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(Hansard)**

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Jeudi
5 décembre 2024

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 December 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 décembre 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ANNUAL REPORT, FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: the 2023-24 annual report of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS AND CAREGIVERS ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET AUX FOURNISSEURS DE SOINS

Ms. Kusendova-Bashta moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 235, An Act to amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 / *Projet de loi 235, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2021 sur le redressement des soins de longue durée et la Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite.*

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

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning, Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to lead debate on the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024. I will be sharing my time with the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and the member for Essex.

Before I begin I would like to welcome the many stakeholders who are present with us today. Many of them have been friends, supporters and advocates, and I'm so, so proud of the collective work that we have all done together.

We have the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Ontario Long Term Care Home Association, AdvantAge Ontario, Community Care Durham, the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Ontario Brain Institute. We also have representatives from some long-term-care homes: Wellbrook Place. We have Copernicus Lodge. We have Peel Manor, Kipling Acres and Villa Colombo. And last but not least

we also have the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils as well as Family Councils of Ontario. Thank you so much for your presence here today.

Speaker, this morning as I was driving to Queen's Park, I was reminded of my maiden speech that I made six years ago as a newly elected, 29-year-old, young and energetic MPP. That day represented an incredible milestone for me as I spoke about my upbringing, my father's medical background, our family's immigration journey to Canada from Europe and my mom's incredible courage, perseverance and hard work when she became a single mom to two children in a foreign country, as well as my early nursing career, which was full of challenges, opportunities, dreams and hopes. I reflected in that speech on how all those lived experiences and circumstances have shaped me into who I was as a 29-year-old, young female MPP, and how they shaped my desire to dedicate my life to serving others, to caring for others and to making a positive impact on the lives of those who surround me. I reflect on that time six years ago, Speaker, because, in many ways, today is an incredible milestone for me. Today, I'm a little bit older, I like to think wiser—definitely wider—with some experience of what public service means, with its rewards and sacrifices, having lived through a once-in-a-generation global pandemic and having navigated those incredibly challenging times in both of my vocations, as a registered to nurse and as an MPP.

I'd like to share very briefly my experience as an RN working in the COVID unit during the pandemic, because it has left a mark on me and has informed so much of my work, my world views and who I am today. One particular experience comes to mind: I worked a 12-hour shift at Etobicoke General Hospital in the early months of the pandemic. Our hospital established a 16-bed unit in the area which used to be the old emergency room prior to the renovation. This was a small unit, staffed by only four registered nurses, which was serving the sole purpose of offloading long-term-care residents from surrounding homes, because homes, as we remember, were struggling to cope.

What we as nurses did not know at the time was that all the patients who were being transferred to us were severely ill with COVID, with multiple comorbidities and had only a few days or hours to live. We were to provide comfort measures and palliative care, and this is not what we as emergency room nurses were trained to do.

On my first day after getting a report from the night nurse on the four patients in my care, I reviewed their medical history, their medications for the day and planned the nursing interventions. It dawned upon me: "My main job today is to keep my patients comfortable," coordinate the

last family calls through the iPads that we were given for families to say goodbye, and to ensure that no one dies alone.

I remember one moment particularly, etched forever in my memory: There I was, standing in my full PPE, sweating and itching under my N95 mask and my face shield, holding my personal phone because the hospital-issued iPads were not working, to give the family of a long-term-care resident who was in his last hours the chance to say goodbye. In this most intimate moment that family was having, saying, “We love you so much, Nonno,” I felt like an intruder, like I should not be there. I reassured the family that Nonno was not in pain and had all the comfort measures he needed, like oxygen therapy. The family begged me for a few more minutes on the call, and I obliged, knowing very well that every extra minute I spent in that room I was increasing my own risk of catching COVID.

When it was time to say goodbye to the family, because I had three other patients to attend to, the granddaughter asked me if I could please play his favourite song when the time comes, in his last moment when he is leaving this earth. Do you know what that song was, Speaker? It was Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door. I said that I would do my best.

So for the remainder of that day, I had my phone in my pocket with the song loaded on YouTube. As I was clustering my care around all the other patients, I was nervously monitoring his vital signs to make sure I did not miss that moment. Lo and behold, that moment came towards the end of my shift, at 6 p.m. The blood pressure started dropping, the heart became first fast, then faint, then irregular. Breathing was slowing down, oxygen saturation was dropping. I knew it was time.

I quickly donned my PPE and went into his room with my phone in a Ziploc bag, ready for my mission. I struggled for a minute to get the phone to work, so I took off one glove and got the phone to play. As soon as the song started playing, he opened his eyes and smiled at me. I tried to smile through my mask and instinctively grabbed his hand with my bare hand. We looked at each other for maybe 10 seconds and listened to, “Knock, knock, knockin’ on heaven’s door.” His breathing became even more shallow and heartbeat was fainting.

From his eyes, I knew that he knew what was happening. It was like the whole universe froze in time and no one else existed, just me and this patient. And then he closed his eyes, took his last breath and was gone: flat line on the monitor, no pulse, no breathing, his warm hand still in mine.

0910

I wanted to start my speech today by sharing this story because I wanted to honour the memory of all the lives we have lost in the pandemic, especially in long-term care, but also because I wanted to celebrate the thousands of lives that we saved and the hundreds of thousands of our incredible health care workers, who went through very similar and much more difficult experiences to provide the best care we possibly could with the resources that were available to us at the time. These nurses, these PSWs, these health care workers, truly are our health care heroes.

The experience of the pandemic has shaped me and has shaped all of us collectively as a community, as a province.

I can proudly say that the many lessons learned and the policy changes our government put in place, like closing ward 3 and ward 4 beds, hiring IPAC leads in every home, robust vaccination practices and made-in-Canada PPE—steady supply—are having the desired effect, such that our COVID infections today in long-term care are the lowest they have ever been.

Let’s fast-forward to today. Today, I still pinch myself when I get introduced as the Honourable Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Ontario’s Minister of Long-Term Care. This truly is a privilege of a lifetime. This truly is my dream job.

So today, as I lead debate on the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, I want to thank the Premier, Premier Ford, for putting his trust in me. I want to thank my mom, Anna Kusendova, who is here in the gallery who has sacrificed so much of herself and her own dreams to give me and my brother the best possible circumstances to grow up into decent human beings; my husband, Mina, who is watching, who is my rock and gives me the wings to fly as high as I choose to; and my incredible team at the Ministry of Long-Term Care, who have worked day in and day out since I became minister six months ago leading up to today, including Deputy Minister Thomson, as well as my deputy policy director Fizza Mirza, who led the file on our political team.

I also want to thank the incredible mentors and stakeholders who are watching or who are here today in the gallery, supporting our bill, many of whom have supported me since the start of this journey, including our RNAO president and CEO, Dr. Doris Grinspun, who was the first person ever to bring me to Queen’s Park as a nursing student on an RNAO placement; and finally, my caucus colleagues, the co-authors of this bill, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, as well as the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility; and last but not least, the member for Thornhill, who has been my partner in crime in putting forward our private members’ bill, Improving Dementia Care in Ontario Act. Bill 121 and our extensive two-year consultation work and advocacy in the dementia space, in many ways, inspired some of the components of today’s seniors and caregivers act.

We know that as Ontario is growing at an unprecedented rate, it is also aging at an unprecedented rate. While this provides opportunities, it also provides challenges that must be addressed today. This is why we are here now: to provide the supports our seniors deserve and need, no matter where they call home. While I am the Minister of Long-Term Care, I am also a nurse, and I know care is not provided in only one place. The investments and changes we are proposing today will help connect Ontario seniors to care wherever they may be.

We know that over the next 20 years, Canada’s seniors’ population is expected to grow by 68%. Here in Ontario, seniors—those aged 65 years or older—are the fastest-growing group in the province. In 2016, 16.4% of Ontario’s population was 65 years or older. By 2041, it is projected that 25% of Ontario’s population will be 65 years or older, growing from three million seniors in 2016 to 4.6 million seniors. That’s a lot of seniors, Speaker.

As a nurse, I know that as people age, they need more support. This bill will continue to build on our government's support for seniors. As we plan for care and support needs of our seniors, we know that we cannot deploy a one-size-fits-all approach. Not everyone requires the same level of support. Some need social supports to stay engaged and promote mental health and well-being. Others need caregivers to help manage their medications and help with activities of daily living, like dressing, bathing and grooming, while others require increasingly complex around-the-clock medical and nursing care, such that is provided in our long-term-care homes.

This is not some group of other people—these are our parents, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles, our families. These are the same people who built Ontario, who raised us, who contributed to our economy and our growth. And these are the same people who now rely on us for care, love and support. We owe them nothing less than the love and care they gave to us. Supporting our seniors wherever they choose to age is a core principle of this comprehensive plan. Now, with Ontario's senior population growing so rapidly, we must act now, we must act today, to ensure they lead healthy, independent and engaged lives for as long as possible, while providing them with the care that they deserve, which is exactly what this proposed legislation and suite of initiatives and investments endeavour to do.

These proposed changes are part of a broader plan being implemented by the province to better support seniors and those who care for them, by improving and expanding supports for seniors living in long-term care, retirement homes and the community. This is why our government has introduced the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, and this is also why this act makes targeted investments of \$114 million to various programs to address the needs of our seniors and caregivers from every angle possible.

Because we know that seniors are not a one-size-fits-all group, we are taking a cross-government approach. With this legislation, we are uniting the efforts of the Ministries of Long-Term Care, Health and Seniors and Accessibility to better serve seniors who are still living in their homes in the community, those living in retirement homes, as well as long-term-care residents.

This comprehensive legislation will amend acts and regulations, contains new investments and policy initiatives, all in an evidence-based approach that is built on the needs and priorities of Ontario seniors. The legislation is comprised of three pillars: improving dementia care and supports; supporting seniors, their families and caregivers; and protecting seniors and enhancing social connections.

Madam Speaker, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024, proposes legislative amendments to the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, and the Retirement Homes Act, 2010. I would like to now review those amendments along with our related initiatives in each of these pillars.

The first pillar, as I mentioned, is improving dementia care and supports. I will call this the purple pillar, because purple is the colour for Alzheimer's and dementia, as well as the colour of those flowers, the forget-me-nots, that we wear during our advocacy days. Some of the initiatives contained in this purple pillar are related to the work that

the member for Thornhill and I did on Bill 121, Improving Dementia Care in Ontario Act, and I would like to thank some key stakeholders who are here in the gallery today, like the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the Ontario Brain Institute.

Back on September 24, just a few days after World Alzheimer's Day, I had the opportunity to speak at the Alzheimer Society of Peel's second annual dementia day conference. At that conference, I spoke some hard truths, which is the same information I'd like to share with you today. Right now, in Ontario, around 250,000 are living with dementia, although I have seen numbers as high as 320,000 in some reports. And according to the Alzheimer Society, Ontario will see dementia cases rise by 202% over the next 20 years.

0920

The truth is every single person in this room, or every single person watching, either has a loved one suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's or knows someone who has a loved one. As many of you know, a dementia diagnosis does not impact just one individual; it impacts the entire community, circle of friends and the family. Simply put, Alzheimer's and dementia impact us all.

But I will tell you what I told the Alzheimer Society of Peel: I have hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel. It is that light that we must shine and bring into focus.

Speaker, we know that Alzheimer's and dementia are not a normal part of aging, and since it is not a normal part of the aging process, then with time we may find a cure and a way to prevent and treat this disease. The good news is that there is something that each and every one of us can do to lower our risk of developing dementia. There are 12 modifiable risk factors found by the Lancet Commission and published in their 2020 report. I'd like to name some of them: for example, hearing loss, acquiring a traumatic brain injury, hypertension, alcohol consumption, obesity, smoking, social isolation, physical inactivity, diabetes—all of these are modifiable risk factors. These 12 factors could theoretically delay or prevent around 40% of dementia cases worldwide.

So let's pause for a moment and let that sink in. We all have the power to potentially reduce our risk of dementia by 40%. Why don't we do it? Why don't we eat healthier, exercise more, meditate, seek social connection, check our vision and hearing, quit smoking and practise self-care?

I would like to share something that is an area of vulnerability for me, with the hope to inspire others. About two years ago, I started noticing my hearing was getting worse, and for a politician, hearing is an important part of our job and being able to communicate with our stakeholders and constituents. Even yesterday, I was at a reception and people were talking to me, and you know how receptions get loud and rowdy. So I got used to just nodding and smiling and pretending like I knew what they were saying. Actually, I didn't understand what that particular person was saying to me yesterday. How many of you have been in similar situations?

I know—and I have seen the studies. I have seen actual brain scans in studies that show that hearing loss over time actually causes our brains to shrink. So why haven't I

found time in the last two years to go and get my hearing checked? Because I'm busy, just like every single one of you. There is always something more important, always a bigger priority.

So today I commit to all of you, as my New Year's resolution, after I have my baby, I will go and get my hearing checked. And you know what? If it results in me having to wear a hearing aid, well, I'm going to start a new trend and make hearing aids very cool.

I would love to inspire each and every one of you to look at those 12 risk-modifiable factors. Pick one that is of concern for you, whether that's healthy eating, whether that's exercising more, getting your eyes checked or your hearing checked, and do it as part of your New Year's resolution. Because if we all do that and if we all raise awareness and talk to our family and friends about these factors, then collectively we will be contributing to lowering our collective risk of developing dementia.

For now, today, we must do everything we can to support people living with Alzheimer's and dementia, and their families. From awareness, prevention and diagnosis to treatment and care, our proposed legislation and related initiatives aim to improve the care and supports that people living with dementia receive.

Speaker, this legislation, if passed, would amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act and require all long-term-care homes to have an organized program for dementia care and services—and we have many representatives of our long-term-care homes present here today. This requirement would be similar in nature to other programs in long-term-care homes such as palliative care. This proposed amendment would build upon our previous investments in dementia supports such as Behavioural Supports Ontario services, which provide person-centred, evidence-informed supports and services for older adults who have, or at risk for, responsive behaviours associated with dementia, complex mental health, substance use and other neurological conditions. In fact, we just grew the base funding for this program by \$11 million this year to bring the annual funding total to \$95 million. This proposed amendment would help improve the quality of care for 60% of long-term-care residents living with dementia.

To support this, Madam Speaker, our government plans to make targeted investments to develop a new program to train long-term-care staff in emotion-based models of care, which are designed to improve outcomes for residents living with dementia.

So when we think of emotion-based models of care, one model that comes to mind is the butterfly model, and we have representatives from Peel Manor here today who have implemented the butterfly model. Many of you have probably visited homes that have the butterfly model. Basically, we're using colours and we're creating experiences for our seniors. For example, we can design every door to a resident's room that will trigger a memory. So, if someone was a firefighter in their past life, we would actually paint the room to make it look like a fire station, because seniors living with dementia, if they live in a home that does not respond to these needs, they might

wander, they might get lost, they might not know which room is actually theirs. By having these personalized experiences that trigger those positive memories, we're truly centring the care around the person. In short, Madam Speaker, it humanizes the care residents receive at a time when empathy and compassion are needed the most.

But that's not all we are proposing. The Ministry of Long-Term Care will also work with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to incorporate additional dementia elements into personal support worker education standards—this is something I heard about a lot in my work as a nurse but also as an MPP—that our PSWs, when they graduate and start working in long-term care, might not necessarily be prepared for the realities of working with someone with dementia. So by strengthening the standard we're going to empower PSWs who work not only in long-term care but also in home care and in the community, to provide better supports for those living with dementia.

Madam Speaker, other steps that we are taking: We are continuing the support for the Alzheimer Society of Ontario's First Link program and the Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County dementia coaches. Crucially important programs for dementia care, First Link and dementia coaches assist those newly diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia and their families with where to turn to for help in their time of need.

The First Link program is a program that the member for Thornhill talked about a lot. She didn't know that that program existed when she was going through caregiving experiences for her aunt and another family member.

First Link is a navigation program where families who are newly diagnosed with dementia—or have loved ones newly diagnosed—can access supports and be linked to services. That is why it is extremely important that we are continuing and supporting that vital work.

Madam Speaker, families want to know that their loved ones are getting the most up-to-date treatment and medication which is also why in this proposed legislation we will continue our government's supports of the made-in-Ontario program GeriMedRisk. GeriMedRisk is a service run by Ontario clinicians for Ontario clinicians. It provides physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists with a central hub for specialist information regarding optimizing medications, mental health and comorbidities in older adult patients.

Speaker, the second pillar of our plan focuses on supporting seniors, their families and caregivers across the health care system. I call this the blue pillar, the colour of the caregiver scrubs. A number of initiatives fall under this pillar. This bill, if passed, would amend the Retirement Homes Act—specifically the retirement home Residents' Bill of Rights—to reinforce residents' rights to ongoing support from caregivers such as family members and friends who provide physical, mental, social and emotional supports.

It also aligns with amendments to the Fixing Long-Term Care Act to acknowledge the importance of caregivers in the health care sector. We know that caregivers do so much of the additional support and additional work that our loved ones and our residents require, so by having

this embedded in our legislation we are celebrating the hundreds of thousands of hours of work that our caregivers provide.

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And for long-term-care homes, this proposed legislation includes measures to enhance recognition and respect for the diversity of residents. The expanded program would ensure residents are given reasonable opportunities to practise their religious and spiritual beliefs and to observe the requirements of those beliefs and develop and implement initiatives that recognize the cultural diversity of residents and communities. These changes would result in improved recognition and respect for the experiences, histories, beliefs and needs of our residents. Speaker, we know that diversity is our strength, and we are celebrating that strength through these acts.

On top of the regulatory and legislative changes and amendments, several initiatives proposed under this pillar will complement the legislation. We are investing \$20 million in adult day programs like the one that I visited in Whitby—Durham—which offer social programming and peer connections, helping reduce social isolation and serve a range of seniors, including those with dementia. Speaker, it's always fun to watch our seniors as they gather together with their friends, play bingo or a game of cards or simply share a coffee, and that's exactly what we are supporting today. Adult day programming, as you know, also benefits caregivers by providing them with much-needed time and resources to simply take a break, to take a breath, to run some errands or to practise self-care.

We are also preparing to launch a pilot project, community access to long-term care, inspired by someone who is in the audience today. This pilot project will give seniors still living in their own homes access to certain services that are currently only available to those living in long-term care, such as recreational and social programming, dementia cafés, clinical services, podiatry—all kinds of personal care. So instead of having long-term-care homes be closed and isolated away from the community, through this pilot project we want to open up long-term-care homes, invite the community in and see the magic that can happen.

This legislation will also support the caregivers and families of people living with dementia through expanded access to respite services, and most caregivers are loved ones with personal connections to those they are looking after. As we know, respite services give those caregivers a well-deserved break so they can also take care of their health, so I'm very happy that we are investing into respite services as part of this pillar.

Madam Speaker, this brings us to our last and final pillar, which focuses on protections and social connections for our seniors that will help reduce all forms of senior abuse and decrease social isolation, address staffing challenges to ensure consistent quality of care in long-term-care homes and support the prevention and management of infectious diseases in retirement homes.

Seniors are often considered the most vulnerable population demographic, and so in addition to physical aging and cognitive decline, they may be isolated and lonely;

they may be depressed. All of these factors can not only exacerbate medical conditions, but combined together, these factors put seniors at greater risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse, which is what our third pillar aims to address. It seeks to protect seniors and enhance their social connections to improve their everyday lives to ensure they are both physically and mentally healthy. I'm sure the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility will expand on that pillar.

I'd like to once again thank everybody who has contributed to this bill being introduced. I look forward to hearing debate from my colleagues in opposition. I hope that collectively we can build better supports for our seniors, wherever they may live.

With that, I will pass it on to my colleague the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: It is an honour to rise today and speak to the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act. This is a bill which recognizes the importance of seniors in our province.

Seniors helped build Ontario, the best province in the best country in the world. They have given their time, energy and effort to build this marvellous province that we call home. Our seniors deserve to live their lives with dignity and respect. As a super senior myself, I understand how our seniors continue to contribute to our communities in their seventies, eighties, nineties and beyond. It is incumbent upon us to honour the contributions of our seniors all across this province by helping to ensure that they are able to stay connected in our communities, and it is important for us to recognize the diversity of our seniors, who started out from all corners of the world and now call Ontario home.

Under the leadership of our Premier, Doug Ford, this is a government that believes in an important mandate for our seniors: that they should be able to live in their homes and communities for as long as they wish. This is core to how our government is delivering services and supports for our seniors: providing them with choice. When we provide choice, Madam Speaker, we are meeting seniors how they want to be met. We are giving those who want digital options a wider array of digital services. For those who want to engage in their language of choice, we have expanded access through 211 Ontario and the seniors safety line to over 200 languages. We are breaking down barriers for seniors, providing them supports in the language of and at the time of their choosing, because seniors matter to our government and to this Premier.

Our government has made considerable investments to support helping our seniors to stay active, safe and connected in our communities. We have expanded community-based care for seniors. We have introduced new refundable tax credits to support aging at home. My ministry has doubled the size of our Seniors Community Grant Program, now providing up to \$6 million to local community groups through our grants of up to \$25,000. These grants matter, Madam Speaker, because our government believes in the

importance of empowering local communities to know the best ways to help their seniors stay connected. Our government believes that as we provide them with the tools and resources they need, each community is also to offer the right programs and activities that our seniors will find tailored to their needs.

One of my favourite programs which our government offers is the Seniors Active Living Centres Program. Last year, our government expanded the number of SALCs by 17, helping to address the geographic gaps in coverage from the existing network. This year, through the leadership of our Premier and the Minister of Finance, we are adding 100 more SALCs. Madam Speaker, this is incredible.

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Our SALCs play a critical role as hubs for our seniors to stay healthy, active and connected in our communities. They help seniors access information from local health partners. They work with organizations like the Ontario Securities Commission to provide information on how seniors can stay safe and not fall victim to financial fraud. They are places where seniors can have fun, strengthen existing—and make new—friendships.

This came home to me last year when I was travelling to visit one of our SALCs in northern Ontario. I had a 92-year-old woman come up to me. She said, “Minister Cho, this centre saved my life.” I was understandably curious. So I said, “How?” I asked, “How did the centre save your life?” She shared with me that her husband had passed away a few years ago. She lived a little outside of the local town. She found herself becoming isolated from everyone who had been in her social circle. She felt her health starting to take a turn for the worse. Thankfully, two of her friends had come to her house and nearly forced her to leave the house and come to the local seniors centre. At the centre, she was able to have fun, learning new skills and making new friends.

It was these new social connections which she made that helped her to feel reinvigorated. New friends, new connections and new skills that she learned helped to give her an extra reason to get out of bed in the morning. Her health got better, and now, she was able to help other new members feel welcome and connected into the local senior community. This is just one of many examples I could give about how our SALCs are actively making a difference in our province today. There are hundreds of thousands of seniors who are involved in these programs today and whose examples I could have offered instead.

We are changing lives for the better with this program. We know that social isolation is enemy number one for our seniors. When our seniors are isolated, their mental health suffers. Their physical health suffers. Studies show that when our seniors are socially connected, they are less likely to need acute care help. The quality of their life is vastly improved. They are able to live the lives of dignity and respect that they deserve.

This is why the expansion of this program is so important; it is a game-changer for seniors in Ontario. We are adding nearly 33% more SALCs in Ontario over the next year.

These SALCs will fill in areas where geography, culture or language could be a barrier for seniors to access local programs.

We know that the number of seniors is growing in Ontario. Each day, we have approximately 400 more seniors in Ontario and the cultural and linguistic make-up of our seniors has changed over the past 30 years in our province. It is so much more important now to have choices that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to help seniors feel safe and connected. I am proud to be part of a government that offers access through 211 Ontario and the seniors safety line to services in over 200 languages. As Ontarians age, they often feel most comfortable in their first language. By expanding the number of cultural and linguistic options available to seniors, we are mirroring the successes of 211 Ontario and the seniors safety line in expansion of our seniors active living centres. We are making sure that language doesn't create barriers for our seniors, in the same way we have been expanding our SALC network in the past year to help address geographic gaps.

We know how hard winters can be in Ontario; it can make travelling far difficult for many Ontarians. This is why it is important that we are adding more locations across the province to help provide those living in rural Ontario with a similar level of access to those services, as those living in urban Ontario. This continues the strategy of our government to ensure that all Ontarians can access the supports and services they need, accessible in the manner of their preference. Our government is one for all the people of our amazing province.

We know that there is still much work left to be done. At the same time, we are delivering tangible results that benefit all Ontarians. As Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, I am honoured to stand today and speak to this bill, which will help Ontario's seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm pleased to address Bill 235 this morning and in my opening remarks, I'd like to say that, as usual, we don't take enough time in the Legislature to recognize the accomplishments of our colleagues and fellow members. I would like to take a moment to recognize some of the accomplishments of the Minister of Long-Term Care, who's also the MPP for Mississauga Centre.

She spoke about her background in nursing; she didn't give you all the details. She holds a bachelor of science degree in human and molecular biology from the University of Toronto and a degree in nursing from Nipissing University. I understand that she recently completed a master's degree in nursing research from the Toronto Metropolitan University. That alone would be impressive, but I have more. She doesn't speak three languages or four languages; she speaks five languages: English, Polish, French, Czech and Slovak. She's a member of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. She is a registered nurse, and she worked on the front line during the COVID-19 pandemic, while many others did not. And I'm on the rather young side, so I don't know everybody's history in this Legislature, but I'm pretty sure that she might be the first mom-to-be in the history of Ontario to introduce legislation in the Legisla-

tive Assembly of Ontario. So I wanted to take a moment to recognize those accomplishments.

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Madam Speaker, the record of building long-term care and supportive care in the province of Ontario has been discussed many times in this Legislature, and I want to discuss it a little bit again.

Under the previous government, for 15 years, they managed to build and supply fewer than 700 new spots for care in the province of Ontario.

However, under the leadership of the Premier, since 2018, this government has embarked on a massive expansion of facilities in the province of Ontario. And literally as we speak, thousands of new spots are under construction—and have been constructed—which are going to provide excellent care and a home for people who need one in the province of Ontario.

I want to talk about one example that's specific to me, and I think it's illustrative of the type of thing that's going on in the province of Ontario. I want to make specific reference to two towns that are in the area of Essex county.

There is the town of Belle River, which is actually situated in Essex county, and then also the town of Tilbury, which is just slightly outside the border of Essex county. In the town of Tilbury, there was a long-term-care home that was getting on in years, and the operator of that home wanted to build a new one. The old one could only handle 75 residents, and as I said, it was getting on in years. So the proponent, which is Arch Long Term Care, wanted to build a brand new facility in Belle River, Ontario. It would be twice the size, it would handle 150 residents, and it would be a brand new, state-of-the-art facility. That proposal needed a licence from the province of Ontario. Of course, they applied for a licence and then advertised publicly that they had applied for a licence.

After Arch Long Term Care applied for the licence, that application was opposed by the NDP, who called on this government to deny the application. Some reasons were given for that—but Tilbury and Belle River are only 15 minutes apart. Well, the call for denial was in itself denied. The government did not follow the advice of the NDP, but rather the government granted a new licence to Arch Long Term Care. And as we speak, today, in the town of Belle River, a brand new facility is under construction, which will provide 150 residents with a new, state-of-the-art facility, where they can move and stay within the community they grew up in. That's great news, not only for Belle River, but also for Tilbury. It's going to be a brand new facility. It's going to provide 150 modern spots for residents. It's going to have the butterfly-style environment. This government is proud to have approved and supported that expansion. That means families in Belle River and in Tilbury will be able to stay close to their loved ones and enjoy continuing their relationship with them into their golden years. And after all, isn't that what we all want? We want to stay close to our loved ones and enjoy them in their golden years.

I thought I would offer that explanation and short story as an illustration of the type of support and the type of programs that this government supports in this sector.

Turning my attention to Bill 235 itself, I thought that I would address what I will call the enforcement provisions of this bill because I think the enforcement provisions are rather important. Although the much-qualified Minister of Long-Term Care would talk about the support and the care that we give to residents, people like myself would actually draw our attention to other portions of the bill, which will involve enforcement and investigation.

Let me make reference to some of these paragraphs. It might surprise members of this Legislature that there is something called a “warrant” mentioned in this bill. Usually, when you talk about a warrant, you think of a police officer knocking on your door. Actually, there are all sorts of enforcement officers who might exercise a warrant to enforce the law.

What this particular section says is, “Upon application made without notice by an inspector, a provincial judge or justice of the peace may issue a warrant authorizing an inspector named in the warrant to enter premises specified in the warrant and to exercise any of the powers mentioned in section 150, if the provincial judge or justice of the peace is satisfied on information under oath....” That's a rather strong enforcement provision. It's very strong, in my opinion. It actually authorizes an inspector to enter a home and do an investigation and seize evidence just like a police officer would.

In fact, if we continue on reading Bill 235, there are a series of enforcement provisions. I want to list them before I start delving into the specifics of them. There are investigations with warrant, powers under the warrant and conditions on warrant. There is a provision for assistance. There is a provision for a time of execution of the warrant. There's even a provision for use of force. There's a provision dealing with copies of seized items, admissibility of evidence, obtaining further warrants, seizure of things not specified, searches in what we call “exigent circumstances,” and again, the use of force. Now, I'm going to delve a little bit into detail into some of these.

We already learned that an inspector can apply for and obtain a warrant, and here are some of the powers after obtaining the warrant that the inspector can exercise:

“1. To enter or access the building, dwelling, receptacle or place specified in the warrant and seize, examine and remove anything described in the warrant.

“2. To make reasonable inquiries of any person, orally or in writing, with respect to anything relevant to the investigation.

“3. To use any data storage, processing or retrieval device or system located at the premises in order to produce a record, information or evidence described in the warrant, in readable form.

“4. To require a person to produce the information or evidence described in the warrant and to provide whatever assistance is reasonably necessary, including using any data storage, processing or retrieval device or system to produce, in any form, the information or evidence described in the warrant.

“5. To use any investigative technique or procedure described in the warrant or do anything described in the warrant.”

That's a pretty standard phrase that you might see, for example, in the Criminal Code of Canada. In other words, this is an investigative technique and a technique where an investigator can enter a premises, in this case a residence, and seize evidence—and seize evidence that's even computerized—and produce a copy of that evidence.

These are very serious powers and that's why you need to obtain a warrant from a provincial court judge, and that is set out in this legislation.

Let's read a little bit more about the enforcement provisions in this: "A provincial offences officer may call upon police officers for assistance in executing the warrant and may use whatever force is reasonably necessary to execute the warrant." That would be highly unusual that force would be used in circumstances of a residence that's contemplated under this legislation. But it's more common that an inspector might in advance contact a local police force and say, "Listen, I'm going to conduct an investigation at this particular spot. I don't know what's going to happen when I get there. Would you kindly escort me in the front door just so everybody knows that this is serious business and nobody should try to suppress evidence and nobody should try to, perhaps, be uncooperative?" These are very strong enforcement measures in this legislation.

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Here's another section that I want to talk about: "A provincial offences officer who is lawfully present in a place pursuant to a warrant or otherwise in the execution of their duties may, without a warrant, seize anything in plain view..." Sometimes something is described in a warrant, and sometimes it's not. If it's relevant evidence and it's not described in the warrant, the inspector can still enter that residence and take into possession that evidence if it is relevant to the investigation.

Those are three of the provisions that I've just spoken about, and why they're important is because this is legislation that is meant to have teeth, and the teeth are in the legislation. This is legislation that empowers investigators to carry out the investigations they need to make sure that this legislation is in place. I thought that that was worth referring to.

Another great piece of this legislation specifically says the following: "Without restricting the generality of subsection (1), every licensee shall ensure that residents are given reasonable opportunity to practise their religious and spiritual beliefs, and to observe the requirements of those beliefs." And that's an excellent provision to be in this bill because these religious practices—you can call them cultural practices if you don't want to call them religious practices—are important to people. They're important to people as they enter their golden years, and they're important to people throughout their life. People need to rely on these practices. These practices give people inspiration and condolence. These practices help people deal with everyday activities. These practices are assistive practices that are meaningful for people, and they should be allowed to continue these practices just as they practised them at home. Switching homes doesn't mean you should discontinue your previous practices. You should be allowed to

continue your practices and to continue them in your new home, wherever that might be. I think that is a spectacular addition to this bill, and it was worth specifically being mentioned.

Finally, I'd like to refer to one more thing in this bill. It refers to encouraging licensees, essentially, to do what they're required to do, and it makes an offence of what we call abuse or neglect. That is outlined very early, and it requires, essentially, licensees to comply. That was worth mentioning as well, because those could constitute offences under this act, and, as I said in my earlier comments, there are strong enforcement provisions in this act to make people comply.

I want to congratulate the minister on this act and thank the Legislative Assembly for this opportunity.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Well, first of all, I'd like to welcome the groups here to Queen's Park. Welcome.

But I'd like to let this group know that, yesterday, this bill was dropped at 1:31—1:31. No discussion with the opposition, no discussion with the critic—which I am for long-term care, as everybody knows. No discussion at all.

I haven't forgot that this government was in charge when we lost 6,000 of our seniors during COVID. I haven't forgot that in the private organizations—78% of them—died during COVID. I haven't forgotten about Bill 7.

But it's absolutely shameful that this government drops a bill as important as this, and as important as our seniors are—not only in long-term care and the retirement homes and home care—with absolutely no discussion and asking me to provide an hour lead one day later. It's terrible.

I didn't have a chance to talk to you guys. I'm sorry; I haven't had a chance to talk to you because I got the bill yesterday at 1:31. I was in the House at 1:31—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Comments through the Chair.

MPP Wayne Gates: So, I apologize to you. You answer whatever one of those questions you like.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I'm not sure if there actually was a question in there, but very respectfully and collaboratively to my colleague: Today is a big win for our residents, for our seniors and for caregivers. In that spirit of collaboration, I would like to invite the member to a lunch we will be having with our stakeholders this afternoon, to give him an opportunity to engage with them.

But, Speaker, we are exactly doing that. We are engaging in discussion. This is the legislative process, where we debate ideas, so this is exactly what people of Ontario elected us to do. I invite him to propose his ideas, to debate this legislation and to propose amendments. If he has some better ideas on how we can make this legislation even stronger, even more robust, I would love to hear from him. That's exactly what we're doing. We're engaging in discussion today through the legislative process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. John Jordan: The member from Essex was talking about new homes. Again, I want to thank the Ministry of Long-Term Care for the three new homes in my riding, in Almonte, Carleton Place and Smiths Falls. They're beautiful homes. The residents are already in two of those homes, and Smiths Falls is near completion.

I want to follow up on the minister's comments regarding dementia. It's really shocking—the comment about dementia cases increasing by over 200% in 20 years. I think the training is really important with regard to the funding for dementia—training specifically for implementing emotion-based models of care within long-term-care homes. Often, dementia will present in behaviour.

I'm wondering if the minister can expand on that training and how it will impact our long-term-care homes.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much for that question.

I also want to thank the member for his work. When he was my predecessor, when he was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care, he certainly laid down some of the groundwork for the bill today.

The member is right; we are investing in emotion-based models of care. Through this pilot, we'll be investing in 15 homes that will train their staff in how to provide communication techniques, such as gentle persuasive approaches or other techniques to support those living with dementia. Through these investments, we're targeting about 1,800 residents—to train up the staff, the PSWs, the nurses in emotion-based care approaches. It's a big win for the dementia community. And we'll continue building on those important investments.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to thank the member for Mississauga Centre for her excellent speech.

I listened very closely to your personal experience as a nurse during the COVID pandemic. It must have been incredibly difficult to go through that experience and many others.

I have some long-term-care homes in my riding that I visited recently, during the long-term-care engagement day. Those centres include the O'Neill Centre on Christie as well as Kensington Gardens. They have two concerns that they would like this government to address, and I'd like your response to that. One is that they need an increase in the number of care hours per patient so they can provide quality care, especially in situations where we're using the butterfly model, because we know that is more staff-intensive. And the second piece is infrastructure funding, because they need to upgrade their buildings, especially to the new accessibility standard. Could you please respond to those two issues?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much for that question.

I'm very proud that it was this government that has actually enacted legislation, and we put it in the legislation, to raise the hours of direct care per resident per day to four hours of care per day. I'm happy to report to this House that today, on average, we are providing three hours

and 42 minutes of direct care per resident per day. So, since we became elected, we raised the hours by one full hour. This represents about 15 days of more care every single resident in every single one of our homes receives. This is a great, great achievement. We'll continue building on those investments.

Specifically, to answer the question about infrastructure, homes have different funding streams through which they can apply. They can apply to the Local Priorities Fund—and the minor infrastructure project fund, as well, that they can apply to. We will, of course, consider those applications on a per-need basis, and we'll support homes by providing this infrastructure funding.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

We all have family members or loved ones who are currently in or may one day be in a long-term-care home. My mother was in a long-term-care home, with Alzheimer's.

Understandably, my constituents, like many others across this province, are deeply concerned about the quality of care their loved ones will receive and how their safety and dignity will be protected in those homes.

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My question: Can the minister inform this chamber how the introduction of an individual offence for abuse and neglect of long-term-care residents will serve to protect residents and, additionally, how this measure works in conjunction with strengthened inspection and investigation powers?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you for that very important question, and I think it's a timely one, because the safety of our most vulnerable residents, such as those living with dementia, is paramount to this government. Previous to our legislation, the only offences that could be charged under the act were actually offences to the licensee. But individual staff members or volunteers who could be participating in neglect or abuse of residents were unable to be charged. Through the legislation, we are introducing the individual offence, and this will ensure that licensees are not unfairly penalized for actions they could not foresee. This is introducing targeted accountability, where guilty staff members will face consequences under the law, not the home itself. This will result in safer homes as well as better tools for our inspectors to use.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I did want to talk a little about caregivers. Because I brought a motion forward, going back just maybe a month ago, on caregivers. We have 3.4 million caregivers in the province of Ontario, that put in 20, 30, 40 hours sometimes a day. They're losing their jobs sometimes to take care of their loved ones. And I brought the motion forward that they should be given financial contribution of \$400 or \$500—like they do in other provinces—yet the minister and their party voted it down.

I'd like to know, if you care about caregivers—and it's part of the bill which I'll speak on, obviously, next time it is called—why did you vote against caregivers for financial benefit when they're putting 20, 30, 40 hours, really doing the government's job and helping their loved ones. Why did you vote against it?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: The purpose of this bill is to support seniors and their caregivers, and that's exactly what we're doing. We have targeted investments. We are investing in respite care. We're investing in adult day programs. By investing in these programs, we are off-loading caregivers so they can go run errands. They can do their medical appointments. They can do their grocery shopping. We're also providing funding for respite care, which is more long-term. It could be several weeks—if the family or the caregiver needs to travel somewhere. So, we're investing into those programs.

We're also piloting a new project which I'm very excited about, the Community Access to Long-Term Care pilot with the same goal to bring people who need supports from the community into long-term care to give that much much-needed respite to caregivers.

I'm excited about these investments, and I'm very excited about this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. It is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN NEWMARKET–AURORA SHELTER SERVICES

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Christmas came early to Newmarket–Aurora this year. The Newmarket Santa Claus Parade was a magical event with thousands of people lining the streets of downtown historic Main Street. Christmas carols were being played while children were beaming with excitement in anticipation of seeing old St. Nick.

The Aurora Santa Under the Stars Parade lit up the evening down Yonge Street, and thousands of people again lined the streets, with the realization that Christmas is only one month away.

The biggest Christmas gift my community received was last Friday when we put shovels in ground on the construction of Newmarket's newest emergency housing facility. Blue Door, a housing charity and so much more, is tearing down the existing 12-unit emergency and transitional housing facility and replacing it with 14 stacked townhomes that will be able to accommodate families. This facility will ensure accessibility, provide upgraded facilities and have expanded services. I would like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for his support on the ministerial zoning order that helped the town of Newmarket, the municipality of York region, Blue Door,

the United Way, amongst other organizations who came together to ensure this project came to fruition. Thank you to the minister for bringing Christmas early for my community, as we are truly appreciative of his efforts.

Merry Christmas, one and all.

WINTER HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: Over the last few days, we've heard a lot about road closures in the district of Muskoka, Gravenhurst, Washago. Our heart goes out to those people; it really does.

But what you don't hear in the news most of the time is that after that, the highways are closed multiple times. Highway 11/17 were closed multiple times—a six-transport pileup on Highway 11 and multiple in my riding as well. It's not necessarily a road maintenance issue; there was a little bit of snow. People in northern Ontario are rightfully frightened of their main street and every time that the minister gets up and says, "We have the safest roads in North America," people in northern Ontario feel not only disrespected; they get angrier and angrier and angrier.

All our families are coming home for Christmas, hopefully. We all want our families to come home safe—all of us do. But mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles in northern Ontario really are frightened that their families might not make it. I'm not exaggerating this—I'm not. We need to understand that the Trans-Canada Highway in northern Ontario is not a safe route. We all have the responsibility to change that, especially the government: not just maintenance, but also to make sure that commercial drivers can actually drive in northern conditions. That's your responsibility; you haven't taken it so far. You better, because the next death is on you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the member: I take full responsibility for everything I do, and I remind him to make his comments through the Chair.

Mr. John Vanthof: My apologies.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It's okay.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Daisy Wai: It's that time of year again when the holiday spirit fills our hearts and communities. On November 29, the Salvation Army in Richmond Hill launched its annual Christmas Kettle Campaign at Hillcrest Mall. This campaign plays a crucial role in supporting local children, families and newcomers to Canada.

As we gather with loved ones this season, we must remember the many in our community who need our help. I am proud of the many organizations and volunteers who make it their mission to support those in need. I would like to take a moment to appreciate the non-profit organizations in our community. These organizations, along with their dedicated staff and volunteers, work tirelessly to improve lives and provide critical services, often without recognition.

I also want to acknowledge that the next Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week will take place from February

10 to 14, 2025. I encourage everyone to join us in celebrating the invaluable work of our non-profit organizations. Let's celebrate their remarkable contributions to the non-profit sector, not just during that week, but every week.

LONG-TERM CARE

MPP Lise Vaugois: I am deeply concerned that people are being blocked from visiting their relatives in long-term care, because of the illegal use of the Trespass to Property Act. Paul Ziman has been banned from seeing his mother for over a year, because he expressed anger about the quality of her care. And because his father can only visit with his assistance, his father has not been able to see his wife for over a year. The result? Paul's mother Anna has been forced into social isolation by her care facility.

The Fixing Long-Term Care Act states that residents have the right to receive visitors of their choice. Sadly, the Minister of Long-Term Care has suggested, incorrectly, that the Trespass to Property Act can be used in exceptional circumstances, but case law does not support this claim. Only the occupant of the unit—in this case, Anna—has the right to say who may or may not enter her home. The facility does not have this right and when they abuse their authority, the financial burden falls on the banned family member to take the home to court. If a person is a threat to the health and safety of people in a care home, the home must apply the correct legal remedies, all of which require due process and the provision of evidence.

1020

The isolation of seniors from their families is a cruel form of intimidation. I am calling on the government to step up, educate police officers and care homes on the correct use of the Trespass to Property Act and once and for all stop these abuses.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Billy Pang: On November 4, joined by Premier Ford and many of our fellow colleagues, I had the honour of attending the grand opening of York University's newest campus, located in the heart of my riding of Markham–Unionville. This state-of-the-art facility will equip students with the skills needed to succeed in today's economy.

While supporting the growth of local industries and creating new pathways for success in my community, our government recognized the importance of modern, innovative learning environments. That's why we are investing over \$201 million in the past year to ensure publicly assisted colleges and universities have the facilities, learning tools and equipment needed to prepare students for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

In addition, we are supporting made-in-Ontario innovation by committing over \$92 million to research projects across universities, colleges, research institutes and research hospitals. This investment will drive growth, fuel discovery and shape the future of our workforce.

I would like to once again congratulate York University on the opening of this new campus. It's an exciting milestone for Markham–Unionville and a bright step forward for Ontario's future.

RIDING OF WINDSOR WEST

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It has been a tough six and a half years for many families in Windsor under this Conservative government. The cost of living has skyrocketed. The unemployment rate in Windsor is the highest in the entire country. Those on ODSP and OW are in deep, legislated poverty.

The Feed Ontario Hunger Report notes that in 2023-24, over one million individuals accessed a food bank in Ontario, visiting almost 7.7 million times. First-time users represented 77% of those needing support. Food bank use has been on the rise for eight years. This is the second year of unprecedented surge in demand. The main reasons: insufficient income and unaffordable housing, and homelessness is at a historically high level.

This is reality under this Conservative government, yet they continue to give out hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in backroom deals that benefit luxury foreign spa owners and wealthy Conservative donors.

In 2023, one in four families in Windsor-Essex did not have secure or adequate access to food, according to the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. The government is spending tens of millions of taxpayer dollars on self-promotional ads telling Ontarians, "Everything is fine, and the government is doing just great," yet people in this province are left hungry, and many will be homeless this holiday season.

It has been an incredible honour serving as the member of provincial Parliament for Windsor West for 10 years. While the Conservatives seem to live in some alternative reality, I will continue to use my voice and the opportunity given to me by my constituents to fight for the living conditions they need and deserve.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I was sad to learn about the robbery that took place last week at Misk Jewellery at Ridgeway Plaza in Mississauga–Erin Mills. Just three minutes' drive from my constituency office, a group of masked individuals attacked the employees in a violent robbery.

Just in the past few weeks, we have been seeing robberies across the GTA, such as in Dixie mall, Square One, in Markham and in Brampton—jewellery stores broken into, pharmacies robbed at gunpoint, storefronts destroyed. Auto thefts continue to cause problems.

We hear it frequently from our constituents: People are feeling that it is unsafe for them and their families in their own communities. Businesses are eating losses. People are having their property stolen.

In response, our government is taking immediate action to fight crime. We have invested \$112 million in new

funding to enhance bail compliance and keep violent offenders off the street. We have invested in the judicial system for more prosecutors and violent crime experts. But our efforts are fruitless if the federal government does not pull their weight. We cannot have a justice system where repeat violent offenders are arrested and released again the same day. The federal government must take action to stop crime in our communities.

We will continue to stand for Ontarians and work hard to ensure everyone is safe and secure.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's the holiday season, and I want to wish everyone all the best. It's also budget season for municipalities, and I've been meeting with mayors and councillors who are struggling to avoid large property tax increases and service cuts because of provincial down-loading.

With budgets tight and people struggling to afford the basics, local leaders are asking why multi-billion dollar oil and gas companies are getting a free ride for their use of public land. The city of Guelph recently passed a motion to charge such right-of-way fees when they renegotiate their 20-year franchise agreement with Enbridge. This could raise millions of dollars the city could use to invest in addressing the homeless crisis in our community, but provincial law prohibits this in Ontario.

BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia all allow municipalities to charge private utilities like Enbridge a fee to use public land. That's why the member from Kitchener Centre and I have introduced the No Free Ride for Fossil Fuels Act to allow municipalities to charge these fees.

At a time when municipalities are struggling to deal with the intersecting crises of mental health, addictions, homelessness and poverty, why is a multi-billion dollar company with a \$19-million CEO getting a free ride? I want to applaud the city of Guelph for trying to change this.

SENIORS

Mr. Aris Babikian: It is truly an honour to recognize the remarkable achievements and birthdays of our seniors who have reached the incredible age of 95 or more. I was delighted to attend and extend the Premier's warmest greetings to Shepherd Village seniors who celebrated this milestone.

The celebration was a beautiful tribute to longevity, resilience and the invaluable contributions of these extraordinary individuals. Shepherd Village has always provided exemplary care, compassion and a sense of belonging to our residents. I commend the leadership and the staff for their dedication in fostering an environment where seniors can thrive and continue to lead fulfilling lives.

It fills me with immense pride to witness such remarkable milestones being celebrated in Scarborough—Agin-

court, wishing the celebrants continued health, happiness and many more wonderful years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, allow me to read the names of the esteemed seniors: Rhea Colwill, Clarence Westcott, Ruth Lucas, Mohamed Shaheed, Kumarasamy Sinnathamby, Bernice Brigham, Gertrude Trudie Clarke, Elizabeth Banks, Chiz Takata, Jessie Ogar, Clara Morgan, Gladys James, Lucila Matias, Noberto Goncalves, Ceta Chang, Man Fai Lau, Tsui Ping Wong, Olga Kitenbergs, Gladys Wismer, Lilian Gray, Gwendolyn Duffley, Lavina Dower, Joyce Chin, Margaret Whitehead, Vera Day, Edith Pennycooke, Maxwell Pennycooke, David Jose, Noelle Thomson and Bing-Xia Anna Qui.

PERTH—WELLINGTON ATHLETES

Mr. Matthew Rae: I rise today to recognize the incredible athletic achievements celebrated at Wellington North's third recognition of outstanding achievements in sports night. The Mount Forest Rams under 15 rep hockey team had a phenomenal season, finishing with a 24-9-2 record and winning the WOAA Lockridge Championship. In the playoffs, the Rams dominated with a 7-0 record, outscoring their opponents 53-9 in the round robin portion of the playoffs before advancing to the Ontario Minor Hockey Association tier 3 championships, where they placed third.

1030

The Mount Forest under 12 soccer club also had a standout year, completing an undefeated regular season and tournament victory. What makes this team truly special is the sportsmanship and camaraderie that they displayed, setting an example of teamwork and inclusivity both on and off the field.

Finally, I'd like to celebrate Khloe Hall, a talented lacrosse player from Arthur, who represented Team Ontario at the under 13 national box lacrosse championships in Regina, Saskatchewan, competing in all eight games, including the final against Team British Columbia. Khloe and her teammates earned a silver medal, showcasing their incredible talent and dedication.

These athletes have made our community proud with their perseverance, teamwork and achievements. Congratulations to all the honourees; you represent Perth—Wellington with great pride.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a special guest: The Consul General of the Argentine Republic in Toronto, Mr. Gustavo Infante. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislative Assembly.

We have another special guest in the Legislature today, a former member who represented Oakville South in the 35th and 36th Parliaments, was the member for Oakville in the 37th Parliament and was the greatest Speaker in the

history of the Ontario Legislature in the 37th Parliament, Gary Carr, and his wife, Teresa.

Gary currently serves the people of Halton as their regional chair.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure and my honour to welcome Janet Sumner, the executive director of Wildlands League, and Dave Pearce, senior forest conservation manager for Wildlands League. I want to thank them for all the work that they have been doing around Ojibway National Urban Park in my community. It's such an important piece of legislation that we need to get through to protect that land. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome, visiting Queen's Park for the first time, Baldev and Satwant Grewal. They are also celebrating their 33rd anniversary, but most importantly, they are the parents of a fabulous team member in the Ministry of Health, and that's Satnam. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome my new executive assistant Francesca Delano to the House. She's here for the first time. Also, holding the fort back in St. Catharines, my constituent assistants Caleb Ratzlaff, Penny Ormerod and Taylor Jones.

I want to wish you all a very merry Christmas and I want to take this opportunity, Speaker, if I may, to thank them for everything they do for the constituents in St. Catharines as well as what they do for me. They are the best team in Niagara, and I hold that to account.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Good morning. I'm delighted to introduce our legislative page from the wonderful riding of Markham–Thornhill, Ananthamhee Shakthi Thirunadarajah, who is a page captain today, who's also joined by her wonderful parents up there and her uncle Dr. Mayoora Mahalingam, who is also celebrating his birthday today. Happy birthday to Dr. Mahalingam. She's also accompanied by her aunt Nirthicaa Nalenthiran and cousins Akarshan and Skyshan. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thanks for being here.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker.

ᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ. Good morning. My colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay and I would like to introduce some guests from Mushkegowuk Council and Wildlands League, many of whom, again, travelled a great distance to be here today. Everyone is welcome to attend their event at Queen's Park in room 228 at lunchtime.

From Mushkegowuk Council: Deputy Grand Chief Amos Wesley, Acting Grand Chief Natasha Martin, Elder Norman Wesley, Lawrence Martin, Paul Crowley, Sam Hunter, Troy Woodhouse and George Nakogee.

From the Wildlands League: Janet Sumner, Anna Baggio, Megan Chen and Marion Ocampo. Meegwetch for being here.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I would like to welcome Scott Knox, Leah Power, Christian Mathieu, Graham Candy, Sacha Lai-Svirk and Ira Baptiste from the Institute of Canadian Agencies to Queen's Park. Welcome, and I am looking forward to meeting with you later today.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to join my colleague from Kiiwetinoong in introducing guests from Mushkegowuk Council and the Wildlands League. Also from Mushkegowuk Council, I want to introduce Ivan Iserhoff, Edward Sutherland, Ron Grech, Colleen McLeod, Ernest Beck, Vern Cheechoo, Galen Boulanger and Jeronimo Kataquapit.

With us with the Wildlands League are Dave Pearce, Kaia Rebane, Jordan Martinez and Katie Hayashi.

J'ai hâte de vous revoir à votre réception cet après-midi. Merci, meegwetch and welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome some constituents from my riding of Aurora. First off, Dalayah and Yasmina Chalk, and their father, Tyler. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning. I would like to welcome some very special guests who are here to support Bill 235 this morning.

We have the Alzheimer Society of Ontario. We have the Ontario Long Term Care Home Association, Ruth McFarlane. We have AdvantAge Ontario. We have Community Care Durham. We have the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario represented by Michelle Acorn. We have several members from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, including nurse practitioner Lhamo Dolkar; doctor and NP Alanna Coleman; doctor and RN Julia Fineczko; as well as Madison Scaini. We also have the Ontario Brain Institute, as well as several long-term-care homes. As representatives, we have Wellbrook Place, Copernicus Lodge, Peel Manor, and Villa Columbo.

Thank you so much for your support on the bill, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I just wanted to welcome to the Legislature two members of my constituency staff: Alla Krupnikov and Owen Cranston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It is my pleasure to welcome to the House today, Mr. D. Keith Smockum, noted and respected trial and appellate lawyer throughout the province of Ontario, and a senior partner at Smockum Zarnett LLP. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It gives me, also, great pleasure to introduce my staff who keep my Hamilton office running. They're the best staff in the place, so thank you, Michelle Tom; thank you, Micaela Krawczuk; and thank you, Linda Boos for all you do. Here's to a wonderful, safe holiday for you and your families. Thank you so much for your service.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais présenter Émile Maheu, qui est le président de l'AEFO, qui est ici à Queen's Park aujourd'hui. Bienvenue à tous les membres de l'AEFO. Ça me fait plaisir de vous rencontrer.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If there are no objections, I propose we continue to introduce our guests.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It is always my honour to introduce my team, both my constituency staff and here at Queen's Park, and thank them for the incredible hard work that they do on behalf of the residents of Windsor West and, frankly, across all of Windsor. While I'm introducing them, I want to take the opportunity to wish them and all

of my constituents a very happy holiday and a very happy and safe new year.

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Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to introduce Joseph Gulizia, who is with us today from UniversalCare. He has been a leader in founding Strides for Seniors, raising over \$1 million for CHATS. Thank you for everything you do for seniors and families in Ontario.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to welcome to the House my new executive assistant, Sam Hamilton.

Also, they're not able to be here in person, but I want to wish both my parents—they have birthdays coming up this weekend. I want to wish my dad a happy 93rd and my mother a happy 88th birthday. Happy birthday, Mom and Dad.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to welcome, for outdoor hospitality day: Cyndy Bonello from Glen Haven Resort and Dave Hilhorst from Skycroft Campground. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's also my honour to welcome my entire team, who are in the House today. They're here to celebrate Christmas with myself and also to extend congratulations and greetings to a number of stakeholders who will be joining us this afternoon. I want to thank Benjamin Donato-Woodger, as well as Emma Beattie, as well as Sarah Gardiner, and, of course, Sasha Kane. Without our constituency assistants, as well as our staff, where would we be? Thank you very much, Speaker, for this opportunity.

Also, I need to say this: My wife had surgery last week, on Friday. She is recovering after a very lengthy surgical process. Her surgery was originally cancelled because of a lack of nurses but she was able to get it a few days later. I wish her, honey—who is watching today—all the very best in your recovery. You are amazing. I love you very dearly. The next five weeks will blow by quickly and I know we're going to be stronger as a family afterwards.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'm very pleased to welcome Susan Somogyi, CEO of Family Service Ontario. Thank you so much for all you do, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Stan Cho: Here today for outdoor hospitality day, I want to welcome Camping in Ontario and the Ontario RV Dealers Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to recognize the Minister of Education on a point of order.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to wear white ribbons in recognition of tomorrow, December 6, as being the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Dunlop is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear white ribbons in recognition of tomorrow, December 6, as being the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Agreed? Agreed.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader next.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to announce that this evening's sitting has been cancelled.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for the information.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: I have a question for the Premier, and I'm really hoping that he will decide to answer the question this time. I want to quote the Auditor General: "Unfair," "subjective" and "not transparent." That is how the Auditor General described the call for development process for Ontario Place. The government is ponying up some serious cash for the Premier's vanity project: hundreds of millions for a taxpayer-funded parking garage, \$700 million to move the Ontario Science Centre so Therme gets a sweeter deal and \$60 million so Therme could have that fake beach.

Why won't this government take this seriously? I want to ask the Premier: Does the Premier not think that wasting billions of taxpayer dollars is a big deal?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I am using words from the AG's report: "The Ontario Place redevelopment was categorized as a real estate transaction and subject to the province's realty directive," not procurement laws. We made a commitment to the people of Ontario, back in 2022, that we would bring Ontario Place back to life. Construction is under way, and we are proceeding.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: As I said yesterday, the people of Ontario are not buying that kind of creative response, but they sure are paying for it. Two days ago, the minister couldn't even be bothered to answer for how, under her watch, this project got so out of control—billions over budget. We've seen hundreds of millions to close the science centre, handing over bags and bags of taxpayer dollars to subsidize a luxury spa company that was pretty much completely broke.

Instead of taking responsibility, the minister has made civil servants face questions for her decisions over and over again. Will the Premier of this province stand in his place, take responsibility, do the right thing and fire this infrastructure minister?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, I hate to disappoint the Leader of the Opposition, but I am not going anywhere. We know that, today, faced with current economic conditions and market conditions, everything is more expensive. We know that projects are more expensive. This is something that my ministry deals with and works with the Treasury Board and the Ministry of Finance every single day so that we can keep projects moving.

But let me use the AG's words: "Some of the cost escalation is construction costs. That would happen also if you were renovating" the science centre.

Let me use Michael Lindsay's words, the CEO of Infrastructure Ontario: "Costs associated with rehabilitating and remediating the ... facility at 770 Don Mills Road have continued to increase."

This is the unfortunate circumstance we find ourselves in. It is far more costly to build. But don't worry, Mr. Speaker, and have faith, Ontarians, because this government will continue to build Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: If it was only about the outrageously ballooning budget for a project that nobody in Ontario asked for—the auditor's report makes it very clear that Therme was struggling financially. In fact, they were and are broke. They did not pass the financial test to be viable for this contract, and yet, despite warnings from staff, even at Infrastructure Ontario, the minister pushed this deal through and handed them billions in taxpayer dollars.

These funds are meant to build homes, they are meant to hire doctors, they are meant to fix schools, not prop up a broke, luxury Austrian spa company. Why won't the minister do the right thing, take responsibility for wasting these taxpayer dollars and resign?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member opposite; perhaps she conveniently forgot that I was not the minister until 2021, and I was not responsible for the Ontario Place redevelopment until October 2022, but that's fine.

Let me read contents from the AG report. Page 77 says the following: "The lease between the province of Ontario and Therme includes a financial test. The lease required Therme Group to have a net worth of \$100 million. An examination by IO of Therme Group's 2020 audited financial statements shows that Therme had met this financial test per the lease requirements." The lease was made public by IO on October 3, 2024.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, that's some way to treat your friends. Throw them all under the bus now, why don't you?

Back to the Minister of Infrastructure: I'm going to try a different approach here, because I can't get over the fact that she is not taking any accountability or responsibility here. Right now, there's a mom about to tap her card at the Food Basics, feeling anxious about whether that's going to go through. Right now, in Sudbury, a dad is telling his kid that they can't play hockey this year because they don't have room in the budget. At the same time, this Premier's focus is on a vanity project at Ontario Place that's going to cost that mom and that dad and every other household in Ontario \$400. Why is a family in Sudbury paying \$400 to build a luxury spa in downtown Toronto?

Interjections.

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

To reply for the government, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, does the Leader of the Opposition ask that family—do they know that you voted against getting rid of the licence plate sticker, getting rid of the tolls, putting money back into people's pockets, getting rid of One Fare? Make sure you tell them, when that family gets their \$200 for the mom, the dad and all the kids, that you voted against it. Maybe that \$200 can be applied to their kids playing hockey.

It's not our money. I always say, Mr. Speaker, it's the taxpayers' money; it's the person in Sudbury's money that's been paying taxes. But guess what? The NDP and the Liberals, they believe it's their money: "Let's not give any money back to the taxpayers," because they'd rather waste it on bureaucracy and all their special interest groups that support them. We give money back to the taxpayers. We're the only jurisdiction in North America—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: —we've never raised a tax. And there's 850,000 more people working today than there was when you were in office—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members, including the Premier, to make their comments through the Chair and not directly across the floor of the House.

Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this Premier is spending \$100 million on advertising to tell people in Ontario that he's giving them a \$200 cheque, and then he's taking \$400 back.

Yesterday, I spoke to some of the biggest manufacturers in Ontario, some of the biggest employers in this province. One common thread is that they can't recruit and they can't retain workers because they can't guarantee that they'll have a family doctor or an affordable place to live or that the school buses are going to show up on time.

And 12,000 people in Sault Ste. Marie don't have a family doctor right now. Meanwhile, this government is spending \$2.2 billion on the Premier's luxury spa project in downtown Toronto. Why is the Premier making workers in Sault Ste. Marie pay \$400 to subsidize a luxury spa in downtown Toronto?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, through you, Mr. Speaker, whoever this big company is, I can guarantee the Leader of the Opposition one thing: They aren't voting for the NDP. The factory workers aren't voting for the NDP; they're voting for the PC Party, because we're putting money back into their pockets. And the same applies for the family in Sault Ste. Marie—which, by the way, the member up there is an absolute champion, building things—they're getting the \$200 as well.

I find it ironic. You can tell the Leader of the Opposition couldn't run a lemonade stand. There's one thing about running a business, and this is a business of Ontario: You advertise. You advertise down in the US; you advertise across Ontario, telling the people it's the greatest place to invest in. And we've seen that, with over 136 companies around the world investing last year, investing \$11 billion, creating 12,200 jobs—

Interjections.

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

I'm going to ask the member for Ottawa to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Joel Harden: Withdraw.

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

The final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, \$400 may not be a lot to this Premier, but it's a lot to most families. It's a lot for the average family. And they're expecting their taxes to be invested in things that would actually help make their lives better—for example, making highways safer in northern Ontario. The twinning of Highway 11 and 17 has been a priority for northern communities for years, but it has not been one for these Conservatives. Winter is here. People are literally risking their lives on these highways.

I want to know: Why are families in Thunder Bay and Kapuskasing being forced to pay \$400 each to subsidize this Premier's luxury spa in downtown Toronto?

Interjections.

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

To reply for the government, the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: What we're witnessing is an absolute failure in leadership on the other side, Mr. Speaker. Just a few short weeks ago, the fall economic statement provided relief for families in Ontario, providing a family of five a \$1,000 tax rebate because the economy is surging.

This government is doing this without raising taxes, without raising fees. But don't take it from me; take it from Standard and Poor's, that just increased the credit rating of Ontario for the first time since 2001, to AA. That's what good government looks like.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Ontario taxpayers are on the hook for more than \$2 billion in subsidies to support a luxury spa in downtown Toronto. An Austrian spa company was

given a 95-year deal in a shady process the Auditor General said was not fair, transparent or accountable.

Some 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a doctor, schools are flooding due to disrepair, rural emergency rooms are closing and housing starts are collapsing. Why is this Conservative minister forcing every family in Ontario to pay \$400 for a spa they will never visit?

Interjections.

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

I'll caution the member on her choice of words.

To reply for the government, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I will reference Michael Lindsay's comments yesterday when he spoke to the public. Through the AG's own submission, the call for development was not meant to be a structure procurement. It was meant to be a real estate solicitation to take ideas from the globe. We did so, creating a process that was competitive, that had non-partisan evaluation.

But while the members opposite focus on that, Mr. Speaker, I will talk to you about what's important to Ontarians. Do you know what's important to Ontarians? The Grandview Children's Treatment Centre that we opened in Ajax. That is important to Ontarians. That is a facility that we built that will provide services to families for years to come.

If they don't care about that treatment facility, let me talk about Michael Garron Hospital, another hospital that will treat families in the province of Ontario, or the Mount Sinai redevelopment or West Park Healthcare Centre.

While the NDP will focus their attention on—

Interjections.

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

Order. The opposition will come to order.

Supplementary question? The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This minister is taking over \$2 billion in taxpayers' money and spending it on a private luxury spa in downtown Toronto. This money is coming right out of the pockets of people all over Ontario, from Windsor to Thunder Bay, from Sudbury to Hamilton. So far, the minister is taking about \$400 from every single household to pay for this luxury spa.

We know Ontarians are struggling to find a doctor or a child care space or a place to live. There's no possible explanation for this abuse of taxpayers' money. So my question: Will the minister do the honourable thing and resign?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Then I may ask the member opposite who asked this question why she didn't support the Grandview Children's Treatment Centre; why she didn't support improvements to the Michael Garron Hospital—if health care is so important—why she didn't support

Mount Sinai redevelopment; why she didn't support the West Park Healthcare Centre, a brand new hospital in the west part of Toronto.

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Mr. Speaker, I am not going anywhere. I am honoured to sit in this house, I am honoured to serve the Premier and I am honoured to serve my constituents. I will continue to build the infrastructure that the people of Ontario depend on each and every single day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Electrification. We know that Ontario families and businesses need affordable, reliable and clean energy to power their lives, but the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is making everything more expensive: higher costs at the pumps, at the grocery store, on heating bills and for building the energy projects that we rely on. While the Liberals and NDP push for higher taxes as their solution to climate change, our government believes in innovation. Ontario is already leading with clean energy solutions like hydro, advanced nuclear, and proving we can grow the economy and cut emissions without punishing families.

With energy demand expected to grow by 75% over the next 25 years, we need a plan that works. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is taking action to build the energy infrastructure Ontario needs while keeping costs down for our families?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Bay of Quinte for that question. It's why this government—our government—will choose technology over taxation every single day, full stop. We were elected to clean up the hydro mess, Speaker, and we did. And now the IESO forecasts the need for 75% more energy in the next 25 years. We will make sure we get it done right.

Just last week, the Minister of Energy and Electrification directed OPG to begin engagements with Indigenous, municipal and community leaders to develop new energy generation that will give us clean, reliable and affordable energy.

Regardless of the type of generation, we need the energy to power our province. The answer lies in innovation, not in burdening families with another tax.

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for that answer.

Speaker, families, farmers and businesses across Ontario are working hard to make ends meet, but the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax keeps driving up costs for everything they rely on: fuel, groceries and the energy

needed to run their homes and operations. Unlike the Liberals and NDP, who consistently advocate for higher taxes and more government intervention, our government has taken a different approach. Our government has shown strong leadership by prioritizing reducing costs for hard-working Ontarians and fostering a stronger, more resilient economy. We've seen the results: more jobs, stronger growth and less red tape holding people back.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please explain how our government is supporting families and businesses while building the clean, reliable energy Ontario needs for the future?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thanks to the member again for that supplementary.

It's precisely why we've taken a different approach compared to the Liberals and the NDP, an approach that supports the success of farmers, empowers businesses and eases the burden on families across the province. We've lowered taxes, cut the gas tax, eliminated unnecessary fees and eliminated the licence plate stickers. We've created hundreds of thousands of new jobs and added billions to our GDP.

Speaker, we're building net new clean and reliable energy for generations to come. It's clean, reliable and affordable. Our government has a plan. It's working, and it doesn't include a Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The AG report is out, and this government is still blurring the line between mismanagement and misdemeanor. In the report, the Auditor General talked about inappropriate VIN searches. The Auditor General didn't talk about 2,200 or even 2,000 of them: We are talking over 22,000 inappropriate VIN searches under the watch of this government. My question is how many of these inappropriate, and potentially at times suspicious, VIN searches resulted in auto theft in the province of Ontario?

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

Hon. Graham McGregor: Nice to hear the NDP actually taking auto theft seriously for a change. Where have you been for the last number of years, where we've been taking it seriously with a \$51-million investment, helicopters, automatic licence plate readers and support for police to take this crime seriously?

We had a bill before this House just recently where we took VIN fraud with penalties up to \$100,000 and six months in jail time through the provincial offences. That party voted against that, Mr. Speaker.

The majority of cars that are stolen are shipped overseas; a minority stay here in Ontario. We need to crack down on VIN fraud. Cars belong in people's driveways, not shipped off into the hands of organized crime.

I wish the NDP would take this problem seriously. Join the PC Party and stand up for public safety.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Speaker, since this government took power in 2018, auto theft has been up 525%—but this is the same government that appointed an associate minister for auto theft and not against auto theft.

My question is, what is it going to take for this government to crack down on the problems with the VIN system by implementing a VIN verification system? It's not that hard; just do it.

Interjections.

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

The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The associate minister.

Hon. Graham McGregor: The only thing you need to know about the NDP's approach to crime, Mr. Speaker: They'll blame the cars and let the criminals run free.

We put a letter out six weeks ago calling for mandatory remand for violent offences, serious offences; a three-strike penalty; automatic detention; no options for bail for criminals that are out three, four, five, six, seven, eight times committing the same crime. Where have the NDP been? Silent, Mr. Speaker.

We have a Toronto police officer who got shot two months ago. We heard nothing from the NDP at the time. They spent all their time congratulating the member for Niagara Centre on his nomination and nothing about the Toronto police officer who was shot. The Leader of the Opposition is a Toronto-area MPP. Where have they been on this issue?

Take auto theft seriously. We're doing the right thing, cracking down on VIN fraud, cracking down on serious offences. We wish the NDP would stand up and join us.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas will come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order.

The next question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Earlier this week, the minister introduced new legislation. A part of that bill, the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, enables the regulation of commercial-scale geologic carbon storage. Commercial-scale geologic carbon storage means firmly storing carbon emissions in rock formations deep underground, which would otherwise be emitted into the atmosphere.

This technology is a crucial component of our government's strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while allowing job creators and workers to continue building our province. Can the minister please tell us more about the actions our government is taking to help build a greener future for Ontario?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks to the member for the question.

The member is right: This is a technology that is new to our province, and the ministry is developing a framework that ensures it's implemented responsibly with measures in place to safeguard both people and the environment.

Over the past three years, my ministry has been consulting extensively with industry, municipalities, Indigenous communities, landowners and the public regarding this framework for carbon storage, and that feedback has helped to develop the proposed act. Ontario is once again on the cutting edge of innovative technology that will attract investments, create jobs and support existing jobs. The carbon tax is driving away jobs; we're bringing them back with innovation and technology in Ontario.

It's a competitive global economy. We need to keep making the investments. We need to keep innovating. We need to keep working together to build a cleaner, more sustainable future for Ontario. This government is doing that every single day.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for his response.

During debate, I heard that the members opposite want to delay carbon storage while increasing the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. The Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is driving up the price of everything, including Ontario's natural resources. Ontario's natural resources go into building everything. A tax on our natural resources increases the cost of living for everyone in Ontario. Carbon storage, on the other hand, will create jobs, support workers and reduce emissions.

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Speaker, can the minister please explain how carbon storage will reduce emissions while creating jobs and supporting workers in Ontario?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks again for the question.

My ministry has conducted some initial estimates regarding the development of commercial-scale carbon storage projects in southwest Ontario, and we expect to see a decrease of approximately five million to seven million metric tons of carbon per year. Well, that's hard to imagine, Mr. Speaker, so let's put that in terms that we can imagine: the equivalent of two million cars off the road in Ontario every year; also, the creation of thousands of jobs to support these projects; a big boost to local economies; a reduction in commercial carbon tax for businesses in Ontario to allow them to be more competitive, to continue to make investments and innovate in our province.

This means billions of dollars for Ontario and a cleaner environment in Ontario. It's being done so we can support the people and the communities, especially in the southwest. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite need to support this bill so we can keep innovating and growing this province.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. The Toronto District School Board needs an additional \$4.1 billion to repair its schools. It's the worst in the province; that's what the Auditor General found.

Take Jesse Ketchum school in my riding: The school has 47 urgent repairs, including plumbing, HVAC issues, flood prevention and electrical work. The school is in such bad shape that it would be cheaper to tear the building down than it would be to fix it.

Kids should be learning in safe and well-maintained schools. My question to the Premier: What are the Conservatives doing to fix Toronto's schools?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Education.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Let me be clear: The safety and well-being of our children is my top priority. As the Auditor General clearly stated, the conditions of our schools are not a risk for our children, and our government has a plan to replace them.

Since taking office, we've invested billions into repairing and upgrading schools across the province, addressing long-neglected issues left behind by the previous government. We're making real progress by building new schools and modernizing classrooms to support the needs of our growing communities.

The TDSB has struggled to make the best use of its funding, including for capital improvements, with \$900 million in school renewal funding that the TDSB continues to bank unused year after year. I suggest the TDSB spend the money that we are providing to ensure that those upgrades are done for our schools, our children and our teachers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question? The member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: If the government's record is so great, release the school repair backlog total.

The Auditor General's report on the Toronto District School Board highlighted some of the many challenges that schools are facing under this government. The number of violent incidents in the TDSB is the highest ever recorded. Across the province, violence is up 114%. Meanwhile, demand for mental health support for students has far outstripped the ability to hire additional mental health staff.

Will the Premier finally acknowledge the problem, implement our emergency plan to end school violence and put more caring, qualified adults in our schools to support our kids?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Under this Premier, our government's investments in mental health and student safety are at record heights, and yet this value-for-money report by the auditor shows the TDSB has hit rock bottom. Year after year, we increase funding for these initiatives to

reach vulnerable students across TDSB. Yet the board doesn't even have the common sense to conduct criminal background checks on some of its employees—shame on them.

The Auditor General spells it out in the report. The TDSB is not even implementing the safety protocols mandated by our government to protect teachers and their unions. But their unions would rather run attack ads against our government, rather than defend their own members from this lack of oversight.

Speaker, to set the record straight: For this school year, the TDSB is projected to receive \$3.3 billion through core education, an increase of over \$68 million compared to last year, an increase of \$350 million since we—

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

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Two weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Health why the government only provided a quarter of the funding to the nurse practitioner-led clinic in my riding. In response, the minister scoffed and implied that the thousands of people in my riding who are still waiting for primary care should be happy with what they got. Well, what they got is not sufficient. The minister knows, because I showed her, on a map, that there are no clinics in Ottawa–Vanier. People who don't have access to a family doctor have to go to the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, I will not stop advocating for access to primary care until every person in my riding has their own family doctor. That's why I have much more faith in the plan recently announced by our Ontario Liberal Party to make that a reality.

The primary care situation in Ontario is dire, with 5.6 million Ontarians either without a family doctor or at risk of losing theirs.

My question to the Minister of Health is simple. Does this government really believe that every person in Ontario should have access to primary care, and what are they doing about it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction, come to order.

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health can reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I really appreciate the opportunity to answer this question, because today, the CIHI data—which is the Canadian Institute for Health Information—actually showed that Ontario is making significant progress. In Canada, we have 85.6% of Canadians attached to a primary care practitioner; in Ontario, we are now over 90%.

The plan we have is working. And of course, starting this past Monday, we have Dr. Jane Philpott, who is now continuing the progress that we have made.

We intend to continue making progress to ensure that every Ontario resident who wishes to have a primary care practitioner will have one in the next five years, because of the work that we've already started.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, in response to my question two weeks ago, the minister also said that this government has increased compensation for nurse practitioners. However, nurse practitioners tell me that their current salary levels have not been increased since April 2020—not even a cost-of-living increase. Even when this government capped wage increases at 1% through the unconstitutional Bill 123, nurse practitioners still didn't get that 1% increase.

If this government thinks that nurse practitioners are a valuable part of our health care system, why have their salaries not been increased in almost five years?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I have to compare and contrast. We have a representative of the Liberal Party, who, when they were in power, cut residency positions, medical seats in the province of Ontario—50 every year. You are now seeing the cumulative effect of that decision—450 physicians who either had to go elsewhere to get their training or choose a different pathway. Compare and contrast that to expanded medical seats in every single medical school in the province of Ontario, two new medical schools in York region and in the city of Brampton, an expanded medical school in Scarborough, increased seats for nurse practitioners and registered nurses.

We are making the changes that, frankly, either your government chose to ignore or didn't care enough to do anything about.

Interjections.

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

I'll remind the Minister of Health that it was not my government and, again, remind all members that we make our comments through the Chair, not across the floor of the House directly.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Ottawa South, come to order.

The next question.

SENIORS' SERVICES

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Every single senior in Ontario deserves access to support that meets their unique needs. As Ontario's population ages, the challenges associated with aging also increase. This includes the needs for support for those living with dementia and programs to help seniors stay active and connected.

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Many of my constituents have shared stories of loved ones struggling to access proper care, feeling isolated or facing challenges related to affordability and safety. These are real issues that demand urgent action. That's why our

government is demonstrating leadership by ensuring our seniors have the resources they need when they need them.

Can the minister please share what our government is doing to ensure Ontario seniors can enjoy the best quality of life?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I thank the member for Thornhill for raising these important concerns and also for being such a great advocate for seniors, caregivers and those living with dementia for the last two years.

We are deeply committed to enhancing the quality of care for seniors no matter where they call home, whether it's in long-term care, whether it's in the community or in retirement homes. That is why, just yesterday, I had the pleasure of introducing the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024, which includes \$114 million of new investments for Ontario's seniors.

This act builds on our government's success in improving long-term care, in building thousands more long-term-care beds and connecting seniors to community support. We are investing in adult day programs, in respite care, in emotion-based models of care, and we're including the requirement for dementia-specific programs in all long-term-care homes.

We will continue to ensure that every single senior in Ontario receives the support they need and deserve.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the minister for her commitment to the people of Ontario and those living with dementia.

Families in my riding of Thornhill want to ensure that their loved ones receive the high-quality care they deserve close to home. They are encouraged by our government's action to meet the needs of Ontario's aging population by better supporting these people who care for seniors.

But they want to know more about this new legislation. Specifically, they want to understand how the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act will tangibly improve the daily lives of seniors living in long-term care, congregate settings and in the community. Can the minister please outline how this legislation will help Ontario seniors live with dignity, comfort and respect?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Our seniors have built our province and our country. They have worked their entire lives. They paid taxes. They contributed to our growth and our economy. Now it is our job to take care of them and provide them with the love, care and support that they deserve. That is why we are committed to addressing the challenges seniors face, both in long-term-care homes and within the community at large.

One key initiative under the legislation, and my favourite one, frankly, is the community access pilot, which expands certain services available in long-term care and makes them available to seniors living in the community. We're opening up long-term care for seniors who live in the surrounding area to come on in and get certain services, such as get a shower, get podiatry, get dementia cafes and all kinds of different and exciting initiatives. This pilot will provide specialized care to more seniors

beyond the walls of long-term-care homes, acknowledging the vital need to support seniors wherever they reside.

Under Premier Ford, our government will never stop working for Ontario's seniors.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker.

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The people of Sioux Lookout and surrounding communities have been advocating for more long-term-care beds close to home for many years. Since 2018, this government has promised to build a new long-term-care facility with 76 new long-term-care beds.

To the Minister of Long-Term Care: What tangible steps is this government taking to deliver the long-promised 76 long-term-care beds in Sioux Lookout?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I thank the member for his question. Back in May, we all remember, it was a truly historic day when the member for Kiiwetinoong spoke in his Indigenous language, and back in May, right here in this chamber, the Premier made a commitment to the member opposite to get this home built in Sioux Lookout. I'm happy to say that today we are delivering on that commitment, and we have just recently approved a \$2.5-million planning grant to be provided to Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre. This planning grant means this 96-bed project can advance from the planning stage of development into the construction stage. With that, we've taken a major step forward in building this home so that Sioux Lookout residents can receive proper, culturally focused long-term-care services in their community.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Thank you to the Minister of Long-Term Care for sharing the news. However, community members from Sioux Lookout may be skeptical of this government's words after years of seeing promises without actions to fulfill those promises.

Will the Minister of Long-Term Care share a timeline for when the residents of Sioux Lookout can expect long-term-care beds to be operational in Sioux Lookout?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Make no mistake, our government is getting this home built. I would like us all to just take a minute to soak in this truly historic moment. There are rare moments that we can put our differences aside and we can agree and work collaboratively across partisan lines simply because it is the right thing to do. That's exactly what we are doing because the people of Sioux Lookout deserve this long-term-care home. I want to thank that member for his leadership because today is truly a celebration of his work. I'm so proud to be the Minister of Long-Term Care to deliver this good news of this \$2.5-million planning grant to help the centre accomplish this goal.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we will continue investing into our historic build: \$6.4 billion, the largest capital build in the history of this country. We are commit-

ted to building 58,000 new and redeveloped beds across the province of Ontario—

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

Interjections.

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

The next question.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform. Every family in Ontario deserves to feel safe. Crime affects our communities, our homes and our peace of mind. Auto theft has been a big problem in Peel region. These crimes are not just about stolen cars; they hurt families, cost people money and raise insurance rates. I know the government has taken action in response to this issue.

Can the associate minister please tell this House more about what the government is doing to tackle crime and stop auto theft in Peel region and across Ontario?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the question. Auto theft and organized crime, like armed robberies and carjackings, remain significant challenges in our communities. Our government is addressing these issues head-on through initiatives like Project Warlock. Project Warlock was launched in response to a surge of violent home invasions, armed robberies and carjackings across the GTA. The joint forces investigation led by the Peel regional police through their central robbery bureau resulted in the arrest of 18 individuals and the laying of 150 criminal charges. Over 17 violent incidents have been solved and investigators have recovered 12 stolen vehicles valued at more than \$1.2 million that was directly invested into CISO by this Ontario provincial government.

But it's about more than just enforcement; it's about restoring safety and confidence to our neighbourhoods. Everyone deserves to feel safe and secure in their homes, in their cars and workplaces. We will not allow violence to take root in our communities. It's time for the federal government to join us in matching the urgency and dedication we've demonstrated here in Ontario, that our law enforcement demonstrate, to tackle the root causes of crime and keep—

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

Supplementary?

1130

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the associate minister for his continuing leadership. Auto theft and violent crimes are hurting families in Peel region and across Ontario. These crimes are often linked to organized gangs. Many of these criminals are repeat offenders. They know how to work the system. People in Ontario want justice. They want to know that violent offenders will not be let back out on the streets.

I know the government is working hard to protect families. They are taking action to stop crime, but we need

stronger laws from the federal government as well. Can the associate minister please tell this House what Ontario is doing to ensure violent repeat offenders face jail, not bail?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you to the member for the important follow-up question. The families in Ontario are rightfully outraged. Auto theft and organized crime are surging, and the federal government's failure to act decisively is leaving our communities vulnerable. Their soft-on-crime, catch-and-release policies are emboldening criminals and putting public safety at risk.

The Solicitor General and I, and our Ontario government, have called on the federal government to immediately amend the Criminal Code with the following:

- (1) restore mandatory minimum sentences for serious crimes, that they removed;
- (2) eliminate bail eligibility for repeat offenders and those charged with organized auto theft;
- (3) mandate a three-strike rule requiring pre-trial detention for habitual criminals; and
- (4) tighten conditional sentencing rules to ensure those convicted of serious crimes face meaningful consequences.

While we wait for federal leadership, our government is taking action. We are investing in new police initiatives, expanding local enforcement capacity and targeting the organized crime networks that are driving auto theft. Our government is standing up for the safety and well-being of Ontarians. We will not back down.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Niagara Health is facing a \$12-million deficit this year. This will have a significant impact on services. Parents with children, seniors and residents are already waiting 26 hours for care in overcrowded emergency rooms in Niagara. Consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have left Ontario hospitals with the worst funding in the country.

Through you, Speaker, why is this government continuing to starve Ontario hospitals by funding them at the lowest rate in the country?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: While the member opposite is going to talk down our Ontario health system, I am going to proudly highlight what we have been able to accomplish since Premier Ford and our government came into office in 2018. In fact, since 2018, there has been a 31% increase in investments in our health care sector. While the NDP and the previous Liberal governments froze hospital budgets, we have stood shoulder to shoulder with our hospital partners to make sure that they have the resources they need to provide the critical care in our communities, and we'll continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you, I am not disrespecting anyone in health care in the Niagara health system. My brothers and sisters in that union, I will respect totally.

Step by step, this government is dismantling our public hospitals. Every contract for private surgeries means less funding for local hospitals. When businesses, which are motivated by profit, enter the health care system, it is patients who have to pay the price.

Speaker, through you to the minister, why is this Conservative government underfunding hospitals in favour of private surgical clinics that will put profits over patients?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I understand the member opposite actually voted against our investments through the Ontario budgets, but the truth is that, for two years in a row, Ontario hospital budgets have been increased by an average of 4%—again, historic comparison to what the Liberals and the NDP were doing when they were freezing hospital budgets.

We are making those investments in health human resources, in 50 capital builds across the province of Ontario to the equivalent of \$50 billion, ensuring that hospitals have the services, the resources, the capital and, most importantly, the staff to do that critical work that we know they do so well.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. Small businesses are the backbone of communities across Ontario, driving innovation, job creation and local economic growth. But we know that starting a business is no easy feat. Entrepreneurs across Ontario rely on resources and support to turn their businesses and dreams into a reality.

Ontario's small business enterprise centres, or SBECs, play a vital role in supporting entrepreneurs at every step of their journey, providing expert advice, mentorship and access to programs and services that help them succeed.

Speaker, can the associate minister please share how our government is leveraging the expertise and resources of SBECs to support Ontario's small business community?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the great member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for the important question and the great work he's doing to support the small businesses in his riding.

Ontario's small business enterprise centres are the cornerstone of our efforts to support small businesses and entrepreneurs. With over 47 centres across our province, SBECs provide advisory services, workshops, mentorship training and access to funding opportunities for aspiring and established business owners. They help entrepreneurs develop business plans, navigate regulations and connect with local networks.

Through initiatives like the Starter Company Plus and the Summer Company programs, SBECs empower entrepreneurs to pursue their goals with confidence. For example, Starter Company Plus has helped thousands of Ontarians launch and expand their businesses by providing training, mentorship and grants.

It is this Premier and this government that's committed to working with our SBECs to ensure small business communities have the resources they need to thrive.

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

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thank you to the associate minister for outlining the critical role of Ontario's small business enterprise centres.

Entrepreneurs often face unique challenges, from accessing financing to navigating market uncertainty.

As we know, successful businesses are built on more than just great ideas. They also need support to overcome barriers and seize opportunities. That's why our government must ensure that all Ontarians, no matter where they live, have access to the tools and resources needed to build and grow a successful business.

Speaker, can the associate minister elaborate on how our government is continuing to enhance the supports available through SBECs, particularly helping entrepreneurs in underserved communities?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you again to the great member for the question.

Our government is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for entrepreneurs right across our province.

To address the unique needs of underserved communities, SBECs work very closely with local stakeholders to provide tailored programs and services. For instance, many SBECs now offer virtual consultations and webinars, ensuring access to support regardless of their geographic location. Programs like Summer Company and Starter Company Plus continue to be instrumental in helping entrepreneurs overcome barriers.

By investing in SBECs and listening to the needs of small business owners, we're ensuring that Ontario remains the best place to start and grow a business. While the Liberals turned their backs on small businesses while they were in office and continue to support the job-killing carbon tax, it is this Premier and this government that will continue to build a diverse, resilient economy that creates opportunities for everyone.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is to the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform. Every day, our police and first responders put their lives on the line. They work hard to keep us safe, but rising costs are hurting their ability to do their job. One of the biggest costs they face is the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax.

Police need fuel to patrol the streets. Paramedics need ambulances to save lives. Firefighters need trucks to respond to emergencies. These vehicles run on gas, and gas prices are higher because of the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. This tax makes it harder for our first responders to do their jobs, and it's putting pressure on tight budgets.

1140

Speaker, can the associate minister please share his thoughts on how the regressive Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is having a negative impact on our first responders?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you to the member for Essex for that important question, and thank you to all members of this House for putting me through my paces this morning. We've got to let the horses run, right?

Listen, Speaker, all members of the House understand that the unnecessary Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax not only adds financial pressure on families, but it also impacts our first responders directly. The rise in fuel and procurement costs directly affects the crucial services that Ontarians rely on to keep them safe, millions in additional costs for police services that they're paying due to the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. It makes fire trucks more expensive. It makes ambulances more expensive, Speaker. I guess you'd have to ask the leader of the Liberal Party, Bonnie Crombie; I suspect it makes private jets even more expensive as well.

Because of this tax, every emergency call and every kilometre becomes more costly for firefighters, police officers and other first responders. We need to scrap this ridiculous tax, prioritize—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm glad to hear about the actions that this government is taking to stand up for our first responders and call for the removal of the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax.

Our first responders are asking for the tools that they need to do their jobs. Paramedics need fuel to reach people in crisis. Police need gas to patrol our neighbourhoods. Firefighters need fuelled trucks to get to emergencies, but the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is making everything cost more and more and more.

Speaker, it's not just about money; it's about supporting our first responders with all of the resources they need to protect our communities.

Can the associate minister please comment on the harmful impact that the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is having on our first responders and what our government is doing to help our first responders?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thanks again to the member for Essex for the question. Look, this government has supported our first responders on the front lines since day one. Our responsibility is to equip paramedics, police, firefighters, correctional officers, animal welfare officers with everything they need, from uniforms to advanced technology and vehicles. The funds spent on the additional Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax could have been better used to hold criminals accountable or to assist victims. They could have gone towards new police cruisers or additional drug-testing devices to enhance road safety. Public safety expenditures are substantial, covering everything from salaries to bulletproof vests and automatic licence plate readers. Despite these costs, our government is unwavering in ensuring the safety of Ontario.

I don't understand why the leader of the Liberal Party, the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, doesn't take this seriously. Maybe it's because they don't have a carbon tax in the Hamptons, Mr. Speaker.

Rest assured that this government will stand up for Ontario families, keep them safe and keep fighting this ridiculous, regressive job killer.

TOBACCO CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: In October, a proposed tobacco lawsuit settlement between the provinces, including Ontario, and big tobacco was announced, with a total payment of \$24 billion—a far cry from the \$500 billion that was sought—and there is nothing in the proposed deal to actually reduce smoking. The Canadian Cancer Society and other health care organizations have criticized the settlement as insufficient and have called for changes before it receives final approval.

Will the government make sure that the new foundations will be allowed to support initiatives to reduce smoking before final approval in January?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: As you can well imagine, Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex legal matter. We've been engaged in it for quite some time. There are a lot of interested parties. There are a lot of people with opinions. It's being dealt with through former Chief Justice Winkler. He's the mediator in it. I don't want to speak to content, because it's still a matter that's a live issue. It's effectively before the courts, so I really can't address it any more than that, except to say that health care is a serious file for us. Smoking is a serious matter for us, as are other ancillary products and actions. It's important that we continue to take this seriously, but I really can't delve into a debate about the contents of the negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Question back to the Premier, as this is a historic case which will set a significant precedent: Non-monetary clauses are on the table, such as the ones forcing big tobacco companies to make public the court documents showing that they intentionally hid and distorted the science—documents this government currently possesses. These documents show how big tobacco companies facilitated deaths of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. There are lessons here that will help ongoing public interest tobacco litigation in other jurisdictions, and it will even impact modern climate justice lawsuits involving vaping laws and other regulations.

My question to the Premier—and it requires a simple yes or no answer: Does he agree with the Canadian Cancer Society that document disclosure can and should be part of the final agreement? Or is he planning to let big tobacco off the hook?

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, I can offer this: If they have specific ideas, I'm certainly willing to hear them

and to receive them, but I can't get into the contents of the negotiations and the court matters. But I am willing to receive them and take them into consideration.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There are three members who have informed me they have a point of order they wish to raise.

First, we'll deal with the government House leader under standing order 59.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to inform the House of next week's schedule, pursuant to standing order 59.

On Monday December 9, during afternoon routine proceedings, a government bill will be introduced. In the afternoon, it will be second reading of Bill 235, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act.

On Tuesday, December 10, both in the morning and the afternoon, Bill 235, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act; and in the evening, at 6 p.m., private member's notice of motion number 152, in the name of the member for London North Centre.

On Wednesday, December 11, both in the morning and in the afternoon, we'll have debate on Bill 235, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act; and at 6 p.m., Bill 48, a private member's bill, in the name of the member for Parkdale–High Park.

On Thursday, December 12, both in the morning and the afternoon—that will be to be announced; and at 6 p.m., private member's notice of motion number 154, in the name of the member for Ottawa Centre.

That's my report under standing order 59.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll recognize next the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I just wanted to correct my record. In my question, I referenced the unconstitutional bill that capped wage increases at 1% as Bill 123. I did mean the unconstitutional Bill 124.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for the clarification. That's a valid point of order.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next point of order, the Minister for Long-Term Care.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I just wanted to take a moment to introduce my number one fan and supporter, my mom, Anna Kusendova, who is here to watch debate this morning. Thank you for everything. Thank you for your love. Thanks, Mom.

DEFERRED VOTES

MORE CONVENIENT CARE
ACT, 2024LOI DE 2024 POUR PLUS DE SOINS
COMMUNES

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

Bill 231, An Act to enact or amend various Acts related to health care / Projet de loi 231, Loi visant à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les soins de santé.

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

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1154.

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

On December 3, 2024, Ms. Jones, Dufferin–Caledon, moved second reading of Bill 231, An Act to enact or amend various Acts related to health care. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Andrew, Jill	Holland, Kevin	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Hsu, Ted	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Blais, Stephen	Kanapathi, Logan	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutula	Shamji, Adil
Bowman, Stephanie	Ke, Vincent	Shaw, Sandy
Bressee, Ric	Kerzner, Michael S.	Skelly, Donna
Byers, Rick	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, David
Calandra, Paul	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Graydon
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Laura
Cho, Stan	Lumsden, Neil	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Clancy, Aislinn	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tabuns, Peter
Collard, Lucille	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Taylor, Monique
Dunlop, Jill	Mulrone, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fraser, John	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Vanthof, John
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy
Gélinas, France	Quinn, Nolan	Williams, Charmaine A.
Glover, Chris	Rae, Matthew	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom	Yakabuski, John

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 87; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no.

I look to the minister for a referral to a committee.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I refer it to the health and social services committee.

Interjections.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Or social policy committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): [*Inaudible*] social policy committee. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There was a no.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 149.

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

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1159.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): MPP Andrew has moved private member's notice of motion number 149. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Gretzky, Lisa	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Jama, Sarah	Stiles, Marit
Clancy, Aislinn	Karpoche, Bhutula	Tabuns, Peter
Collard, Lucille	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Jones, Trevor	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Jordan, John	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bressee, Ric	Leardi, Anthony	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Byers, Rick	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Calandra, Paul	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Cho, Stan	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Clark, Steve	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Coe, Lorne	Mulrone, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy
Harris, Mike	Quinn, Nolan	Williams, Charmaine A.
Holland, Kevin	Rae, Matthew	Yakabuski, John
Jones, Sylvia	Riddell, Brian	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 30; the nays are 56.

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

Motion negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1202 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated December 5, 2024, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I beg leave to present a report on Value-for-Money Audit: Climate Change Adaptation: Reducing Urban Flood Risk, 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Rakocevic presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes. Thank you.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today entitled Value-for-Money Audit: Climate Change Adaptation: Reducing Urban Flood Risk from the 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee and substitute members who participated in the public hearings and report-writing process.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry; the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; and the Ministry of Infrastructure.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee, and legislative research.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROBBIE'S LEGACY ACT (HONOURING BELOVED ORGAN AND TISSUE DONORS), 2024 LOI DE 2024 SUR LE LEGS DE ROBBIE (HOMMAGE À NOS CHERS DONNEURS D'ORGANES ET DE TISSUS)

Mr. Hsu moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 237, An Act to amend the Gift of Life Act in order to recognize organ and tissue donors / Projet de loi 237, Loi pour modifier la Loi sur le don de vie afin de souligner la contribution des donneurs d'organes et de tissus.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Kingston and the Islands like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Ted Hsu: This bill would allow a return to the past practice of named public recognition of deceased organ donors, if certain conditions are met. It is named after the late Robbie Sherren of Kingston, who was the first adult donor in Canada for the game-changing, life-saving "heart-in-a-box" technology. Robbie was able to be recognized by name only after a substantial amount of legal work.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, this Friday marks 35 years since the tragic shooting at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. On December 6, 1989, a gunman took the lives of 14 women and injured 13 others. This horrific act of violence deeply impacted our nation and led to the national recognition of December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Today, I'll take a moment to honour the memory of the 14 women who were tragically killed on that day in Montreal by reading their names: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, age 23; Nathalie Croteau, age 23; Barbara Daigneault, age 22; Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 22; Sonia Pelletier, age 28; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; Annie Turcotte, age 20.

Speaker, we also remember and honour all women who have experienced gender-based violence, including victims and survivors who inspire us with their resilience.

This is more than a day of remembrance. It's a call to action. It compels us to continue working toward a society

where women and girls are safe, are valued and are empowered.

Our government has been very clear: We have zero tolerance for gender-based violence in any form. Everyone has the right to live in safety and with dignity, free from the threat of violence. We're acting on that belief in communities across our province by providing supports for victims, raising public awareness and holding offenders accountable as we combat gender-based violence in all its forms.

At the centre of this effort is our four-year action plan to end gender-based violence. Our government launched this action plan last December to bring our communities closer to services that are focused on preventing and ending the cycle of intimate partner violence and family violence, while supporting crisis response services that are in high demand, such as shelters and crisis helplines. This plan really focuses on preventing gender-based violence and addressing its root causes, while also addressing the longer-term needs of survivors by focusing on healing as well as recovery.

Our plan will enhance gender-based violence prevention by:

- intervening early to address warning signs;
- strengthening service coordination;
- investing in local community-led and culturally responsive solutions;
- providing educational supports to promote healthy relationships and disrupt attitudes fostering gender-based violence.

This important work is supported by a range of investments, including \$1.4 billion by our government, supplemented by \$162 million over four years from the federal government's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. As part of this funding, we initiated a community call for proposals to invest \$100 million over three years in new and innovative programs that address local and community-specific needs. This application closed on October 11. There was a strong response across the province, and I look forward to announcing the successful applicants in early 2025 with my colleague Minister Williams.

Our investments go beyond providing safe spaces for victims. They aim to prevent violence before it happens by addressing its root causes and fostering a culture of respect and equity.

Our prevention efforts start early, with key educational supports—for men and boys, specifically. In Ontario schools, this means mandatory learning in every grade that teaches elementary students what healthy relationships look like.

At all ages, we must commit to speaking out against gender-based violence in any form and take action when we see it. Silence is never an option.

As we reflect on this solemn anniversary, let us remain committed to creating a province where every woman, every girl, can live with dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I thank my colleague minister for his words—very powerful.

On December 6, 1989, Marc Lépine entered l'École Polytechnique in Montreal and murdered 14 women, wounding several others, before, in a final act of cowardice, turning his gun on himself. His savagery changed Canada. On that day, he stole lives, dreams, aspirations, and our shared innocence as a nation. The aftershock still reverberates across our country; every woman remembers. Indeed, how could we forget?

As we reflect on that dark day and remember the victims and their families, we do so in the spirit of hope and with the shared conviction that we must work to finally put an end to violence against women. For some, this might seem like an impossible task, but it's one we are morally obligated to achieve.

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Violence against women exists in many forms. It can be obvious—shocking in its depravity, as we witnessed at École Polytechnique—but it also can be subtle, hidden away behind closed doors, its effects obscured by makeup and face coverings and excuses and coerced lies.

Our determination to find a new path for vulnerable women must be matched with a willingness to work together and, critically, create tangible actions to help women escape violence and achieve independence. When women have the skills, the confidence and the opportunities to succeed economically, they gain more independence, which in turn grants freedom of choice. This means the ability to choose where they live and choose with whom they live. Controlling these choices makes women less vulnerable to coercion and violence. That's why it's important that we continue promoting women's economic security and social opportunities.

In August, we announced that our government is investing up to \$26.7 million over three years in 25 community-based training programs across the province through the Women's Economic Security Program, which I call WESP. These programs help low-income women increase their financial security by equipping them with the skills, the knowledge and the experience needed to find a job or start a business. This program has helped thousands of women since 2018. The program also provides opportunities to access in-demand, well-paying jobs and achieve financial independence.

I always say that when women are financially independent, they are safer.

As Minister Parsa pointed out, the rates of violence against women remain unacceptable, and these rates are especially concerning for Indigenous women, who are significantly more likely to experience domestic violence.

I'm really grateful for the work of Ontario's Indigenous Women's Advisory Council, or IWAC. The council's expertise is a guiding light as we learn and understand how violence impacts Indigenous women and girls and how to address it. IWAC is a key partner in helping us engage First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in violence

prevention efforts. I also acknowledge the council's critical role as a partner in implementing Pathways to Safety: Ontario's Strategy in Response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

As Minister Parsa often says, our work isn't done; it's ongoing. Our government is investing \$1.4 billion over four years in services and programs to support victims and survivors. This investment includes nearly \$247 million to support victims of violence and more than \$10 million in violence prevention initiatives. This money goes towards the operation of about 400 crisis response services like shelters and support lines. It also funds innovative programs that focus on education and training to help spot the warning signs of violence, with a focus on prevention. We will continue to support these initiatives and see them through while expanding support through Ontario's action plan to end gender-based violence. We will continue to speak up about the reality of violence against women while actively listening to and learning from survivors' experiences.

To all of us in the House and to those who might be watching: If you or someone you know is a victim of gender-based violence, you can go to [Ontario.ca/safe](https://ontario.ca/safe) to find resources and supports, including a list of helplines and shelters.

Additionally, women experiencing violence can call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 to receive confidential counselling, advice, and help to escape violence. That line is also good if you know somebody who's experiencing violence and you want to know how best to support that person.

Today, as we remember the lives that were cut short, let's commit ourselves again to creating an Ontario free from violence. Together, we can put an end to it—because we know that when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I'm honoured to rise today and speak to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on behalf of the official opposition, the Ontario NDP. Every year, we come together in this House as leaders and lawmakers to reflect, honour and take action.

December 6 marks the tragic anniversary of the 1989 Montreal massacre, when 14 women lost their lives at the hands of a gunman who targeted them simply because they were women. These women were students, dreamers, and individuals with futures full of promise. Their deaths remind us of the violence and discrimination women continue to face here in Ontario, across Canada, and around the world.

Today is not just about remembering those who have been lost, but also acknowledging the countless women and girls who still experience violence in their homes, workplaces, campuses and communities. It is about recognizing the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the need to stand in solidarity with survivors and victims of violence. We remember all those who have been killed by their partners or former partners.

Intimate partner violence and gender-based violence is impacting every single one of our ridings. It's happening in every corner of this province.

We have the ability today to make a difference and declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. Acknowledging it for what it is is the very first step needed to address gender-based violence.

As we honour the lives of the victims, we must also renew our commitment to creating a society where all women and girls are safe, where they are not subjected to physical, emotional, financial or systemic violence. We must support survivors, challenge harmful attitudes and work together to ensure that every woman, girl and gender-diverse person has the freedom to live without fear.

Let this day remind us that our collective action, whether through necessary policy changes, education or simple acts of kindness and support, can help eliminate violence.

Women experiencing violence should not have to wait another day to see their provincial government make the changes needed to help save their lives, which include passing Bill 173, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act and declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic, as well as passing Bill 189, Lydia's Law, to ensure that the justice system actually supports survivors, instead of allowing perpetrators of gender-based violence to walk free.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: December 6 marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On that day, we lost 14 young, bright women scientists to misogyny and gun violence. The man who carried out the 1989 Montreal massacre killed these young women students simply because they dared to study in the male-dominated field of mechanical engineering. This was the textbook definition of femicide.

Over the decades, governments have produced numerous studies, reports, commissions and inquiries, including the one that interviewed 2,380 family members, survivors and stakeholders, which produced 231 calls to action to address the violence and death that met missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. All this research and testimony revealed that gender-based violence and intimate partner violence are preventable when politicians take real actions and make meaningful investments to eradicate it.

Since 1990, in Ontario alone, we are aware of over 1,080 femicide victims who lost their lives to male violence. Speaker, 62 women this year alone have been added to the list of women killed as recorded by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses.

Violence against women is pervasive and deadly.

A self-described "incel" motivated by hatred of women killed 11 people when they plowed a rented van into a busy Toronto sidewalk in 2018.

Chronic underfunding of the gender-based violence sector is leaving workers and clients demoralized and destabilized. The lack of shelters, housing, harm reduction services and counselling services are death sentences to women waiting for justice.

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I think of Caitlin Jennings, only 22 years old, and her loving family who she leaves behind. Caitlin was brutally killed by her boyfriend in July of last year. Her family worked tirelessly to ensure that Caitlin is remembered and that her death moves people to action. They were here in this Legislature, carrying framed pictures of their beloved daughter, trying to bring the government's awareness, to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. Sadly, they are still waiting. At a reception at Queen's Park, Caitlin Jennings's parents met another brave survivor, also named Caitlin. The second Caitlin is known as Cait Alexander to many in this Legislature, because I've told her story numerous times. Cait Alexander was also beaten nearly to death by her then boyfriend on the same day that Caitlin Jennings was killed. It was beautiful and heartbreaking to see them move together to try to address this epidemic.

I stand in support with those survivors and many more.

I hope that this government can take action and lead the charge to declare intimate partner violence—and make sure that gender-based violence is behind us once and for all.

MPP Andrea Hazell: It gives me great honour to speak once more about the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Today, our collective presence should signify a powerful commitment to eliminate gender-based violence from our communities.

It has been 35 years since the murder of 14 young women at the École Polytechnique de Montréal. Mr. Speaker, it feels like just yesterday to me, because there have not been a lot of changes to decrease the situation. I want to ensure that we never forget them. After 35 years, we continue to experience a shocking amount of gender-based violence.

Since 2022 until October 2024, there have been over 160 victims of femicide in Ontario. These are not just numbers; these are daughters, mothers, sisters and friends.

As I stand here and speak today, there could be another femicide that is waiting to happen. In the past eight months alone, nearly one in five victims of femicide were reported to be under 18—heart-wrenching.

This is definitely an epidemic. The government needs to call it what it is.

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

To the families who have lost a loved one due to femicides: I am sorry that we have let you down. My colleagues and I are your voice in this chamber. We will never stop fighting for change. We will never stop fighting for you. I will never stop fighting for young girls and women.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm honoured to be here today to speak up for the 14 women who died 35 years ago at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal—women who never came home for the holidays. I think we can all connect to that. Their deaths symbolize the ongoing acts of hate that continue in this province and around the world, which are becoming more prevalent.

I'm worried about the rise of toxic masculinity, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, violent pornography in this province—and, especially, the rise in this content in the United States.

Just last year, a young man went to the University of Waterloo campus, to a gender studies class, and stabbed staff and students, traumatizing the whole campus community.

During my time as a school social worker, I was trained in violent threat risk assessment. This intervention catches these harmful ideations in their tracks and tries to bring help to the perpetrators, tries to stop violence in its tracks. I think it's something we need in all of our schools across the province.

We need to listen to survivors, hear what they have to say—as members in this audience who don't always live what they experience—and bring that forward.

We need to do what we can to stop the toxic content of the far right that is empowered by online media giants who are profiteering off this violent pornography, and we need to stop influencers like Andrew Tate who are in the algorithm feed of our young men every day.

We need to invest in mental health supports for men, pornography addiction—and so many other things that we are not prepared to deal with right now.

We need to educate our young men in our schools with the Male Allies program. Let's make this program possible for every young man across the province.

I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about trafficking. The 401 is known for more than just gridlock; it moves young women up and down. Some 65% of the sex trafficking that we experience in Canada happens here in Ontario. It is along that 401 corridor—Super 8 in Cambridge, for example. There are many places across the 401 moving women up and down. Do you know what they say? Those pimps are educated online. They can access that training manual freely. Those girls talk about those pimps not as somebody abusing them, but as their boyfriends, often—people who give them gifts: new cellphones, new shoes. And they end up slowly, over time, becoming more and more involved in this problematic harm that steals our young women. Indigenous women, especially, have been disproportionately impacted.

I call on the government to ensure that all families in Canada have housing security, food security, and that we do all we can to make women across this province feel empowered and valuable. Give us all the critical thinking we need to interrupt this stark trend.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to take this moment to recognize the teacher and students from St. Thomas of Villanova high school from LaSalle, Ontario, who are momentarily in the chamber. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

PETITIONS

MISSING PERSONS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition, which we know has signatures—not just the paper ones that have been tabled here in the Legislature, but also over 100,000 signatures that have been submitted electronically since Bill 74 has been submitted—calling on the government to create a missing vulnerable persons alert.

I have spoken in this House several times. We have had a committee process. I have met with ministers' offices—I still await ministers hoping to pass Bill 74. It is good legislation. It is the last panic button, shall we say, when all other resources have been used in the community and we have a vulnerable missing person within our community, to ensure that people are alerted that there is someone missing within their very close geographic community—and hopefully bring them home safely and not see the demise of any more vulnerable people due to them going missing in our community, when we can have another tool to bring them home safely.

I wholeheartedly support this. I ask the government to pass Bill 74. I will give it to page Anuva to bring to the Clerk.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition, and I'd like to say thank you to members of Community Living Guelph Wellington. They started this petition at a meeting that the member for Wellington–Halton Hills and I attended.

The petition outlines the severe funding challenges that Community Living agencies in Guelph-Wellington and across the province are facing and the impact that's having on families—especially families seeking housing for their adult children with developmental disabilities—and the stress these families and their children are facing.

They are asking the Legislature of Ontario to take immediate action to increase funding to Community Living agencies in line with both the cost of living and the needs of developmentally delayed adults.

I fully support this petition. I will sign it and ask page Ekam to bring it to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Guelph for presenting that petition, which includes many signatures from the people of Wellington–Halton Hills.

Petitions?

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have a petition here entitled “To Raise Social Assistance Rates,” and I want to give a special thank you and shout-out to Dr. Sally Palmer for sending me these petitions. They have been signed by residents from Stoney Creek, Hamilton, Dundas and Scotland, Ontario.

1330

The petition is basically asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to double social assistance rates, because social assistance rates for both OW and the Ontario Disability Support Program are far below the poverty line. Someone on OW receives only \$733, and on ODSP, only \$1,308. There has been a very, very small increase to ODSP rates, but OW rates have been frozen for decades. Both of these rates have been frozen—but also, this is basically keeping people in legislated poverty. Governments are supposed to lift people out of poverty, and these rates keep people in poverty.

So, along with 230 organizations that have written to the Premier and to cabinet ministers calling on the government and calling on the Legislature to double social assistance rates, I fully support this petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm here to present a petition on behalf of many people across Kitchener, my riding, and Guelph. It calls on the government to keep—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the members that we are in petitions. Question period is over. I'm going to call the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform, the member for Windsor West, and the member for Hamilton Mountain to order. Once again, we are in petitions.

The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Thank you, Speaker.

The residents in my riding are asking that the government keep consumption and treatment sites open because they're proven to reduce deaths, injuries, hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and the spread of HIV and hepatitis. I am grateful for their advocacy on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbours, who worry about their safety and their lives in the months to come.

I support this petition, and I will pass it to page Andrew with my signature.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very proud to be submitting this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is calling on the government to ensure that there is adequate funding for the arts sector.

Recognizing that the Ontario Arts Council budget has been frozen since 2009—15 years of flatlined funding; recognizing that many of the artists and cultural workers are now earning, still, less than \$25,000 a year, far below any type of poverty line; and recognizing that the arts and art culture sector contributes over \$26 billion to Ontario's GDP and creates over 300,000 jobs, this petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly to increase arts funding, to index it to inflation, and to ensure that the operating budgets of the Ontario Arts Council, Experience Ontario, the Community Museum Operating Grant, Ontario

Creates and Ontario's public library funding are going to be adequately funded, and to ensure that there is real affordable housing and workspaces for artists.

I will sign this petition and send it back to the table with page Kamila.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: There was an industrial fire at Brenntag Canada in the west end of Toronto, in Etobicoke, and it caused a chemical spill. That spill spread rapidly into Mimico Creek, Humber Creek and then into Lake Ontario. Of course, countless local wildlife have been killed. Their habitat has been contaminated. Local residents have been impacted, and local residents have not received clear information from this government. So I have a petition here signed by residents calling on the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to be transparent about which chemicals were spilled and the risks that they pose.

It's also calling on the minister to provide residents with a clear timeline and expectations of when the cleanup will happen.

Finally, it's calling on the government to provide funding to the Toronto Wildlife Centre, because they have taken on the task of protecting, cleaning up and saving the wildlife that have been impacted by this chemical spill.

I fully support this petition, and I add my voice in calling on the government to do exactly what the petition outlines.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition titled "Pass Anti-Scab Legislation." This would be in line with federal legislation that New Democrats were able to pass. It's stopping replacement workers from entering into workplaces while those places are on strike or on lockout. This has been proven to keep strike lines safer—less aggression. It's better for the workers; it stops a lot of conflict. It has already been done in British Columbia and Quebec. It has shown that there are no increases to the number of days that strikes or lockouts take in duration. It's good legislation. It's important for people to know their jobs and their collective bargaining rights are respected. It's too bad that it's not included in the minister's current Working for Workers bill, because this is the type of legislation that I know workers across the province are looking for to protect their jobs and to keep picket lines safer while they are out on the line.

I fully support this petition. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Ryan to bring to the Clerks.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Transform Ontario's Energy Sector."

We know that the last few years have been the hottest years on record. We know we're in a climate emergency—at least, some of us know that and can admit that publicly. We know we have wildfires out of control across Canada.

The petition is asking us to focus in on renewable energies and options and conservation.

I will send this, after I sign my name, with tall page Jack.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, we know that the planet is undergoing significant warming, and that is having adverse consequences for our health, for agriculture, for infrastructure. We have had so many extreme weather events that have caused flooding, that have caused drought. These weather events are increasing in frequency and increasing in severity.

Unfortunately, for the last two decades, under successive Liberal and Conservative governments, we have seen an expansion of gas plants despite public pushback.

Speaker, we must reduce the province's reliance on fossil fuels. Instead, we must invest in renewable energy and ensure that we meet our provincial climate targets.

This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop expanding Ontario's gas plants.

I could not agree with this petition more. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ahilan to bring to the table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here, and this one is about auto theft. I think it will find particular significance with the minister of crime prevention and auto theft. It talks about the rise in auto thefts and how it's putting a strain on law enforcement.

To summarize, it does talk about the federal government and suggests that the federal government is failing in its policies. It also suggests that the cycle of crime is undermining public trust in the system.

There's a call to action in this petition. It calls upon the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to put pressure on the federal government—which, by the way, is kept in power by the minority NDP supporters up there—to implement stricter bail reform, which falls entirely within the Criminal Code and is under the federal jurisdiction. It's something that Jagmeet Singh could certainly do something about if he wanted to.

I certainly want to sign this petition.

Send a message to Jagmeet Singh—help us out here; we've got some crime going on.

I'm going to give it to Elyse, and she's going to bring it to the Clerks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the members that the standing order says that you should summarize the petition but not add additional political commentary to your presentation.

1340

Interjections.

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

SCHOOL SAFETY

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to keep classrooms safe for students and staff—we have definitely seen an increase of violence in our schools—and this petition is asking for immediate action to do that. New Democrats believe that we can do this by investing in mental health resources—by improving the number and adding more adults into the classrooms, with EAs, teachers and less kids in classrooms so they have further attention; and improve the support staff. This is what we know will be sure to keep kids safer in our classrooms.

I'm proud to support this petition, to add my signature to it and give it to page Mahee to bring to the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind the members on both sides of the House that you can summarize the petition but not add additional political commentary of your own to the presentation of the petition.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I also have a petition entitled "Clean Up Mimico Creek and Humber Creek." We know that key details of the leak were never made public; people didn't understand the extent of the plume, the emulsification, the oil. So this petition is calling on the government to be transparent with what happened at Mimico Creek. People living in and around the creek are still worried and concerned that they do not know what they had been exposed to. They know that countless wildlife have been killed, their habitats contaminated.

This petition is calling on the government to be transparent as to what actually happened, because we know that it also breached the containment area and has made it to Lake Ontario. They want, from this ministry, a clear timeline—which is something that only can be expected—to know when the cleanup will be completed.

Finally, we know that the Toronto Wildlife Centre is at the forefront and covering all the costs to ensure that they protect wildlife and that they participate in the cleanup. They need to make sure that the government provides that agency emergency funding, because this was a very serious spill and containment breach. The government needs to take it seriously as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA GESTION DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2024, on the motion for second 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): When we last debated Bill 228, the member for Guelph had the floor. He still has some time available to him.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I was debating Bill 228, schedule 2, and just pointing out that many people have described carbon capture and storage as a billion-dollar boondoggle that just doesn't come close to the hype, and part of the reason why is that tens of billions of dollars have been spent on CCS and it has only captured 0.1% of carbon pollution. Even the International Energy Agency—which has long time been known as oil and gas—has said the oil and gas sector has to get over this fantasy that CCS is any sort of climate solution.

Meanwhile, the earth's soils are a massive carbon sink that store carbon pollution free of charge. In particular, Canada's boreal peatlands, which contain 25% of the 150 billion tonnes of the world's peatland carbon storage, is one of the largest carbon storage sinks in the world.

Right now, First Nations elders, artists and leaders are at Queen's Park calling on this government to work with the federal government to support the shoreline conservation area connected to the Mushkegowuk national marine conservation area. They're asking for the provincial government to support them to unlock funding for Indigenous-led conservation areas of the peatlands and of the national conservation park, and they're asking for free, informed, prior consent before any development takes place on these peatlands.

Speaker, the boreal peatlands are literally the lungs of the world—we talk about the Amazon, but Canada has it right here; as a matter of fact, northern Ontario has it right here.

First Nations are at Queen's Park right now asking this government to help unlock funding to protect those lands and enable them to provide carbon capture and storage free of charge to the people of Ontario. Across Ontario, wetlands store 29 billion tonnes of carbon. That's the equivalent of taking 24.1 million cars—that's all the cars in Canada—off the road for 1,000 years, free of charge.

I think it's great that the government has their Greenlands Conservation Program in northern Ontario, but as they roll that out, they need to be working with First Nations to unlock Indigenous-led conservation programs.

Despite the fact that we've paved over 75% of wetlands in southern Ontario, the 25% that remains stores 1.3 billion tonnes of carbon, free of charge to the people of Ontario. That's the equivalent of taking all the 24.1 million cars in Canada off the road for 40 years, free of charge. The greenbelt alone stores 21 million tonnes of carbon, which was one of the reasons I was so opposed to the government opening it for development. Wetlands do all that for us, free of charge. And yet, this government wants to waste

over \$10 billion on Highway 413, paving over 2,000 acres of farmland, 220 wetlands, 400 acres of the greenbelt, and crossing 85 waterways, threatening the ability of that land to store carbon free of charge—don't need CCS and billion-dollar boondoggles for that—but also protect us from flooding, and clean our drinking water.

We have proven, affordable technology already storing carbon in the province of Ontario—and that's nature. That's why we need to defend it.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions for the member.

Hon. Mike Harris: I do apologize to the member from Guelph; I wasn't here this morning to hear the beginning of his remarks, but I do know that he is very passionate about reducing greenhouse gases, and I think this bill takes a serious attempt at trying to do that. I'm going to speak to it a little bit later on, and then hopefully he'll have some discourse for me, as we do like to have a little bit of fun here on Thursday afternoon.

There are a lot of jurisdictions that do this type of thing, that are looking into carbon sequestration and that are quite successfully doing it, not only in North America, but around the world. So I just wondered if you had any ideas about what other jurisdictions are doing—in particular, with carbon sequestration. I would love to hear your thoughts.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I enjoy our conversations—through you, Speaker.

Of the tens of billions of dollars that have been spent on carbon capture and storage—and the member is right; in jurisdictions all around the world—0.1% of their target carbon storage has actually been stored. So, from a return-on-investment or any kind of business case, it hasn't been successful. That's exactly why the International Energy Agency, which historically has been a very pro-oil-and-gas sector, has said that oil and gas companies need to start “letting go of the illusion” that “implausibly large” amounts of carbon capture are the solution to the global climate crisis.

I'm not opposed to us looking at CCS, but nature stores far more carbon free of charge. That's why we need to protect it.

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The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I agree with the member from Guelph; we're putting at risk the largest natural storage of carbon—the lungs of the breathing lands that he talked about—and embarking on this strategy, at the same time that we have the legacy of an industry, which are the abandoned oil and gas wells that are all across the province. We have something like 27,000, maybe as many as 40,000, abandoned oil and gas wells. There's not good data. This is what happened when an industry came to town, extracted their profits and left taxpayers holding the bag for the cleanup.

So it's amazing to me—the irony that in the same bill that we're looking at expanding a whole new industry

where we don't understand the risks, we still haven't dealt with the damage left behind from the oil and gas industry that profited greatly from our resources here in the province, but left taxpayers holding the bag.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. Again, I enjoy our conversations.

One of the concerns about the use of CCS in Ontario is that it will be used to extract what little bit of oil and gas is left in a lot of those abandoned oil wells, actually increasing climate pollution, not reducing climate pollution.

But more importantly, from a long-term standpoint, this bill opens the door to unproven technology. It raises significant questions about what the safety effects will be on surrounding communities, especially when it comes to water. It raises serious questions about how these CCS sites will be monitored, for how long they're going to be monitored, and what costs the taxpayers of this province are going to face to monitor these for decades and decades to ensure safety for local communities.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: There's a lot of energy around lobbying to make carbon capture and storage happen. Can you explain why these partner groups are so interested in making this investment go into their industries?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member from Kitchener Centre.

The oil and gas sector is lobbying for this because they want to keep polluting. They don't want to admit the fact that heat pumps are cheaper than gas furnaces; that wind, solar and storage are cheaper forms of energy. They don't want us to know that we shipped \$16 billion out of the province of Ontario to buy oil and gas products, when that \$16 billion could stay in Ontario, producing Ontario-made electricity, creating Ontario-made jobs and delivering Ontario-made climate solutions.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to further debate.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Speaker, before I get to my remarks on Bill 228, if you'll indulge me, I'd just like to give a warm welcome to the students from St. Patrick High School who are visiting the Legislature today. They are from my riding, Thunder Bay–Atikokan. In fact, their school is the school that I attended high school at, but it was called Selkirk at the time. Thank you to the students for being here today.

I'm pleased to be here today for the second reading debate on Bill 228, the Resource Management and Safety Act. Our government is dedicated to continually building Ontario's economy, seeking opportunities of improvement and listening to the voices of the people who call Ontario home. This bill exemplifies the standards our government holds themselves to, and, as Minister Smith emphasized last week, if passed, would fortify our shared capacity to prevent, mitigate and manage wildland fires, protecting families, communities, forests and industries across Ontario's fire region from escalating threats. It will attract new surveyors to support Ontario's rapidly expanding

infrastructure and housing needs, and it will enable the permanent storage of carbon dioxide in deep-underground geological formations, helping industry to reduce their carbon emissions and meet climate goals.

While the fire season has come to a close for most, there were a few remaining fires in the north, close to my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, but I'm assured that those are probably gone with the snow we received last week.

As the MPP of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and a volunteer firefighter for 21 years, I recognize the hard work, dangers and efforts displayed this fire season. I want to thank the hard-working and dedicated staff who have worked tirelessly to reduce and manage the impacts of wildland fires and forest fires in our province, protecting people, communities, infrastructure and economic activity across Ontario. Although this past fire season may not have seemed as challenging as last year's, there were a significant number of fires managed: 475 wildland fires—hectares burned was 43% of the 10-year average, and 20% of what we saw in 2023. Our rangers not only cared for and protected our province, but when we were called for help in other provinces experiencing more devastating fire seasons, they did not hesitate to deploy. We had rangers across Canada—in Jasper, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Alberta and the Northwest Territories. I want to thank all of our rangers for their valiant efforts this fire season—never afraid to lend a hand to fellow Canadians in need, serving in these challenging roles and protecting our vast forests and wildlife lands.

Speaker, although this fire season was less damaging than previous years, fires are becoming larger, more frequent and much more severe across Canada, and our province is no exception. We want to put the protection of our people, economy and environment first, and in that vision to create safer communities, our government is modernizing our wildland fire management program and making significant investments in our resources to position us well for the challenges that lie ahead.

It's because our government recognizes the hard work and value of our fire rangers, our aviation, forest fire and emergency services branch and all those who support them that we have brought about this bill.

The Forest Fires Prevention Act is the primary provincial legislation that sets out rules and regulations for managing wildfires in Ontario. It sets obligations for fire prevention measures, authorizes enforcement, and defines offences and penalties. Bill 228, the Resource Management and Safety Act, if passed, would amend this act. No significant changes have been made to the act since 1999, and we need to update this act to address the escalating threat of wildland fires. The act, as it stands, enables the ministry to enter into agreements for the prevention, control or extinguishment of grass, brush or forest fires. In keeping with our vision of an Ontario that works together to reduce wildland fire risk, this bill, if passed, would enable the ministry to enter into agreements on all aspects of wildland fire management. This could include agreements on wildland fire management training with a municipality or a First Nations community. And that is

why the Resource Management and Safety Act proposes to amend it. The amendments we are proposing would allow greater ministerial powers to take proactive measures to prevent and prepare for wildland fires while at the same time updating the act's enforcement and compliance tools.

These proposed legislative changes are intended to strengthen collective responsibility for wildland fire management, improve awareness of wildland fire risk, expand prevention and mitigation activities, enhance preparedness and response, and strengthen rules and consequences for non-compliance with wildland fire management laws.

This strategy is a call to action meant to mobilize all in society in reducing wildland fire risk.

In addition to legislative changes, we are also undertaking policy and program initiatives to modernize the wildland fire program, increasing our collaboration with municipalities, Indigenous communities and industry. We need to educate the public and promote their awareness of the prevention and mitigation actions that they can take to reduce fire risk. It will take all Ontarians working together across the fire region to reduce the risk of wildland fires, and the collective efforts of all partners to fulfill this vision of safer and more resilient communities.

1400

The president of NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Mayor Wendy Landry, had this to say about the proposed legislation:

"The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association is very pleased to see the investment that the Ontario government is making to attract, retain and recognize wildland fire rangers. Northern Ontario communities battle forest fires each year and depend on our fire rangers to keep our communities safe. We all appreciate their tireless efforts not only to protect our municipalities, but also to contribute to the safety and well-being of our entire province."

My ministry's long-term goal is an Ontario that works together to minimize the impact of wildland fires, to create safer, more resilient communities. I am pleased to note that the legislative changes proposed in this bill will support us in leading this work in Ontario and position Ontario as a leader in Canada.

As the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products, I recognize the significance of our forests, not only in terms of the impacts through the fire season, but as a sector as a whole. These forests play a huge part in Ontario's economy, and our forest sector has a proud heritage and a promising future.

Wood is being made into new products every day that are used in new ways. These novel wood-based products and new applications are poised to increase the use of Ontario wood in construction projects, growing the market for our sawmills, feeding into new manufacturing plants, and building community assets right across our province. Our government is dedicated to showcasing the forest sector and helping to realize the potential of the industry.

The new technology used through advanced wood construction helps to develop engineered wood to replace carbon-intensive products—and factory-based manu-

facturing methods to prefabricated modular components off-site. These new materials can be used in larger and taller buildings than those that can be built using conventional wood, including taller multi-family residential and office buildings, as well as institutional, commercial, educational and industrial buildings. And this technology can be used to build infrastructure, including bridges, wind turbines, towers and sound barriers.

Advanced wood materials are engineered out of wood fibre, including sawn lumber, wood chips and strand. Two products produced using this method are cross-laminated timber and laminated strand lumber.

Today, 11% of global energy-related carbon emissions come from the building materials used in construction and the way they are used. Low-carbon materials, like those used in advanced wood construction, and better construction methods could reduce this percentage in Ontario. Our government is investing in this exciting new technology to help open up an entirely new market for timber producers.

I had the opportunity, earlier this week, to sit down with the Ontario Forest Industries Association at their board meeting, where we continued the collaboration on new and innovative products that can be created using biomass from the forestry sector, thereby increasing the capacity and the value of our forestry sector.

In July, we announced a significant investment of \$3.46 million in Element5, a manufacturer of cross-laminated timber. Element5 holds Forest Stewardship Council certification, uses wood from Ontario forests, and is using a new cross-laminated timber in new ways expected to transform the building industry.

Prefabricated buildings inside factories can speed up construction, lower costs, reduce the carbon footprint of building projects, yield less waste and minimize community disruption. Element5 has developed an affordable and prefabricated mass timber multi-unit residential housing concept and delivered several affordable and supportive housing projects, recognizing the strong potential of this technology and its high-quality, durable products. In our richly forested province in the heart of North America, we are looking to this technology as an industry of the future. That's why we've drafted an Advanced Wood Construction Action Plan. This plan positions Ontario to lead in this fast-growing sector by using more wood in the construction of multi-family residential buildings, both mid-rise and tall, and in commercial and industrial buildings, creating new opportunities in the forest sector.

I'd like to wrap up my time by speaking on a crucial part of our bill, the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, which parliamentary assistant Dawn Gallagher Murphy spoke to previously. I'd like to speak to the environmental benefits of this act and touch on its economic potential.

If this bill is passed, the initial development of commercial-scale carbon storage projects in southwestern Ontario could sustain as many as 2,400 existing jobs in Ontario's manufacturing, oil and gas, and utility sectors, and create up to 4,000 short-term jobs associated with the development of carbon capture and storage projects.

I want to re-emphasize how geologic carbon storage offers Ontario a unique opportunity to preserve and create thousands of high-value jobs, attract significant investment, and help our industries remain globally competitive.

Over the summer, the Ministry of Natural Resources engaged and consulted industry, municipalities, Indigenous communities, landowners, other stakeholders and the public about a proposed framework for commercial-scale geologic carbon storage.

The government is now proposing a new Geologic Carbon Storage Act to enable the safe, responsible and permanent storage of carbon dioxide within geological formations in a manner that protects the public safety, the environment and other land and resource uses. The act, if passed, would authorize regulations for the design, development, operation, maintenance, decommissioning, closure, remediation and restoration of carbon storage sites, as well as activities associated with carbon storage. It also addresses location of carbon storage sites, including the use and allocation of core space underlying public lands and the crown resources for the purposes of carbon storage.

Ontario's approach in regulating and enabling geologic carbon storage would help energy-intensive industries manage their greenhouse gas emissions and create local jobs and investment, while ensuring safety to the public and the environment.

The proposed act is enabling and will require the development of supporting regulations before the act can be proclaimed and brought into force.

By enabling industries to reduce their carbon costs, this technology would protect vital sectors and position Ontario to take advantage of federal tax incentives and the growing global demand for carbon-management technologies, ensuring we stay ahead in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Ontario's natural resources hold incredible and unbelievable potential in sustainable and environmental prosperity. We must work together to unleash their full potential.

That is exactly why we're taking steps to introduce and regulate geologic carbon storage in Ontario. As it stands, about 30% of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions each year come from essential industries like manufacturing and utilities. This bill, if passed, would enable those hard-to-abate industries to permanently store the carbon dioxide they emit in suitable underground geological formations. Geologic carbon storage—it's also known as carbon sequestration—involved injecting carbon dioxide, which would have otherwise been emitted into the atmosphere, into deep underground rock formations for permanent storage. This technology will contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the province. Carbon storage is new to the province, and the ministry is committed to developing a framework that will ensure it's done responsibly, with measures in place to safeguard people and the environment.

Porous space refers to the spaces in underground rock formations where carbon dioxide could be permanently stored. These are naturally formed, small voids between

solid grains of minerals that make up rock, similar to the small holes within a sponge that hold water.

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After CO₂ is injected, it becomes trapped in underground porous space and sealed by rock layers above the storage formation which prevents the upward movement of CO₂. Injected CO₂ can also dissolve into saline water that is present in the rock formation or react with rocks and fluids to form solid carbonate materials.

This bill is not just about regulation. It is about supporting our environment, helping industries reduce their carbon footprint and creating a sustainable future for all Ontarians. By embracing innovative technologies like geologic carbon storage, we can ensure that Ontario's industrial base remains a key contributor to a cleaner, more sustainable world.

The Canadian Steel Producers Association provided this quote: "We welcome Ontario's announcement on creating a framework to regulate and enable carbon sequestration in Ontario. These regulatory changes represent an important step forward and support our long-term decarbonization strategy."

This bill is not just about the future of our economy; it's also about the future of our communities. By investing in our natural resources, we are creating jobs, stimulating economic growth and strengthening the social fabric of our province.

In conclusion, this bill is a critical step forward in our journey towards a sustainable and prosperous future. By embracing innovation, investing in our natural resources and working collaboratively with industry, Indigenous communities and all stakeholders, we can build a stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions for the member.

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan's presentation. I know that his passion for the forestry industry and passion for northern Ontario is equal to anyone in this House and equal to mine.

Just in layman's terms—for many, "carbon sequestration" is something they haven't heard before. So could the associate minister give an example of another jurisdiction that has successfully captured carbon in a large-enough scale to make it worthwhile? He said it's a new industry to Ontario, so it must not be a new industry to—and this isn't a question to cause controversy. I'm just asking the question—if he could point to a place where this is widely used.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you for the question, and thank you for your passion for northern Ontario. I think that's something the two of us share equally, so I appreciate that.

He's right that the carbon storage is new to the province, and the ministry is committed to developing a framework that would help ensure that it's done responsibly. We will continue to engage with other jurisdictions that have undertaken carbon sequestration and learn from their work as to how it can be utilized here in helping

Ontario, if this bill is passed, as we move forward on the carbon storage for the industry in Ontario.

Geologic carbon storage is one tool being considered to manage emissions. There is growing worldwide acceptance of the important role carbon capture utilization and storage can play in economically achieving net-zero emissions for a global economy.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I understand that the Ministry of Natural Resources, which is such a wonderful ministry—they coordinate the protection of people, property, as well as economic activity, from the threat of wildland fires. This is over 900,000 square kilometres of this great province. I know that it takes hundreds of trained professionals, of fire rangers and many more specialized support staff to accomplish—any of the risks that we have to these great forests.

My question to the associate minister—we know we've had some investments in this area. So, if passed, what would this bill do specifically to support Ontario's ability to manage wildland fires?

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you for that question.

The Forest Fires Prevention Act is the primary provincial legislation that sets out rules and regulations for managing wildfires in Ontario, and there have been no significant changes made in the act since 1999. We need to update this act to address the escalating threat of wildland fires, and that is why the Resource Management and Safety Act proposes to amend it. The amendments we are proposing would allow greater ministerial powers to take proactive measures to prevent and prepare for wildland fires, while at the same time updating the act's enforcement and compliance tools. These proposed legislative changes are intended to strengthen collective responsibility for wildland fire management; improve awareness of wildland fire risk; expand prevention and mitigation activities; enhance preparedness and response; and strengthen rules and consequences for non-compliance within the wildland management laws.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I thank the associate minister for his presentation.

He spent a bit of time talking about the carbon capture and storage technology. What we do know is that carbon capture and storage is expensive. It has very high energy costs associated with it. It creates a lot of pollution. And so far, as we know and heard from the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, it has a history of poor performance and is unproven at scale. So my question to the associate minister is, why go down this path when we have a cheaper, more efficient approach through renewable energy?

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thanks for the question. I appreciate the concern that you've expressed.

Why we're going down this path is really—geologic carbon storage involves the injection of carbon dioxide into deep underground rock formations for permanent storage. The depth at which carbon storage is stored is

equivalent to at least 800 metres—or approximately 1.2 times the CN Tower.

The ministry's proposed framework would be focused on the activities associated with the use of wells to inject carbon dioxide into deep geological formations. Injection sites usually require a relatively small surface area and would typically include one or more wells, monitoring equipment and other associated works.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Hon. Mike Harris: There are some great pieces to this bill that talk about building with mass timber. As the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products, obviously, I think it's something that is very important to you, and it's very important to the industry that you represent.

I was hoping you could tell us a little bit more about what it means to be able to build up to 18 storeys with mass timber—how it actually is a lot more ecologically friendly than using some certain products to be building buildings of that size—and what it means to the industry to see it be able to be more sustainable, when our government is looking to make sure we're able to create and keep a lot of those good-paying jobs in the north.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you for that question.

You're absolutely right; the amendments we've made to the building code to increase the height that we can construct buildings, the investments we've made into the advanced wood construction, into mass timber, have positioned the industry to bring that viability and sustainability back to the forestry sector at a time when we're experiencing some challenges within the sector. This is another example of how we can increase the value added to businesses, associate businesses and products associated with our natural resources.

In the forestry sector—we know that it sustains indirect and direct jobs of 148,000. It adds \$5.5 billion to our economy, our GDP, every year. By bringing about new advancements in technology and building, and changing the building code to allow the construction of buildings used in this new technology, we're positioning Ontario's forestry sector to be leaders once again across the world.

1420

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. John Vanthof: In the remarks from the member—once again, very respectfully, I respect his knowledge, particularly of his associate ministry of forestry.

Where exactly in the bill does this bill specify the hiring of more firefighters? I believe you had a quote from Wendy Landry—that she supported the bill because it hired more fire rangers. I don't see specifically in the bill where more fire rangers are hired because of these amendments. So if you could specify the part of the bill that says that more fire rangers are going to be in the forest because of this bill, we would really appreciate it.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the member.

The quote I gave, as you indicated, was from Mayor Wendy Landry, the president of NOMA. She prepared those remarks.

We do know that by continuing to invest into our Forest Fires Prevention Act, we are assisting our fire rangers and we are assisting the sector in making sure that we are positioned well to deal with the forest fires that we know are going to be increasing, that are going to be more in nature, despite the last season we've had. This act is going to help us with the forest fire issue by mitigating those impacts, by reducing the number of fires, by putting into the act regulations and legislation that are going to assist us in ensuring that all Ontarians are playing a role in reducing the risk of wildland fires and the frequency of human-caused wildland fires across the province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don't have time for another round of questions and answers. We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It's always an honour to be able to stand up in this place to talk about the bills that come through—but Bill 228 is a bill created from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

One of the things that we know about—because of where I come from, how I grew up, up in Kingfisher Lake, as a kid, but also at camp—there's a term that we use when we start talking about any bureaucrat, conservation officer or somebody from the Ministry of Natural Resources. We have a name for them. We call them “amik okima”—“ΔPL.” Amik okima—ΔPL—how would you say it? If I translated it into English, it would be: “Amik”—“Δ”—is beaver, and then “okima”—“ΔPL”—is boss—beaver boss. We call them that because they controlled the amount of trapping or the amount of fur that we put in. When we were growing up, that's how the elders, people referred to them—no matter where you go. If it's a bureaucrat—again, that's how we call them.

When the election happened two years ago, when we got re-elected, the Minister of Natural Resources is one of the first ones who came over to me and introduced himself on the first day when we were sitting. I really appreciated that. I started telling him the same story I just told you. I said, “Because of your role, you are kihci amik okima—ΔPL: big beaver boss.”

I wanted to just share that story. I share that story because I grew up in a very—I'm not supposed to be here in this building. I remember the times, growing up on the land, when we would go by Ski-Doo to camp and we'd come back in a boat. I'd be there for eight weeks at springtime—and then the same thing in the fall. The reason I'm sharing that is, when we talk about access to lands—because when I was out on the land, I was outdoors every day. All we had was a canvas tent that whole time. I learned about the language, the naming of the points, the naming of the creeks. Not only that, my dad shared with me the history of those, why they're named that—every island, every bay, every creek, all those things. That's where I learned how to name things, whether it's animals, whether it's the plants, whether it's the fish, the names of everything. I think it's important that people realize that that's where we come from as First Nations people and, without the land, we lose the language.

I've said this before: I've been here about six and a half years in this place, and one of the things I've learned is that—since this past spring, in May, was the first time I was allowed to speak my language, and that's when I knew and then when I speak again—I spoke last week in my language as well, whereby I had translators with me. I think one of the things is that I'm starting to learn that I'm losing my language while being here, while I'm not being allowed to speak—or I'm allowed, but there are only certain times that translation comes to Queen's Park.

But again, I took those five minutes just to talk about what the land means, and I'll get into that a bit later—why I share that story.

Again, this bill is tabled by the Minister of Natural Resources, and we know this bill enacts the Geological Carbon Storage Act to regulate a new industry of permanent storage of carbon dioxide. We know that the purpose of this act includes the protection of public safety and the environment. When we talk about the environment—First Nations Indigenous people have been here for thousands of years, and that's one of the reasons why I was sharing that story about how I grew up.

It's important to remember that we already have a safe form of carbon storage in Ontario, in the breathing lands, or the peatlands. We have to understand that while peatlands are remarkable natural carbon sinks, they can quickly become carbon sources, carbon emitters when disturbed. We know that peatlands store twice as much carbon as all the forests in the world. I know this Ontario government is very focused, actually, on mining in the so-called Ring of Fire area, but we cannot forget—oh, but we should not forget. Let's not forget that it's estimated that the peatlands in northern Ontario store 35 billion tonnes of carbon—imagine an annual emission of 39 billion cars.

Well, Speaker, while it's important to find safe new ways, I guess, of storing carbon, the best thing we can do, first and foremost, is protect the natural carbon sinks that already exist in this province. This act says that the crown can make regulations that essentially determine where the carbon repository site will be located “without the consent of any persons who own ... rights, and those rights vest in the crown.”

1430

Mr. Rick Byers: Achoo!

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Bless you.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thanks.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The bill does state a research and evaluation permit or storage permit can only be issued by the minister if they are satisfied that “adequate consultation with Indigenous communities has been carried out, if the activities for which the permit is sought have the potential to adversely affect established or credibly asserted Aboriginal or treaty rights...”

The term “adequate consultation” raises questions here. The questions can be like: What will this consultation comprise of? Who will be deciding which First Nations are to be consulted? Who determines if consultation is adequate? “Adequate” to who? And how will the consultation influence the ministry's decisions?

When I see this term, “adequate consultation,” you can't help but immediately feel that it will be inadequate, because consultation alone is not enough to respect the inherent rights of the First Peoples of these lands.

We know that Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP. I want to refer to a few articles of UNDRIP. Article 26.2 states that, “Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.”

And article 29.2 states that, “States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.”

I would like to see this bill be amended to require the free, prior and informed consent for all impacted First Nations for any new carbon storage site to be built on their lands and traditional territories.

One of the things, being here at Queen's Park is—one of my roles is to question, to be a critic on Indigenous and treaty relations and northern development. I'm concerned by some of the issues that have been raised to me by First Nations in Ontario. These concerns give me a reason to question whether Natural Resources will take the feedback of First Nations seriously when considering new carbon storage sites.

Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg, also known as Pic Mobert First Nation, has tried to secure a meeting with the Minister of Natural Resources to address challenges with critical fisheries enforcement at White Lake. This First Nation, Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg, has been dealing with illegal, large-scale commercial fishing, which is critically endangering White Lake's ecosystem and the community's food security. This situation has been made worse by the Ministry of Natural Resources, who are failing to fulfill their duties to enforce conservation laws.

Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg is calling on the government of Ontario to appoint two honourable individuals to conduct an external review and provide joint recommendations for a plan of action before the 2025 spawn, within six months of when the letter was sent. It is my hope the government will take this step, which is both reasonable and necessary to ensure that the next steps are informed by expertise. It is key to building trust.

I also want to note that Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg invited the Minister of Natural Resources to visit the community, to see White Lake first-hand; they did not receive a response from the minister's office. I would like to quote one paragraph from their letter: “Our people have called White Lake home since time immemorial and it holds immense cultural, historical and spiritual significance. However, the threat posed by illegal, large-scale commercial fishing without enforcement mechanisms threatens the future of this precious ecosystem. This has been incredibly difficult for our community, with many feeling like hostages in their own homeland.” It is not too

late for the Minister of Natural Resources to provide a response to the letter from Chief Kwisswa and to accept the invitation to visit White Lake. I hope the minister will take action immediately.

Another issue has been brought up to me from my riding of Kiiwetinoong, which the Minister of Natural Resources could have taken actions to resolve: The Ministry of Natural Resources regulates hunting in Ontario. For First Nations people, hunting is not a luxury, but a way of life and an important source of food, enshrined with our inherent rights to land and treaty rights.

For the community members in Neskantaga, hunting rights were violated this fall because of low-flying helicopters from the Ring of Fire road construction. Neskantaga Chief Chris Moonias publicly stated that this has violated First Nations' rights under Treaty 9. The helicopters disturbed the fall moose hunt by scaring moose away during the important harvesting time. In that request, one of the things they requested was a review of the activities that have taken place without their consent and which have had adverse impacts by violating First Nations' rights. They requested an urgent meeting with the provincial leadership to find a way forward. To my knowledge, these requests were not granted.

1440

I know the bill talks about the fire management as well, about amendments to the Forest Fires Prevention Act. The entirety of Kiiwetinoong, the riding of Kiiwetinoong, is a fire region. Just yesterday, we welcomed a wildland firefighter to the House, Noah Freedman, who spends every fire season fighting wildland fires in northern Ontario.

In 2023, there were 741 wildfires in Ontario. Climate change is only going to continue to make fire seasons even worse. I know there was some talk about firefighters, and I know, particularly—this was a few years back, maybe two or three years ago—there was a fire near Cat Lake First Nation. They had 37 firefighters ready to go, Speaker, and they never got a call from MNR. They know these lands like the back of their hand, and there was no call. But people from the outside—whether it's outside the country—they come and fight fires instead. Why are we not hiring First Nations firefighters?

Anyway, that concludes my remarks for the day. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions for the member.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Each year, the Ministry of Natural Resources protects people, property, communities and economic activity from the threat of wildland fires across the province and often sends resources around the country and around the world. The ministry is taking steps to modernize wildland fire management in the province and the proposed changes under the Forest Fires Prevention Act would strengthen community preparedness and improve wildland fire prevention.

Speaker, the Ministry of Natural Resources announced in October another \$64-million investment to strengthen the province's wildlife fire program. This money will go towards hiring and training key personnel and funding the

purchase of new support equipment. Earlier this year, Minister Piccini introduced Bill 190, the Working for Workers Five Act, to expand coverage to wildland firefighters.

My question: Will the member opposite support the proposals made in this bill to maintain public safety, protect communities and ensure the safety of all wildland firefighters and staff?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch for the question. I remember a couple of years back—you have to understand, Kiiwetinoong has 24 fly-in First Nations that I represent. I remember flying from Sioux Lookout to Kasabonika Lake, and it was for a graduation: a grade 8 graduation, kindergarten graduation and a high school graduation. And I remember the whole time—the whole time, the whole way, the whole northern Ontario, the whole riding of Kiiwetinoong—it's just smoke. It's like clouds. And that was the intent of when we talk about wildfires, forest fires. You could see the impact of—there was a neighbouring fire right by the community, and I know they lost their camps. People lost their camps. People lost their boats. But that's the impact it has.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Kiiwetinoong, who is always so interesting and appealing to listen to here in the chamber and ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard. We very clearly heard him talk about consultation—a lot of times the lack thereof. I've heard many times that consultations have happened, yet none of the voices were reflected in government policies. We have Tawich, who's here in the House. Interestingly enough, Acting Grand Chief Natasha Martin spoke very clearly about “the breathing lands” and the sequestered carbon that is currently being released from those lands due to climate change.

Possibly, could the member elaborate on that and whether that will be corrected or whether that will be further hindered within this legislation?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I think for many years, for thousands of years—First Nations have been living on these lands for a long time. We are the protectors of Mother Earth. We are the protectors of these lands and the waters.

It's critical that we keep these lands, and I think that's one of the things that the Acting Grand Chief for Mushkegowuk spoke about earlier. It's so important that we keep these lands, that the peat moss I spoke about earlier is so significant, and I think it's important to work with First Nations. It's important to work with us, with the people that live up there, because, again, it's not just for business; it's a way of life. It's a way of life for people, so we need to be able to work together on this. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for his remarks and for acknowledging my sneeze. I look forward to seeing that in Hansard, but I very much appreciate it.

I'm interested in his remarks covering both the process that he sees as important to this as well as the outcomes. I look at the outcomes, and the Associate Minister of Forestry was talking about updating the Forest Fires Prevention Act, which has been so long needed. Another part of this bill, looking at CO₂ storage, on conservation—we all know we need many, many options.

Per my earlier comment on another speaker, no bill is perfect. None of us are perfect, but doesn't this bill move so many areas forward that you could consider supporting and getting things done for your community and the province?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Thank you for the question from the member.

I know that we always talk about—where I come from, in far northern Ontario, from Kiiwetinoong, we know that peatlands are very remarkable natural carbon sinks. We know that, but they also can become, again, carbon sources when disturbed, especially when we talk about the Ring of Fire.

We cannot forget that you will be disturbing the peatlands in northern Ontario. I think it's important that there's proper, free, prior, informed consent, and I think that's very critical of the impacts. It's important to talk about that. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member from Kiiwetinoong. His presentations are always so deep and enlightening.

Member, I want to ask you about the responsibility that the crown would have to communities where the extractions take place. We recognize that it's important for a site to be properly prepared. It's oftentimes years in the making. When the harvesters and the extractors leave, they oftentimes leave the site abandoned.

What we've seen is that that cost is often times deferred back to the crown, back to the government, and this has happened with abandoned wells. Without adequate consultation, without a plan to properly remediate the sites afterwards, who do you think will be left with the environmental contaminants as well as the costs?

1450

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'm going to tell a story. I'm going to tell a moose story. Moose were gathering. They have a meeting, and they tried to determine what time of the year they're going to meet. Then the bulls are meeting, and they're trying to decide when they're going to meet. The bulls decide they're going to meet in the summertime, and so they made a decision.

The cow moose shows up at the meeting: "What are you guys deciding? What are you guys talking about?"

"We tried to determine when we're going to meet each year."

And they say okay and then the cow tells them, "We cannot meet in the summertime because there's so many bugs, so many bugs and mosquitoes, in the summertime. The perfect time to meet is in the fall where there's less

bugs." When we talk about the fall moose rut, that's when they get together, right?

The reason I'm telling that story: That's what consultation is. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): One last quick question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Public consultation is very important when it comes to any legislation. But when it comes to legislation that impacts First Nations and Indigenous communities, it is particularly important. This government has the responsibility to make sure that First Nations and Indigenous rights are respected, that the government obtains free, informed and prior consent.

My question to the member is, can you explain to the government side why it is so important that we do this?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It's really important to engage with First Nations. It's important to talk to them. When we talk about free, prior and informed consent, that's where you gain—that's how we work together. It's important that—you know, to protect the lands and the resources that are out there. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you very much. Meegwetch.

Further debate?

Hon. Mike Harris: I'm very excited to be able to lend my voice to debate today to a ministry that is very near and dear to my heart. I am an outdoorsman. I very much like to get outside, hunting, fishing—always like to hear the stories from the member from Kiiwetinoong when he's talking about all the good things he used to do when he was a kid because I used to love doing those things too, and we don't get a lot of time to do them anymore. Madam Speaker, it gets pretty busy around here, but I think it is important to always remember your roots, your heritage, where you came from, and still try to get out and do some of those things that you used to do when you were younger—before you had, maybe, the responsibilities that we have here now, of course, just being a little bit older, adults, and being representatives in the Ontario Legislature.

Like I said, a ministry that's near and dear to my heart: I had the good fortune of being able to serve as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources under then-minister—I think I can use his name if I'm not using it in reference to anything in particular, but I'm just going to do it; you correct me if I'm wrong—Minister Yakabuski, at the time. It was really great to be able to see some of the inner workings of this ministry and be part of some of the good things that the Ministry of Natural Resources—it was then the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, but now the Ministry of Natural Resources—were doing to improve life for people all across Ontario, not just people that were into the outdoors, like myself, but quite frankly, this ministry touches a lot of other pieces of the province that maybe a lot of people aren't really aware of. Of course, hunting, fishing, that's kind of the bread and butter of the ministry, of course, when you look at the forestry sector—but also when you look at what used to be a very thriving oil and gas sector here in the province. It's not something that we see very

often, but it certainly still is very important to a lot of people in southwestern Ontario. Also, this ministry governs the Aggregate Resources Act, which helps to build all of the roads, bridges, highways, schools, hospitals that we're endeavouring to build here in the province, with one of the most historic infrastructure spends that this province has ever seen.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the pieces, obviously, of this bill, but I want to quickly relate it to my role a little bit as the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. There's some really good pieces in this bill that are going to streamline things; that are going to make it easier for people and businesses to navigate the system, I guess, for lack of a better term; and that will just make it easier for them not only to reinvest in their people and their businesses, but also to make sure that we're putting our best foot forward as legislators to make sure that we're meeting the needs of Ontarians, that we're keeping good regulation in place.

Again, when we look from a red-tape-reduction perspective, it's not just about slashing every single piece of red tape we can find, but it is about also bolstering those good pieces of regulation that keep environmental protections in place, that keep safety in place and that really are going to promote those things in a good spirit.

I did want to just mention as well, that I'm going to share a little bit of my time with my colleague the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South. It will depend on how much I yammer on here over the next 16 minutes, so we'll see what happens.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the pieces of this bill. Wildland fire preparedness is something that we hear talked about quite a bit in the Ontario Legislature. Obviously over the last few years, it's been something that has come up more and more. We've seen a lot of challenges, of course, here in Ontario, in particular eastern Ontario and northwestern Ontario, but really right across the country. Also, our neighbours to the south have seen a lot of challenges: drier weather, lightning strikes. And, of course, most of us here who are from northern Ontario—we have a lot of northern Ontario members. I consider myself from the gateway to the north, Madam Speaker, in North Bay.

Mr. John Vanthof: So Muskoka is south, right?

Hon. Mike Harris: The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane may differ, and I know the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay always likes to give me a hard time when he says North Bay is not the north. I will say that he is from about 800 kilometres north of there, so he will definitely win that argument, Madam Speaker.

But when we look at wildfire preparedness, almost 80% of fires here in Ontario are man-made. We need to have better awareness. We need to have people understand that they can't be leaving fires unattended, or they can't be negligent in the way that they maybe burn brush or do other things.

But when we look at this bill in particular, there are a lot of good pieces that are going to set some framework to really bring some more awareness to what's going on.

First, it's going to require municipalities and industries in fire-prone areas to have comprehensive fire management plans. These plans must meet clear provincial standards, ensuring consistency and effectiveness across the board. Second, we're modernizing enforcement and compliance tools by introducing measures like administrative monetary penalties and remediation orders, and we're giving the ministry the tools it needs to act quickly and decisively.

So it's good to see some more pieces being added to what we view as obviously something very important here in the province and looking at a lot of the things that my colleague has actually done in regard to presumptive cancers and different legislative pieces that have been introduced in the Working for Workers Act that are helping wildland firefighters. There's a lot going on in the space, so it's good to see that that's being represented in this bill.

Another thing that has come up a little bit in debate today, but that's certainly top of mind for the people of southwestern Ontario, especially around communities like Wheatley where we have seen some unfortunate tragedies unfold over the last couple of years, is in regard to hazardous oil and gas wells. Like I said, this is an issue that we see really in an isolated part of the province, and this bill is going to give the ministry some extra tools in the tool box to be able to hold operators accountable. If an operator fails to comply with an order, whether due to negligence, bankruptcy or any other reason, the ministry will have the power to step in, intervene and make sure that these oil and gas wells are safe.

We're also ensuring that costs associated with remediation can be recovered, and of course it's only fair that that burden doesn't fall on taxpayers; that the people, the organizations that are in control of these wells, need to be ones that are responsible and any costs incurred in making them safe, in remediation of the wells, will be able to be recovered by the province. I think it's a great tool and I'm happy to see it in this bill.

1500

One of the things I think has garnered most of the attention here today, obviously, is looking at carbon storage. This is maybe something that some members of the House may be ideologically opposed to. We've heard, "Ah, well, it doesn't work," or, "It's going to cost too much money."

What I can tell you is that this is going to provide 4,000 short-term jobs in the province here, and it's going to help keep 2,400 existing jobs in this province. Because under the Liberals, we've seen higher carbon taxes, we've seen higher energy costs, and we saw those drive business and manufacturing out of this province—300,000 manufacturing jobs; I think it was roughly around 12,000 to 18,000 of those from Waterloo region alone—to more competitive jurisdictions. It's good to see that investment has finally come back to Ontario, of course, under the leadership of the Premier and also the minister of economic job creation—or economic development, job creation and trade.

Interjection.

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you. I'm getting a thumbs-up. It's a big word for a Thursday afternoon. But under his leadership, we've seen billions upon billions of dollars being reinvested here in the province, and we need to make sure that we're able to keep those investments here.

So when we talk about what carbon storage and carbon sequestration is going to do for businesses here in the province, not only is it going to actually have real, dramatic effects on reducing greenhouse emissions and gases that are readily available in the atmosphere, we're talking about a savings of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1.2 billion a year to business across the province which, again, is able to be reinvested in people, reinvested in businesses. These are good-paying jobs, often union jobs, in many of these facilities. I know that the member beside me here, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, is probably going to want to talk about that, and he's probably wondering how much I'm going to leave him left on the clock. You're going to be up very shortly. I'm going to close it out.

But again, it's good—

Mr. John Vanthof: We like to listen to him better, anyway.

Hon. Mike Harris: Yes, you probably do. Listen, I don't blame you. I really don't. It's okay. We won't talk about cilantro today, okay? We'll keep that one for another day.

There are a few other really good pieces to this, of course: modernizing the Surveyors Act, making it easier for new surveyors to get accredited, opening up some opportunities for people that are going to be helping to, quite frankly, build this province. I think we can all agree that modernizing that act is going to be a good thing.

I'll close it out just by saying Bill 228 is a bold, forward-thinking piece of legislation that I think reflects well the priorities of the government: protecting Ontario families, supporting economic growth, cutting red tape to make life easier for people who live and work in our great province. Those are things I know that I can get behind. This is about building a safer, more innovative Ontario—one where industries thrive, communities grow and families know their government is delivering results for them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll pass my time to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Over to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate my colleague for giving me a few minutes to talk about this important bill today. Congratulations to the Minister of Natural Resources for the incredible work the entire team has put into this and to my colleague for his remarks. I think he touched on the very essence of why I had wanted to speak to this and why I know it's important to him, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga—both growing up enjoying the outdoors. These stories we've heard today open a little window into who we are as people, not just as MPPs, and so I appreciate that.

I wanted to zero in on the piece on carbon sequestration and storage. I think this is so important, and I just wanted to allude to some work being done by this government to reduce emissions to drive a more sustainable energy future for Ontario.

Power was absolutely out of control. It was one of the number one things I heard in 2018 at the door: energy rates soaring, people choosing between heating or eating. We stabilized those prices. And where I want to make the connection here—largest-ever energy procurement, building nuclear in communities like mine; I'm so excited at potential new power production. But when I went to the debate in the 2022 election, all members of other parties were against nuclear. Just think of that—how we're going to drive a low-carbon energy future fighting men and women in the nuclear sector. How are we going to have the energy to attract the good, unionized jobs that we're bringing in, the workers who are benefiting from LG, NextStar and Stellantis in Windsor, for example—\$14 million in payroll on a weekly basis? That just wasn't going to happen. The Minister of Economic Development will tell you—what was it, 0% we were scheduled to get on the EV renaissance?

Where I'm going on that is: Once-proud sectors across manufacturing—sectors my grandfather worked in, my dad—Stelco, steel sector, good manufacturing jobs, good, unionized jobs that, driven by ideology, opposition parties were content to see flee this province.

Well today, we're working, through the electrification of the arc furnace at Algoma and Dofasco, to lower emissions—not driving out jobs, but partnering with industry to invest in capital, tools and machinery to drive long-term sustainable growth and drive productivity. As labour minister, I'm proud to work with the Minister of Economic Development. I'm proud to work with my colleague the minister of red tape to ensure we're creating a competitive climate where we're driving these jobs and productivity in this country. We're seeing our productivity decline, so we have to do everything to turn that ship around. We're doing it for those steel workers. But for folks at Stelco, for example, and now Cleveland-Cliffs, I know they were looking at carbon sequestration and storage.

This government is partnering with industry to look at a variety of ways to drive down carbon emissions so that we can ensure a competitive and sustainable future for the workers of this province—men and women who, quite frankly, could care less about the ideological musings we sometimes hear from opposition members when it comes to just putting food on the table for their families; members in the manufacturing sector who could care less about that ideology when they get a pink slip and lose their job because manufacturing fled this province when the Liberals had the opportunity to destroy our manufacturing sector.

Those same bandits made out for Ottawa, where they've now done this to our country, and we've seen what the result of that is. But there is a new day in Ontario—

Interjection.

Hon. David Piccini: Exactly. The member opposite from Parkdale–High Park, she's going to go up there and be a great MP. She's going to take seats from Liberal members, because they're going to have a historic defeat like they did in 2018, because they drove manufacturing jobs out.

When you're in your fancy building in downtown Toronto, you could care less about the reality of the worker who gets up every day to be on the front lines of our automotive sector, who gets up every day on the front lines of our steel sector, who gets up every day to ensure we have the critical minerals in the north to power the electric vehicle renaissance in the south. But what would they rather, Madam Speaker? This is getting to be a good contrast. They would rather drive Teslas and other vehicles that have rebates to their affluent friends before empowering a worker at a mine in the north to work and to take those critical minerals and to drive it to produce an EV at a Unifor plant down in southern Ontario.

Again, I want to go back to productivity and to the work being done here. We recognize, as a government, through modernizing and making investments in Ontario's forestry sector, through pursuing sustainable ways to produce a low-carbon future while driving innovation and driving productivity—innovation and productivity, two concepts lost on Kathleen Wynne's Ontario when she wanted to drive us to a service economy. These are things that matter. They matter to men and women in my community. It matters to workers that I have the privilege of advocating for as Minister of Labour.

1510

Today, I had the opportunity to sit down with men and women of Unite Here in the hospitality workers' sector who recognize that they are less successful when their brothers and sisters on the manufacturing floor are less successful, who recognize that they are less successful when their brothers and sisters on the floors of mines in northern Ontario are less successful. But under this Premier, under this government, we're showing that we can have opportunity in all of these sectors. We can, through a low-tax environment, create the opportunity to drive sustainable investment that ensures a future for men and women in our manufacturing sector, in our labour sector and in our automotive sector. I'm very excited about that future.

I want to shift gears, just in closing, because the debate has been very interesting with respect to another one of nature's best storages, our greenspace. Our natural environment is one of the best sequesters of carbon out there. I want to give a shout-out to Rob Kennedy and the team at Northumberland Land Trust for the work that they're doing to protect our protected areas. I've had the privilege of working with them and Willow Beach Field Naturalists on some exciting work we're hoping to do in Leslieville alongside the O'Neill property—added protections there; added protections in Presqu'île. All of that matters, not just to get out and enjoy nature but to sequester carbon.

I think to the largest protection of boreal wildlands in the north, which we accomplished just last year—working together to make sure that was the largest protection of boreal wildlands in Ontario's history, done under this Premier, under this government. And recognizing that when you work with industry, work with the forestry sector, we can also achieve ambitious goals—not driving those jobs out, because this is really the ideological divide where PC members of this place recognize that working with industry, we can ensure sustainability and leverage capital dollars from industry to drive a more sustainable future without sacrificing jobs.

That's something that this side of the House is laser-focused on. It's something that I know men and women in my community care about, something I'm proud to sit with the member of Kitchener–Conestoga to fight for every day in this place, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll go to questions.

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to both presenters, and I respect them both. I listened so intently—the member from Kitchener–Conestoga almost entered into debate about where northern Ontario actually starts.

Obviously, he has a long history in North Bay and he said that some would see that as the gateway to northern Ontario. I don't dispute that, but as the member knows, it is an issue of dispute, particularly in Muskoka, Huntsville. They have more snow than a lot of northern Ontario.

So could the member expound, where does he think the real boundary of northern Ontario—where does northern Ontario start?

Hon. Mike Harris: I know what the member is trying to do here, but I will say, personally—just to be very clear, I'm not speaking for the government in this case—I would believe that North Bay truly is the gateway to the north.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Haven't you seen the arch?

Hon. Mike Harris: The member from Nipissing I think might back me up on this.

Listen, in all fairness, Madam Speaker, we do have several members from northern Ontario in our caucus. They represent the north very well.

Interjection: The Liberals called it no man's land.

Hon. Mike Harris: There's a lot of people who will remember when the Liberals called northern Ontario no man's land, a wasteland. They drove away jobs; they drove away people from northern Ontario. This government will not do that. We will invest in northern Ontario, and we will make sure that it's prosperous for many years to come.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. John Jordan: I want to thank both of the ministers for their presentations.

Speaker, as we all know, wildland fires take a joint and collective effort to prevent, to mitigate and to extinguish. We have heard that half of the wildland fires that the province responds to are caused by human activity. We also heard that proposed amendments to the Forest Fires

Prevention Act included in this bill, if passed, would enable a greater focus on the prevention and mitigation of such fires.

We already have really good collaboration between municipal government, First Nations, fire departments and provincial staff, and the aviation, forest fire and emergency services are constantly working to improve communication, education and awareness to improve our wildland fire response, and I congratulate them.

I'm wondering if the Minister of Red Tape Reduction could tell me about how this bill, if passed, would help with the prevention and mitigation of wildfires.

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you for the question.

There are a lot of pieces that are laid out in this bill that really focus around emergency management plans. When you have areas that are obviously, certainly, more fire-prone than others—I think we think mostly of north-western Ontario when we talk about that—it's being able to work collaboratively in partnership with municipalities across northwestern Ontario to make sure that they are truly prepared, especially when it comes to evacuations, making sure that they have plans in place to try to mitigate as much damage as possible to their communities; of course, in partnership with our fire rangers and in partnership with our government and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. I think this bill takes a really proactive step to doing that, especially as we're starting to gear up and look at budgets and different things, of course, for the next fire season. We want to make sure that we're going to see that everybody is as prepared as possible.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened to both ministers on the other side, and I'm actually finding this debate quite interesting, particularly since Tawich had a Queen's Park day today and Mushkegowuk Council was here. They spoke of concerns that they're currently seeing in what they've called breathing lands and sequestered carbons that were in that land, and, due to climate change, how that is currently being released. Their point here is to ask us to all work together for the betterment of saving these lands and ensuring that we have environmental protections.

Are the ministers committing today to ensure that we are working together to save those lands in James Bay?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you for the important question.

I don't want to presuppose the work that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is doing today, but I can say just from my past experience that we were engaged on protected areas with Indigenous partners in the north. In fact, it was also a Conservative Premier, my good colleague's father, who protected more land in one single day than any Premier in Ontario's history. And we're continuing to do that, working in partnership with Indigenous nations.

I would just suggest, in closing, that I don't think there's one ubiquitous voice for every single Indigenous nation, something I recognized when I was environment

minister and we worked with Indigenous nations—equity building, for example, in Biigtigong. The mining community there recognized that the health care, social services and economic prosperity this Premier is making with the Ring of Fire, with driving better mining in the north, leads to prosperity for everyone, and we're working hard on that.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, on the proposed Geologic Carbon Storage Act.

We know that carbon storage is good for reducing emissions. We have heard from some of the members opposite that this hasn't been happening long—it has been about 50 years—but it's all about the technology. As we know, technology is always changing; it's evolving, and we are to the point now, over the 50 past years, that we are able to do technology that will help us put this under the ground. This could give us upwards of 4,000 good-paying jobs. My question to the Minister of Labour: What does that mean right here in Ontario?

1520

Hon. David Piccini: I think whenever you're investing in cutting-edge technology and better capital tools, machinery is a good thing. I think our declining productivity—any report you've read, whether it's Dalhousie or a University of Calgary one I just recently read, points to, fundamentally, a divide as compared to our OECD counterparts in terms of investment in tools and machinery, but creating that climate. The reason why companies weren't making those investments is because they were leaving this jurisdiction, under the previous government.

When you create a competitive climate, make those investments, like we're doing in carbon capture and storage, you drive productivity, and you ensure our workforce is well-equipped and well-trained—which is also something we're doing with our Skills Development Fund.

That's an excellent question because it touches on work we're doing to drive innovation, to drive productivity and to ultimately ensure a better future for the workers of this great province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. John Vanthof: Again, it's a very interesting debate today.

I'm going to ask about carbon capture and storage. I had a meeting with Fertilizer Canada—and we import a lot of fertilizer into this country, and why we do that is because we have more stringent regulations regarding carbon pricing as well, and they end up importing fertilizers from other areas that don't have the same regulations. They're very interested in carbon capture and how this works, and so am I.

I just heard the minister say this is cutting-edge technology, and I agree with that.

When you're looking at cutting-edge technology—where has this been used successfully before? There is a

case that you can be ahead of the curve a bit and suffer all the mistakes. So where are we using this—or is this really cutting-edge technology?

Hon. Mike Harris: You're right; it has been a very interesting debate.

I think this sets a framework and kind of lays the ground to be able to start truly making real investments into this. We're not going to turn the corner tomorrow and all of a sudden see the benefits of this. It's incremental. To be able to do some further consultation, to be able to have the legislative pieces to be able to do this going forward—should it be something that we want to get into here in the province—this bill will start to enable that. So I would just say, here in the province of Ontario, we have to start somewhere; we have to lay the framework. It will allow for—

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

We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address the bill today. There are a number of interesting points. I'm going to start with the commentary on fire, and then I'm going to go over to a discussion about geological storage of carbon dioxide.

This morning, the *Globe and Mail* had a very interesting editorial about facing the new reality of urban wildfires. Although I appreciate what's in the bill, I think more planning and thought has to go into dealing with wildfires in regions that historically have been a source of greater concern. The *Globe and Mail* quite correctly points out that, increasingly, you're beginning to see wildfires encroach on urban areas: Halifax in 2023; New York City this past fall—record dryness led to wildfires on the borders of that city. And in 2022, London, England had wildfires in the suburban areas that were only barely contained. There was great fear at the time that if the wind had been blowing in the wrong direction, they would have had a second Great Fire of London.

The whole question of wildfires, as the world gets hotter, is one that is going to move to a discussion not just about areas we traditionally think of with regard to wildfires, but to areas where we have not previously been spending much time thinking about it.

I would say that this act would be a lot better if there was an expansion to address that urban wildfire issue.

Frankly, one thing that doesn't seem to be addressed in the bill is the whole question of resources—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I have to apologize for interrupting the member.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has 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.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Are we directing the debate to adjourn or continue? I don't have a clear answer from the government here.

Interjections.

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you. Debate will continue.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I'll return to the member for Toronto–Danforth to continue debate.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: With regard to fires and to the wildland-urban interface, I think this bill needs modification. I think the *Globe and Mail* is quite correct in their editorial, saying that governments—they were talking about the federal government, but they also talked about provincial governments—need to make investments in municipalities and townships so they can actually carry out the responsibilities that they're required to carry out under this act. Failure to do that puts large numbers of people at risk, puts property at risk, puts the economy at risk. So I appreciate the *Globe and Mail's* intervention on this—useful commentary.

I found it very interesting—listening to the comments of the MPPs from the government earlier and comments made by the minister and the parliamentary assistant about geologic storage and how it would save a lot of money, as compared to paying carbon taxes.

I actually think that our goal as a province should be to assist industry to leave fossil fuels behind. That really is the goal. Whether you have a charge for carbon capture and storage or you have a carbon tax, the real goal is to decarbonize, and if you're not doing that, you're not doing what's necessary.

I have not heard from the government any real prices, which is kind of interesting because the minister and the parliamentary assistant claim very substantial reductions in cost for industry by moving to geological storage. So I took a look at some of the prices.

The federal price on carbon, which is being charged to industry in Ontario, is \$80 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent in 2024. That's projected to rise to \$170 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent in 2030.

If you look at the cost of carbon capture and storage—the International Institute for Sustainable Development actually put out a whole study on what this technology costs. They note that the technology has some intrinsic difficulties in that almost every point of capture is relatively unique, that you have geographic dispersal.

We have gas plants here in Toronto, and for the most part, we're talking about storing the CO₂ in rock formations in southwestern Ontario—so you're talking about building pipelines across the province. You're talking about costs that they estimated ran as much as almost \$300 per tonne for cement plants, and as much as \$250 per tonne for making blue hydrogen; for natural gas power plants, as much as \$250 per tonne; for steel mills, about \$170 per tonne. These were 2021 projections.

What the government is proposing, in fact, is an approach that seems to be an awful lot more expensive than carbon tax. Since, so far, they've not actually referenced any numbers, it would be very useful for them to say what their projection of savings is based on. Are they assuming that the carbon capture and storage is a free service provided to carbon dioxide producers? That's utterly unclear. But if, in fact, you actually are going to require companies, manufacturers, to spend money to

store their carbon, then you're talking about a much higher cost than a carbon tax.

Again, the only utility of a carbon tax is ending the use of carbon-based fuels. If it's not doing that, then it's not doing its job.

It's interesting to me that in the course of looking at this, the International Institute for Sustainable Development had real questions about the commercial viability of carbon capture and storage. I think we are going to have some, because there are areas where we need to actually engage in production. At this point, we don't have the technological ability to eliminate carbon emissions. We will have some, but to think that this is going to be a major industry at these costs—I simply don't see it.

1530

I noticed one of the proponents of all of this is Enbridge. Enbridge is very interested in making hydrogen out of natural gas. They see it as the future, as a way of saying, "We're clean now. Don't worry." I think there are two things to say about that—actually, there are more than two, but I'll focus on two. One is, there are ongoing problems of leakage of methane when you use natural gas to make hydrogen, so in fact it's not as clean as is claimed. That is a substantial problem, especially in a world that's getting hotter and hotter. Secondly, the cost of the hydrogen made from natural gas is twice the cost of natural gas. So tell me where the advantage is to Ontario if, in fact, we're deciding that we're going to spend, or charge, upwards of \$200 per tonne for storage of carbon dioxide. Where's the advantage to our economy? I don't see it. We may have to do it in some very narrow circumstances, but I don't see that.

There's no doubt that as we make the transition from a carbon-based economy to a renewable economy, there will be generation of thousands of jobs; that's the nature of technological revolutions. If you look at the transition from horse-drawn transportation to gasoline-fired automobiles, there was a gigantic increase in our economy, a huge change. Toronto and other cities in North America were surrounded by oat farms. The oats were growing the fuel that kept transportation going. We changed that quite radically.

As we move away from carbon-based fuels, we will change our economy and open up huge opportunities for us, because we aren't particularly oil and gas producers here in Ontario. We spend between \$14 billion and \$20 billion a year importing oil and gas. That's money that flows out of our economy. To the extent that we actually keep energy production within Ontario, then frankly we have a huge economic advantage.

The reality, as well, is that as the world gets hotter and hotter, and as there are more and more crises, the political push to move away from fossil fuels is going to become greater. If we here in Ontario aren't doing that, then very substantial players on the international economic scene are going to say they don't particularly want our goods.

The European Union is setting up a system of carbon-based tariffs so they keep out goods that are not made with attention to reducing carbon content. They're smart to do

that because within their own market they're expending money to make that transformation. They don't want industry to just move out of Europe. They want to protect their own industry while they're going through that cost of transformation.

So if we aren't prepared to make that transformation, we're going to have difficulty getting into those markets.

It's interesting to me that part of this whole process is using carbon dioxide to inject into rock formations to get out more oil and gas. It's a very strange thing for this government to be doing, because I listen to the Minister of Energy, who is talking about spending in the range of \$400 billion over the next few decades to dramatically increase generation of electricity in Ontario—effectively replacing the burning of gasoline in cars, trucks, buses; replacing the use of natural gas for home heating, heating of commercial buildings—and at the same time saying we need to spend money to increase oil and gas production.

I think the people involved in the oil and gas industry should be looking at the minister and saying, "Okay, you want to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to essentially eliminate burning these fuels. You're saying you're preserving our industry by saying, 'We can put oil and gas, carbon dioxide, into rock formations.' Minister, which side are you actually on? Which side are you actually on?"

This is an industry, in oil and gas, where this government has said a number of times, "By 2050, we'll be net zero." Well, that's 25 years—not that long in terms of the life of an economy. If this government is serious about that, then I have to ask, why are they putting a lot of money into carbon capture and storage, especially when we're talking in the range of \$150, \$200, \$300 per tonne to capture and store that carbon?

This is a government, Speaker, that is talking about net zero but, as far as I can detect, does not have a viable climate plan. When you actually look at what they've put forward, big items around reducing emissions from cars—I expect that electric cars will take over in the next few decades, but the plan that's actually in place is largely irrelevant in terms of that transformation. People should take a look at it. The emission of methane from landfills—that's a very, very big project, and as far as I can detect, no real investment in what it would take to get rid of that methane. So I don't see this government's plan, as it is written, actually delivering the 30% reduction that they claim they're aiming for in 2030.

But I should also note that emissions since the peak of the pandemic have continued to grow, so that, in fact, this government is ignoring its own climate plan. When you look at the framework for energy planning that came forward with Bill 214, there was no consideration and planning to actually have the energy plan align with the climate plan. I would say that their energy plan is far more aligned with the interests of natural gas industry than it is with any climate consideration on the part of the government. I don't see any difference there.

One of the realities about the cost of energy to people is that, increasingly, people will use less natural gas, and part of that simply is that it's a lot cheaper to heat your home with a heat pump. People can save about a thousand

bucks a year when you factor in the cost of capital over the lifetime of those investments. That's worthwhile, and yet this government is not actually looking at the impact of people leaving the natural gas system and what that will mean for those customers who remain.

In Europe right now, as more and more people are leaving natural gas behind, what they're seeing very clearly is the price per household for heating is going up very steadily, because a smaller and smaller group of people are paying for those tens and, I imagine, hundreds of thousands of kilometres of piping in the ground. And that's what we're looking at here in Ontario.

If, in fact, the government was interested in affordable energy for people, they would not have overturned the Ontario Energy Board decision to say, "If you're putting new pipe in the ground, Enbridge, that's your expense. That's the expense of your investors. That's not something you can dump on customers in Ontario." But, as you're well aware, Speaker, that isn't what happened. The investors were protected, and consumers are going to be left holding the bag.

So when the government says that they're really concerned about carbon capture and storage, let's face it: They're not going to put a pipe on every household and capture the emissions of gas from the household and take it down to Leamington and put it underground. The cost would be astounding. The use of geologic storage will be very limited, because it's not economically viable. It will be used for critical functions, and to pretend that it will be a major job creator and a cost saver is divorced from reality, which is part of the reason I'm very interested in seeing what their numbers are.

If they think that you can spend \$200 or \$300 per tonne storing carbon underground and it's going to be cheaper than the carbon tax, then show me the numbers. Is it because you're saying that we will now be providing billions of dollars of subsidy per year for companies to store that carbon, as opposed to providing financing for companies to transition away from fossil fuels? That would make sense. That would make us competitive on an energy basis for the years to come.

1540

The questions that arrive with this bill are ones that I think actually need to be settled or explored in committee hearings. Let's see those numbers. Let's hear from those who think they're going to benefit from geologic storage. Let's find out from those who have built pipelines what it's going to cost to run a pipeline from Kingston down to—and I'll pick Leamington, Chatham-Kent, Essex, a lot of beautiful places down along Lake Erie. How much are the pipelines going to cost to actually do what the government says they're going to be able to do? If the government really wants to protect industry and allow it to grow in Ontario, it will make the investments in the transition so that industries are not using old technology, so that they're using the newest technologies that actually are sustainable and far more cost-effective.

Speaker, I think I've made the argument I want to make. I appreciate that you let me go overtime. Thank you. And I cede the floor back to you.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions for the member.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member gave an eloquent presentation today and it raised in my mind a question about the carbon tax. The function of the carbon tax is supposed to alter human behaviour through price adjustment and make it less attractive to consume carbon-based fuels and more attractive for people to shift away from those fuels—at least that's what I understand the theory to be. But it seems to me that the theory breaks down because it is not going to be successful in doing that, or if it does become successful in doing that, the consequence of doing that is to create economic pinch or pain on the consumer. That's what I understand the theory and its consequences to be.

I invite the member to comment on that in any way he sees fit.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question, because it's a substantial question. Carbon taxes or market-based carbon pricing actually came out of the Bush government in the 1980s in the United States. They were looking at how you deal with acid rain and what came out of the Republicans was, "Charge people. Use market mechanisms to do this." And it seems to have been generally accepted that market mechanisms work.

I actually think it's far better to regulate and invest, but I recognize where most people's thinking is at. If, in fact, you look at the history of the European Union, carbon pricing on industry has driven change. I don't think there's any question about it.

But as you may be aware, our party has called for cap-and-trade, with a greater focus on industry rather than individual consumers, who have less financial resources to make the changes necessary and less analytical time to say, "Okay, how do all these things work?" There, I think it makes far more sense to invest heavily, but cap-and-trade is the system we think where you can use pricing for carbon that will drive technological change.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I really appreciate the member's comments today, and especially around this carbon capture. I'm looking at the Bloomberg newspaper here and they're saying that, "Carbon capture utilization and storage is one of the oil industry's favourite decarbonization tools because it professes to continue the use of fossil fuels while removing their emissions. But it's expensive," and it hasn't been proven and it may just be a ruse for oil industries to be able to continue pumping out fossil fuels.

Is this a worthwhile investment for the taxpayers of Ontario to be investing our tax dollars into carbon capture?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question. I don't think taxpayers should be paying for this. I think that companies that want to deal with their carbon emissions—so that they can trade internationally, so they can comply with laws—should be paying for it entirely. I don't think

we should be subsidizing this. It's their expense; they should be paying for it. If they think that it's cheaper to pay 200 bucks a tonne to store the carbon underground, than it is to pay the current price of \$80 per tonne for the carbon tax—well, who am I to be their accountant? I would just say to the member—and I think Bloomberg actually has done a pretty good analysis there—the critical thing for us is ensuring that investment happens, so that we are phasing out the use of fossil fuels so we can stabilize our climate and avoid the kind of wildfires, urban and otherwise, that are increasingly putting lives and property at risk.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member, thank you very much for your comments today.

I want to speak to the Surveyors Act specifically. As you may be aware, there's a high demand for surveying right now in our province, and that's driven by the building that this government is doing—building all kinds of infrastructure.

Now, there's a challenge: We need more of these surveyors. So one of the things that this proposed legislation is detailing here is to have an opportunity to renew, and modernize how, some of the most important services our province is delivering. When it comes to surveyors, specifically, it's looking at a licence that would be accessible to surveyors with limited Canadian experience or who are recognized in other jurisdictions.

My question to the member opposite would be: Will you support the proposals in this bill so that we can attract more of these surveyors to the profession in order to support their key role in helping us make sure that we're building safe and affordable homes right here in Ontario?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question from the member and I have no objection to having more surveyors here in Ontario. In fact, my nephew-in-law in Alberta is a surveyor—seems a decent guy. This is a nice place, Ontario; maybe someday he will move here. But, unfortunately, my focus on this bill has been on the fire and the geologic storage of carbon.

I didn't look at that very closely, so I don't think I can give you a really useful answer.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to compliment and congratulate the member for his incredible knowledge on the energy file in his speech today.

Energy poverty is a real thing. Under the inflation, the affordability crisis that we're facing, people are really struggling. We have the energy support program for those who use electricity but, of course, as we transition over to cleaner fuels there are people across the province that use alternate and other ways to heat their homes, and right now they're struggling.

Can the member speak to the need to combat and do everything we can to safeguard against energy poverty here in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member for both his kind words and his question.

We already have supports for people who heat their homes with electricity, who are in poverty and find that the cost of keeping themselves safe and warm through the winter is beyond what they can afford. So it makes complete sense to me that we would extend a program to people who use propane or natural gas—non-regulated fuels—to ensure that their lives are protected, that they have a stability in the coldest months of the year that is afforded to electricity consumers. And I'm very glad that the member has taken the initiative along with my colleague from St. Catharines to bring forward a bill to do exactly what he's talking about: making sure that energy poverty is something of the past.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Another question?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for his comments, and as he said, he touched on two areas: the wildfire and carbon capture elements of this bill. I guess I wanted to ask the member on both those subjects—on the Forest Fires Prevention Act, because we heard from the associate minister earlier that this is an update on an act that hasn't been done for decades, a long time, and is really needed. Does the member see this as a step forward on that path to helping to address wildfires?

And on the carbon capture: The environmental challenge we all face is a major one, and there's no one single answer. Isn't this part of a comprehensive solution that will ultimately get us to the place we need to get on the environment and are those measures that could see the member supporting this bill?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you—good questions, both of them.

In terms of wildfires, I would like to see an expansion of the bill to take in this whole question of urban connected wildfires, because I think, unfortunately, increasingly, that's going to be a problem for us. If New York City has been dealing with it, if London, England has had to deal with it, if Halifax had to deal with it, at some point, Stratford, Markham and Toronto are going to have to deal with it, so let's prepare now.

1550

I think the bill needs to go a further step, and I also agree with the Globe and Mail: There needs to be investment in resources. Small municipalities, rural municipalities already pressed very hard to maintain the services they have, should be getting support from the province to ensure they have an adequate plan.

I agree with you that there's no single answer when it comes to taking on climate change, but I also know there are some solutions that will play a small role, and some that will play a big role. Carbon capture and storage, when you look at the economics of it, is always going to be a pretty small niche item. If you're actually using it to expand oil and gas production in Ontario when, frankly, we're moving away from oil and gas use, it doesn't make sense to me economically, and I don't know why the government is saying we need to put hundreds of billions

into electricity generation as we move away from oil and gas, and saying we need to put billions into having more oil and gas production. Pick one.

You're right. It's going to be multiple, but some will be more important than others.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): At this time, we're going to move to further debate. Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Smith, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved second reading of 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.

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

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.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I believe that if you seek it, you will have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6? Very good.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

AFFORDABLE HOME HEATING ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE ABORDABLE

Mr. Rakocevic moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to enact the Affordable Home Heating Act, 2024 and amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 213, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur le chauffage domestique abordable et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member now has 12 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to rise today to debate the second reading of Bill 213, the Affordable Home Heating Act. I want to thank the bill's co-sponsors, the member from St. Catharines, the member from Toronto–Danforth and the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Times are tough right now for many, especially our seniors, who are living on a fixed income. When it comes to heating their homes, many are deciding to switch off their furnaces or run their homes very cold because they can't afford to keep warm.

According to a report by the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, 20% of households in Canada experi-

ence energy poverty, and Ontario has the highest number of energy-poor households with approximately 1.1 million households struggling to pay their energy bills.

These households are spending more than 10% of their income on energy bills and are having to make tough decisions about what they spend their money on. As you know, during the holidays, home heating bills tend to rise, adding extra financial strain on already stretched budgets. I believe that heating your home should never be considered a luxury.

Last winter, my office was inundated with calls from seniors and families who were struggling financially to keep up with their heating bills. Many were shocked to see their bills double, sometimes even triple, compared to the previous year.

While the LEAP program provides assistance for those in arrears and facing the threat of disconnection, there is no proactive or ongoing support for those who choose to heat their homes with gas, propane, oil or wood. You shouldn't have to wait for things to get terribly bad to get help. This underscores the urgent need for more comprehensive support to prevent energy poverty, like the kind proposed in our bill.

I've worked with community organizations and asked what they thought of the bill. The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly is a community-based legal clinic dedicated to helping low-income seniors since 1984. They not only provide direct legal services but also work on systemic issues affecting older adults and engage in law reform to improve the lives of seniors. The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly reviewed the bill and offered these words of support: “The proposed bill offers much-needed relief for seniors on fixed incomes who are struggling to keep up with the rising costs of living in Ontario.”

As I mentioned, throughout the winter months, my office regularly hears from seniors struggling to pay their heating bills. I'd like to share a few stories now from what they've experienced. Take Rosa and her husband, for example. They're trying to survive by living off a single, meagre pension and having trouble keeping up with energy costs for their home. When they reached out for help, I was able to help them apply for the electricity support program, but they were disappointed to learn that the same kind of program doesn't exist for gas customers.

Another senior similarly contacted our office when she received an unexpected \$450 gas bill—a 50% increase from last year. When she called her gas company to ask if there was an error, they simply shrugged and told her that the price of gas went up and there was nothing that could be done about it.

Faced with this reality, many seniors are choosing to switch off their furnaces or run them low. That's what Tripti and her husband told me they have to do. Both are seniors who found themselves unable to pay their bill when it rose last winter. As a result, they told me they have no choice but to lower the heat so much that their home can only be described as “so cold at night.”

Dr. Gabriella Colussi Arthur and Dr. Richard Arthur have this to say on behalf of a relative, who they call a super senior at the age of 94: “We wish to express our

unqualified support for this proposal since Mrs. Colussi still lives in her own home (with the supervision of a full-time caregiver) and all efforts to reduce her house expenses are indispensable.

“In recent years, as noted by LIEN and similar groups, house gas prices have significantly increased, and this expense contributes to eroding my mother’s modest income.

“All efforts to ensure that seniors should remain in their own homes (rather than moving to other living alternatives) are essential.

“As the population continues to age, this affordability measure is ever more precious.”

Finally, there’s Josie, who can’t afford to retire because her pension won’t be enough to cover her living expenses. She loves her neighbourhood, but she is considering moving because she just can’t afford to live here any longer. Josie is trying hard to stay afloat. She’s doing her best, she watches her spending and despite keeping her thermostat set to low, she still receives high monthly bills for just herself and her husband.

These stories are common among seniors and those with low incomes in my community. Seniors are keeping their thermostats low or off during the coldest months of the year, terrified of the bill they might receive. The only relief available currently for gas customers and those who heat with alternative fuel is if you’ve already stopped paying your bills entirely and are in such arrears that you’re facing the threat of disconnection. Why does it have to get to that point? These seniors tell me they want to pay their bills. They don’t want it to get to that point.

Here’s what happens next: They begin to cut expenses in other areas. Some will reduce the amount of food they buy, and many will turn to food banks. Some will become less social, skipping out on trips and meet-ups with friends for coffee, embarrassed because it’s so hard to make ends meet. Speaker, our seniors deserve better. Our parents and grandparents deserve better.

As Brendan Haley, senior director of policy at Efficiency Canada, Carleton University, puts it: “Expanding bill assistance to natural gas and those who heat with expensive oil or propane will help create a universal social safety net against energy poverty. In addition, this policy will help identify the homes who could benefit the most from energy efficiency upgrades—providing a durable energy affordability solution.”

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I know many people want to go clean, but this is a necessary intermediary measure to support people as they make the transition. It’s about making sure that people aren’t having to choose between heating their homes and buying groceries. This bill isn’t just about gas users either. It’s about establishing a program to assist those who heat their homes with other fuels, like propane, oil and wood. In many rural Ontario communities, these fuels are their only option. This bill is about filling in the gaps in the current support program we have in Ontario, by extending the financial support available to include those who heat their homes with gas, propane, oil and wood. The programs exist for electricity users. Let’s do the right thing

and extend it to those who have no choice but to heat their homes with gas or other heating fuels.

I’d like to give the last word to LIEN, the Low-Income Energy Network, and I’d like to thank them for their advocacy in safeguarding Ontarians against energy poverty.

“LIEN has been concerned about the Enbridge gas rate hikes over the past few years and the impact this has had on vulnerable consumers, including seniors, the working poor, people on social assistance and northern Ontarians. Home heating costs have more than doubled for some this winter, causing households struggling with energy poverty to make the difficult choice between heating and eating.

“In March 2023, LIEN and CELA published *Pathway Out of Energy Poverty in Northern Ontario*, a report assessing energy affordability programs available to low-income people in northern Ontario. One of our main findings was that ongoing monthly assistance is crucial for low-income people struggling to pay their utilities bills and that utilities costs are particularly high in northern Ontario. We made 18 recommendations to improve the energy affordability programs for low-income people in the region, with a” high “priority placed on ongoing assistance programs.

“LIEN was formed in March 2004 to raise awareness of the impact of rising energy costs on low-income consumers and to work with policy-makers and the utility sector to keep these vulnerable consumers connected to their essential energy services. LIEN is a joint program of the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario.

“LIEN’s focus is on putting effective solutions to energy poverty in place, drawing on our expertise in energy policy and knowledge of Ontario’s complex energy system. Over the years, LIEN was instrumental in the development and implementation of the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) and the suite of low-income energy efficiency programs that currently exist for gas and electricity customers.

In 2023, the OESP, a proactive on-bill support” system, “helped 229,272 low-income households a month with almost \$156,660,961 in monthly on-bill credits over the year. Ongoing affordability programs such as the OESP reduce the demand on emergency financial programs such as LEAP.

“Natural gas prices have risen dramatically in the last five years. These very dramatic rate increases, coupled with inflation, are having an adverse impact on vulnerable consumers, including seniors, the working poor, people on social assistance, rural communities and northern Ontarians. High heating costs are causing households struggling with energy poverty to make impossible choices between heating bills and other essentials, like food. Unfortunately for these consumers, the OESP is not available to people relying on natural gas.

“In order to address high natural gas prices, we are recommending that an on-bill credit program, similar to the OESP program available for electricity users, be

created for natural gas users. A proactive program that provides ongoing affordability would reduce the need and reliance on emergency assistance funds. Rate affordability program for unregulated fuel types low-income rural Ontarians, many of whom heat their homes with oil, propane or wood, would also greatly benefit from a monthly assistance program and are not well served by Ontario's energy affordability programs.

"The Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) is a very valuable program administered by municipalities to assist low-income people facing homelessness and it is used by some municipalities to assist with payment of unregulated utilities bills. However, the program does not require that such assistance always be made available, and it is only available when households are already facing a crisis of being unable to pay for utilities. The Ontario Energy Board does not regulate oil, propane or wood. It is therefore necessary to create a new provincial program for ongoing support for low-income people relying on oil, propane and wood to heat their homes.

"In light of the steep increase in gas prices, we urge the Minister of Energy and Electrification to issue a directive to the Ontario Energy Board to implement an on-bill assistance program for Ontario's low-income gas customers, similar to the OESP. We also strongly recommend that the HPP be expanded to ensure that all eligible low-income people across the province using non-regulated fuels have access to emergency assistance for utilities bills. A new provincial ongoing monthly assistance program is needed for low-income people relying on oil, propane and wood."

Speaker, there you have it. Seniors and low-income families are struggling to stay warm. Financial support is there for those who heat their homes with electricity, but why not those who have to heat their homes with gas and other fuels? Let's help them stay warm this winter too. Do the right thing: Let's pass this bill and make it into law.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy and Electrification, I appreciate the opportunity to rise here this afternoon to speak on Bill 213, the Affordable Home Heating Act, which was introduced by the member from St. Catharines in October and co-sponsored by the members from Toronto–Danforth, Mushkegowuk–James Bay and my friend from Humber River–Black Creek. Again, I appreciate that my friends on the other side have a passion for this issue.

On this side of the chamber, we also recognize the importance of affordable energy, including affordable home heating. That's why one day after the opposition introduced Bill 213, the Minister of Energy and Electrification introduced Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, which establishes Ontario's first long-term integrated energy plan. Speaker, this plan will consider all energy sources, including natural gas, electricity and other alternative fuels. Unlike the previous Liberal government, which signed thousands of contracts based on ideology, not affordability, and drove many families and seniors into

energy poverty, we're moving forward with a clear focus on making all energy affordable for Ontarians, including energy for home heating.

We know that over 70% of homes across Ontario are heated with natural gas, but many families still rely on other, more expensive fuels including propane and home heating oil. To help families and business in rural Ontario move away from these higher-cost and higher-emission fuels, we're providing support through the natural gas expansion program. To make home heating more affordable, we're also providing support through programs like the Clean Home Heating Initiative, and the Energy Affordability Program and the HomeEnergySaver Program, which helps families add an electric heat pump to their existing heating system.

But we recognize that under the previous mandate of the IESO, they were limited to their ability to deliver broader-based energy-efficiency programs for consumers who use natural gas or other fuels for home heating. Moving forward, Bill 214 will expand on the mandate of the IESO to allow them to help more consumers save money on their home heating. I look forward to future announcements on this in the next few months.

Speaker, Bill 213 would require the Minister of Energy to develop a strategy for alternative home heating fuel, including a plan for rate assistance for eligible low-income consumers. But, as I said, we already have a plan and we're working every day to make energy more affordable for home heating and everything else.

Respectfully, instead of debating another redundant bill, the opposition should have supported Bill 214. I do want to give the NDP credit, though, for supporting motion 70, which called on the Trudeau government to eliminate the carbon tax on all home heating fuels not just home heating oil, which is mainly used in Liberal ridings in Atlantic Canada.

In closing, while I will not support Bill 213, I want to reassure my friends on the other side that our government will never stop working to ensure that Ontario families have access to affordable home heating now and in the future.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Good afternoon to everyone.

I want to take you back two winters ago, when a flood of constituents walked into my constituency office confused—they were worried and they were scared for their financial future. It started with a gentleman who was a senior on a fixed income, living off of CPP, OAS and Trillium benefit. He was already stretched thin month to month, and then he was hit with an Enbridge bill that was almost double the cost from the previous months and previous years. After looking into it, it was confirmed that there had been numerous rate hikes in recent months. He was sad. He began to cry.

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That wasn't a one-time thing. It wasn't a mistake that Enbridge had made on his bill, and it wasn't something that could be "fixed" in the moment. It required someone

to take strategic action, and it took looking at existing programs to inspire a new, simple assistance plan that can, and will, make a real difference in affordability for everyday Ontarians.

Bill 213, Affordable Heating Act, is a practical, non-sense solution to helping our most vulnerable across Ontario. Seniors, individuals living with disabilities and low-income households are disproportionately impacted because they do not have the financial flexibility to absorb these rising costs.

The cost of heating our homes is rising. As we approach the harsh winter months, it is crucial that we call it what it is: definitely price gouging. A single senior in a small home or apartment is paying well over \$100 a month on their Enbridge bills. Acknowledging the immense financial burden this places on households across our province, particularly those who can least afford it, is the first step.

For many residents, opening a heating bill in the dead of the winter brings more than just a chill from the outside air. It brings anxiety. It brings uncertainty. It brings thoughts of, “How am I going to afford to pay this bill and also afford the groceries I need?” What we are seeing happening as a result is families and seniors being forced into a situation where they are always behind on their bills, constantly playing catch-up month after month. We are seeing double the amount of residents at our local food banks as well.

Over the past two years, heating costs have risen sharply, leaving countless Ontarians struggling to make ends meet. Being able to heat your home in the dead of our winters is not a luxury, but a basic human right, Speaker. Instead, I’m hearing from seniors in my riding that they have to take breaks. They turn their furnace completely off for periods of time, and then, simply, to offset the cost, they have to keep it off for a long period of time, longer than usual, and they cannot afford to turn it back on sometimes. So they’re actually using their ovens to heat up their homes because they catch a break on the electricity bill.

We are facing an affordability crisis, and residents cannot afford to wait any longer to address it. All of us here in this House know this kind of approach can work because we have the OESP program that operates the same way in assisting residents with their electricity bills. It’s a simple, simple solution. It offers Ontarians a much-needed lifeline during tough times, and extending this practice to our everyday heating bills is simply a logical solution. Bill 213 can and will assist residents, each and every one of our residents, in our communities.

Speaker, all of us in this House, let’s make the right decision. Let’s make the moral decision and ensure that the Affordable Home Heating Act is passed immediately. Let’s look after the more vulnerable people within Ontario. Let’s make sure they can keep the heat on, and let’s make sure that they’re not living month to month, bill to bill.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good afternoon, everyone, and Madam Speaker. It’s always a pleasure to speak in this House and represent the beautiful riding of Beaches–East York. I’m happy to speak on my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek’s private member’s bill tonight, Bill 213, Affordable Home Heating Act.

Families in Ontario are struggling. We know that. I was surprised that that was the number one issue I heard at the door when I was door-knocking in 2022—affordability. It’s hard to make ends meet. We know that. As MPPs, one of our top priorities should be working together to make life more affordable for everyone and making it a little easier to get by.

This Affordable Home Heating Act would establish a heating support program that would offer on-bill relief for eligible households who heat with natural gas, similar to the Ontario Electricity Support Program, OESP. It would also enable an assistance program for low-income consumers of non-regulated fuels.

I think it’s important that we meet people where they’re at. While I would love to move everyone towards a completely clean and green energy grid, we also need to support the people who can’t afford to make that transition right now. But we need to be making that transition—so that’s a note for the government. It’s not cheap to switch from gas to something like a heat pump, for instance—

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Would the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore care to contribute to my speech tonight? Correct me if I’m wrong, but you just had the floor.

Anyway, sorry for the interruption, Ontario.

Unfortunately, the government has no interest in expanding these rebates that were available for Ontarians who did want to invest in this change.

I think working to make technology like heat pumps more accessible to more homes will help make a difference in our efforts to clean up the grid and also, in the end, be more affordable. Also, if you know about heat pumps—I remember our former Minister of Energy had a heat pump—you would know that that also adds a huge amount of comfort to your home by regulating the heat, so one room isn’t as cold as the other room.

We know that we should be investing in renewables. Unfortunately, this government ripped up a whole whack of renewable contracts when they first got in. I think they’re regretting that a bit now, and we are behind the eight ball by six long years on that. We should be investing in renewables but also doing a huge educational blitz on conservation, because we know that the cheapest, easiest and most immediate, effective way of reducing our greenhouse gases and lowering the cost of bills for people is with conservation. So we should be doing some sort of jazzy, fun campaign on that, I would challenge the government.

All of this is why the Ontario Liberals have committed to cutting taxes on home heating. I think this is a simple, common-sense approach that will help make this essential expense a bit more affordable, with a lasting effect on

families and seniors, rather than a one-time \$200 cheque, because our way helps everyone and it's sustainable.

There are solutions to creating a more affordable Ontario and ensuring that we have a positive impact on our climate. We have to get back to the basics and get them right and make essential expenses like home heating more affordable for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

I'm happy to support Bill 213.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Good afternoon. I rise today to voice my opposition against Bill 213, the Affordable Home Heating Act.

Now, just two days ago, the opposition had the ability to vote to a bill that did the same thing. They could have voted for Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, now law, that will keep home heating affordable in this province—but not just home heating; all energy affordable.

Speaker, do you know what they did instead? They voted against it. How can the NDP say that they are for affordability when they had the chance to vote for affordability just two days ago, but instead they voted against it? But more importantly, the NDP have repeatedly called to phase out natural gas, yet ironically they are hypocritically calling for a subsidy for home heating.

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Speaker, it was just a couple of weeks ago in the House that the member of Toronto–Danforth stood in this House and said, “So I have to ask: ... why did we pass a bill to protect Enbridge’s plans to expand the gas system? On the one hand, we are saying we’re going to electrify everything; on the other, we’re saying we’re going to increase the number of houses that use gas.”

Well, today, I want to ask that same member, who co-sponsored this bill, why are you against affordability? On the one hand, you’re saying, “Close all the natural gas plants.” On the other hand, you’re saying, “Wait, let’s subsidize natural gas.” I can answer that question for you. It’s because, through you, Speaker, the NDP is not for affordability; in fact, they’re solely focused on ideology. They will say one thing, yet do another.

Yes, Speaker, we proudly introduced Bill 165, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, an act that protects future homebuyers from increased costs and to keep shovels in the ground for critical infrastructure projects. It was this legislation that reversed a decision made by the Ontario Energy Board that required residential customers and small businesses to pay 100% of costs of new natural gas connections, something that would have been previously paid out over 40 years.

And while the opposition will complain about it because this legislation reversed an ill-informed decision made by the OEB, the truth of the matter is the opposition does not want families to save money. They are okay with skyrocketing rates and unaffordable bills on low-income families. They would rather have families choose between heating and eating as 70% of Ontario’s households rely on natural gas to heat their homes. This decision alone would have significantly increased the cost of building new

homes across Ontario during a time when home purchasing remains at an all-time high. It’s why the opposition continues to support the unnecessary carbon tax, a tax Ontarians just don’t need and they cannot afford.

So, no, Speaker, we will not support this bill because the truth is when the opposition had the chance to support affordability, they voted against it every single time, and that says enough, full stop.

This government, under the leadership of Premier Ford and our Minister of Energy and Electrification, is keeping bills affordable and providing relief for families and businesses across Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank my colleagues from Humber River–Black Creek and St. Catharines for actually showing leadership to bring forward this bill. The simple reality is, not just in their ridings and my riding, but in ridings across Ontario, people are very stretched with the bills that they have to pay for, and I would say particularly in parts of rural Ontario where incomes have not been rising sharply, but where people are using propane and oil and, in some cases, natural gas. They are facing very tough times.

So it makes sense to look at the people who are most disadvantaged, who have the most difficult time keeping the heat on in the middle of winter, and giving them assistance. I haven’t heard the parliamentary assistant say that we should withdraw the subsidy for low-income hydro users. This is simply consistent with making sure that anyone who has to deal with a heating bill gets support from this government.

I have to say, the parliamentary assistant does have a sense of humour that I had missed earlier. She talked about the Affordable Energy Act and how it was the choice if you wanted to have affordable energy. But I read the act a number of times, and at no point was the minister required to take into account affordability when they made a decision about how to plan our forward energy future—at no point. The minister could consider affordability, but wasn’t required to consider affordability. In fact, that act didn’t touch on anything that has been brought forward in this act today. It provided no mechanism for support of people who are having difficulty with high oil, gas, propane bills—not for one moment. So I just want to be clear about that.

Read the bill again. If you find a section in that bill consistent with what has been put forward here, I’ll be very interested to hear it. If you find a section in that bill that requires the Minister of Energy to consider affordability and build it into their plan, bring it forward. Because I read the bill a few times—may consider affordability, not required to consider affordability; totally optional, totally optional.

So, interestingly, the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore was talking about natural gas and its affordability. I want to say a few things: We in Ontario import our natural gas from Pennsylvania—60%—so we are dependent on the price in the United States. Increasingly, in the United

States, they are building liquified natural gas export terminals because they want to get the world price for gas. So we are going to be on that ride as that price goes up. The price is not going to be set in North America; it's going to be set globally. That's what happened a few years ago. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia changed world natural gas markets.

So what you're saying here is, "We don't mind if some foreign set of hands determines what our heating bill is going to be; we think it's going to be okay." Obviously, it's not okay, and many members in this chamber can speak to the fact that it's not okay for their constituents. That's one thing.

The second is that what has been happening globally—in Europe, and increasingly is happening in North America; you're seeing it more in the northeastern United States—is that people are moving away from natural gas. There are cheaper technologies. Heat pumps increasingly are undercutting the cost of heating from natural gas.

The reality with the bill that the government brought forward on natural gas, the protection of Enbridge act, means that those who remain on natural gas will be stuck with the higher costs of the infrastructure as customers leave. That is happening in Europe today, and they are having serious discussions about how do you protect the remaining natural gas customers who are paying for an infrastructure that used to serve many more million people. So, we here in Ontario, with Bill 165, made sure that anyone who is a natural gas customer in the next decade is going to be stuck holding the bag, while the investors whistle and dance all the way to the bank.

It was interesting to me, again, that the parliamentary assistant was talking about how, I can say, we should be phasing out natural gas and calling for a subsidy. I want to make this very clear: We need to move away from fossil fuels if we're going to have a stable society, if we're going to have an economy, if we're going to protect peoples' lives and property.

That doesn't mean that you say to people who are having a hard time today putting food on the table or keeping the house warm enough so that they're healthy: "Hey, forget about you." We don't say that. We should be saying, and my colleagues have said it very well on this bill, "We are going to make sure that everyone has at least a base that they can operate from so they are not cold in the winter."

They need more than just this, no doubt about it. They need investment in energy efficiency. They need help transferring out of those fossil fuels to lower-cost heat pumps. But that is where we're headed.

The member was saying, "Well, you're not supporting this whole Enbridge system of putting natural gas in new houses." Well, I don't support putting coal scuttles in either; I don't support putting in hand-pumped water in houses either. I know where the technology is going; I know where the world is going. I don't suggest that you invest heavily in technologies whose days are now numbered. But I do suggest, strongly, that we invest in the

people of Ontario who need support so they can keep healthy for winters that are still cold.

1630

Again, I want to thank my colleagues for their initiative. They deserve a lot of credit.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: I rise today to speak to the private member's bill, Bill 213, the Affordable Home Heating Act. While I appreciate the member opposite's position, I will not be supporting this bill for the following reasons:

First off, Speaker, just two days ago, this House voted on Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, and, surprisingly, it was the NDP who voted against the bill—a bill that has now already been signed into law. The Affordable Energy Act's sole purpose is to singularly keep energy affordable in the province of Ontario.

A couple of months ago, the province's system operator forecasted that Ontario's electricity consumption will increase by 75% in the next 25 years. That's equivalent to adding four and a half cities to the grid. It's the reason why this government introduced and passed the Affordable Energy Act into law—a plan to create Ontario's first long-term integrated energy plan, a plan to integrate all energy sources.

We are a technology-agnostic government. While we work to expand net new energy generation to further power our growth, we will ensure it is affordable. It doesn't matter whether you use natural gas or heating oil or electricity, your energy needs to be affordable. And when you look at the history of this province, that wasn't always the case. Under the previous Liberals, propped up by the NDP, energy skyrocketed in this province. When the NDP voted for the Green Energy Act in 2009, we saw energy bills skyrocket by 300%. Families were paying \$1,000 more a year. Our energy was being sold to neighbouring jurisdictions for a billion-dollar loss a year. How can the NDP say they support affordability when their track record shows everything but that?

Speaker, the Affordable Energy Act will ensure all energy sources are affordable for the people of this province. It's the exact reason why this government introduced it. We are making energy-efficiency programs available for all families and businesses and putting more money back into the pockets of Ontarians. It's why we even expanded the natural gas expansion program, a program that helps connect northern and rural communities, because we know two thirds of Ontarians use natural gas to heat—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's time. We've run out of time.

Further debate?

I'm going to go back to the member for Humber River–Black Creek, who can use the remainder of the time and two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members from St. Catharines, Toronto–Danforth and Mushkegowuk–James Bay—the co-sponsors to this bill—for speaking so well and eloquently about it. I want

to thank the member for Beaches–East York for telling us about her support of it, and I also want to thank the government members from Mississauga–Lakeshore, Newmarket–Aurora and Scarborough–Agincourt for, unfortunately, speaking against the bill.

I did not think it could get worse earlier when this government voted on the side of Enbridge against the Ontario Energy Board when the Ontario Energy Board said that they need to keep the rates down. This government stepped in and said to Enbridge, “You can continue to raise those rates.”

I didn’t think it could get worse, but today, government members said they were going to vote against our Affordable Home Heating Act and they said they would vote against it with gusto. They said they would be voting against the 1.1 million Ontarians struggling to pay their heating bills. They said they were going to be voting against our seniors, our parents, our grandparents, struggling to pay for their gas furnace; those heating their homes with wood; those heating their homes with propane; those heating their homes with oil. Because, with this government, they’re not going to help them. They are going to continue to condemn Ontarians to live in energy poverty. They are going to continue to condemn seniors in our province to make the hard choice between heating and eating.

They are not helping in this affordability crisis. They are only making the lives of Ontarians harder and harder and harder, voting against legislation to bring relief, like

our home heating act, every day. Do better, government. It is disappointing. You are only making the lives of Ontarians, our seniors, harder and harder.

People shouldn’t have to choose, in the coldest months, to have to turn their thermostats off because they can’t afford to pay. If you’re not going to make the lives of Ontarians easier, then get out of the way. We need relief in the province of Ontario, and they have proved day after day they are not up to the task.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

Mr. Rakocevic has moved second reading of Bill 213, an Act to enact the Affordable Home Heating Act, 2024 and amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

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 to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): All matters relating to private members’ public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, December 9, 2024, at 10:15 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1637.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Associate Minister of Mines / Ministre associé des Mines
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (IND)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
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	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre associé de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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	