe in building roads. They don't believe in building highways. They're so far removed from reality. Take a trip outside your downtown Toronto bubble. Go to the communities in York region, Peel and Brampton. Go to Timmins, look at Highway 11, look at Highway 17 and the projects that you continue to oppose. Then, please, come back to reality. Your punishing carbon tax, your opposition to making fuel prices lower and fighting against our tax cuts on fuel, ridiculously supporting policies that increase bike lanes and make life even more difficult for people across this province and cause more gridlock—we are going to continue to work for the people of this province and support common-sense initiatives and ensure that we are delivering for those drivers.

I also want to put forward and remind the House that, in this piece of legislation, it would require and enshrine that the current fees for knowledge tests and road tests would be frozen. This will help save Ontarians \$72 million over the decade. Any future fee increases, which we know the previous Liberal government put forward, whether it be on taxes or whether it be on driver's licences and knowledge test fees, would be frozen. If anybody wanted to change that, that would require a legislative amendment. This is another example of our bold, decisive action to keep costs down for drivers across the province. We're making it more affordable for people to get behind the wheel and, I would say, making it more affordable for people to take public transit with the introduction of One Fare, saving people \$1,600 by removing the duplication of fares. Unfortunately, the NDP and Liberals have voted against that too. Let's continue to build Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to add a few remarks on Bill 212 as it comes back to the House after a truncated, surprising committee process. This

government had been talking about giving themselves the power to rip out bike lanes and do other various things, and yet we hadn't seen it in the original bill—surprise, an 11-page amendment the day before we were to discuss and debate the amendments. That whole, giant 11-pager had never even come to the House for all of the members and the folks in Ontario to discuss—interesting move.

I'm going to take the opportunity and walk through a little bit about this bill. This is a five-schedule bill. The first one is supposedly building broadband faster. I do want to say, we all want broadband built, and considering the fact that this government cannot get the funding out the door and that budget after budget that money has gone unspent, we will believe it when we see it, but I would encourage them to actually come good on that significant promise.

This also has a section about building highways faster. Well, we tried. We brought forward at committee a series of amendments to designate other projects in the province as priority highway projects—projects like the Highway 11/17 widening project, the Highway 7 Kitchener-to-Guelph project, the Morriston bypass project, the Highway 40 widening project, the Highway 69 widening project, the Cochrane bypass project and the Highway 401 London-to-Tilbury widening and concrete-safety-barrier project. We discussed each of those thoughtfully, and the government voted against each one of them.

Mr. Joel Harden: What?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, shocking. Those communities are probably quite disappointed to find out that each of those projects is not a priority highway project. We tried though.

I'll move on to schedule 3 of this bill, which is about the 413. Schedule 3 would exempt Highway 413 from the requirement under a section of the Planning Act that ministry decisions be consistent with provincial policies and plans, which includes the greenbelt plan.

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One objective of the greenbelt plan is “to ensure that the development of transportation and infrastructure proceeds in an environmentally sensitive manner.” In other words, the current law effectively says, “You can build a highway through the greenbelt, but it must be done in an environmentally sensitive manner,” so they basically already have the power. By exempting Highway 413 from the need to be consistent with the greenbelt plan, this government is explicitly saying it doesn't intend to develop Highway 413 in an environmentally sensitive manner.

By the way, that's how they're going to invite the feds to make them go through the impact assessment process because, also, Highway 413 will no longer be subject to the Environmental Assessment Act. The Environmental Assessment Act already allows the government enormous flexibility for streamlining processes. They are bypassing the Environmental Assessment Act provisions, they are making sure that it isn't covered under the Planning Act or, as I said, the greenbelt plan.

I really worry about what they have in store when it comes to the 413 and the environment. We don't know what it will cost. We have no idea.

I will say also that Highway 413 is now exempted from the notification and consultation processes required under the Environmental Bill of Rights, and I will say that the Environmental Bill of Rights is a pretty proud achievement from the Ontario NDP government of yore. The fact this government is ensuring that it doesn't have reach over the 413 is shocking. It is disgraceful how this government has routinely violated the Environmental Bill of Rights that established the rights of Ontarians to be informed of and participate in decisions affecting the environment. Of course, the NDP vehemently opposes this section of the bill.

The NDP put forward an amendment to remove a subsection in this bill which allows certain activities to proceed before consultation with Indigenous communities is completed—the article “Highway 413 Work Could Start Before Indigenous Consultations End, Prompting Concerns”—that's not okay, and yet they've put it in the bill explicitly.

Moving on to schedule 4—I know that my colleagues are going to ensure that we get all of the voices that we can on the record about their bike lane attacks—but in this 11-page amendment, the government only considers vehicle traffic, not bike traffic.

Interestingly, while it says that the minister shall remove the bike lanes on Bloor Street, University Avenue and Yonge Street, that they would have to approve various projects—here's just an interesting section, I'm figuring, since there is an election on the horizon, that says, “For the purpose of” ripping out bike lanes—sorry, those are my words—the minister may “enter any place” and “use machinery, structures, materials and equipment therein or thereon...” I imagine that because it literally gives explicit permission for the minister to get on a backhoe and rip it out himself once this bill passes, that's going to be a heck of a campaign ad.

Listen, I'm not trying to mock this. This has been a heck of a shortened process with a lot of impassioned voices who are interested in safety—by the way, that word, “safety,” doesn't make an appearance in schedule 4.

I see members from the cycling community here in the House today. I want to thank them for being a part of this process.

This fight is not over even though the government is ramming this through. We want to keep people safe in the province of Ontario. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm sharing my time with the member from Guelph.

I did not realize that the Premier liked to fish and that he was such a good fisherman, but we're not taking the bait of bike lanes with Bill 212. He's trying to distract us from real issues the provincial government should be solving: education, housing, health care.

I'm done being a city councillor—that's over. And the Premier is no longer a city councillor, but he is still—lately, he's been acting like he's the mayor of Toronto, with this horrible Bill 212 and his government's reckless approach to transportation.

We know physically separated bike lanes save lives—your constituents' lives. Does the government actually think this is a great policy decision when they have to pre-indemnify themselves from lawsuits and criminal charges? Imagine that the government is readily admitting that they know people will get injured and die as a result of this backwards legislation.

I'm a person who bikes. Beaches–East York is full of families, youth and seniors who use bikes to get around. Many of them only do so because of the safe cycling infrastructure on the roads. All the members in this chamber who vote for this bill are telling me that they do not value my life, that they do not value the lives of their residents who choose to bike as their mode of transportation.

They are telling their residents that they are happy to spend \$48 million of their tax dollars ripping out infrastructure in Toronto. Why the obsession with Toronto? Surely, people in Timmins would want that money spent locally. In my riding of Beaches–East York, there are important things that I could spend that money on. Second public school has been waiting for a renovation for 10 years. Some 23,000 Beaches–East Yorkers do not have a family doctor; that money could help. Michael Garron Hospital could use the help for ER wait times and retaining nurses.

The government continues to fail to provide the basics for the great people of Ontario, and instead pulls stunts like Bill 212 that divide us and distract us from the provincial issues we should be dealing with. But guess what, Mr. Premier? Ontarians are smarter than that. We aren't taking the bait.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: You know, I'll be honest: I said at the second reading of this bill that we had entered the Twilight Zone, and we are still firmly there. This is my first instance in six years where I've heard a minister of the crown get up and propose a bill based on sentiment. I have never heard a single shred of evidence that protected infrastructure for vulnerable road users causes congestion, but the minister—we heard it; it was 25 painful minutes of subpar stand-up comedy. We heard it—we heard it again and again—but without a shred of evidence.

I just want to say as I start, Speaker, that that's frightening, because we are living in a time when if you say things again and again and if they get shared in a viral capacity on digital platforms, you can propose them to be correct. But it's the government's responsibility to demonstrate to the opposition caucuses and the people of Ontario that their decisions are made in the public interest and with evidence, and they have utterly failed on that front today.

The bill should be called the “increasing tragedies, missing the moment act.” Why do I say that, Speaker? I'll say it for the record again: because we know from collisions statistics from the Ministry of Transportation that 49,106 people were critically injured or killed in 2023 by reckless driving. Very often in those statistics are vulnerable road users: cyclists, people with disabilities,

seniors, road workers, first responders responding to the scene of an accident, who have been critically injured or in some cases killed.

The government, in six years, sadly has not proposed a single measure for vulnerable road users—not a single one. Impaired driving? Sure. Stunt driving? Sure. But not a single shred of evidence, despite the fact that the opposition has put it on the floor six times in the last 10 years, under this government and the previous Liberal government, to have vulnerable road users be safe in our communities.

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I want to read into the record the words of Janessa Mann, who lost her father, a cyclist who was hit and killed in the west end of our city. This is what her message is for the minister. Janessa says this bill is “not worth the money and time and lives it will cost. My one-year-old daughter, she's not going to know” her opa—her grandfather. “And I don't want that to be the case for any other one-year-old because of unsafe cycling infrastructure, unsafe drivers, because it hurts. That's not fair.” Members of this House may not know Janessa, but she's a person. She's a daughter. She lost her dad.

The evidence that we are starting to gather in Ottawa is that this is a dangerous area that could use further protection. But this government has said through this bill that the only way the city of Ottawa can do it is if they get the Minister of Transportation's permission first, because dad knows best.

Speaker, I also want to acknowledge Jessica Spieker and Michael Longfield in the House today. Jessica Spieker was critically injured in 2015, seriously injured at the site of an accident with a reckless driver—who was fined a pittance of a few hundred dollars for this—and nearly died from her injuries of blood clots afterward. Michael Longfield, vice-president of Cycle Toronto, was also critically injured in an accident on a bike.

You may not know Janessa, you may not know Jessica, you may not know Michael, but I'll end on this note: Maybe you know me; I've been here for the last six years. And I regret to inform this House that I'm also someone who was involved in a reported incident of road violence very recently. I was on my way to go pick up our vehicle, which was being serviced. If people know my city, in Ottawa where Billings Bridge shopping mall is, the traffic is reduced to a narrow two lanes. The signage says cyclists and cars have to share the road. When I was going southbound, up Bank Street, under the Transitway, I could hear a whoosh behind me and a driver knocked my left arm to the point where my handlebars turned like so and I was vaulted over the handlebars. This gentlemen did a hit-and-run and left. But thankfully—and this says a lot about Canadians—everybody around stopped. They got out of their vehicles, they dusted me off, they looked to see if I was okay. But if that car that was in behind that dangerous, reckless driver had been right on the bumper, I might not be here today. I might not be here today.

Behind that 49,106 collision incidents are human beings: Jess, Michael, Janessa, me and so many other

people whose lives matter. My friend from St. Catharines's mom, critically hit as she crossed an intersection near an elementary school in St. Catharines: thrown how many feet?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Fifty.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thrown 50 feet by a driver who began from a standstill. Where are the penalties? Why isn't that a priority in this bill? And why are we proposing the removal of protected infrastructure that could save lives?

I know we are living in an age of politics, where likes and shares and spin seem to matter more than substance, but I had the honour in this place—the honour—of meeting the former Premier of this province, Bill Davis. Under those Conservative governments, hospitals were built, school were built, swimming pools were built, libraries were built, community infrastructure was built. I have great respect for former Premier Davis.

But what I struggle to understand is how this generation of Conservatives appears to have forgotten their responsibility to conduct evidence to guide their decisions. The people that will suffer, the people that will lose their lives, are regular Ontarians. It doesn't need to happen. We still have time. Pull this bill. Fix it right now.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: When I travel around this province and I visit people in Huntsville and Owen Sound, in North Bay and other places, they tell me they do not want to pay to remove bike lanes in Toronto or to build a highway in the GTA when they don't receive any benefits, when they are fighting to keep their emergency departments open or get access to a doctor or build affordable housing. Because none of these efforts that this government is doing will actually solve gridlock and it is going to cost billions of dollars.

The minister talked about experts. First of all, the government has given us no evidence on why they would ever tear out bike lanes and the only evidence we've ever seen on Highway 413 is that it will cost billions of dollars and save people 30 seconds. It's not worth it, especially when it's going to pave over 2,000 acres of farmland, 400 acres of the greenbelt, 220 wetlands and 85 waterways.

So, this highway shouldn't be built, but then the government says, "Oh, we're going to exempt it from an environmental assessment." Well, this summer, one day of rainstorms cost the city of Toronto over \$4 billion worth of damage. We know those storms are going to become more frequent and severe due to the climate crisis. Paving over all those wetlands, all that farmland, unleashing sprawl on all of that land to benefit a handful of wealthy speculators—the same speculators that are, by the way, part of the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal and RCMP investigation—is only going to make flooding worse in the GTA.

This government doesn't care about the lives of cyclists. It doesn't care about the cost and damage that flooding is going to do, otherwise it would at least do an

environmental assessment. They would maybe even do a cost estimate. But no, no, no.

If the government wants to solve gridlock, put truckers on the 407 and start building homes people can afford in communities they know and love so we don't have to force people to commute so long.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Let me begin by saying that the title of this bill, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time, is inaccurate, because nothing, absolutely nothing, in this bill actually reduces gridlock or saves anyone time.

What does this bill really do? It rips out existing bike lanes and prevents the creation of new ones. I think we must be the only jurisdiction in the world moving backwards on this. Conservatives included this in the legislation as a distraction from their real agenda, which is to bypass due diligence and environmental assessments for Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. This is their backdoor attempt to cut into the greenbelt and pave over 400 acres of protected land and 2,000 acres of prime farmland. Speaker, they were forced to back down when they tried this last year, but they're so determined to build over the greenbelt that they've now taken this route to push it through.

Here's the thing: By using the bike lanes as a distraction and a divisive issue, this government is engaging in a massive overreach into a municipal issue. Not only that, and perhaps the worst, they're putting the lives of vulnerable road users at risk, creating conditions for serious injury and even death.

We know that the government knows this will happen, because they included an 11-page amendment to their own bill to prevent anyone from suing the government for injuries or deaths caused by the removal of bike lanes. This Conservative government has given themselves immunity from any and all consequences of their actions.

But beyond bike lanes, the extraordinary powers enabled by this bill represent yet another abuse of power by the Ford government. It is reminiscent of Bill 154, which declared Ontario Place a zone where the rule of law and government accountability do not apply.

The people of this province see right through this government's agenda, and they are pushing back. This bill is not just opposed by cycling advocates and cyclists or environmental groups, but by professional organizations, like the engineers and urban planners, and tens of thousands of Ontarians are speaking out against it.

So, what did the government do? They used a time allocation motion to cut short the debate and limit committee hearings to just one day, even though countless stakeholders and individuals wanted to voice their concerns. And then, for that one day of hearings, not a single presentation—not one—at committee spoke in favour of this bill. Every single presentation at committee opposed this bill.

The Premier and the Minister of Transportation have provided no evidence to back their claims that bike lanes cause gridlock. In fact, the only evidence they have is a

briefing document prepared for the cabinet which actually shows that removing bike lanes does not solve traffic congestion—in fact, it has the opposite effect.

1450

If the Conservatives truly wanted to reduce gridlock, they could move trucks off of Highway 401 and into the underutilized 407. We proposed this in the House. The Conservatives voted against it. It would be an initiative that would actually reduce gridlock and save time.

If the Conservatives are serious about reducing gridlock, they would prioritize finishing existing transit projects, like the Eglinton LRT, the Finch LRT, the Hurontario LRT. The Eglinton LRT construction began 14 years ago, and we still don't have an opening date, not even an estimate. If they cared about reducing gridlock, then the Conservatives would invest into TTC operations, improve train reliability, increase service frequency, ensure safety, expand bus services. That would reduce gridlock and save time.

But have they done any of these things? No. This bill will not reduce gridlock and it will not save anyone time. What this bill does is pave over the greenbelt and put the lives of vulnerable road users at risk. I urge the government: There's still time to do the right thing. Stop this bill. Go back to the drawing board. Listen to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House, although I do so with a heavy heart today. The government's Bill 212 is not a smart bill. We know it's wrong-headed and it's cynical politics at best. What we're seeing from this government is trolling.

What they're proposing to do is remove cycling infrastructure installed by cities. They're proposing to make roads less safe. It doesn't necessarily remove cyclists; it just means that the cyclists will then still be biking in those communities, but without the adequate protections that they deserve. The government goes as far as inoculating itself from future potential legislation. That is how much confidence that they have in the goodness of their bill. They themselves know that this is a wrong-headed bill.

Speaker, we have heard from numerous advocates across Ontario who have come forward to speak about the importance of local governance. This includes the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who have written to the Premier and the cabinet about how wrong-headed this bill is. They cite that this government has overreached once again into municipalities.

I have seen this fight before on numerous occasions, when the Premier at this time, who was still sitting as a city councillor with his brother, did everything they could to undermine cycling and road safety in Toronto. I can't believe that the Premier wants to actually be the mayor of Ontario. So much can be said about how to support municipalities, and none of that is here.

The fact is, bike lanes do actually reduce congestion. They take up less space and still facilitate the movement

of vehicles, as well as passengers and people. The recent Bloor Street corridor study has shown that information, and they know that in order for us to address congestion in Toronto, the government can do so much more. They can invest in transportation that includes active transportation, includes transit, which they have not done adequately. Toronto has the highest fare box in North America when it comes to transit. This government has abdicated its responsibility by not investing in that mass transit order.

The government can also reduce congestion by regulating rideshare. We have 100,000 vehicles every single day, through Uber and Lyft, deadheading through our community, hustling for passengers. They are actually contributing to the problem of congestion. This government refuses to see that.

We also know that hundreds of roads in Toronto are pinched by private developers as they build housing and other mixed-use communities. That is a problem in Toronto. I don't see this government addressing that concern, nor is this government putting any other effort in the other smart tools that can be invested in to reduce congestion.

We've also seen that bike lanes can boost business. This has come from their own study, from the Toronto bike lane impact study conducted on Bloor Street. We see similar studies in San Francisco, Vancouver, Portland, that all show that when you put in cycling infrastructure, you will see more people stopping in neighbourhoods, investing, shopping, dining. The fact is, roads and sidewalks are municipal issues and they should be left to municipalities, not necessarily oversight by this provincial government who is meddling and trying to distract us from their real record, which is the failure to invest in housing, the failure to invest in health care, the failure to address the problems in long-term care.

This municipal issue that this government continues to overreach in is a problem. Municipalities want a partner in their provincial government; they don't want an overseer. Provincial overreach on this matter is highly undemocratic and ignores the rights of Toronto residents and, mark my words, it will ignore the rights of your local residents when the time comes.

Finally, the removal of cycling infrastructure in Toronto is a massive waste of taxpayer dollars. This is not fiscally prudent on any order whatsoever. By removing those cycling lanes, not only are you losing the \$27 million of sunk cost that went into installing them, you're actually now forfeiting that by adding another \$47 million to it.

The data is clear: Bike lanes do save lives. It alleviates congestion and it benefits businesses on the corridor.

Residents in Toronto deserve a government that will work with them. I want to be able to highlight a few voices from my community and I want to thank them for writing in, because in order for me to actually convey how I feel about this debate, I'm going to bring the voices of my community right into the chamber.

I want to share the voice of a very thoughtful constituent, anesthesiologist Dr. Natalie Wainwright. She writes, "I'm a physician in Toronto. I've worked at nearly

every major hospital in the GTA. While working in the trauma bays at the two major trauma centres, Sunnybrook and St. Michael's, I have witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of cycling accidents. I've been impressed by the city's initiative to improve road safety by creating protected bike lanes, so much so that I've now begun cycling. I am now biking downtown and I've been doing so for years, and to my surprise, my commute will be disrupted.

"My partner, who works farther downtown, would likely continue cycling ... if the bike lanes were removed." This would cause concerns about his safety.

I also heard from another health care worker: Nathan Haspel. He shares that his friends who work in health care rely heavily on University Avenue to get to work. If those bike lanes were removed, they are concerned that they will not be able to get to work on time or be safe.

Ontarian Colin Whyte, who identifies himself as a car owner and not a cyclist, has strong words for this House: "I ... urge you to oppose any attempts to remove the bike lanes on Bloor Street, University Avenue, and Yonge Street. Recent discussions on their potential removal are both disappointing and a grave oversight, as they undermine the progress" of our city and they actually make our community less safe.

Fact: Bike lanes save lives.

Finally, I will say this: As a parent who is raising my child in Toronto, I want my child and all his friends to be safe. It is only a matter of time, when you take away his bike lane, that you'll leave him less safe—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We've reached the end of time for debate.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 6, 2024, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Sarkaria has moved third 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. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1459 to 1504.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Members will take their seats.

Mr. Sarkaria has moved third 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.

Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bresee, Ric	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Leardi, Anthony	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Graydon
Dixon, Jess	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Piccini, David	Tibollo, Michael A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Hamid, Zee	Quinn, Nolan	Yakubski, John

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanhof, John
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 66; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

STRENGTHENING CYBER SECURITY AND BUILDING TRUST IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RENFORCER LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ ET LA CONFIANCE DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. McCarthy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures / Projet de loi 194, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 visant à renforcer la sécurité et la confiance en matière de numérique et modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui concerne les mesures de protection de la vie privée.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I return to the minister to start the debate.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Madam Speaker, through you to the members of this House—all honourable members

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Anand, Deepak	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Barnes, Patrice	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot

of this House—it is with great pride and determination that I rise in the Legislative Assembly today for the third reading of Bill 194, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024.

I wish to express my thanks to my ministry officials, including Deputy Minister Sarah Harrison, associate deputy minister John Roberts and all of the team with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, and, of course, my chief of staff, Kai Nademi, and his team at my ministry office.

1510

This proposed legislation reflects our government's unwavering commitment to building a stronger, safer and more resilient Ontario in this digital era. Today, we stand at a definitive crossroads in our province's history—a moment when the choices we make will shape Ontario's digital landscape for decades to come.

The digital revolution that we are living through brings boundless opportunities, but it also comes with complex challenges that demand bold action and forward-thinking leadership. It is not enough to keep pace with technological advancements, but Ontario must continue to lead.

Bill 194 embodies this vision of leadership. It addresses the critical issues of cyber security, data privacy, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence in the public sector. With it, we are laying the foundation for a future where every Ontario resident and every institution in this province can trust Ontario's government to protect data, secure our services and defend our interests in an increasingly digitally connected world. By adopting robust security measures, enhancing accountability and fostering innovation, this legislation positions our province as a leader in digital trust and resilience. This is not just a legislative milestone; it is a declaration that Ontario is ready to meet the challenges of the digital age head-on to secure a brighter, safer and more prosperous future for all.

If passed, Bill 194 would lay the essential groundwork to future-proof our digital infrastructure and implement robust safeguards to harness the benefits of this digital revolution while mitigating against its risks. This legislation would not only build a secure and innovative digital future for all; it would ensure the long-term success, security and economic prosperity of our province.

Today, I urge all members of this House to seize this moment and affirm our collective commitment to safeguarding Ontario's digital future.

Over the past year or so, cyber attacks have created havoc across our world.

Here in Ontario, in October 2023, cyber criminals encrypted Toronto Public Library computer systems and stole employee data, essentially shutting down services for months. The same month, a ransomware attack took critical systems at five southwestern Ontario hospitals. It took them offline for weeks, and recovery has cost upwards of \$7.5 million.

In October 2024, just last month, personnel at the Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant successfully

identified and navigated around a cyber incident and maintained operations.

Also, the city of Hamilton has spent millions of dollars to rebuild its IT network after a February 2024 ransomware assault.

The list goes on, sadly.

In January 2023, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario had malicious code embedded on its website, compromising customer data.

A December 2022 cyber attack against the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board exposed the information of employees and current and former students, costing almost \$1 million.

In June 2023, the Toronto District School Board—Canada's largest—experienced a ransomware attack that may have compromised students' identifying information.

In February 2024, Laurentian University confirmed a data breach resulting from a broader cyber security incident that compromised personal information stored in the university's network.

These are only some of the many cyber attacks negatively impacting our province, but all make it abundantly clear that we need to act immediately to bolster our defences against cyber criminals. These attacks do not just jeopardize the trust and the peace of mind of the people who live in our province; they are a direct threat to our way of life. Now is the time for action to help prevent attacks from debilitating our cherished public sector institutions.

Over the course of the past several months, it has been my privilege to meet organizations in Ontario's business and technology communities to share highlights of Bill 194 and its impacts. I have met with boards of trade in Brampton, Ottawa, Mississauga, Markham, and the Windsor-Essex chamber of commerce as well. I also hosted a round table with Communitech in Kitchener, a support organization for tech start-ups. And recently, I met with both the Vector Institute and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. And specifically, on November 12 of this year, I was honoured to address the Empire Club on Bill 194. These sessions aimed to raise awareness about how our government is safeguarding privacy and data, and to gather valuable feedback as we develop potential regulations, should the bill pass. The broad support that we have received from the various stakeholders we engaged with demonstrates both the timeliness and the importance of this work. It is vital that we openly communicate across all levels of government, all regions and all sectors to ensure there are no gaps in our fortifications against cyber threats.

We are committed to engaging and working in lockstep with partners now and into the future so that the people and the businesses of our province can trust that the right protections are in place to confidently and safely participate—and thrive—online.

By maintaining an open dialogue with partners over time, our government is committed to adapting to meet the changing needs of our people and our businesses, ensuring protections remain relevant and effective, and fostering

trust in our digital landscape. This open dialogue is not limited to our provincial boundaries, however.

In September, I had the privilege of meeting with my counterparts from across Canada who are responsible for digital trust and cyber security at the federal, provincial and territorial symposium in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. We discussed three main areas: cyber security, digital trust, and artificial intelligence. It was a tremendous opportunity to showcase Ontario's strong leadership in these three critical areas and to report on the decisive actions we are taking to build digital trust. My counterparts across the country were pleased to hear about our Bill 194, and we had many productive conversations about interprovincial alignment on cyber security. All jurisdictions agreed on the paramount need to develop strong digital trust frameworks to ensure that our residents are safe online. The entire table committed to collaborating and working alongside each other to build a stronger, safer and more resilient digital future for all.

On the 14th of this month, I also had the privilege of speaking to members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy about Bill 194. The committee members and the presenters all offered some informed and thoughtful feedback. The committee also heard from experts on the importance of setting requirements around mandatory reporting of cyber security incidents to our government. This requirement would help government and public sector organizations get ahead of challenges and respond more quickly to cyber threats.

With respect to artificial intelligence, we heard from a broad array of participants who share this government's interest in building safeguards for this rapidly evolving area to protect people's data and guide the transparent, accountable and responsible use of artificial intelligence in both the public sector and the broader public sector. In particular, representatives from industry and the technology sector informed us of the emerging opportunities AI presents and commended Ontario's leadership in advancing balanced artificial intelligence guardrails that are both robust and nimble enough to keep up with the incredible pace of this evolving technology. While we know there are risks with AI if used irresponsibly, we also know that AI can drive innovation, enhance service delivery, achieve efficiencies and achieve cost savings for our government.

We hear those who tell us that we are all on a learning curve and that greater public awareness and achievable safeguards are the key to building trust. The proposed legislative changes are vital to maintaining public trust and security.

1520

Building public trust and security is especially important to protect Ontario's children, who face unique risks when using digital technology. We heard from experts about the serious negative impacts that children can face when using online applications. These impacts may include cyberbullying, AI-generated deepfake impersonations, and predatory marketing, all of which can undermine a child's health and a child's well-being. The

committee heard there is an urgent need to implement strong protections against digital abuse, at the same time building digital literacy and provide opportunities for children and families to give consent for the use of their data. This proposed legislation aligns with this feedback by laying the groundwork to protect and empower Ontario's children and Ontario's youth in schools, alongside children's aid societies, including Indigenous child and family well-being agencies.

We also heard the Information and Privacy Commissioner speak to the committee about the importance of protecting personal information. The Information and Privacy Commissioner stated to the committee: "Bill 194 charts a path towards that laudable goal ... to secure the public's confidence that their personal information will be protected in a world of digital information and AI." We look forward to continuing to work with her office in an open and co-operative manner to identify and make further improvements to this framework going forward.

Speaker, today we stand at a critical juncture in Ontario's journey toward a secure, resilient and forward-looking digital future. In this constantly advancing digital world, our shared mission to protect Ontario's digital landscape is more urgent than ever, and I'm proud to share with you how we plan to do so through Bill 194, the proposed Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024.

The proposed legislation is not just a necessary response to the challenges we face, but it embodies a strategic, proactive approach to protect our public services, our public institutions and, indeed, the well-being of every person throughout the province of Ontario. Simply put, our commitment to cyber security can never be overstated. The digital era has opened up new frontiers of convenience, connectivity and opportunity, but as we embrace these advancements, we must face the risks that grow more sophisticated and aggressive with each passing day.

Ontario's essential public services—health care, education, child welfare, and more—are all potential targets for cyber criminals, whose motives range from financial gain to deliberate disruption of our systems. Bill 194 represents Ontario's promise to address these threats with the strength, the foresight and the adaptability required to protect our society's most critical functions, to protect everyone in Ontario, with the protection of our children and the most vulnerable in our province at the forefront of all our efforts. This legislation underscores our determination to create a safe, secure and trusted public sector in our province. With this proposed act, we are not only enhancing the resilience of our systems, but we are also setting a high standard of vigilance and preparedness. The aim is clear: to continue positioning Ontario as a national leader in cyber security—and yes, we are leaders, and we will continue to be leaders.

This bill, if passed, would set a framework to implement requirements to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to all forms of cyber threats. By reinforcing our defences, we are taking necessary steps to counter threats

from cyber criminals that could compromise the safety, privacy and prosperity of our people. Denial-of-service attacks, ransomware, phishing and other cyber threats—all threats that have materialized against governments and their institutions of late—are not just attacks on organizations themselves, but they also undermine public trust, national security and the health of our economy. Governments and the people we represent cannot afford to endure more of these assaults on their trust and on their tax dollars. Because of this, honourable members, there is no time like the present for us to double down on our efforts to put cyber criminals on notice and out of business. We will not stand idly by while they attempt to compromise our ability to serve Ontario's people and Ontario's businesses.

The proposed legislation was developed in consultation with experts, academia and key public sector stakeholders. I do wish to express my thanks to everyone who contributed, and who will continue to play a role—as the conversations will begin anew if this legislation is passed—and as we develop proposed regulations under the act, should it pass third reading and receive royal assent. Our government understands that new protections are required for the ever-changing technology landscape.

I was honoured and proud on May 13, 2024, when I stood before this House to introduce this bill for first reading—one which I believe to be one of the most transformative pieces of legislation in our province's history.

Bill 194 is a response to the challenges of the digital age. It is Ontario's declaration that we will lead the way in building a secure, innovative and trusted future for our citizens and residents. In this rapidly evolving technological landscape, this bill will equip our broader public sector with the tools to protect what matters most: the privacy of our citizens and residents, the safety of our most vulnerable populations, and the prosperity of a digital economy built on confidence and innovation. This legislation is not just about keeping up; it is about setting the standards for public sector organizations to strengthen cyber security, enhance privacy safeguards, and ensure the responsible use of artificial intelligence. In doing so, it positions Ontario as a trailblazer in creating a digital framework that balances innovation, modernization and protection.

During the second reading debate in this House, it became clear just how vital this legislation is to the people we serve in the province of Ontario. We can and we must foster growth in our digital economy while safeguarding our citizens, our residents and their data.

Upon the passage of this proposed legislation, Ontario would become one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to regulate three key pieces of digital security in the public sector at the same time: cyber security, data protections for our children, and the use of artificial intelligence.

When it comes to strengthening cyber security, we know that the best type of response is both coordinated and proactive. Should the bill pass, we would propose sector-specific requirements that could include mandatory notifi-

cation of critical cyber security incidents to government, better enabling the government to develop targeted tools to enhance cyber resiliency across the public sector. Cyber threats do not adhere to jurisdictions, industries or any confined space. It is imperative, then, that we work across all levels of government to identify, stop and mitigate against the impacts of a cyber attack. And by working together, we can and we will achieve this.

As parents across Ontario understand, children are at the greatest risk of harm posed by digital technology. Unscrupulous criminals who engage in cyber crime often target children's data. This is contemptible, and we owe it to our children to ensure their futures are secured and protected while they use digital technology in the public space.

That is why the proposed Bill 194 includes tools to establish ways to better protect children from inappropriate data use in schools and children's aid societies, including the Indigenous child and family well-being agencies I referenced.

For our children, and indeed for all the people of Ontario, we must ensure that our protections and our guardrails not only keep pace with but anticipate technological advancements. That is what we owe to our children—never accepting complacency, and putting their best interests first and foremost, always.

In addition, the bill would introduce measures to modernize our approach to privacy protections. With data breaches on the rise, Ontario is enhancing the authority of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to investigate privacy breaches and enforce stricter standards across public institutions. By mandating privacy impact assessments, we are prioritizing the responsible use of personal data. These measures will be integral in ensuring that privacy is at the forefront of every digital interaction with our public sector.

1530

The final pillar of Bill 194 is safeguarding the responsible use of artificial intelligence. Ontario would become a national leader in responsible AI governance if this legislation passes this House. Bill 194 lays the foundation for transparent, ethical AI use within the public sector. By establishing clear guidelines and accountability measures, we can ensure that artificial intelligence is deployed to serve the people of Ontario while upholding privacy and trust.

Artificial intelligence has immense potential to transform public services, and Ontario is committed to realizing this safely and responsibly. Government and industry are leveraging AI in their operations to increase efficiency, productivity and expand the range of products and services available to all. Our government fully recognizes the incredible opportunity technology like artificial intelligence offers our province. That is why Bill 194, if passed, would guide the responsible use of AI in the public sector while also supporting the growth of a safe and prosperous digital economy. This landmark legislation is critical because it ensures both economic prosperity in a digital world and safety and security for all.

Every day that we do not take proactive measures to safeguard our province's digital infrastructure is another day that we remain open to attack. Cyber attacks do remain an active challenge for our province. We must stand together to defend against them, and I am confident that the bill, if passed, would enable government to put the protections in place that we need to protect our province in the face of cyber criminals. Simply because we do not see these enemies does not mean that they do not exist and represent a growing threat. We would deliver a strong message to these criminals that Ontario will not be a victim of their malicious crimes.

Speaker, and through you to all honourable members of this House, this is a landmark piece of legislation, of critical importance to our digital economy. It confirms Ontario's place as a leader not just in Canada but as a global leader. In the end, our goal is to keep the people of Ontario safe from potential data-related harms while fostering growth in the digital landscape. By working with our partners across all sectors, I'm confident we can and will achieve it. The people of our great province deserve nothing less, and we need to deliver.

As I close, let me remind all members through you that this is more than just a bill. It is Ontario's declaration of leadership in this digital age. In a world where cyber threats grow more sophisticated by the day, standing still is not an option. We must act, and we must lead. Our ministry consulted with and engaged with, among others, cyber security experts, parents, school boards, partner ministries and technology leaders, all of whom gave us advice and wisdom and good information. We all agreed the time to act is now.

We have the technology, we have the thoughtful leadership, we have the vision, we have the determination, and above all, we are on the right side of history with the values that will guide us to triumph over the cyber criminals who seek to undermine our ability to keep our residents and our critical infrastructure safe.

Our future is one where Ontario stands as a beacon of digital resilience. Let us now rise to this challenge not only as members of this House that serve our people but as stewards of Ontario's future. By supporting Bill 194—and I urge unanimous support for Bill 194—we signal to every Ontarian that this 43rd Ontario Parliament is prepared to defend their interests, secure their data and build a foundation for a strong digital future. Thank you.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement for bringing forward this bill.

We need this bill. We're in an artificial intelligence revolution. We're inundated with cyber security attacks. We need a bill for not just the public sector but the private sector. This bill deals with the public sector and AI and cyber security, so we absolutely need some legislation.

There should be four goals with this bill. It should be:

—to encourage the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence in the public sector;

—to protect our public sector from cyber attacks and our data that they hold;

—to promote the Ontario tech sector, because as we build our artificial intelligence infrastructure and are looking to hire cyber security systems, there is an opportunity to promote our native Ontario tech sector; and also

—to protect jobs, because one of the great fears among many people is that artificial intelligence is going to eliminate a lot of jobs. We need to make sure that jobs are protected and that people have a place to transition to.

I would say this bill does a couple of things, but none of them well. The challenge with this bill is that it is not transparent. Every person I spoke to and every article I read said that the hallmark of good artificial intelligence and cyber security policy-making is transparency. The word "transparent" appears in this bill once, the word "transparency" also appears once, and 52 times the word "regulation" appears.

I know this is kind of inside baseball. I see some students up in the gallery today—hey, guys—and I'll take a moment and just explain to you a little bit of how this place works. The government brings forward legislation. Actually, any of us, any of the 124 members in the House, can bring forward legislation. We can bring forward a bill. We can have it debated in the House. This is a public debate—like yourselves: You're from the public and you are welcome to come and listen to this debate. This is the value of a Parliament and it's the hallmark of our democracy.

After the legislation is passed, the ministers make regulations, which are basically rules, to implement the legislation. Usually there is a broad statement of principles in the legislation: "These are the things that we want to accomplish and here are some guidelines." Then the minister will create regulations—the rules—about how this is implemented.

This bill has very few guidelines. That's the risk of it. The word "regulation" is mentioned 52 times. What it does is, it gives the cabinet ministers the power to create rules about the implementation of artificial intelligence and cyber security, but it doesn't do it with guidelines. This is one of my greatest concerns.

I'll tell you a little bit more about this House. The House goes through three readings of a bill before it becomes law. The first reading and the second reading happen here. There is a debate on the second reading. Then, after the second reading, usually the bill is transferred to a committee. Then you have committee hearings and the public can come and speak directly about the bill at the committee hearings.

At the committee hearings, we, the opposition, can bring forward amendments. We brought 32 amendments to this bill.

MPP Wayne Gates: How many?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thirty-two. All of these amendments were voted down.

MPP Wayne Gates: All of them?

Mr. Chris Glover: Every one of them.

MPP Wayne Gates: Was it something you said?

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't know, maybe it was something I said. Although I must have been saying the same thing for six years because—and this is one of my concerns about our democracy and our parliamentary democracy: Usually when you get outside this room and go to committee, it's a bit of a back-and-forth. We are genuinely trying to improve the legislation.

So we asked for amendments to insert guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence in the public sector for our public sector services—our hospitals, our schools, our colleges, our universities, all our municipalities. We said, “Hey, AI should be transparent. If a resident of Ontario is interacting with an AI system, they should be aware that they're interacting with an AI system. It should be accountable. It should affirm human rights and it should protect our democratic rights.”

Those very simple, broad guidelines were all voted down. This is my concern with this bill, because it empowers the ministers to make rules and regulations without any guidelines. This is, I think, the greatest concern that I have about this bill.

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In another era, I would not be as concerned as I am right now. There's a global movement against democracy, and several pieces—and it's not just global. It's not just other countries. I've lived in two countries that, when I lived there, were robust democratic states, and then afterwards, their democratic rights were grossly infringed upon. It would be hard to describe them as democratic states right now.

In this province, there have been several pieces of legislation that have overridden our charter rights, overridden the Human Rights Code and that have allowed the appointment of partisan judges. These are attacks on our democratic rights in Ontario. The question is, with this legislation, should we be trusting this government to make rules without guidelines that will direct our democratic rights? The answer that I'm coming up with is I'm not sure. I don't know that we can trust this government to actually make regulations that will protect our democratic rights and our human rights.

I want to step back a bit and just talk a little bit about what artificial intelligence is. This is a story I relayed when I gave my second reading speech. It's about a chat bot and about CAPTCHA. CAPTCHA are those scrambled letters that you have when you're trying to get into an app or website or whatever and they send out those scrambled letters. I don't know how many times you guys have to do it, but I have to do it many times to actually get the right combination of capitals—I just don't see it. Anyway, apparently computers can't see it either, so it's not just me; computers can't see it.

This one guy created a chat bot to solve CAPTCHA puzzles. The chat bot tried to solve the CAPTCHA puzzle, but it could not. So then it accessed Taskrabbit, which is a service where you can hire real people to help you with digital tasks. The human at Taskrabbit was suspicious, and it asked the chat bot, “Are you a robot?” The chat bot said, “No, I have a vision impairment.” So the person at

Taskrabbit helped them to solve the CAPTCHA puzzles so the chat bot was actually able to accomplish its goal.

What this made me realize is that artificial intelligence is an incredibly powerful tool, but it has no moral compass. It's like an axe. An axe is a really, really powerful tool, a great thing to use for chopping wood, and a really dangerous weapon if it's used against a human being. AI is just as wonderful and just as awful, potentially, depending on how it's used. That's why we need some guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence built into this legislation. That's what we tried to do in the committee, to build in just some basic guidelines.

I'll give a couple of other examples where governments have adopted automated decision-making. These automated decision-makings were largely just algorithms—they're not even artificial intelligence algorithms—but several state governments in the United States, as well as the Netherlands and Australia, have adopted automated decision-making tools in order to measure people's eligibility for social security.

In Indiana, they privatized the social service delivery, and the privatized company used an automated decision-making tool that cut a million people off of social services, including a six-year-old girl with cerebral palsy and a woman who missed an appointment with her case worker because she was in the hospital with terminal cancer. In Arkansas, an assessment algorithm cut thousands of Medicaid-funded home health care hours from people with disabilities. In Michigan, a new system led to 40,000 people being wrongly accused of unemployment insurance fraud. In Australia, there was a class action lawsuit after 381,000 people were denied social service payments by an automated decision-making system.

So there's a real risk with this, and this government is looking at an American corporation to run our social services. I would say there are two risks there. One is, are they going to be using an automated decision-making tool that could potentially cut social service payments off from people with disabilities or other people in need? And the other question is, where will that data be stored?

I want to come back to one of the goals that I thought should be in this legislation. It would be to promote our Ontario-based tech sector. So, if we are looking for a tech company to run our social services then we should be looking at an Ontario company. We're going to be looking for artificial intelligence tools. We're going to be looking for cyber security systems. We should be looking at Ontario-based companies for two reasons. One is the procurement gives our Ontario companies a foot up. When I talk to tech companies in the riding of Spadina–Fort York and across Ontario, they all say that the biggest thing they need is a government contract, especially with a start-up, because if they get a government contract then it shows that they are legitimate. It shows that they are stable, so then they can go to other jurisdictions and start selling their products so it's a real leg up. But this government consistently looks to American corporations. They're contracting with Amazon for IT services and they're using money that's available from the federal government and

they're giving \$100 million to Elon Musk's Starlink, whereas Quebec is using that money to lend money to Telesat, which is a Canadian company. So we could be promoting Canadian companies with that money rather than Elon Musk's American company.

The other risk is that if the data is stored—and it's our data—in the United States then it's subject to the PATRIOT Act, which means that the government in the United States can access our data through the PATRIOT Act. And so our data is actually at risk. I know this because when I did my PhD thesis, I was not allowed to use SurveyMonkey for the survey I was doing. We had to use a local Canadian survey tool because there was a risk that the people who had completed the survey for me, their data could be at risk if it was stored in the United States. So, I'm concerned about this government continuing to not support Ontario businesses, one, for the leg up that it could give Ontario businesses but also because of the risk to our data.

One of the other amendments we asked for in the committee was that the amount of data that's collected by the government agencies be minimized to what is essential. We are seeing examples from across the world where all kinds of data on people is being collected by governments. This is a real risk to everybody's privacy, but ultimately it could potentially subject them to manipulation later on. I'll give you an example: There's one digital ID system in Kenya that requires fingerprints, hand geometry, earlobe geometry, retina and iris patterns, voice waves and digital DNA if you want to access social services in Kenya. That's an incredibly dangerous precedent, for a government to have all of that personal data about someone.

In the committee, we asked for guidelines. I'll give you—these guidelines, they weren't just from us; they were from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who wrote a long document, a long response, to Bill 194. She said we need this bill. We need it to be nimble. We need the government to be able to react quickly because AI, artificial intelligence, and cyber security, these are moving quickly, but we need broad guidelines to make sure that the values that we hold as Ontarians are incorporated into the adoption of AI and cyber security systems. So she asked that the following amendment be made, that there be a “declaration of principles” asserting that artificial intelligence be used in a manner that is valid and reliable, safe, privacy-protecting, transparent, accountable and human rights affirming. These are almost identical to those that are in the European Union's artificial intelligence bill.

I asked every deputant who came to the committee over the two days of hearings whether they supported this. Every one of the deputants said that they supported a broad statement of guidelines for this bill, except for two. Those two reserved judgment because they said they didn't understand the legislative process enough to know whether they should be supporting this or not. But every one of the others—the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Vector Institute, TECHNATION, the Council

of Canadian Innovators, Proofpoint, the Dais think tank at TMU, Engineers for the Profession, the Law Commission of Ontario, Rogers Cybersecure Catalyst at TMU, the association of municipal managers, Fariborz Lesani and John Wunderlich—asked for these guidelines to be put in, in a written deputation. So everybody who came said, “Hey, we do need these broad guidelines to make sure that this government, when it's adopting artificial intelligence and cyber security systems in our public sector, that the public sector will have some guidelines, mainly around transparency, protecting human rights and protecting our democratic rights.”

1550

I put in the “democratic rights” amendment. I mentioned before that I'm concerned about our democratic rights in this province because this government has passed several pieces of legislation that interfere or, I would say, take away our democratic rights. Let's see, I'll give you a couple of examples.

The government has used the “notwithstanding” clause in three pieces of legislation: Bill 5, in 2018, which was the one where they changed the rules of the Toronto municipal election in the middle of the election period; Bill 307, in which one of the judges who heard the case about Bill 307 said it interfered with people's right to free speech by preventing people from organizations from putting out paid advertisements being critical of the government, a year out from the last election in 2022; and then Bill 28, which not only overrode our fundamental charter rights using the “notwithstanding” clause—all of these have used the “notwithstanding” clause—it also overrode our Ontario Human Rights Code.

The “notwithstanding” clause is a bit of a euphemism, but the “notwithstanding” clause is a clause within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that said, “Yes, we have fundamental freedoms, we have legal rights embedded in the charter.” The fundamental freedoms include freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom of the press. The legal rights include things like, if you are arrested, you have the right to access a lawyer without delay, you have the right to be brought before a judge to be charged with something, you can't just randomly be arrested, you have the right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment. The “notwithstanding” clause, however, gives any provincial or federal government the power to override our fundamental freedoms and legal rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This government has brought in three pieces of legislation that overrode our fundamental freedoms and legal rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, using the “notwithstanding” clause.

Most recently, the Premier has said that he wants to use the “notwithstanding” clause to bring an end to encampments. There are 1,400 encampments in this province. There are 234,000 people homeless, and the Premier's response to this crisis is that he's going to strip those who are homeless of their charter rights. Now, I don't know how that's going to provide them with housing, which is what they need, and it really concerns me that they would

use the “notwithstanding” clause in such a flippant manner. If you normalize the use of the “notwithstanding” clause, if you normalize the stripping away of our fundamental freedoms and legal rights, then do we have any? Do we have the charter? Do we have charter protections of our democratic rights? This is the real question that’s at stake here with this bill.

One of the amendments I asked is just to say that the way artificial intelligence systems and cyber security systems are adopted by the public sector in Ontario should protect our democratic rights—just a broad global statement like that. That was voted down by the Conservative Party. This is a real concern, especially when you consider their track record in overriding our democratic rights.

There were other recommendations that people brought forward. I would say we need legislation around the adoption of artificial intelligence and cyber security in the public sector, but we need to have some broad guidelines, so that it can still be nimble, so the government can still respond nimbly to cyber security threats or the advances in artificial intelligence. But without those guidelines, this could potentially be used for purposes that would undermine our democratic rights, that would undermine our human rights.

The other recommendations: When I was speaking to groups about this, they said this legislation—it’s not enough for the government just to make rules for public sector services and agencies to adopt cyber security systems; they actually need funding to do it. Eleven of our 23 universities in this province are facing a funding shortfall that is leading them to run a deficit this year. Most of our school boards are in deficit positions, our hospitals are in a deficit position and it’s because of the lack of funding.

Every tech person that I talk to about this bill said that if a public sector agency is underfunded, then it becomes an automatic target for attack, because the cyber hackers know that this organization, particularly smaller organizations, are not going to have the funding to build or pay for robust cyber security protections. I think that’s why we’re seeing—like in southwestern Ontario, a number of hospitals were hacked. We’re seeing school boards being hacked. We’re seeing hospitals in Toronto being hacked. The LCBO was hacked. So all of these public sector agencies are targets of attack. They’re targets of attack, in part, because they hold a lot of data about us as Ontarians and about their employees.

And so, one of the recommendations from the tech people that I talked to was that we need to fund our public sector agencies adequately, so that they’re not running deficits. It’s not enough for the government to say, “Hey, you need to hire or pay for a cyber security system.” The government actually needs to provide the cyber security systems for our public sector agencies, particularly the smaller ones: the smaller school boards, the smaller hospitals, the smaller municipalities.

I was talking to one mayor of a small community. He said their tech support, their tech person—there’s five employees in the entire municipality. There’s one guy who

does the tech off the side of his desk, right? So what is his level of expertise or his capacity for protecting the data that that municipality has? This government needs to step up and not just make rules and regulations; they actually need to provide cyber security tools to our public sector agencies and they need to fund our public sector agencies.

The other thing: One of the big concerns with artificial intelligence is that it’s going to be displacing jobs. We need a robust plan in the public sector to protect jobs, so that as artificial intelligence tools are adopted, there’s a plan for workers to take on other tasks or to move to other sectors within the public sphere, so that there isn’t a massive loss of jobs.

One of the articles I read last summer talked about how every tech revolution leads to a growing gap between rich and poor. It does it because those with money can adopt that new technology quickly, and those without the money are not able to adopt it. We’ve seen this. I think this is part of the reason for the growing gap between rich and poor over the last 40 years. Our median income has been flatlined for 40 years. Most people are worse off than their parents were 40 years ago.

Part of the reason is that we’ve gone through the computer revolution, the Internet revolution. We’ve gone through the World Wide Web—all these revolutions, you know? And you think, “Wow, we’re so much more efficient. People should be better off.” But people are worse off, because those with the money and the power to adopt those tools have used that to get people to work for less and less, and to accumulate more and more power and money for themselves.

So there’s a number of protections that should be in this legislation that are not here. We need protections for responsible artificial intelligence. We need protections for our data through cyber security tools and we need protections for jobs. I wish that the government had not voted down the NDP motions.

1600

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Thank you for the time to address Bill 194.

I’ll just start out by saying that it’s very strange that there is time allocation on this bill. I agree with the minister that this is an important topic and it’s something that is going to affect our society for a long, long time, so it’s very strange that, for example, there aren’t opportunities to ask questions of the speakers and to have a deeper, fuller discussion.

I want to start out with an experience that I had in my riding of Kingston and the Islands at the Ongwanada centre, which is a place that delivers services for people with developmental disabilities. They have one full-time equivalent employee whose job it is to worry about cyber security. The reason why I mention this is that that just shows—here’s an organization that has a mission to provide services to people with developmental disabilities and yet they need to spend the money to have one full-time equivalent to work on cyber security.

Across society, if we don't get cyber security right, this can be a very expensive and costly burden on society. So I welcome this piece of legislation, but I want to go back a little bit and talk a bit about history. In May of 2019, one of the things that this Conservative government did when they first came into power was to cut funding for artificial intelligence. In particular they cut funding for the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence. I care about that because neural networks and artificial intelligence have been something that I've been interested in for a long time.

When I was a graduate student in physics almost 40 years ago, one of the first papers that I read was by a physicist named John Hopfield, who had recently published a paper describing how you could store and recall memories from neural networks. That work, now several decades later, has turned into the artificial intelligence systems—the AI systems—that we're using today. It was a special interest of mine and I've continued to follow it as I have been able to now and then—to follow the field. It's really interesting to see how it has blossomed. It has great potential, but it has to be used properly.

One thing about the Legislature's politics is that governments and Legislatures and politics can be laggards when it comes to having our laws and regulations be up to date with technology. This is no exception, so I'm glad that the government has introduced this piece of legislation. They're certainly not laggards when it comes to gambling online or beer—but laws do have to keep up with technology.

This is not a nice-to-have thing and it's not just about protecting society; it's also about attracting economic growth. Ontario is behind British Columbia and Quebec when it comes to this kind of law and regulation and it's really important that a regulatory environment is present and it's put together in a smart way and it's up to date so that it supports innovation and investment.

I have a suggestion for the government, which is that they consider in the future using regulatory sandboxes to encourage innovative work in the economic field for artificial intelligence. This is something that was suggested by a capital markets review for the financial industry here in Ontario. It hasn't been implemented yet, although it has been implemented in other provinces, but this is definitely something that we should be considering for artificial intelligence. We have the ability to be a world leader in artificial intelligence and we have to have the right regulatory environment.

In conclusion, since my time is running out, let me just call on the government to follow up on Bill 194—to follow through. This is something that we're going to be looking at for years to come and if we want to be leaders, we have to keep our focus on it. I call on the government to follow through and keep their eyes on artificial intelligence after Bill 194.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 29, 2024, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. McCarthy has moved third reading of Bill 194, an Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

CUTTING RED TAPE,
BUILDING ONTARIO ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
ET À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 227, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to speak to the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024.

I want to just begin by also acknowledging and thanking my team and those who have helped participate in so much work that has gone into the legislation today. I also especially want to acknowledge the excellent Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, for their passion and their advocacy on reducing the burden for businesses, for families, for workers and for continuing a legacy that I'm also grateful to have been a part of.

I had the privilege of serving as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for a couple of years here in this chamber. One of the things I have to say about that particular role is the breadth of stakeholders and individuals you have the opportunity to meet from across this province, from every corner of this province, to share their ideas and their feedback, and the way that you could meet with people from every walk of life who have had interactions with government that just made them shake their head, that made them think, "What is going on? Why is this a particular regulation? Why is this a process?"

And one of the biggest questions that we had the question of when we were there was, "Why? Why is this here? Why is it this long? Why is it every year you have to renew this, or every three years you have to renew this? Why is this the process?" Often, there would come back a bit of a blank stare from bureaucracy or from those who had enforced this regulation—in some cases, for so long that they forgot why they were enforcing it. They forgot why it had come into place to begin with.

There's an old saying that I know applies more to, perhaps, the legal profession, but I think also is something that we should consider here in this chamber, and that is that a tough case makes bad law—a tough case can make bad law. Sometimes, governments, for perhaps good reasons—or well-intentioned reasons, anyway—bring forward overbearing regulations, overbearing legislation in response to a difficult situation. Perhaps there was a one-off when there was a bad actor who made a particular decision at a given point in time that was bad, and instead of reacting and responding to that particular decision, governments come in and, ham-fisted as they are, decide to pass laws and legislations and not be responsive and reactive and nimble to the real needs of job creators and constituents.

So I'm very pleased that the current minister—the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is someone who I know served alongside me in that role, and he always stressed when he was Minister of Red Tape Reduction that we had to make sure we were bringing forward ideas that were for the people and that came from the people. And I can see that this Minister of Red Tape Reduction and this parliamentary assistant, in their legislation, are truly doing that. They are bringing forward ideas.

Speaker, in this legislation, I think the impacts for my community are going to be very, very positive. From supporting our farmers to strengthening energy-intensive industries and ensuring that our seniors receive the care they deserve, this bill is about delivering results. I'm going to speak a little about which results those are, and how those results are going to really have a positive impact.

In my riding of Niagara West, as in so many other ridings across the province, housing is a top concern for many families. I think this legislation builds on a legacy that we have adopted here in this chamber, and I think it's a legacy of building more housing and building that housing faster and better for the people of this province.

1610

So this bill, if passed, will help address the housing crisis by breaking down barriers which slow construction. It's going to empower municipalities to deliver the homes our communities need. We're streamlining regulations to make building faster and simpler. We're doing this by standardizing processes and reducing unnecessary approvals so that homeowners will have more flexibility to create rental units—something I know in my community are desperately needed and I'm sure in so many other colleagues' as well—like garden suites and basement apartments, while builders can move projects forward without delays. Measures like pre-approving infrastructure changes and enabling modern financing tools such as pay-on-demand surety bonds will ensure that municipalities have the support they need to meet growing housing demands.

We're also tackling shortages in key roles like building officials by opening pathways for qualified professionals from other provinces to work in the province of Ontario. And these are solutions which will make it easier to get

homes built, will reduce costs for municipalities and builders and provide more options for families looking for affordable housing.

It's through innovation like digital twin technology, where we're ensuring that projects are not only completed faster but also with greater efficiency and cost savings. Now, whether it's homes, whether it's highways, whether it's hospitals, these changes mean more homes for young people, like those watching today, stronger infrastructure so that the roads we drive on are reliable and accessible and better opportunities for Ontarians to build their futures.

Also, if passed, this bill will make health care more accessible and convenient for the people of Niagara West. Through the modernization of the Assistive Devices Program, people with vision loss will receive 100% coverage for essential tools, like white canes and cane tips with the added benefit of more support closer to home.

By eliminating unnecessary reauthorization requirements and removing outdated regulations, this bill is reducing burdens on both patients and on our health care system, ensuring faster and more efficient delivery of care. It's an example, Speaker, of how you can do more with the same amount that you're working with. And I'll give you another example of what this looks like when it comes to reducing red tape to ensure that people have the opportunity to access health care when and where they need it.

Last year and the year before, our government made a number of changes to allow Ontario pharmacists to not only prescribe but also to diagnose in particular situations. And what that meant is that hundreds of thousands of people who might have otherwise gone to a family doctor—where we need more family doctors and we need people not to make unnecessary visits to doctors—and may have gone into emergency room departments where, again, they can be in a situation really for perhaps a very small diagnosis or a small prescription. That can then, again, add to that backlog that we see in some emergency rooms in the province. We were able to have a list of, I believe, 31 different ailments that now pharmacists are able to actually use and then be able to provide a prescription for this individual so that they wouldn't have to go through that context.

That then saves other patients from having to have longer delays in the waiting room, and it saves them from having to wait for a long time, and also from having to make multiple visits. Because in many cases you have to go to your doctor. You might wait there for a couple of minutes while you're waiting to get into the meeting—if you're lucky, it's a couple of minutes. Then you have a meeting, you chat about that, you go home and you wait for the prescription to actually get filled by sending it over to the pharmacist. Then you once again hop into your car, drive over to the pharmacist, and you might have to wait there. You go up to the front. Finally they pass it to you, and back you go.

You think about the amount of time that that costs the people of the province of Ontario. I mean, it's literally millions of hours every single year spent in these kinds of

processes; these things that just take up time. They take up a day off work, an afternoon off work, or even longer in some cases. And now you can go in for some of these minor ailments and you can say—well, I was going to say, “Well, Doc,” but it’s not “Well, Doc”—“Well, Pharmacist. Here are the symptoms, here’s the situation.” And we know that they have the training, they have the skills, they have the knowledge and the experience to analyze these common ailments and to provide a quick solution to those challenges. That can be a very minor thing. And we’ve seen how much uptake that has had here in the province of Ontario, and it’s an example of a little change that can have a hugely positive impact on the lives of people here in the province.

For so long, we saw governments coming forward with only really one *modus operandi*, only one way of governing here in the province, and that was more regulation, more red tape, more barriers for accessing care, more challenges for people in the province of Ontario to be able to unleash their potential. That had a job-killing impact on so many small business owners.

I come from a family of small entrepreneurs. No one’s a big business owner in my family, but they’re people who worked hard, either for others on the job site or perhaps on a farm, and over time they were able to put together a down payment and they were able to start a small business. I have four farmers in my family, and multiple small business owners in other trades—you know; landscaping, demolition. Most of my friends in their later twenties started off small, blue-collar construction companies; now they’re hiring a few people.

One of the biggest complaints that I hear from these people who are entrepreneurial—you know, they’re good with their hands and they’re very, very smart people. But again, yesterday evening I was at a friend’s house. He has a waterscapes company, Niagara Waterscapes, and what they do is very specialized rec ponds. They’re called recreational ponds, made to look like a natural pond, but when you jump in, you can actually go swimming. It’s a very beautiful thing, and he does this in locations across Ontario. He said, “I spend more hours on paperwork than I do on the job site. I spend more hours having to fill out forms than I do being able to follow up with clients.” His frustration is real, and it’s after we’ve cut 6% of the regulations here in the province of Ontario.

You look at how many regulations were growing year over year. I believe it was about 4% growth annually here in the province of Ontario, a 4% growth of red tape burdens placed on the backs of small businesses, on workers and people who are just trying to get ahead. That grew every single year; it wasn’t like a one-time 4%. Every year, it’s 4% and that grows. I mean, that’s exponential growth. We know how this turns out, right? It’s an enervating, cloying, exhausting network of minute rules and regulations that seem to just suck the lifeblood out of the entrepreneurial spirit.

It took us time to really shift that focus, to shift the whole apparatus of government towards saying, “No, we don’t have to always bring in another law. We don’t

always have to bring in another regulation. We don’t have to over-govern everything. We can trust the people, the province of Ontario. We don’t need to have a nanny state coming in and telling people about every little thing that they can do in their business.”

And so, we’ve made changes, and this legislation builds on that. It’s part of a commitment to come forward with two bills every year, one in the spring and one in the fall. And why is that? Why don’t we just do one big red tape package? You know, “This is our red-tape-reduction package, one and done. We’ve called it a day. Let’s put up a big ‘Mission Accomplished’ banner behind us and go on our merry ways.” That’s not how the insidious nature of overregulation works. It’s gradual. It’s the sneaking growth of bureaucracy, of rules in all of life that say, “Well, you know, maybe this one’s a good one, right guys? Maybe that’s good red tape. This regulation: Well, we might need that regulation.” And that’s slow and gradual.

What happens is the older regulations, the outdated regulations—those which aren’t protecting health and safety; those which aren’t protecting the environment; they aren’t protecting clean air, clean water and the health and safety of workers—just stay on the books. And so you have examples where—for example, again, agriculture is my family background. There was a situation where we had a nutrient-management plan on a farm—a nutrient-management plan is a fancy way of saying disposing of, you know, by-products of animals. This was a plan that had to be updated every five years.

I live on a family farm that has grown with time. My grandfather purchased this farm in the 1960s. My parents then moved in when they got married and my grandfather retired, and now my brother is taking it over. It has changed with time, so it makes sense that when it changes that you go from, in my family’s case, pork production to sheep production to now quail production—guess what? You’re going to have differences in the way that that by-product of animal waste is dealt with. So you need to make changes and you need to be responsive to them, for sure.

But if you are in an established environment where you have an established farm and you’re doing the same thing year in, year out, and perhaps you’re happy with the level that you’re at—you don’t need to grow all the time; you’re not striving for the next farm; you’re not striving to always expand; you’re happy with the farm that you have—why do you have to spend hours and hours, days, going through this nutrient management plan every five years? And the answer that came back was, “Well, that’s just the way it is.” No, that’s not good enough.

So the change that we made was really just a small change. We said, “Well, if you’re making a major use change in your farm, then you have to amend it. You have to go back, you have to review it, and we want it to be responsive. But if you’re not really making any changes, then you don’t have to.” That’s such a little example of the mindset change that came into this government, into this chamber, when we formed office. It was about finding solutions. It was about saying, “What are ways that we can remove some of that burden, the hours and hours that people have to spend on paperwork?”

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I know that as we sit here in this chamber and debate this legislation, which has a substantial number of changes—even eliminating unnecessary reauthorization requirements. Reauthorizations: I get it; we don't want people who are dead and having people use their authorizations. It's good to check in on authorizations, but we can't do that all the time. Why does it have to be every year, in some cases? Why can't it be two years? You cut the paperwork in half the second you increase a reauthorization from one year to two years, and we're still able to follow up and make sure that we're validating the authority of a particular signature or other regulation. Those are the kinds of things that we're bringing forward.

We're also bringing forward changes that are going to be helpful in my riding to assist fruit and vegetable growers and greenhouse operators develop and implement guidance and processes. We're clarifying options for greater flexibility in the government's environmental compliance approval requirements currently available to vegetable and fruit growers. This is actually going to make it easier to demonstrate compliance and also address challenges identified by the agricultural sector, while continuing to protect the Great Lakes and other waterways. Why is that important? Why is it important to be able to identify compliance?

I'm going to tell you something, and I won't say who—but I've heard this story. I don't even know if it's a real story that he has told me. I know someone, and this person said the archaeological assessment requirements can be so ridiculous—in some cases; I'm not saying all the time. We obviously want to protect our heritage and our archaeology, and we want to protect very special places—especially in Niagara; we have a great many Indigenous burial grounds. I think of the Jordan Hollow I was at over the weekend and its history of the Neutral Indigenous peoples in that territory. We want to protect that, of course. But this individual said that sometimes when they were on a work site, because they knew it would be so onerous to get compensation to deal with anything—“You dug up a bone? I think it was a deer, right? It's a deer.” I don't know if he's making this up or not, but what happens in some cases—you turn law-abiding citizens into criminals when you make compliance so difficult and so onerous that, frankly, it takes so much time and effort they're not even able to comply without taking years and years of delay in some cases.

Again, I don't know if that's an apocryphal tale or not, but the way I've heard about this from some individuals—they say when it becomes so onerous that you're actually not even able to continue, almost, moving forward with projects or being able to, you end up with bad actors. People become bad actors because the cost of compliance is so high. We have to ensure that the cost of compliance is reasonable, so that you are enforcing the rules that exist and ensuring that they apply to everyone and that they're being followed, and not creating vast quantities of onerous regulations that are not actually either being enforced on the ground level, where people are dealing with it—and

that have processes associated within them that can take so long that people feel they can't even maintain their business under that regulatory framework, and so they go elsewhere, which ends up creating higher costs for everybody, because you have fewer people actually providing the service. Obviously, when you have fewer people providing the service, the cost goes up because you have less competition.

All of the legislative changes that we take have to be thoughtful. They can't be done without considering the impacts they have on this province. So I'm very pleased to see—and again, having served in the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction—the importance that was placed on every single decision through that lens: Are we protecting workers' rights? Are we protecting the environment? Are we ensuring that we're maintaining our culture and history? Are we doing this in a respectful way, a responsible way?

We know that it's important to have some regulation to protect these really valuable assets, but we also need to make sure that we're being nimble, and when things become outdated or unreasonable, we need to be responsive in moving, as well.

This legislation builds on that legacy. I'm proud of the work that's within it, and I know it's going to be supporting so many crucial sectors. You look at the changes to support Ontario's mining and energy-intensive industries, which are continuing to grow, innovate and support a low-carbon future—by updating the Mining Act, we know that we will be seeing clear, predictable standards that are reducing administrative burdens. Predictability is so important for making multi-year investments into projects that do take a very long time. Let's be candid about how long it can take to open a mine in the province of Ontario. Some of that is for very good reason—again, protecting the environment and the duty to consult with First Nations are very, very important, and we don't want to rush those things. But when there are predictable guidelines that people can know, they can budget around, they can plan their time around, that leads to more investment, and that, ultimately, leads to more jobs, because people see that they're able to have a playing field that is equal, that is not going to be changing on them overnight. That's why this legislation is very important. It's legislation that assists in providing that certainty to businesses, to job creators and to workers that we're here to save them time and money, we're here because we want to make life easier for them, and we're going to do that in a respectful, responsible way.

We're going to streamline processes. In some cases, I remember there was a form—I'm trying to remember what the name of the form was—and you had to fill out your name at the top of every single page, and it was 17 pages. It was something to do with the then government and consumer services. Now it's the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement—a very long one. We just made a change so you enter it once and it auto-fills through the rest of the form. “Oh, that's a game-changer.” Well, it sounds like a little thing, but when

you've got to fill it out 17 times and you do your name wrong once and then the whole form is invalidated because you put the E in front of the U in Samuel—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's good to hear my friend from Niagara West hold forth—again, without notes. It's good for parliamentary and rhetorical debate. It's good to see that, all from memory, forensic knowledge of the bill.

I want to talk to my friend about something that I don't see in here. I just took a meeting back home with craft brewers in Ottawa Centre. In fact, when you look at manufacturing statistics insofar as who are among the leading manufacturers and value-added, economic boosters to Ottawa Centre, craft brewers are almost right at the top. What they told me in this meeting, which is what I'd like my friend to reflect on, given that it's not here in the bill, is that there are apparently 17 levels of taxation for small craft breweries in Ontario. What that does is advantage the huge breweries that are producing lots of hectolitres of product, because they can sit at the top, but the small guys get trapped at the lower-level taxations.

I'm wondering if he would support supporting craft brewers.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I'll tell you, Speaker, I absolutely would support reducing the tax burden on our manufacturers.

I actually had a meeting on Friday with one of my local breweries as well, Bench Brewing. Matt Giffen and his team do great work. I think they're the seventh-largest craft brewery in Ontario by volume. They really have some great brews coming out of that place in Beamsville. They do great work as well.

I think that there are ongoing conversations. But I'm going to say, look at our legacy. We cut the 6.1% tax on retail wine. We've frozen beer and wine taxes, which were increasing every single year when the Liberals were in power. We've expanded access. I talked to him about the amount of different—he called them C-stores—convenience stores that he was in. He said they're in 700 convenience stores now—they didn't have any convenience stores in the spring. Those are also beneficial ways of supporting that sector.

I would suggest that all of these actions, taken together, demonstrate our support for manufacturing and for business more broadly.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Our government has already made great strides in reducing red tape and making life easier for individuals, saving them time, money and frustration. We recognize there's always more work to do.

I'd like to ask the minister if he would share how we currently measure the burden on individuals, and explain how these efforts are part of our broader commitment to continuously improving government services and making life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes. It reminds me of one of the first gifts I got after I was newly re-elected in 2022. I had a constituent come and bring me a roll of red tape, the electrical tape. He's an electrician. He said, "Here's your red tape. Now get to cutting." He was kind of joking, but his point was, "How are you going to measure some of this?" He said, "You've got to measure tape, so how are you going to measure the tape before you cut it?"

We have a burden reduction report. I highly urge every individual here in this chamber and, frankly, anyone watching to look up the 2024 red tape burden reduction report. It is exhaustive. It's over 30 or 40 pages, last time I looked—breaking down all of the ways that we are reducing red tape, but also how you measure that compliance, and within different ministries how you measure how much time it's costing people and what that burden is.

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I'll also give a shout-out to the CFIB. The CFIB does great work advocating for small businesses. They have a great report that they bring out every year, as well, in which we've gotten an A a whole bunch of times, which is good.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I would like to thank my colleague for erasing the 6.1% tax on small and medium-sized wineries.

Speaker, it took six years to get my bill finally passed by this government, and it certainly has helped our medium and small wineries in not only my riding, but in Sam's riding as well.

There are 25 court locations in Ontario with a unified Family Court system; there are many across this province without it. So why isn't the government moving ahead with unifying Family Court across the province, especially considering that—this is interesting, Madam Speaker; you'll like this—the federal government has provided funds for the expanded unified Family Court since 2018?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I thank the member opposite for also supporting those changes to the 6.1%. You know what they say about a broken clock, right? So I appreciate the member opposite and his work on that, as well.

I'll say, when it comes to the Family Law Act, there are actually a number of changes within this legislation. We're proposing legislative changes to also allow parties to a family arbitration award for support to file the award with the court for enforcement. We want to ensure that the orders are actually being enforced.

We're also proposing updates to the Courts of Justice Act, to give the Attorney General the same rule-making authority that the civil and family rules committee have, which he would then be able to exercise, subject to consultation with the judiciary. This would include eliminating references to two defunct committees and updating the judicial membership of the civil and family rules committees. It's really, again, focused on making sure that those committees operate more efficiently and more responsibly for those who need them.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank my colleague the minister for his comments on this important legislation.

I was very interested in his comments about the CFIB, which is a wonderful organization.

I know that, in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, Collingwood has been named as one of the top-10 entrepreneurial communities in Canada of any size.

I wonder if he might speak—I think it's almost as much as half of Ontario's workforce work for small or medium employers—on the importance of making sure that on the ground we're creating the right conditions for our small businesses to succeed. He listed the example in his riding of his friend who makes beautiful ponds. So if he can speak about how—making sure that we are getting needless red tape out of the way of our small businesses to make sure they thrive.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: That's a great question.

The member for Simcoe–Grey is a fabulous advocate for his community. One of the things I love about this member is that he always shares information with his constituents so that they can provide ways for him to advocate for them. So I want to let him know that he can share ontario.ca/redtape. I include it in every newsletter, because it's actually a portal where people can bring their ideas. I'll tell you, one time, just to kind of make sure it was working, on my own time I submitted an idea, because I wanted to see what happened to the idea and if it ever made its way back to me and if it would get flagged. I can't even remember what the idea was, but I sent the idea in that I had, and I was just waiting to see what would happen with it. Indeed, it did end up on my desk, working its way through that portal to a policy adviser and also on to our desks, with a feasibility of whether or not the idea was able to be moved forward with and what the consequences would be, and also its impacts, negative and positive. So there absolutely is a way that they can participate: ontario.ca/redtape. Send them to it. And we'll listen to it when we get it.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your words here today.

I would say that today, we know, is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. We are in the middle of an epidemic of intimate partner violence, IPV, and gender-based violence.

This bill before us is 140 pages. It includes 27 schedules. You opened up acts in 20 different ministries, including the Courts of Justice Act. We have been asking time and time again for to you properly fund the justice system and the courts. We had Lydia's Law here. We've heard time and time again from victims of sexual assault. When they go to court, their perpetrators are walking free because you have underfunded the court system.

My question to you is, with such a massive omnibus bill that includes so many different ministries, why did you not take this opportunity to set right and do justice by the

women of this province who are victims of sexual assault and violence?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member opposite for her question. I appreciate her raising this.

Obviously, this has been a day and a time that all of us have taken to also just remember and think of those whose lives have been lost due to intimate partner violence and to remember that it is a collective responsibility we all wear, to ensure we are speaking up against that, calling it out whenever we see either examples of it within our communities or in broader circles, and also taking action to support women and their experiences, and to believe women when they come forward with the stories of what they've encountered and to seek to provide services.

I know the Attorney General and the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler and the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity have been doing of a lot of work to bring forward reforms that are informed by the evidence brought forward by experts at that committee, and I'm confident they're going to be tabling and introducing legislation that will ensure that those supports are enhanced here in the province of Ontario. I want to acknowledge that.

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

MPP Jamie West: There is nothing I'd rather do on my birthday than debate an omnibus bill that affects 20 ministries and 27 schedules.

It has been said earlier, but if people are watching this for the first time, I first saw this bill and I thought it was 140 pages. My colleague had clarified it's only 70 pages, but the reason I was pointing it out earlier was that this bill was tabled last Wednesday, and Thursday morning, we were debating it. Imagine that. You got a bill that's 70 pages. It's affecting 20 ministries. It has 27 schedules.

Our roles here aren't so much to speak on behalf of ourselves but to speak on behalf of the people of Ontario in each of our ridings. It's very difficult when you get a bill, when you are in committee, for example, and you aren't able—you have the bill until the end of the day, 6 p.m., to track down people. I don't know how you'd even be able phone 27 people before they went to bed, let alone ensure they would get back to you in time, or point out in the schedules where they're being affected. This is how you make bad legislation—bad legislation.

MPP Wayne Gates: They've been doing this for six years.

MPP Jamie West: Absolutely. My colleague just said we've been doing this for six years. The thing that the government, I think, fails to remember is that 15 million people in this province count on us to make good decisions.

It's cliché to say that across from me is the eagle and across from the government is the owl, but it's a good thing to remember. The owl is a reminder for the government to make wise decisions; the eagle is the reminder as the opposition to look for ways to improve it. When you ram bills through—not you specifically, Speaker, but when the government rams bills through, they have the votes. They know what's going to happen.

Sometime in the near future, there's going to be a new labour bill. I know because I'm hearing rumours already, but they won't share the details of the bill. It shows up, it's debated, it's time-allocated, out the door. We've nick-named this over the last six years "ready, fire, aim" because the Conservative government has a history of getting ready, firing on what's there, all through debate saying, "If passed, if passed"—we know it's going to pass. It's about 2 to 1 in terms of a vote. "If passed, if passed"—but they don't really care about the debate side. It's this trust-us mentality. And I understand. When you have the power, do what you want, but you're going to make mistakes. You're going to make mistakes. As a result, you end up with these weird omnibus bills to patch mistakes that you've made.

I have a theory, and I've said this before, that this is a make-work project for the ministry of red tape where they pass bad legislation and then he gets to cut the red tape and there's job security. I say that just to try to make myself laugh so that I can put up with the nonsense of what's going on with a bill like this—not the content itself, but just the way it's presented and put forward.

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It's very frustrating because there's people out there who are really suffering. I don't know if maybe my colleagues from the government side don't go to their constituency offices or don't speak to people there, but there are people out there who are having a hard time putting food on the table or paying rent or making ends meet.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Tough times.

MPP Jamie West: Very tough times. When I went through this incredibly large bill and read it and then reread it for a second time with my highlighter out, there wasn't of a lot of things where I thought, "Wow, the people of Ontario will be super excited about this." It not that's it bad, but there's not a lot in here where somebody that is trying to raise their kids—for example, every year, more and more people, working people, going to food banks every year for the last seven years. Those people going with their kids to the food bank, hoping desperately the Conservative government will notice them waving their arms and desperate for any kind of attention—there's not much in here to help people out, unfortunately, like every other bill for the last six years. That could be why more and more working people are going to food banks on a regular basis.

When we first started debating this last Thursday, we rose a couple of times as New Democrats and we said, "You know, it would be nice if we can have enough time to reach out to stakeholders and talk to them," and they were like, "We did it already. We did it already." Look, I don't know if you're just being—I'm trying to think of words that I can say here; there are some words that I can't say, that are unparliamentary. I don't mean they're insulting but there are just some things we can't say. As an example, I'm not allowed to say to anyone—

Mr. John Vanthof: Arrogant is one of them.

MPP Jamie West: Arrogant. Thank you. I was trying to say that I can't even think of an example.

So there is an arrogance of thinking that you are right all the time. There is an arrogance of thinking that when you have all the power, when you hold the purse strings, when certain industries and not-for-profits and agencies like that depend on the funding of the government, that they're going to be 100% truthful to you, you just don't get it. I'm not saying that they shouldn't be trusting but, human nature, people are a little bit hesitant.

I've talked a lot about my work as a union rep, and I remember, one of the first things I did, there was this guy, Joey, and his wife was pregnant—this was in the old days, when you carried a pager—and his pager went off in the middle of the shift, and Joey was terrified to tell his boss that he wanted to go to the hospital to meet his wife so he can deliver their baby girl. My job as a union rep was to go ask his boss if it was okay because Joey's too afraid even to come with me.

And look, Dan was a great foreman—Dan has passed away now. He would never say no. He would make sure that he was there, absolutely. He was a family guy. He cared about that sort of stuff, cared about his crew. But the thing I learned that day is that sometimes people are a little bit nervous and sometimes there are things that they'll say to some people who don't have all the power, who don't sign the paycheques, but they won't say that to the people who sign the paycheques.

That's why you have a better bill when you allow the time—especially on a bill like this. This is not a wedge bill. This is just a big bill, a bill like this—when you have the opportunity to have us reach out and say, "What do you think of this?" You can make really good legislation. There could be parts that they're not telling me, instead of us coming back again and—I mean, probably, there will be an election by the time we come back again, but there's nothing wrong with us coming back after the election, having to patch the things that you missed in this. We can get it right. It would start the allure of that repetition you made of "Ready, fire, aim," right? It doesn't work.

Every time I see a red tape bill, I think of things that should be prioritized—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'm sorry to interrupt the member.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, please adjourn the debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, the Administrator has been pleased to assent to certain bills in Her Honour's office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):

The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour's assent is prayed:

An Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures / Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 visant à renforcer la sécurité et la confiance en matière de numérique et modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui concerne les mesures de protection de la vie privée.

An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and

other transportation-related matters / 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

The House is adjourned—sorry. Orders of the day?

Mr. Steve Clark: No further business, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): There being no further business, the House is adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, November 26, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1646.

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		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
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Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (IND)	Carleton	
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Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
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Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Electrification / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Électrification
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Ministre associé de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
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	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	