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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Lundi
5 mai 2025

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Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 May 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 mai 2025

The House met at 1015.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

100 WOMEN WHO CARE 1000 ISLANDS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate a remarkable group of women who continue to make a tremendous difference in the lives of so many in our community: 100 Women Who Care 1000 Islands marks its 10th anniversary at their meeting next week. In that decade, this group of amazing women have raised more than \$400,000 for charitable organizations in every corner of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. It's a testament to the true power of collective action: Women from all walks of life coming together with a single purpose—to accomplish something greater together than they would do individually.

They commit to provide \$100 each at four meetings every year, and at every meeting, a vote determines which charity will receive \$10,000 to support and enhance life-changing work in our community. That's zero overhead. Every penny raised goes directly to the organization in need.

Over the past 10 years, nearly 40 organizations have benefited through this outstanding demonstration of philanthropy. These funds have strengthened our community and made it more resilient by supporting a number of charities—mental health, food security, social inclusion, seniors and youth programs.

So as 100 Women Who Care 1000 Islands celebrates 10 years, I join our community in saying thank you to all those involved. Your vision and generosity have set a gold standard for community leadership.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: For those who face unfair eviction, it's not just the loss of a home, it's also the shock of being uprooted without warning and the fear of not being able to afford another place. In my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean, this is an ongoing issue, with landlords evicting tenants under the guise of making significant renovations, only to relist the units at much higher rents. This practice is making our province's affordable housing crisis much worse.

I've been proud to support the work that ACORN has done in my community to help mobilize affected tenants. They've been urging the Ontario government to put into force legislation that this House has passed that will put in place stronger protections for tenants and close legal loopholes that landlords use to displace long-term residents.

In January, Ottawa city council voted to push the Ontario government to actually implement the tenant protections that were included in Bill 97. The city gave the province three months to enact these measures. Last week, that deadline came and went with no action taken. What is the government waiting for, Speaker? We're talking about people's lives here. They deserve action.

I want to express my heartfelt support for everyone in Ottawa West–Nepean who is affected by this issue, and I urge all members in this House to remember that the power to stop bad-faith evictions ultimately rests with us.

RIDING OF KINGSTON AND
THE ISLANDS

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, democracy thrives when citizens participate actively. Today, I rise to thank Kingston and the Islands for achieving voter turnout well above the provincial average in the provincial election.

I particularly want to recognize students, many of whom lined up patiently to vote. The line was 80 people long at 5:30 p.m. at a polling station near my home. I want this Legislature to be inspired by their determination to vote. These young Ontarians deserve more than our applause, they deserve action.

In March, students at Queen's University spoke through a campus plebiscite. Now, I want to make sure that this government hears, through me, that they ask the Ontario government for action on the following:

- “—housing insecurity;
- “—tuition, ancillary fees and financial aid;
- “—food insecurity;
- “—housing, transit and community development.”

1020

Students aren't asking for luxuries; they're asking for stability so they can focus on their education instead of worrying about the basics. As the Premier finalizes this year's budget, I want him to listen to these voices.

To the students and youth across Ontario: When the budget is released in about 10 days, speak up again. Hold us accountable. Your involvement strengthens our democracy and shapes your future.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION GRANTS

Mr. Lorne Coe: Our government believes local programs and services enrich the lives of hard-working families and play an important role in building a strong community and prosperous economy. That is why we're proud to fund local program and service providers through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Grow grants stream.

I recently announced two grants in Ajax to two pillars of the Ajax community. Durham Youth Services will be receiving \$429,800 and Black Queens of Durham region, \$152,300. These grants are due to the long-time advocacy of our friend and colleague Patrice Barnes.

One of the recipients of the money, Shannon Jackson, the executive director of Durham Youth Services, had this to say: "By intervening early in a young person's experience of homelessness, we were able to find safe and stable housing for 92% of the youth we met through this program. The generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation Grow grant will allow us to grow and expand this highly effective program over the next three years, to support more youth in more schools across the region of Durham."

Every young person deserves a safe place to call home, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation is making it happen thanks to the leadership of the Honourable Stan Cho.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC DAY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The first Sunday in May recognizes Battle of the Atlantic Day, honouring the lives lost during the longest continuous battle of World War II. As MPP for London West, I had the privilege of participating in a moving and extraordinary ceremony in London. Not only did we mark the 80th anniversary of that historic battle, but new walls of honour were unveiled, recognizing the sacrifices of every young Canadian who gave their life over the battle's 2,075 days.

Since 2010, a national Battle of the Atlantic memorial has stood on the hillside of HMCS Prevost at the forks of London's Thames River, with commemorative stones to honour each warship lost, as well as the service and sacrifice of the merchant navy.

On Sunday, thanks to the efforts of a dedicated team of volunteers, diligent naval historians and many generous donors, the monument was rededicated with beautiful and solemn walls of honour. The walls are inscribed with the individual names of the thousands of brave and valiant sailors, merchant mariners and air force members who fought and died in the Battle of the Atlantic, creating Canada's only national tribute to these fallen service men and women together in one place.

On Saturday, a Battle of the Atlantic gala was held, graced by the presence of Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Edith Dumont and commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee. I thank them both for joining Londoners to mark such a special and meaningful occasion.

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Deepak Anand: Across Canada, 1.5 million people live with vision loss. In Ontario alone, that number exceeds 680,000. May is Vision Health Month, a powerful reminder of how closely our sight is tied to well-being and especially the future of our children. Yet one in four school-aged children have a vision loss issue, often going undetected, impacting how they learn, grow and thrive.

Public-funded eye testing for all children reflects our government's commitment to early detection and care. Despite OHIP covering eye exams until the age of 19, not all children have their eyes tested before starting school. Vision care is not just a health issue; it is about equity, education and access. No child should struggle to see the board or read a book, especially when help is available. Thanks to the advocacy of Dr. Asha Seth for leading the effort to designate May as Vision Health Month, and partners like CNIB to champion early screening and awareness, reminding us that real progress starts with prevention, not just treatment.

To every parent and caregiver in Mississauga–Malton and across Ontario: Get your child's eyes tested. It is free, it is simple and it can change a life. Let's give every child clear vision and the opportunity to succeed. Let's build a better, stronger Ontario.

RED DRESS DAY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaker, today on May 5 we mark the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People, also known as Red Dress Day. On this day, we come together to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples across the country. The pain of losing a loved one to violence is something that no one should endure, but, unfortunately, for Indigenous communities, this pain is all too common. In Ontario, the proportion of femicide victims who are Indigenous has steadily increased since the national inquiry in 2019.

This violence is rooted in the painful legacy of colonization and ongoing systemic injustice, and this is a crisis that demands action. The provincial government has a crucial role to play in fixing this crisis, beginning with an acknowledgement that human and Indigenous rights violations are at the root of violence against First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls and two-spirit peoples. We must listen, and we must respect Indigenous voices and their leadership. They are the experts in this crisis.

Today we wear red. Communities across Ontario—like in my hometown of Hamilton—will gather. They will remember, they will speak the names and they will demand justice and action.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): If I could just ask everyone to be mindful that we are still in members' statements and bring the conversations down just a little, please.

Members' statements?

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

MPP Bill Rosenberg: As we kick off Emergency Preparedness Week in Ontario, I rise today to highlight a key investment our government has made in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin. Last year, the corporation of the town of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands received \$50,000 through our government's Community Emergency Preparedness Grant—a grant which is now part of the newly minted Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Speaker, with this grant money, the township was able to purchase new machinery and maintenance equipment to support the region's brush-clearing and fire maintenance efforts. This grant, part of our government's historic investment of \$110 million into the emergency preparedness sector, is a great achievement for the people of my riding. I want to thank the minister and the Premier for ensuring all the communities like mine have access to the supports they need to protect Ontario from any emergency we may face.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Again, if I could just ask everyone to be mindful: There are people making members' statements in the House, if you could just bring your conversation level down a little. Thank you.

I recognize the member for Oxford.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair, and it's an honour to be in this House once more representing the people of Oxford.

This past week was National Volunteer Week, and my office has received dozens of requests for certificates acknowledging volunteerism in our communities. It's great to see the spotlight this week shine on the work volunteers do, but we should also be thankful for how they step up for one another all year long. That's why I wanted to highlight one group of volunteers that has truly made a difference in peoples' lives in Oxford.

For over 50 years, the members of Woodingford Lodge women's auxiliary have poured their time, energy and compassion into supporting the residents of the long-term-care home. They would keep the residents company, chat with them over tea, host events and generally make them feel cared for. They've also donated a grand piano to the home, helped maintain the fish tank and made lap blankets for residents, just to name a few things.

Recently, I was part of the final cheque presentation by the group. I'm sorry to see it come to an end, but I'm thankful for all the lives they have enriched over the years. It's volunteers like these—people helping people, Madam Speaker—that remind us that they don't do it for the spotlight; they do it because it's the right thing to do.

1030

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Holland: I would like to give a warm welcome to Marc Blais and Linda Bruins, who are visiting us here today from Thunder Bay. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I am so pleased to welcome some great citizens from Waterloo, the Passion for Fashion group: Stephanie Ratza, Victoria Garash, Kelly Groff, Cathy Brown, Nancy Koebel and Louise Kaiser. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I look forward to having lunch.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I wish to welcome to the House today Laura Elliott and Leo Plue, a wonderful husband and wife team, originally from Durham region—strong, respected educators over many decades and also active champions of the Abilities Centre in Durham.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to welcome Michael Reid, Judith Jackson, Kathleen Corcoran, Rachel Hubert and Steven Soliman. They are all workers in long-term care, retirement residences and home care. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Chris Scott: It's my absolute honour to rise and greet my number one supporter, my wife, and my two daughters and son who are here today. I think they actually just stepped out—which is kind of embarrassing—because it's the baby's nap time, but I'm really pleased to get to stand and introduce them.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to welcome three constituents of mine from St. Catharines and members of the CLAC to the House this morning: Mandeep Thakur, Shawn Kelly and Stephanie Hollender. Welcome to Queen's Park and welcome to your House. Thank you for being here today.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome the members of CLAC who are with us in the House today. They'll be having a lunchtime reception in 228 at 2:30, and I encourage all members to go.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd like to also introduce three members of CLAC who are here today, constituents Pam Mulder, Rachel Hubert and Samantha Gratton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I am pleased to welcome the 2025 cohort of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet Summer Youth Program. We have Kalsang Yangchen, who is placed with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. We have Tenzin Choenyi, who is placed with our member from York South–Weston, and finally Tenzin Kunsang Tsarong, placed in my office. I also want to thank all the members who are participating in this invaluable opportunity.

My second group of guests is Ward 7 school trustee Debbie King, parents and advocates Anna Dobie, Nadia Rajaram, and Tyler Rooney. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I welcome Jessie and John Knight, proud parents of today's page captain Shepherd Knight. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Piccini: I just want to build on my colleagues' comments. I see Ian DeWaard, provincial director for CLAC here today—such a valued partner of the provincial government in building a stronger Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome Joyce Zuk, the executive director of Family Services Windsor-Essex to Queen's Park. Also, Zoya Villamizar is starting as a page today. Zoya comes from a family full of peace and education advocates and activists, and I am honoured to welcome Zoya to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to introduce Keya Osborne, director of disability justice at CNIB, to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome my friend Dana McKiel to the Legislature. Dana is son of the East York legend George McKiel. Welcome.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to acknowledge in our House Arfa Khandaker from my riding of Scarborough North, who is serving as a page captain today and is representing her peers from White Haven public school. I'd also like to welcome Arfa's proud parents in the members' gallery today, Salim Khandaker and Wahida Akter, who are here in support.

Thank you to all pages, in particular Arfa. Thank you, Arfa.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Just a reminder that if you would like to introduce anyone, we do have introduction of visitors again at 1 o'clock.

This being the very first sitting Monday of the month, I am asking everyone to join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem. I would like to ask the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries to lead us.

Singing of the national anthem / Chant de l'hymne national.

Singing of the royal anthem / Chant de l'hymne royal.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You may be seated.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): If I could have the attention of the House:

On Tuesday, April 29, 2025, the Minister of Infrastructure rose on a question of privilege relating to an exchange that had occurred during question period that morning. Although questions of privilege are more commonly raised in the House following the provision of written notice to the Speaker, because the matter had arisen directly from the proceedings, the minister was permitted to raise her question without written notice, in accordance with the standing order 23(c).

The leader of the third party and the government House leader also spoke to the question of privilege, and I subsequently received written submissions from the Minister of Infrastructure, the leader of the third party, the

government House leader, and the official opposition House leader.

I have reviewed the Hansard from the proceedings of April 29, along with the written materials and the relevant parliamentary authorities, and I am now prepared to rule on this matter.

Given that this is the first question of privilege to be raised in the 44th Parliament, I will begin by explaining the concepts of privilege and contempt. Erskine May, the pre-eminent authority on Westminster parliamentary procedure, defines parliamentary privilege in the following terms at page 239 of its 25th edition:

“Parliamentary privilege is the sum of certain rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament; and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Some privileges rest solely on the law and custom of Parliament, while others have been defined by statute.”

Privileges fall into two categories. One category is made up of the privileges enjoyed by individual members, which include freedom of speech, exemption from jury duty and exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness. The other category comprises the collective privileges of the House, including the right to regulate internal affairs, the right to institute inquiries and the power to discipline.

It is important to distinguish breaches of privilege from the separate but related concept of contempt. The third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice explains the distinction in the following terms on pages 80 and 81: “Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its members, either by an outside person or body, or by a member of the House, is referred to as a ‘breach of privilege’ and is punishable by the House. There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its members, or its officers.... In that sense, all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege.”

1040

There is agreement among the procedural authorities that a finding that a member deliberately misled or attempted to mislead the House can amount to a contempt. However, there is also agreement that the threshold for such a finding is quite high. The fifth edition of Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand provides the following explanation on page 719:

“There are three elements to be established when an allegation is made against a member regarding the

member's statement: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; the member must have known that the statement was inaccurate at the time the statement was made; and the member must have intended to mislead the House....

"For a misleading of the House to be deliberate, there must be an indication of an intention to mislead. Remarks made off the cuff in debate can rarely fall into this category, nor can matters of which the member can be aware only in an official capacity."

This standard has been affirmed on many occasions in our own House by my predecessors in this chair. As Speaker Carr ruled on June 17, 2002, at pages 101-102 of the Journals, in order for the Speaker to find a prima facie case of contempt on the basis of deliberately misleading the House, there must be "a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable member would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

In reviewing the exchange between the Minister of Infrastructure and the member for Ottawa South, I am unable to find tangible confirmation that the member misled or intended to mislead the House. The member asked a series of oral questions, all answered by the minister, relating to the process by which the government awarded a contract for the redevelopment of Ontario Place. The minister has contended that the member's characterization of the government's process is at odds with the reported findings of the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner. The member for Ottawa South, on the other hand, has submitted that his characterization of the process is, in fact, supported by the Auditor General's report. As has been the case in this House many times before, this appears to me to amount to, at most, a disagreement between two honourable members.

The members are entitled to hold differing views of the matter and to express those views in this chamber. The question period proceeding enables private members to hold the government to account by asking questions of the executive council about government policy and decision-making, thereby fulfilling one of the primary functions of this Legislative Assembly. Members' remarks in question period, as in all parliamentary proceedings, are protected by the privilege of freedom of speech, which permits members to express their opinions and speak freely.

This is essential to the effective functioning of this House and to the ability of all members to fulfill their parliamentary roles. If a member and a minister disagree in their interpretations of government action or decision-making, or even in their interpretation of the report of an officer of the assembly, question period provides an ideal opportunity to make those views known. It is not uncommon for honourable members and ministers from all sides of the House to draw different interpretations of the officers' reported findings, and even on occasion to disagree with them.

On a separate but related note, the minister also suggested that the behaviour of the member from Ottawa South amounted to misconduct, and the government House leader made reference to the members' code of conduct on harassment. It is relevant to note that on October 4, 2018, the code of conduct was amended to make it clear that "the code shall not derogate from ... the parliamentary privileges of the assembly and its members." The members' code of conduct does not supersede the privileges that members enjoy, including freedom of speech.

Finally, in her written submission, the Minister of Infrastructure correctly noted that standing order 25 contains a number of rules regarding the orderliness of members' language and remarks. I'd like to clarify for all members that the application of these rules of debate is distinct from the concepts of privilege and contempt that I have described in my ruling today.

As the Speaker, it is my role to ensure that the rules of debate are respected during all proceedings. Should any member wish to raise a point of order about language used during question period, the appropriate time to do so is immediately following question period on that very same day.

I thank the House for your attention.

QUESTION PERIOD

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, everyone. Speaker, Ontario's own financial watchdog says that up to 100,000 jobs are set to vanish next year because of Donald Trump's reckless tariffs. My question is to the Premier because, as we've seen, the Premier's response so far has been, "Let's see what happens." Those were his exact words. Well, Premier, it is happening. On Friday, 750 jobs were cut at the GM plant in Oshawa.

To the Premier: Why did the Premier ignore the warnings, and does the Premier still think "let's see what happens" is the right approach to this?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for that question. It's important to recognize that the unfortunate news from General Motors last week has been extremely tough on workers in Oshawa and their families. We continue to be in close contact with the company and with our labour partners, and throughout those discussions, GM has reaffirmed its commitment to the Oshawa plant, which will continue to build Ontario-made trucks for years to come. We are going to continue to do everything in our power to support a strong future for that facility and for its workers.

I would remind the member opposite that this is not a fight that we picked. President Trump's unnecessary and unjustified tariffs are causing chaos and uncertainty across

the global economy. In the face of this unprecedented threat, our government will continue to fight every single day to attract new investment, secure good-paying jobs, and support workers and their families.

We didn't pick this fight, but we will win it, and our government will always prioritize the needs and protect the livelihoods of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of His Majesty's official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, just because you didn't pick the fight doesn't mean you don't fight.

I already warned this government about the impact of those tariffs and those threats: cancelled shifts, layoffs, equipment that is right now being loaded up on trucks and sent to the United States, 750 jobs cut—yes, at GM in Oshawa, but that, I will remind everyone here, is also going to mean 1,500 supply chain jobs impacted, and thousands more in Windsor are coming. This is political. GM is appeasing Donald Trump and moving their operations out of Ontario.

Back to the Premier of this province: What assurances can he give to the families in Oshawa and Windsor who are scared of losing everything?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: We are fully aware on this side of the House that we are facing a once-in-generation threat from south of our border. We are going to continue working with our industry and labour partners as they navigate these uncertain times, and we will continue to be a stable hand.

1050

We have announced \$11 billion in relief that will provide immediate support to the businesses and workers who need it most. At the same time, we're taking necessary action to ensure that Ontario remains competitive on the global stage, and that we don't just compete; we also win.

Our auto sector has been revitalized since we took office, with more than \$46 billion in new investment. We aren't going to throw in the towel on our auto sector like the previous Liberal government tried to do. We are going to do everything in our power to protect the progress that we have made and ensure more good-paying jobs are created right here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, workers in Windsor are putting their bodies on the line to stop equipment from being shipped south while this Premier won't lift a finger.

The government has poured taxpayer dollars into those companies, those same companies that are packing up and heading south.

And since the election, what specific actions has this Premier actually taken to stop Ontario jobs from bleeding to the United States? Zero—zip. Is he finally going to stand with workers, or does he still think that it's just enough to wait and see?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: This government will continue to stand with businesses and workers, as we have done since 2018. I will remind the member opposite that since 2018,

we've attracted over \$75 billion in new investment: \$46 billion in automotive, \$6 billion in life sciences and tens of billions of dollars in tech investments.

We've also cut 550 pieces of red tape, lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$8 billion, which set the stage for those important investments which have created tens of thousands of jobs.

Our manufacturing sector now boasts over 840,000 jobs, twice as many as Texas or New York state. We know that we are building an economic powerhouse here in Ontario, and we will continue to do everything that we can to support workers and support businesses through these tough times.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Ms. Marit Stiles: It boggles the mind, Speaker; that's the best they got. That's the best they've got to give—750 people lost their jobs on Friday and this is the best response we can get from this government. That is shameful.

Meanwhile, Alstom workers in Thunder Bay are facing layoffs again as well. There is no work lined up. As the NDP member for Thunder Bay—Superior North has pointed out many times, the new Line 2 subway cars can be built right there in Thunder Bay by experienced Ontario workers.

I want to say, I saw that the minister finally got around to writing a letter. Well, congratulations. But to the Premier: Why did the government wait to advocate for local production and leave those workers in limbo?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you for that question. Madam Speaker, we have been leading the charge in Thunder Bay in supporting those hard workers every step of the way. In fact, I was there just a couple of months ago to announce another \$500 million that we are investing to refurbish our Metrolinx bi-level trains, a contract that has gone to Thunder Bay to support those workers.

I have to add, Madam Speaker, that when we put that investment forward, those members voted against those jobs in Thunder Bay. When we put forward the Ontario new deal with the city of Toronto, a part of that was over \$700 million for the Line 2 subway trains that are going to go to Thunder Bay. And guess what? Those members over there voted against that again. Day and day again, they vote against good-paying jobs in Ontario and in Thunder Bay. That's a shame.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, again, back to the Premier of this province, because while this minister writes the occasional letter, Alstom workers are being laid off and Ontario is facing a recession. All this Premier has had to say about it is, "Let's see what happens."

Workers in Thunder Bay have been waiting years and years for a decision on the Line 2 subway cars, and now

they're facing layoffs on top of that. Let's not forget why that happened, why they're being laid off now. It's because this government made the decision to send those jobs from Line 1 down to the United States while workers here lose out.

Is this the message of the Premier to the people and the workers of Thunder Bay and their families? Is it that they should just sit tight while others get those jobs and the orders go south?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The message to those workers in Thunder Bay is that Premier Ford will always have your back. In fact, the Premier has personally visited that facility many times. Many members in this House and government members have visited that facility and reaffirmed our commitment to ensuring more jobs go to Thunder Bay. That is why we wrote a letter asking the TTC to direct that investment to Canadian, Ontario-made jobs in Thunder Bay. That is why we have invested over \$500 million of refurbishment money into that facility. We will always support good-paying jobs.

Do you know what happens every time we do bring forward any sort of motions, any sort of budgets that support Thunder Bay? Those members over there vote against good-paying jobs in Thunder Bay. That's a shame. When it comes to transit investments, like Line 2, like the Yonge North subway extension that will be supported by those 55 Line 2 cars, those members voted against—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let's review what happened here, shall we? This government ignored its own transit procurement policy, and they actually reduced the required Canadian content requirements for transit vehicles from 25% to 10%. That was this government when they signed the Ontario Line P3 contract. We remember, and the workers in Thunder Bay at Alstom will never forget.

The vehicles for every other subway line in Ontario have been made in Thunder Bay, but the Ontario Line subway cars are being made in the United States, right now, with Alstom announcing layoffs in Thunder Bay because they have a lack of work because of this government's decisions and the United States waging this trade war against us here in Canada.

I want to ask the Premier of this province to stand up and tell us, does he regret his decision to allow the Ontario Line subway cars to be made in the United States instead of in Canada by Ontario workers?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to ask the Leader of the Opposition: Do they regret voting against billions of dollars in investment into transit? Do they regret voting against billions of dollars in skills development funds that are going to support workers, welders and many of the others that are working on that facility in Thunder Bay and across the province?

The Leader of the Opposition should look very closely and see why unions have left them in droves and supported the PC Party and our government and our vision. It's because we want to build. We want to build for the future. We're investing \$70 billion over the next 10 years, and

many of those dollars are going to support plants in Thunder Bay, to keep those hard-working Ontarians in Thunder Bay employed. It's unfortunate that the members in the NDP don't support this government when we bring forward over \$700 million of investments into that Thunder Bay plant, when we bring forward billions and billions of dollars of investment into Line 2, like the Yonge North subway extension that will be supported by those trains in Thunder Bay—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

TAXATION

Mr. John Fraser: I was up late last night, after I got here in Toronto, working on our opposition day motion. I got to thinking, and I thought, "Why is it that only Liberals are proposing tax cuts?" Prime Minister Carney has put forward an income tax cut, and I do remember seven years ago, that the Premier promised to cut income taxes. He promised to cut income taxes, and guess what? It never happened. Times are tough these days. Times are tough. Families are struggling just to put food on the table, to pay their rent. They need a little help.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Does the Premier think it's time to unbreak his broken promise and deliver an income tax cut to families?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: It's a great opportunity to stand up and talk about the fantastic work that this government has done over the last six-plus years. We inherited quite the mess when we were first elected in 2018. The Liberals had introduced cap-and-trade, which was a tax on everyday people. The Liberals had brought in more toll roads, which was a tax on everyday people. What did we do? We removed the tolls on 412 and 418.

1100

Our electricity bills under the Liberals went up 300%. We went from the lowest rate in North America to the highest rate. We have reversed that, saving families over \$1,000 a year. We've introduced One Fare, which is saving commuters \$1,600 every single year.

Madam Speaker, the record of this government has been to reduce the cost of living for every single person in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, back to you: Why are Liberals the only ones proposing tax cuts? Now, I know—hey, we all remember—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, just listen for a sec—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Government side will come to order.

Mr. John Fraser: We all remember that Prime Minister Carney cut his carbon tax. But the Premier, he kept his. The Premier kept his carbon tax, right? The Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Stop the clock. The government side will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member. I've stopped the clock. The government side will come to order. I don't want to start calling people's names.

Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: The Premier kept his carbon tax. He still has it. You're all paying it right now.

Why is it the Premier says he's on the side of Ontario families, but he can't cut their taxes?

Mr. Dave Smith: Let's take another path down history and take a look at what the voting record is of the Liberals in the last two governments. We introduced legislation to give a \$200-per-person rebate back to the taxpayers of Ontario, and they voted against it. We lowered the gas tax 10 cents per litre, and what did they do? They voted against it. Every measure that we put forward to reduce taxes, the Liberals have voted against it.

In the history of Ontario, there has not been a government that has held the line on taxes their entire term, and yet, for six-plus years—almost seven years now—that has been our record.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. John Fraser: Okay, I'm glad the member opposite mentioned history. The Premier has the largest, most expensive cabinet in the history of Ontario. And if that's not enough, he's got the largest and most expensive Premier's office in the history of Ontario.

How is it that the government has no problem filling its pockets but can't put money into the pockets of Ontario families?

Mr. Dave Smith: We have been laser-focused on the economy in Ontario, and we have done things to make it easier for people to live. We've reduced the tax burden on the people of Ontario. Do you know what that has resulted in, Madam Speaker? That has resulted in our economy growing. We've increased the revenue to the province by almost \$50 billion, but we have not raised a single tax in that length of time.

Yet, when we look at the Liberals and what they did, they handed us the most indebted subnational state in the entire world. When the economic times are good, that's when you should be lowering the debt. We absolutely had to have the measures during COVID to make sure that we were protecting the people of Ontario. But we were given a position where the cupboard was bare.

We have been focusing on bringing those jobs back to Ontario. Some 300,000 manufacturing jobs left under the Liberals. More than 800,000 jobs have come back to Ontario since we've been—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Fraser: Never has a government spent so much, borrowed so much, put so much debt in and done so little.

Speaker, through you: Another promise, seven years ago—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government side will come to order.

Mr. John Fraser: I can't hear myself think over here, guys.

Seven years ago, the Premier promised he'd cut hydro rates, that hydro rates would go down. But guess what? What happened? They went—

Interjections: They went up.

Mr. John Fraser: Up—right. So, Speaker, we propose taking the HST off home energy bills—simple, straightforward. Will the Premier today support doing exactly that?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It was the Liberal Party that lost an election because of the incompetence of how you managed hydro in the province of Ontario. A 400% increase—honestly, the Academy Award goes to the interim leader of the Liberal Party. How can you talk with a straight face about hydro when it increased by 400%—\$1,000 more every single year for a working family or for a senior—and you did nothing to stop it because you were driven by ideology instead of choosing the lowest-cost option.

We have used competitive procurement to draw down prices by 30%. We've stabilized prices. In fact, we've launched the largest energy savings program in the history of Canada, which your party voted against. We're going to continue to cut taxes, cut the gas tax and make life affordable in spite of the Liberal party.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Just a reminder to talk through the Chair.

Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll just go back to it. You said you put prices down, but they went up, and that's pretty straightforward. It's simple math, Minister; that's what I was pointing out. Families could use some relief on their energy bills. I think that's a reasonable thing to say. Again, why are Liberals the only ones proposing tax cuts? I said it earlier: Families are struggling, and they need something they can count on every week, every paycheque.

If the Premier can find \$2.2 billion and a 95-year lease for a foreign shell company, how come he can't find dollars for tax cuts for Ontario families?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: When this Legislature was seized with an opportunity to create affordability for every single driver in the province of Ontario—a 10-cent reduction in gas and diesel, which we extended and then made permanent—it was the Liberal Party, in their wisdom, who opposed it while campaigning for a carbon tax. The federal Liberals—the member opposite seems to suggest there is a virtue in creating a tax, elevating the tax and then removing the tax, and somehow we're supposed to be grateful to them for seeing the light on something that Conservatives oppose consistently and systematically.

Madam Speaker, we are going to keep taxes low, we're going to keep energy prices low and we're going to continue to stand up for Canadian businesses to succeed, to grow our economy and to create more jobs for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: It's the last supplementary; you won't have to endure much more.

I still didn't get an answer to my question. Again, to the mining minister: You said you would put hydro prices—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Through the Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: —that they would go down, that they would be lower. They are, in fact, not lower. Check your bills; maybe you don't. They went up. Families need relief. A very simple measure: Taking the HST off their bills will help them on their hydro and their gas bills.

Speaker, is the government saying they don't think that's a good idea? That they don't want to put that money back into the pockets of families?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Independent experts have confirmed that hydro rates will be 23% lower under our plan when compared to the plan the Liberals had and campaigned to continue. We're saving families every single month, because we launched the largest energy-efficiency program in the history of Canada: \$10.9 billion of investment back into the people's pockets—a program the Liberals could have enacted but failed to do so.

Our priority will continue to be lowering costs for families. We've stabilized the rates. We've cut gasoline taxes. We have made sure lowest-income families benefit from the LIFT tax credit, the most progressive tax reduction in Ontario history. We're going to continue to put money back into people's pockets, and we're going to continue to work with all members opposite who want to work with government in this moment of crisis to make life affordable and to save Canadian jobs for the people of Ontario.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. This is a very hard time for auto workers in our community of Oshawa. General Motors has announced the end of the third shift in Oshawa, which means 750 permanent jobs and 1,500 to 2,000 spin-off jobs will be leaving our community.

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Since President Trump started this tariff war, workers have been bracing for impact, and now GM has made a reckless and political move that is putting the future of so many workers at risk. The last time, the Premier sided with GM and said the ship had left the dock; well, now the ship is leaving.

So Premier, will you stand with Oshawa's auto workers and this time will you fight for the workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for the question.

We know on this side of the House how important those manufacturing jobs are. In fact, they're the lifeblood of so many of our communities, including mine in Bay of Quinte, where 28.5% of our GDP comes from manufacturing exports to the United States. That's why we put forward \$11 billion in solutions to keep businesses afloat and keep workers working, bringing home those paycheques and being able to put food on the table for their families. And that's not all. We've also put forward more money—hundreds of millions of dollars—for the made-in-Ontario manufacturing tax credit, more money for the Skills Development Fund to train hundreds of thousands of workers who may have lost their jobs, and tens of millions of dollars for the trade-impacted communities fund, for communities like yours in Oshawa or Windsor, or my home community of Bay of Quinte.

This government is always going to prioritize the needs of the people of Ontario and make sure that we protect their livelihoods for years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, and with all due respect, we're not ready to talk about retraining. We have six months ahead of us and we've got some fight in Oshawa.

Workers who are losing their jobs are devastated and families are reeling. Unifor Local 222 and all the auto workers are fighting back against Donald Trump's chaos and I am proud to fight alongside them. This feels familiar. Auto workers in our community have fought to keep jobs here many times before. We need all levels of government committed to workers to fight to keep good jobs here and keep manufacturers committed to Ontario.

Oshawa built GM. Ontario has made massive financial investments, but people are worried that there weren't strings attached. So, Premier, what are you doing to make sure GM stays committed to Ontario and to Oshawa workers?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you once again to the member from Oshawa for the question, and we understand how important this question is for Oshawa, in light of these layoffs, which are very troubling and very damaging to those families. But as I asserted for you earlier, our government has been in constant contact with the company as well as with our labour partners, and they have recommitted several times in the course of those conversations to making sure that the Oshawa plant will remain and will continue to produce Ontario-made trucks for years to come.

Now, I know that there has been a lot of strife in Oshawa over the years, particularly during the previous Liberal government when they tried to chase away 300,000 manufacturing jobs. This government has continued to make sure that those investments are

incoming, with over \$75 billion in new investments since 2018, creating over one million new jobs.

We will always stand strong with workers and with businesses to make sure we're building a better economy that works for everyone here in Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: In 2018, this Premier campaigned on a promise to cut income taxes. He said, "We have a simple theory: Put money back into the taxpayers' pocket instead of the government's pocket, because we believe that the taxpayers are a lot smarter at spending their money than any government."

Well, Speaker, six budgets, seven fall economic statements later, and that's still just a theory.

We know the Premier can afford to make good on this theory—make this theory a reality—because under this Premier personal income tax revenues have skyrocketed. They're up over 45%—\$16 billion—under his watch. So he can afford to do this; he just isn't.

My question to the Premier: Will he put his money where his mouth is and finally cut income taxes?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: If we look back to just this past fall with the fall economic statement, there was a \$200 rebate going back to every single person who paid taxes in Ontario. That effectively is a tax break. And what did the Liberals opposite do? They voted against that measure. I'll take no lessons from the Liberal Party, who says one thing and does something completely different. They voted against every single measure that we have put forward to reduce taxes for people. The 10-cent-per-litre gas tax cut that we made—started off as a temporary measure; it is now permanent—they voted against it. There is not a single measure that we have done to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario that they have voted for. In fact, they have voted against every single one of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: This government is collecting record amounts of taxes—billions more than the previous Liberal government. This Premier talks about being a businessman; I think he should add taxman to his résumé.

This government voted against my private member's bill to cut small business taxes in half, which would save them up to \$17,900 a year. That's money that would help them keep their doors open and keep their employees employed as they face a potential recession from US tariffs.

Speaker, businesses in Don Valley West and across Ontario need this help now. It's not just for them; it's for their workers. It would help the two thirds of private sector workers who work in small businesses keep their jobs.

Through you to the Premier, Speaker: Will he help small businesses and workers by cutting income taxes?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Associate Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for the question.

Prior to getting elected in 2018, it was this Premier and this government that promised to make life more affordable for businesses and for the people of Ontario. So one of the first pieces of legislation was to reduce the taxes on small businesses to 3.2%. That was a promise made and a promise kept. And how did the opposition Liberals vote, how did the NDP vote? They voted against that reduction at that time, and today, all of a sudden, they have a great feeling for small businesses?

Not only that; we just introduced, a couple of weeks ago, legislation to provide \$9 billion in cash flow relief, supporting businesses and mostly small businesses by helping them defer taxes on employer health taxes, on insurance premium tax, on retail sales tax, on fuel tax, mining tax. These are real, tangible savings and help for small—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines. The world economy is unstable. The US is threatening tariffs. Costs are rising. Families and job creators across Ontario are worried about what this could mean for them. And while others talk, our government is taking real action. Ontario has a strong plan to protect jobs and keep energy costs low because that's what leadership looks like.

Nuclear power is key to meeting that need. It gives us clean, stable power we can count on. It creates good jobs in Ontario for Ontario workers, and it keeps the economy strong in uncertain times. While the opposition parties fight nuclear, our government is fighting for Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister tell us how we're using nuclear power to protect our energy future and support jobs right here in Ontario and in my riding of Whitby?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for Whitby for the question, and I want to thank him for his leadership in supporting Ontario's nuclear advantage.

Speaker, we know that the only way forward to have baseload, reliable, 24/7 affordable power for the people of Ontario—to secure our future, given 75% demand forecasts—is we need to expand and refurbish our entire nuclear fleet, which is exactly what the Premier of this province campaigned on and that he is delivering. In fact, the largest commercial nuclear generator that's being refurbished, at Bruce, where I know the Minister of Rural Affairs is very passionate about this expansion, is being done, delivering over 6,500 megawatts of clean power.

We have committed to extending Pickering. This is, of course, in contrast to the Liberals, who tried to shut down the Pickering nuclear plant, who would have turned their backs on 4,500 high-paying jobs for the people of Ontario.

We know that in order to grow the economy, we have to have more power, which is why we're working with the Minister of Labour to build the largest nuclear generator

on earth of 10,000 megawatts of power: more jobs, affordable energy, a secure future for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, Ontario's not waiting; we're leading. While others back away from big ideas, our government is moving forward. We're powering our province, and yes, our country.

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Electricity demand in Ontario is expected to rise by 75% by 2050. That is why we're advancing bold projects to meet Ontario's growing needs. The Darlington small modular reactor is proof of that leadership. It means more jobs, more clean power and more made-in-Ontario solutions. And it shows what's possible when we believe in our workers, our supply chain and our energy future. This shows that Ontario can lead again, not just at home but around the world.

Speaker, can the minister explain how our investments in nuclear power are helping Ontario assert leadership at home and on the global stage?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It's not just the member for Whitby who's been a strong champion for nuclear. In fact, it's the former member from Ajax who's been leading the way in Durham and across Ontario, fighting for affordable, reliable, clean nuclear power.

The fact of the matter is, we have a plan. We're building the first small modular reactor in the G7 right at Darlington. This fleet will help produce 1,200 megawatts of power, but more importantly, it will create Canadian jobs. We're talking about upwards of 17,000 jobs during construction. We're talking about 2,000 permanent jobs over the 65-year lifespan—half a billion dollars of Canadian businesses building out these SMRs, and we're going to in fact be a part of the build-out for SMRs around the world, creating more jobs for the people of Ontario.

This is a plan to grow our economy. This is a plan to deliver affordable power. It's a plan to ensure Canada stands as a top-tier energy superpower in the world.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

MPP Alexa Gilmour: My question today is for the Premier. Community Living released a harrowing report about the dangers students with disabilities face due to the chronic underfunding by this Conservative government. The TDSB has a \$58-million deficit, which means more cuts to programs, to staff and to supports.

There is deep pain in the special-needs community today, as children are walking out of classrooms and ending up in the streets, and children like Landyn are dying because schools lack enough funding and trained staff. This is not just a funding issue, Speaker; this is a safety crisis.

Why has the government not taken action to keep children safe and supported?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, I think I said last week that it really doesn't matter that we have record levels of

funding in different programs, especially across the education sector. It doesn't matter as long as parents don't feel that their kids are safe in school.

Let me be very clear to the Toronto District School Board and any school board out there: If you think you're going to cut classroom education, think again. If you think you're going to take funding cuts and disadvantage our students, think again. We have some of the best teachers in the world. We have some of the best educators in the world. We have the best principals and vice-principals. These are people who are focused on one thing, and that is ensuring that our students have the best that they possibly can and succeed.

I certainly will not allow the Toronto District School Board, or any school board, for that matter, to cut the programs and services that matter, that give our kids all the advantages that they need to succeed, and that is a very clear message to the Toronto District School Board. Don't test me. Don't push me. I'll make a decision for you if they do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, like so many of us, I love a good musical, but this is the Legislature. Can we skip the song and dance, please?

We know the government's playbook at this point. Act one: Blame the public institution for failures caused by chronic underfunding by the government. Act two: Claim the system is broken so that you can privatize.

With the threat of ballooning classrooms, fewer teachers, our students are at risk, our boards have already made the cuts, and for our special education kids like Landyn Ferris, their lives are on the line.

Why is this government picking a fight with the school boards, who have already made cuts, instead of working with them to help our children?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think we made it very clear. I don't want school boards going to Blue Jays games. I don't want them sending trustees all over the world to be art inspectors. What I want them to do is focus on providing the highest level of education for the kids in the school. I think parents deserve that, and more importantly, I think students deserve that. So, will I continue to fight boards that divert money from the classrooms and away from our teachers? Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I'll let the NDP continue to fight for those trustees who waste taxpayer money, and I will continue to fight for parents, students and teachers and make sure that every single dollar that is meant for the classroom goes to the classroom. I will accept nothing less.

And if any school board thinks differently, let me tell them very, very clearly: Do what you're supposed to do, because if you don't, I will do it for you, and I will always side with students, parents and teachers all the time.

TAXATION

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, with the threat of tariffs and an affordability crisis, Liberals are still the only party talking about tax cuts.

The Premier has had every chance to side with working people, and he's rejected it every time. The Premier voted against making their kids' extracurriculars more affordable. He's voted against cutting small business taxes. He doesn't support taking the HST off the cost of heating your home or cooling it in the summer, and he's failed to deliver an income tax cut for the middle class.

But, Madam Speaker, don't worry; today the Premier can change course. He and his government can vote to cut income taxes, to lower energy bills and give small businesses a break. Or he can do what he always does: talk a big game and leave families in the lurch.

So, Madam Speaker, will the Premier back real tax cuts today, or will he once again tell Ontarians to wait—"It's okay"?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, let's talk about this, about giving money back to the people: When we saw \$3 billion more come into our province, do you know what the NDP and Liberals wanted to do? They wanted to spend it on all their little backroom deals with all their buddies. We gave it back to the people. But they voted against the \$200 rebate. One Fare, that would put over \$1,600, \$1,800 back into people's pockets; they voted against it. When we got rid of the tolls for the hard-working blue-collar people, they voted against the tolls. When we made sure that we gave 1.1 million low-income workers savings of as much as \$850 every year, you voted against it.

There's no government that's put more money into people's pockets than ourselves, but you constantly vote against it.

We reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion in this province to create more hard-working blue-collar jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm glad the Premier talked about spending, because his government has spent more money than any government in the history of Ontario, run the biggest deficits. So if we want to talk spending, look in the mirror, Mr. Premier.

Madam Speaker, families in this province are out of patience. They don't need more slogans; they need lower bills, they need fairer taxes and a government that backs them.

Seven years ago, the Premier promised Ontarians an income tax cut, but year after year, budget after budget, that promise has been left on the cutting-room floor.

Today's motion is a test: Will the Premier support relief for families and small businesses, or will he just keep saying, "Maybe next time?" Will the Premier support tax cuts today, or is he really prepared to ask Ontario families to keep on waiting?

Hon. Doug Ford: Let's remind everyone out there, their Liberal cap-and-trade—do you remember that? Do you remember that? A lot of you were there. You voted for it. We ended up reducing the gas tax by 10 cents a litre, putting money back into people's pockets. We eliminated the vehicle sticker tax by \$120 per car. They voted against it.

Let me say, times have changed. When President Trump is attacking our province, attacking our country, we're going to stand up for the people of Ontario. We're going to make sure that we create the environment for companies to come here and invest into the people of Ontario. That's what we're going to focus on. We're going to continue attracting companies coming here. But do you what we're going to do? We're going to continue cutting taxes. That's what we are all about. You believe in increasing taxes.

1130

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, here is a question that really affects the people of Ontario, and the question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Every day, people across Ontario are stuck dealing with gridlock traffic. Parents miss time with their kids. Truck drivers lose hours. Small businesses pay more for goods to move. Gridlock is not just a traffic issue; it is an economic issue, and it is holding our province back.

I have heard from the people in my riding who want to see the new roads built. They want better highways, fewer delays, faster trips. People are tired of talk and opposition by the Liberals and the NDP.

People are looking for action. That's why they want our government to continue the work we are doing on building roads and highways. Speaker, can the minister share with the House what our government is doing to fight gridlock and move Ontario forward?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member for Mississauga–Malton for that question. Speaker, he's absolutely right. Gridlock is costing Ontario in time, productivity and the quality of our life. Parents miss dinner with their kids. Truckers lose hours. Small businesses pay more to move goods.

That's why, under Premier Ford's leadership, we're delivering real solutions. We're building Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, the 401 tunnel, and we're expanding highways across this province. While the Liberals and NDP block progress, our PC government is getting shovels in the ground. We're not just planning for today; we're planning for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that assurance.

Gridlock is more than just an inconvenience; it is a barrier to economic growth. Reports shows that gridlock costs our economy \$56 billion a year. If we don't act, the cost is projected to grow to \$108 billion in less than 20 years.

That's why our government is acting and building a stronger highway network. But the Liberals and NDP continue to vote against new highway infrastructure. They said no to Highway 413. They said no to the Bradford Bypass.

Unlike the Liberals and NDP, we know the people of Ontario want us to build our province. They want us to

progress. That's why I'm asking the parliamentary assistant to explain how our government projects will help tackle this congestion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: The member again is absolutely right. Gridlock is costing Ontario billions while the Liberals and NDP spent years saying no and doing absolutely nothing. Our PC government is the only one saying, "Let's build."

That's why Ontarians gave Premier Ford a strong third mandate, to build projects like the Bradford Bypass that will move traffic off local roads and onto a proper freeway. Highway 413 alone will save drivers up to 30 minutes, and by 2031, it will carry over 300,000 trips per day.

Imagine those 300,000 cars jammed on the 401, jammed on the 410 during rush hour. That's why we're also investing in the 401 tunnel, the Gardiner Expressway, the DVP and we're expanding highways across this province.

Speaker, our population is growing fast. Our PC government is building highways and the critical infrastructure that our province needs to succeed, and we're going to continue to do so, so that generations—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. The tunnel for the Scarborough subway extension was supposed to be finished months ago. It is not finished; in fact, we're hearing that the \$757-million tunnel project is barely 20% finished after more than two years of construction.

So will the Premier explain why this important project—and he knows Scarborough is important—is delayed and when he expects the tunnel to be completed? Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thanks to this Premier's vision for this province, we are building Scarborough the transit it so desperately needs. For years, the previous Liberal government robbed transit riders in Scarborough of what they deserve.

When we came into government, the Premier made a commitment to build the Scarborough subway extension, and that is exactly what we are doing. It supports over 3,000 jobs annually, and the people of Scarborough deserve that transit.

That's why we have shovels in the ground—our tunneling machine is currently operational—and we continue to make significant progress for the residents of Scarborough. It will have over 100,000 daily boardings.

I hope the members across the aisle, both Liberals and NDP, support continued investment into Scarborough and transit across this province.

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, the people of Scarborough don't want any more promises. The Scarborough subway extension was supposed to cost \$5.5 billion. Last month, Infrastructure Ontario quietly revealed that the cost of the

main P3 contract for the subway project was \$5.7 billion. That's on top of \$757-million contract for the tunnel.

We know that Metrolinx likes to keep secrets when there are problems. So will the Premier or the minister direct Metrolinx to tell us why they can't get this project done on time and on budget?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Here are the facts: The NDP have opposed every single one of our subway projects—including the Liberals, actually. Whether it's the Liberals or the NDP, when we put forward the Scarborough subway extension, every single member between both the Liberals and NDP voted against that. Whether it's the Scarborough subway extension, which is going to move over 100,000 people every single day, the Ontario Line, which will move over 400,000 people every single day, members opposite have voted against that every single time.

We are the government that has committed to getting it done. We're committed to building. And over the next 10 years, for public transit, we are investing over \$70 billion. We will continue to get shovels in the ground, continue to build, and ensure subways and priority transit projects across this province are built.

TAXATION

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Ontarians are struggling more than ever. They're facing rising costs, stagnant wages and tariff threats that are driving prices even higher. Families need relief.

The Premier promised a middle-class tax cut back in 2018, but working families, they're still waiting. It's been seven years. My question to the Premier: Will he finally keep his promise and cut income taxes for the middle class?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: As I've said already today multiple times, we have done so much to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario. One of the things that seems to be lost by the Liberals is when they drove out 300,000 jobs—when we came into power, we brought back in more than a million jobs to this province, and we've seen the results of it. That's all about the plan to build this economy and make sure that we have the things that the people of this province need.

We've reduced the cost of living for every person in this province. With licence plate stickers—that alone—the Liberals saw that as a fee that they can jack up every year to increase their revenue. We've increased revenue by getting people back to work, by finding opportunities for them to have more jobs, reducing the cost of driving your car by \$120 a year by taking that one measure off. That's eight million vehicles owned by people in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Speaker, there used to be a time in this Legislature when Conservatives said, "Promise made, promise kept." My question to the Premier: What's the holdup?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: God’s country—thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you again for the for the question on that. Two hundred dollars per person as a tax rebate that went back to them—that was money that people had paid to us in income tax that we gave back to them because that was something that was important. And what did the members opposite do? They voted against it.

Reducing the gas tax by 10 cents per litre to give some of that instant relief back to people—what did the members opposite do again? They voted against that.

Every single measure that we put forward to put money back into the people’s pockets has been voted against by the Liberals.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources.

President Donald Trump has made it clear he doesn’t think the US needs Canadian or Ontario lumber, minerals or energy. Ontario’s natural resources of forests, minerals and energy are vital to our communities and economy. They support jobs, especially in northern Ontario, and are essential for our goals. They are key to Ontario’s strength and future growth. We need to keep building and keep selling what we make here at home and around the world.

1140

Speaker, can the minister please explain what steps our government is taking to protect and strengthen Ontario’s natural resources sector from growing threats coming from the United States?

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member for Oxford for that question. I can tell you right now that President Trump is dead wrong. Let’s be clear: The US does and will always need Ontario’s natural resources. We’re stronger together as friends and allies. That’s how we stand up to China and protect North American jobs.

Ontario’s natural resources help build homes, roads, cars and clean energy. They support thousands of good jobs in the north and across this province. That’s why our government is showing strong leadership to protect Ontario. We are cutting red tape, speeding up permits and making it easier to mine and harvest responsibly. We are working with our federal partners and the US to grow a better supply chain.

Speaker, Ontario’s economy depends on our resources, and we will never let them be pushed aside or diminished.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you to the minister for the response.

Families in the north and across Ontario are proud of the work they do in the natural resources sector. They know how much the sector means to our economy. But they also know these jobs are being threatened by tariffs.

When leaders in the US say they don’t need our resources, we can’t sit back. We must continue to stand up for Ontario and defend what we build here.

Our government has a plan focused on protecting Ontario jobs. We’re also working to make sure our resources are valued around the world. They should not be dismissed by our neighbours or anyone.

Speaker, can the minister explain how we are standing with our resource workers and pushing back against unfair attacks from the United States?

Hon. Mike Harris: Madam Speaker, I can tell you families in the north and across our province have every right to be proud. Our mining, forestry and energy workers help build Ontario and all of North America.

Once again, President Trump is wrong. The US needs our lumber, our minerals and our clean energy. Homes, highways, cars and batteries—none of this gets built without Ontario.

We are showing strong leadership. We’re speeding up permits and cutting red tape. We’re working with our federal partners and US leaders who understand how important Ontario is.

Speaker, this is about protecting Ontario jobs. It is about building a stronger Canada. And together with our allies, we will push back against unfair attacks and stand up for what we build here in this province.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians want to do the right thing and support our friends and neighbours by shopping local and supporting Ontario’s small businesses. Who could disagree?

A minor tweak to Ontario’s regulatory requirements would be a simple update requiring big box stores to label products with a Canada flag or an Ontario flag. This supports small businesses who will be hard hit by trade exposure.

Ontarians want this. Proudly labelling goods with an Ontario or Canadian flag would be one step to balance the economic environment.

Why does this government refuse to support small businesses and refuse to help consumers who want to shop local?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: We recognize the status quo is not an option in this tariff trade war that we have with the United States.

I want to give a big shout-out to the manufacturers here in Ontario, because during COVID, they came up with a program called made in Ontario. We have that sticker available on products that are being developed right now—that are being made—in Ontario. We’ll continue to promote that and continue to work with those manufacturers on it because we do think it’s very, very important to make sure that the people of Ontario recognize and know that products made in Ontario are good products and that’s what they should be purchasing.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: In previous answers to the official opposition, this government has suggested that the Ontario flag or the Canadian flag are red tape, or that supporting Ontario small businesses is red tape. We here in the official opposition are here to inform this government that supports for small businesses are not red tape.

Will this government finally show pride in our flag, update regulatory requirements for amazing Ontario-made products and ensure consumers can support Ontario's small businesses?

Mr. Dave Smith: We agree wholeheartedly that promoting Ontario is not red tape. We agree wholeheartedly that things made in Ontario are things that people should be purchasing.

If you look at the advertising campaign that this government has done, it has consistently been about promoting Ontario. The opposition members actually opposed the idea of that advertising campaign to say that Ontario is the place to invest, Ontario is the place to purchase from, Ontario is the centre of Canada's industrial might. They've opposed all of that.

We will continue to get behind all of those small businesses here in Ontario and make sure that we're doing the things that we need to do to promote them and ensure the success of all people in Ontario.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Adil Shamji: For the Premier: Last week, we heard from the Minister of Health all of the so-called action that has been taken by the Minister of Health since we faced the worst measles outbreak in the last three decades. We heard about letters that have been written and so-called funds that have been spent, and not even 24 hours had passed before we learned that the number of measles cases in this province had increased by over 200 and the measles outbreak in Ontario is accelerating.

Now that the government's approach to addressing measles has failed, what do the Minister of Health and the Premier have to say to Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Health for a response.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, Speaker, I'll say what I have been saying, what Dr. Kieran Moore has been saying for over a year and a half: Public health units need to refocus their efforts—which we did through a directive—to ensure that childhood vaccinations were up to date. We have ensured, as a government, to make sure that we have sufficient measles vaccines available to primary care clinicians, to public health units, to hospitals. We've done that. We are doing everything that we can to ensure that this outbreak that began in a very small area, very small group, is not going to continue to impact our communities.

Those are the changes that we make as a government to ensure that not only do public health units actually understand what their responsibilities are, but we give

them the financial ability to do that, and we direct them through the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

That's action, that's ensuring that people understand the value and importance of a vaccine that has been in the province of Ontario for over 50 years. We will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Back to the Premier: This is not confined to a small community now. We have measles in the Premier's own riding of Etobicoke North at the Woodbine Mall and Fantasy Fair, we've got measles in downtown Toronto at Ripley's Aquarium, and we've got the Minister of Health telling us she's been doing the same thing over and over again for a year and a half. And we know what that same thing is: It's underfunding public health, silencing our public health officials and doing absolutely nothing.

To the Premier: When will you take action? When will you simply utter the word "measles"?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: That's got to be Liberal math, Speaker, when you increase the budget of public health units by almost 20% and they call that a cut. It is insane that they do not understand that a 20% investment is actually more money for public health units in the province of Ontario.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Before we rise for lunch, I would like to announce that we have Patrice Barnes, the MPP for Ajax in the 43rd Parliament, joining us.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm very happy to have a guest here today from the town of Amherstburg. She is from my constituency, the constituency of Essex. Her name is Danielle Brindley. I'd like to welcome her to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like the House to welcome a remarkable organization that has been doing some very important and groundbreaking work in Ontario, calling for an end to anti-Black racism. Please join me in welcoming Black People United for Change, who are in the House today.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: ᐱᑦᑦᑦ

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It's a good afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone.

I'd like to welcome the leadership from Kiiwetinoong who are here today—I think they're arriving soon, but I don't see them. It's not every day that you see people from Kiiwetinoong, because it's thousands of kilometres away from where we are.

Welcome to Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who will be here shortly—he's right there—Anna Betty Achneepineskum; and, of course, their staff members: Krystyn Ordyniec, Kennedy Ling, Alison Anderson, Michael Heintzman and Martha Loon.

Welcome, Grand Chief Leo Friday from the Mushkegowuk Council.

From the Windigo First Nations Council, we welcome Anne Chabot.

Meegwetch for joining us today.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

MORE CONVENIENT CARE ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025

POUR PLUS DE SOINS COMMUNES

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to enact or amend various Acts related to health care / Projet de loi 11, Loi visant à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les soins de santé.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the member wish to briefly explain the bill?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The More Convenient Care Act, if passed, would take the next steps in the province's plan to provide more people with the right publicly funded care in the right place by making it easier to access their health care records, building healthier communities and bolstering the province's health care workforce today and in the future.

PETITIONS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Diana Smith from Capreol in my riding for these petitions. This week is Mental Health Week, and the petition is called "Invest in Mental Health Services."

What Diana and many people in Capreol are saying is that about one in five adults experience mental health challenges each and every year. It is really hard for people facing mental illness to be able to have access to the care they need close to home. There are long wait-lists in the Sudbury/Nickel Belt area, and throughout Ontario, to access mental health services. A big reason for this lack of access is that most community-based mental health services have not seen a base budget increase in 12 years. Think about it: You haven't been able to give your employees a raise for a very long time.

So they ask that the government prioritize mental health as a core part of our health care system by investing in much-needed services and professionals to ensure accessibility and timely care for all Ontarians, including the people of northern Ontario I represent.

I am happy to sign this petition, and I will ask Edward to bring it to the Clerk.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Ted Hsu: My petition today is from my constituents in Kingston and the Islands, many of whom are connected to Queen's University, the second-largest employer in my riding after CFB Kingston.

One of the things that they're saying in this petition is that in their experience in Ontario, universities are undervalued and chronically underfunded. They mention this government's own Blue-Ribbon Panel on Financial Sustainability in the Post-Secondary Education Sector from a year or two ago, which said that Ontario has the lowest level of post-secondary education funding in Canada.

They are asking this government to invest in Ontario's future—in fact, all of our futures—by investing in Ontario's universities. And specifically, going back to this government's own Blue-Ribbon Panel on Financial Sustainability in the Post-Secondary Education Sector, they are asking for a boost to base operating funds to Ontario's universities, as recommended by their very own blue-ribbon panel.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House and to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre. Today, I'm going to be presenting a petition on behalf of Black People United for Change. This petition is signed by many people from across Toronto and outside of the city as well.

They're calling upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urgently pass a bill to implement specific laws to protect Black individuals living in Ontario, who are facing anti-Black racism and discrimination, who are facing unjust punishment from law enforcement, exclusion and other systemic barriers.

We recognize in this House that the Black community in Ontario has suffered historical and ongoing injustices, including but not limited to racial profiling and disproportionate policing of Black individuals by law enforcement, and systemic barriers in education, employment, housing, health care and other essential services. There's always a persistence of harmful stereotypes and racist attitudes that contribute to the discriminatory practices in various facets of life. There's a lack of accountability for hate crimes—this is something that we all know very well in this House—especially for those who are Black individuals, as well as unfair legal outcomes and overrepresentation in the justice system, including wrongful punishment and convictions.

The undersigned are calling on this House to do everything they can to prevent and address anti-Black racism through comprehensive education awareness programs; to hold law enforcement accountable for discriminatory practices, with robust civilian oversight and anti-racism training; to ensure that there are fair and equitable practices; to do everything we can to make sure that Black individuals in Ontario have access to education, housing as well as employment.

This petition was presented and authored by Vanessa St. Louis and Emma Ansah, and I want to thank them for coming in today along with other friends and colleagues from Black People United for Change in Ontario.

VETERANS

Ms. Catherine Fife: If you were watching TV this weekend and you saw how the Netherlands was responding to the 80th anniversary of the liberation from Nazi Germany, you would be emotional, because it is emotional.

In that spirit, I want to introduce for the first time this petition entitled “Raise the ‘Lest We Forget’ Veterans’ Flag at Queen’s Park.” I think it’s important. This is actually coming from veterans, from Legions across the province of Ontario.

They are asking us to please raise the “Lest We Forget” veterans’ poppy flag at Queen’s Park on the last Friday of October each year, which will be flown at half-mast from sunrise to sunset.

1310

It’s important to understand that the “Lest We Forget” flag is also a symbol to honour veterans, active members of the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as first responders and their families, and the sacrifices that they have made on behalf of Ontario and on behalf of Canada.

I hope the Legislature will receive this petition as it is intended, as a way to actually show our respect for veterans and first responders across this province.

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and deliver this to the table for the first time.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here that talks about gas taxes. As we all know, the cost of living is going up, and one of the ways we can deal with that is to lower gas taxes, and this petition talks about that. It talks about the gas tax cut that was introduced by this provincial government. In addition to that, it talks about making that gas tax cut a permanent cut. It calls upon the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to help out Ontario families and make life a little bit more affordable by making the per-litre gas tax reduction a permanent reduction. I certainly support that. I support making this gas tax reduction a permanent reduction in the gas tax.

Therefore, I’m signing this petition to indicate my support and passing it on to this fine page, Hayden. Hayden is going to take it over to the Clerks’ table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, I have an important petition here calling on this government to develop an Ontario dementia strategy. We’ve been calling for this for years now. Currently, it takes an average of 18 months for people in Ontario to get an official diagnosis. Some patients often wait for years and years to even get their diagnostic testing done. More than half of patients suspected of having dementia in Ontario never actually get their full diagnosis. Research confirms that there are a lot of people who go through the stress and families go through the stress—and sometimes we lose a lot of lives in that process. The PET scan test approved in Ontario in 2017 is still not covered by OHIP for this. The Ontario government needs to work together.

We’ve got a lot of data that also says that it actually costs the government, costs the province more money by not doing the support, not giving the funding that’s necessary. Research findings show that Ontario will spend over \$27 billion from now until 2043 on ALC and long-term-care costs associated with people living with dementia.

So I’m calling on the government, calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to develop and commit a comprehensive funding strategy for dementia in Ontario now.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Just a reminder: Petitions are to be brief explanations.

Petitions?

TAXATION

Mr. Deepak Anand: My petition is actually non-partisan, from citizens of Ontario who are concerned about the costs—and I heard it from both sides of the aisle, with MPPs talking about reducing the costs, increasing the economy. This petition is about tariffs on steel, aluminum, fuel, costs added, and the implications on construction, transportation and manufacturing.

Madam Speaker, the residents are saying to please cut fuel taxes and are requesting the government to maintain a permanent reduction of gas taxes so that we can help and support the businesses and the residents of Ontario, so that we can, together, build a better, stronger Ontario.

I absolutely support this petition. I’m going to give it to the wonderful page Hayden, who is going to give it to the table.

Thank you, Hayden, for doing an incredible job.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the incredible Brenda Salo for these petitions called “911 Everywhere in Ontario.”

The month of May has started. The long weekend is on its way. We will see a lot of people coming to northern Ontario to enjoy everything we have to offer. Some of them, unfortunately, will run into trouble, dial 911 and

realize that this number is not in service in northern Ontario.

Speaker, we all know that in times of need, in times of an emergency, we dial 911. But access to 911 is not available in most parts of northern Ontario. In Ontario, it's available within the boundary of a municipality but not outside of a municipality. So if you leave Sudbury, there are three hours, before you reach Timmins, when there is no 911 available at all.

They have signed the petition to make sure that Ontario does the same thing that every other province in our country has done: Make 911 available everywhere so that if you face an emergency, you can dial 911 and receive the support that you need.

I'm happy to sign this petition, and I will ask my good page Stephaney to bring it to the Clerk.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: The petition that I'll be tabling this afternoon is called "Protect Farmland and Sustainable Growth in Waterloo Region."

Many of us will already know this story, but 770 acres of prime class 1 farmland are under threat of expropriation for an undisclosed industrial factory. There has been a true lack of transparency and accountability with regard to this development.

I hope we can all agree that stealing farmers' land is not what we are about in the province of Ontario, especially under the threat of Donald Trump and his tariffs. Our food sovereignty is our national sovereignty.

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Aashman.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Karen Lewis from Dowling in my riding for this petition. It's called "Neurological Movement Disorder Clinic in Sudbury."

For some reason, the people living in northeastern Ontario have a very high rate of neurological movement disorders. Neurological movement disorders are things like Parkinson's, Huntington's, dystonia, Tourette's, and many others.

The city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care for northeastern Ontario, so they would like a clinic to be set up at Health Sciences North, to have a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of movement disorders, a physiotherapist and a social worker, at a minimum. I think this clinic is long overdue and would help a lot of people who have to travel long distances now to gain access to treatment.

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

SOINS DE SANTÉ

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Juliette Denis pour ces pétitions : « Améliorer l'accès aux soins primaires ».

On sait tous que le système de santé public nous définit comme Canadiens, comme Ontariens, et nous différencie de nos voisins aux États-Unis. On a accès aux soins dont on a besoin basé sur nos besoins, pas sur notre habileté à payer. Malheureusement, près de 2,3 millions d'Ontariens et d'Ontariennes en ce moment n'ont pas de médecin de famille ou d'infirmière praticienne. On sait tous que la meilleure façon d'offrir des soins de qualité, c'est au travers des équipes interdisciplinaires comme les centres de santé communautaire, comme les cliniques dirigées par du personnel de soins infirmiers, comme les équipes de santé familiale, ainsi que les cliniques dirigées pour les personnes autochtones.

Donc, ils demandent au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'augmenter le financement pour les centres de santé communautaire, pour les cliniques d'infirmières praticiennes, pour les cliniques spécialisées pour les personnes autochtones, ainsi que pour les équipes de santé familiale.

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Zoya, qui a été très patiente, de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Suzanne Leblanc, who is from Hanmer in my riding, for this petition. This petition is called "Make PSW a Career."

You know full well that today at Queen's Park we have a lot of PSWs who have come. They've offered us a beautiful lunch today. They work in long-term care. They work in retirement homes. They work in home care. And they want what everybody else wants: a permanent, full-time job that is well paid—that offers some sick days, some holidays, maybe even a pension plan—so that they have enough money at the end of their shift to pay for rent and feed their family.

1320

The ones who work in home care want to make sure that they are paid for their travelling time. In my riding, they will show me that they have submitted over 400 kilometres of driving. Do you know how long it takes in the middle of the winter to travel 400 kilometres in northern Ontario? But those workers don't get paid for that time. Who works 10, 15 hours a week and doesn't get paid? PSWs who work in home care. This has to change. That's why they've signed this petition.

I will affix my name to it and ask my very patient page Zoya to bring it to the Clerk.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: I move this motion:

Whereas Ontario is in an affordability crisis, making it increasingly difficult for families to pay their monthly bills; and

Whereas Ontario businesses are struggling to stay afloat faced with US tariffs; and

Whereas the Premier promised to provide Ontarians with an income tax cut over seven years ago and has failed to deliver;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should make life more affordable for Ontario workers, families and small businesses by reducing the tax rate for Ontario's second income tax bracket from 9.15% to 7.15%, eliminating the provincial portion of the HST on home heating and hydro bills, and cutting the small business tax rate in half.

It's addressed to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Mr. Fraser has moved opposition day motion number 2.

I acknowledge the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: In case anybody missed question period this morning, you're probably going to hear a lot about the same things.

This is our first opposition day motion, so I am proud of all the work that everybody has put into it getting ready for today. It was an important issue for us to raise, because seven years ago the Premier, before he was Premier, promised an income tax cut that he never delivered—nada, nothing. He forgot about it. He forgot about that promise. Nothing has happened.

So, last year, Ontario Liberals put forward a recommendation to the government to split the second bracket between \$51,440 and \$75,000 and reduce the tax rate from 9.15% to 7.15%. That would mean a difference of \$900 a year to Ontario families.

Why is that important? That's important because we have an affordability crisis. Families are struggling just to put food on the table, to pay the rent, to pay the mortgage, to pay the bills. There's not a lot left over—if there is anything left over. An income tax cut is something that people can count on every week, every paycheque, something they know that's going to be there—not receiving a cheque willy-nilly every four years, at the whim of a Premier, because he's got something that's more important to him he wants to take care of, like an election.

So, in the spirit of good faith, we just wanted to give the opportunity for the government to say today, "Yes, we're for an income tax cut. We believe in income tax cuts." That's what the Premier says he believes in. That's what he said seven years ago. That's the thing that he committed to that he never delivered on, the thing that didn't get done. In all the things that got done, that's the thing that didn't get done—the thing that matters to families right now.

The second thing that we put forward relates to energy costs. Again, there's another promise—I remember very distinctly not just the Premier—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: —but members on the other side, some of them who are chirping right now because they don't like what I'm going to say.

What I'm going to say is, you all promised that electricity prices would go down. Did they go down? No, they didn't go down. What did they do? They went—

Interjections: Up.

Mr. John Fraser: Up, guys. And you all know that, eh? You all know they went up.

You committed to people that you would reduce their costs for electricity. It didn't happen.

So the least the Premier could do in this instance is actually remove the HST from home heating and electricity. That's going to mean about \$200 a year to families. It's important. I think it would be a way to unbreak the promise that he broke to reduce electricity prices.

As a matter of fact, providing an income tax cut to families—again, splitting that second income tax bracket between \$51,000 and \$75,000 and reducing the tax rate by about 2%, giving families about \$900 a year. That would be a great way to unbreak the promise that he broke, to fix it, to make it right. That's why we put the motion forward.

Thirdly, what's proposed in here is cutting the small business tax rate in half. This was brought forward last year by my colleague from Don Valley West. I know that she's going to have more to say about it in this debate. I think that would mean about \$16,000 to small businesses—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Thanks. I stand corrected: \$18,000.

That's going to help employees. That's going to help businesses. That's going to help create employment in the face of Trump tariffs.

There are people hurting out there right now because production lines are shutting down, especially in our auto industry. We heard about that this morning from the member from Oshawa. People are really hurting. We've got to do some things about that. Reducing income taxes will help. Reducing prices for energy will help.

The other thing we have to remember is, it's not just the big factories; it's not just the big businesses. Small businesses are going to be affected by this too. They need a break. They need support. That's why we put this forward.

I know my colleagues are eager, literally chomping at the bit, to have a few words to say about this, but let's reiterate very quickly what we're talking about.

Seven years ago, the Premier promised to cut income taxes. Guess what? It didn't happen. So we put forward a modest proposal to split the second rate—a modest proposal; I wasn't reading Tom Parkin's speaking notes. By splitting the second bracket between \$51,000 and \$75,000 and reducing the tax rate by 2%, that would mean \$900 to families. We put that forward. It's an opportunity for the government to vote for it.

Seven years ago, the Premier said, "I'm going to reduce electricity costs. They're going to be lower, folks. I'm lowering your electricity." Guess what? They didn't go down. They went up. So the least the Premier could do to unbreak his broken promise is to reduce the HST on home heating and electricity.

I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to opposition day motion number 2.

Speaker, while this government gives billions of taxpayer money to a foreign-owned spa and closes a beloved institution—the Ontario Science Centre, well loved in my riding of Don Valley West—so they can drive business to that spa, families and workers are struggling with an affordability crisis.

This motion asks the government to help families, to help workers, by finally making good on their seven-year-old promise that still stands broken today, to give an income tax cut to middle-income earners—about \$950. It also asks them to eliminate the provincial portion of HST on home heating and hydro, saving another couple of hundred dollars. And it asks them to cut the small business tax rate by half, from the current 3.2% to 1.6%, and increase the threshold that is eligible for that deduction from \$500,000 to \$600,000. That represents a 50% tax cut and a 20% threshold increase. That would save them about \$18,000 a year.

While people struggle, this government wants to build a tunnel. While people worry about being able to afford the basics like groceries, rent, their mortgage payment or utilities, this government went on a billion-dollar boozedoggle to get beer in corner stores a year early. While this government pays for billboards that try to hoodwink us into thinking everything is great here in Ontario, the reality tells a very different story.

1330

Here are a few facts. The government talks about creating a million jobs. The government promised to bring back 300,000 manufacturing jobs that went south during the financial crisis, when the dollar was at par, but the reality is they've only done about one tenth of that. That's right: 30,000 jobs of that one million were in manufacturing, the sector they brag about the most. But while they brag about creating jobs, they're not bragging about another very important measure: Ontario's unemployment rate. It jumped to an 11-year high of 7.7% at the end of 2024.

Ontario used to be the engine of economic growth. We have the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. Ontario—I'm going to repeat it: the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. Usually we're in the lower half of provincial rankings, but now, for the first time since the 1970s, we are second in the country—that means thousands of families who are trying to make ends meet. They're working hard to do everything right. They're falling behind. It means that graduates who are trying to enter the workforce can't find a job. The real story is that job creation is not keeping up with the number of people losing jobs and looking for work.

The government's inability to fix the problem of unemployed workers is making cost-of-living pressures even worse. There are currently 667,000 people unemployed in this province. That's up from when this government was elected. The situation isn't something

that we can blame on US tariffs, because the performance of Ontario's labour market—the poor performance—has been steadily deteriorating versus other provinces, in the seven years of this government's mandate. Under this government, unemployment has increased three and a half times faster than job creation, and that's not good for workers in this province.

While the government brags about creating jobs, companies that received billions of dollars in public subsidies, tax breaks and bailouts—money that came from Ontario taxpayers—are turning around and threatening to shut down or move elsewhere. These are companies that made promises to create jobs, to invest in our communities, and now they're talking about walking away, leaving workers and towns to pick up the pieces.

Large companies aren't the only ones closing up shop. Small businesses—the heart of our economy, the places that sponsor your kids' sports team, who know your family and give back to their communities at local community events—are feeling the pain.

A small business owner met with me recently. He works in the construction business. With the affordability crisis that homeowners and other businesses are facing, his business is down. He's struggling to keep his doors open.

In 2024, the number of small businesses in Ontario that filed for bankruptcy or were forced to restructure increased by over 20%. That's not just a number on a page. That's a family-run shop closing its doors and their workers losing their jobs.

Business insolvencies have been rising steadily since 2022. In 2024, nearly 500 Ontario small businesses were in bankruptcy proceedings or trying to restructure to keep their doors open. Business insolvencies have continued in 2025 and are now tracking to be the worst in 10 years. Small businesses could have benefited from a full year of savings if my small business tax cut bill had been implemented, as proposed in 2024. But this Conservative government voted against that tax cut. That would have been \$18,000 back in the pockets of small businesses, enough to make a difference. It could have saved some of them from shutting their doors. It could have helped them keep their workers working.

I'm going to read a couple of quotes from some of the businesses that supported my tax bill last year.

Let me start with the CFIB. The CFIB said, "On behalf of our 38,000 Ontario small business members across all sectors, we urge" the Minister of Finance and his "government to support private member's Bill 195.... Lowering the ... (small business tax rate) would allow employers to further invest in their employees, expand their businesses and grow Ontario's economy. It would also encourage start-ups and new businesses to risk taking the plunge on a new enterprise."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which also supported the bill, said, "Small businesses are still struggling, and the Ontario chamber welcomes tax relief proposals such as this one."

And from a small business in my riding:

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

“This is where” Bill 195 “becomes particularly important. By cutting taxes on small businesses, it will help alleviate some of the financial burdens we face as business owners, enabling us to reinvest in our businesses, retain staff, and continue providing valuable services to the community.

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

This “bill marks a positive move towards supporting their growth and success.”

The Tourism Industry Association said, “The measures in Bill 195” echo the TIAO’s “call for small business tax relief as tourism operators continue to grow their visitor numbers while seeing the cost of business rise due to inflationary pressures, high interest rates, supply chain disruptions, and labour shortages. TIAO urges swift passage of Bill 195 to deliver the expanded capacity it would offer small tourism” operators “and visitor destinations across the province.”

So what we are doing today is calling on this government to support small businesses, to support families and workers. We’re giving them a chance to do that with their support for opposition day motion 2 today, and I hope they will do that with us.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: It’s interesting to hear some of the arguments that are coming forward from members of the third party on this, and some of the things that they historically have done to create the environment we had in Ontario when we were first elected back in 2018. Let’s not lose sight of some of those things.

They came forward with a plan to transition the electrical grid—a plan that caused our hydro rates to increase by 300%. It was something that was very difficult for a lot of small businesses, because that effectively was a tax on business. It was a way to do something that caused hardship in the province.

I remember very, very well, during campaigning in the 2018 election, that there was a slogan someone came up with, where you had to choose between heating and eating—and coming from a riding that has a very significant rural component to it, that was actually the truth. There were a lot of individuals who had to heat their home with electricity because natural gas is not something that you could run through the Canadian Shield effectively. It’s difficult to dig up granite to run a pipeline for natural gas. We still had people who were on oil. We had a number of people who had transitioned from a

wood-burning stove to an electric because it was more reliable for them, but, at the end of the day, the hydro cost was astronomical.

When we take a look at what the Liberal plan was—and this has been confirmed by independent auditors—their plan would have seen our hydro rates increase by 20% more than what they have gone up.

So when we take a look at what they had done and the damage that they’ve done to the province—it is taking time for us to fix some of those things.

1340

Let’s look at the manufacturing side. We had 300,000 manufacturing jobs leave Ontario under their leadership, and it’s because the cost of doing business was so high. We’ve reversed that. We’ve created almost a million jobs in Ontario since we were first elected.

The member opposite threw out a number that I’m struggling with, because with the Volkswagen plant that has been announced and is under construction, there are 32,000 jobs between Volkswagen and the supply chain that is feeding it. I’m struggling with how they come up with their math. Perhaps it was the Liberal discovery math that they had in education—that was another one of their failed policies on it.

They raised the employer health tax. That is something that caused hardship on business. That’s something that we actually reduced on it.

They increased the fees on aviation fuel. When you’re in northern Ontario, especially if you’re in a remote community in northern Ontario, all of your product is being flown into you. So that’s a tax on the average person.

We can’t forget their carbon tax, cap-and-trade system that increased the price of everything. They tried to make an argument that this was something that was good for the people of Ontario. I want to point out that when the federal government finally listened to us and removed the consumer carbon tax, the cost of gasoline dropped 20 cents a litre overnight—overnight. And yet, they had made the argument that that was something that was good for the people of Ontario, that it was good to pay that much in addition to it.

When you look at simple things like licence plate fees—that was one of the fees that they continually increased. It got up to \$10 a month for the licence on your car, \$120 a year. Premier Ford saw that as a tax on everyday Canadians, something that was hurting the average family taking their kids to the soccer game, going to get groceries—all of those things. We removed that: \$120 a year per car—eight million cars. That’s a lot of money that was put back into the pockets of the people in Ontario—in total, over \$12 billion in savings is what we’ve actually done, to give money back to the people of Ontario.

We had a rebate just this past year: \$200 per person. If you’re a family with three kids—husband, wife, three kids; wife and wife and three kids; husband and husband and three kids—however your family is made up, that’s \$1,000. Why did we do that? We did that because that was taxpayer money. That was money that the people of

Ontario gave to the Ontario government, and we gave it back to them, because we felt it was something that should happen.

In July of this year alone, more than 100,000 low-income seniors in Ontario are going to be eligible for the GAINS program, which is a way of reducing the cost of living for them.

Going back to the gas taxes for just a minute: 10 cents per litre for gas and diesel. We removed that because everyday people in Ontario travelling wherever they're travelling were finding it difficult to cover expenses. For the average person, that's \$400 a year that goes right back into their pocket, that they can choose to spend however they choose.

Then we've had some people say to us, "Yes, but what if you're a commuter?" Well, what if you are a commuter? You're taking GO Transit into Toronto. You're hopping onto the TTC. Maybe you're using York transit or Viva or any of the others that way. We introduced One Fare. That is saving the average commuter \$1,600 per year—\$1,600 extra that you have to choose to spend however you want.

When we look at what the Liberals have done and what they continue to talk about, I want to transition back, because they did bring it up—the election that we just had in February. One of the Liberal platforms—they want to talk about affordability for the average person, for the average family in Ontario. They want to talk about this—and they have. In their platform, the one promise that they made that was significantly different than something that Premier Ford has said his entire time—Premier Ford has said it's too expensive for the average person in Ontario to go to post-secondary school, so he held the line on tuition fees. One of their core platforms was to lift the tuition freeze. What they were saying is, they wanted to make it more expensive for that high school graduate to go to college or university. They wanted the average family in Ontario to pay more money to improve the lives of their kids—very short-sighted.

We have been focusing on bringing jobs back to Ontario, building the economy in Ontario, making life more affordable for the people of Ontario, and our plan has been working. You've seen an increase in revenue, without raising a single tax in Ontario. We've actually lowered taxes, and we've seen an increase in revenue. Why have we seen an increase in revenue?

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Smith: Because although the Liberals opposite want to chirp at me on it, almost a million people more have jobs today in this province than they did back in 2018. Our plan is working.

We know there's more work to be done. We know that we're facing a threat with the Republican administration putting tariffs on things, and the threats that Donald Trump has put forward, and we know the status quo is not the way that we should go. That's why, at 11 o'clock today, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and the Minister of Finance made an announcement about expanding the tax credits for businesses in Ontario—\$1.3 billion. That's all about protecting jobs

here in Ontario. That's all about ensuring that we're doing the things we need to do so that the people of this province have the opportunity to continue with a high quality of life. We know that if the economy is not going well, there is nothing else that is.

We have increased funding in health care by \$30 billion, and the only way we've been able to do that is because the economy was growing, because revenues were going up, because of the changes that we were making—again, not a single tax increase in almost seven years. The entire time that we have been in government there has not been a single increase in provincial taxes. And yet, the revenue for the province has gone up, and it has gone up because we've focused on things that improve business.

The employer health tax: another way that the Liberals previously just stuck it to small business, and we have made it easier for businesses because we have lowered that.

When we look at some of the other things that have been done—the business education tax. Again, the education tax is something that goes to fund education. Our education numbers have gone up. The amount of money that we're spending on education has gone up. And yet, we reduced that rate, giving \$450 million in relief to businesses. Over 200,000 businesses are receiving that now.

The Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit: another way that we have made it easier for businesses to work in Ontario.

We're the first government to have a Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. We recognize that a lot of times those regulations, although well-meaning, get in the way and they obstruct each other. Government's role is to regulate to the point of integrity but not to the point of interference. What we have seen is that previous governments put in so much red tape, made it so difficult for businesses to function and thrive, that we were interfering with it. We are continuing on that, finding ways that we can reduce the cost to do business. When businesses are successful, they hire more people. When there are more people with jobs, the economy is doing better. When the economy is doing better, revenue for the province is up, and that means that spending on the core things that we all expect also increases.

1350

Speaker, we've heard the rhetoric from the other side on this constantly. They talk about lots of things. They talk a good game, but all you have to do is look at the history. Look at what they've actually done. They increased our debt to the point that, in 2018, when we were first elected, we were the most indebted subnational state in the entire world—

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Smith: I know they don't like to hear those things, but that is the record that they gave us.

We were one of the quickest to recover after the COVID-19 pandemic because we had done those core investments in Ontario to make sure that businesses could

thrive. We have the Associate Minister of Small Business and the work that we're doing there.

The main street program—again, during COVID, we saw that companies needed to transition, to have more of an online presence, and that is something that we invested in, in all of those small businesses. The number of small businesses that have come to me and said that that was a game-changer for them—it allowed them to get their product out, it allowed them to sell their product safely to people. It was a very small initiative that paid massive dividends for us because it kept a lot of those small mom-and-pop shops open.

When we look at some of the other measures that have been done—we've had people say to us, "Some of our most vulnerable find it very difficult." That's why we've increased ODSP rates. We're actually the first government in history to tie it to inflation rates, so they'll never get further behind. They will continually, every single year, have their ODSP increased based on what the cost of living has gone up by. We want to make sure that we're there to support all of those people in Ontario with everything that they need.

Yet, the formerly independent Liberals, who now have party status—congratulations on that; you got to 14 from nine. They did vote against it. I can't say that as a party they voted against it because they weren't a party. They were just a group of independents. But they did stand up and were heard and voted against all of those measures. The \$200 rebate—they voted against it. The gas tax reduction—they voted against it. Every measure that we've put forward to make life easier for the people of Ontario, they voted against.

Now, after we have already lowered the income tax for small businesses, they're coming forward again and saying, "You should do something different." Yet, when you look at what we have done, they said no to all of it—every single measure, they said no to.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Smith: It really is interesting to hear the chirping that's coming from them.

I don't want to make it personal, but I do have to point this out: Under the previous Premier's regime, there is one single member who served in government—and it wasn't that long ago, but there is only one who survived from it.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: The good-looking one.

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes, the good-looking one from Ottawa. I do like him a lot. We do have a lot of good conversations outside of the chamber.

Other things that they've done: They made it more difficult for the average person—and they're going to chirp me on this; they're going to heckle me on this, but they increased the beer tax, they increased the wine tax. That's something that the average person in Ontario actually does consume. They do go out and buy the odd beer. And there's nothing wrong with an adult beverage being consumed responsibly that way.

What have we done? We've found ways to reduce the costs on that. We've got—

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Smith: Speaker, you just have to laugh when you hear some of the stuff. I wish it could get picked up by the microphone—because it is laughable to hear some of the things that they're attacking me on this.

Here's the reality of it: When we look at the actual leader of the Liberal Party, the leader who doesn't have a seat here in the Legislature, what's her record? Her record is one that raised the taxes. She didn't think that it was a good idea—for the gas tax. In fact, she has talked about putting the licence plate sticker fee back on and talked about how tolls are a great way of bringing revenue in for the province.

We have found ways to increase the revenue of the province by \$60 billion without raising a single tax. I cannot emphasize that enough: without raising a single tax. We have brought manufacturing jobs back to Ontario. We have increased the number of people who are working by a million people. And yet, they have the gall to say some of these things.

They put tolls on Highway 412 and 418. They increased the wine tax. They increased the driver's licence fees—all of those things. And yet, we've reversed all of that.

We've found ways to make it more affordable for the people of Ontario. We did things on the electrical file to keep the costs down—not with any help from the former independents who called themselves the Liberals in the last two governments. We have been building the economy. We've been supporting workers.

That's why, on February 27, the people of Ontario returned 80 Progressive Conservatives to this House. They recognize that we've had their backs all along and that we have been doing things to make life more affordable for them. We have been doing things to improve the economic conditions in Ontario. We have been doing things to bring jobs back to Ontario. We have been doing things to make life more affordable for all of them.

Madam Speaker, I will be voting against and I will be recommending that all of my caucus members would also vote against this foolish measure that, once again, the Liberals are putting forward. They're all talk, but you simply have to look at past history. All you have to do is look at what they did in the 15 years that they were in government, the damage that they did to this province—and the fact that, after three elections, they're only able to come up with 14. That's because the people of Ontario know that their plan has not worked ever and will not work. That's why they continue to be in third party status.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's great to be here to debate this very important motion—a motion that speaks directly to what families, workers and small businesses across Ontario are feeling each and every single day: the crushing weight of an affordability crisis that this government has done little to address.

I know they have short memories on that side of the aisle, so let's not forget that seven years ago—actually, it was only a short time after the Premier said that his support for Donald Trump would be unwavering. Seven years ago,

the Premier stood up before the people of Ontario and promised an income tax cut for the middle class. Seven years, and what do Ontarians have to show for it? Zippo—absolutely nothing. Not only has the Premier failed to deliver on that promise, but he has voted against every single opportunity presented by the opposition to ease the burden.

We brought forward a proposal to eliminate HST from home heating—something that would directly help families keep the heat on during the coldest winter months. We did that two winters ago, and the Premier and his government said no. We called for a tax credit to help parents put their kids in sports or sign them up for art class and after-school activities, and the Premier and each and every member of his government got up and said no. And when small businesses, still recovering from the pandemic and now facing American tariffs and rising input costs, asked for a break, the Premier and each and every member of his government said no. That's not leadership. That is abandonment.

1400

Today, the Premier has another choice: He can support this motion and finally deliver real tax relief or he can once again ask Ontarians to wait.

Let's talk a little bit about what the motion proposes, because I don't think everyone has gotten the memo on the other side. It's progressive. It's responsible. It is common sense:

- a tax cut for the middle class, putting money back into their pockets, for middle-income earners;

- the elimination of the HST on home heating and hydro bills, because no one should be taxed for staying warm in the winter or cooling their homes in the summer; and

- cutting the small business tax rate in half because small businesses are the backbone of our economy and they need support, not red tape and rising costs.

These are practical, affordable, targeted measures that can be implemented now—not some day in the future, not in another election cycle, but today. Make no mistake, the need is urgent. Food prices are up. Rent is skyrocketing. Utility bills, despite the Premier's promise to lower them, are actually now outpacing wages. People are skipping meals to pay for medication. Parents are putting off extracurricular activities for their kids because they simply can't make the math work. These are real choices being made in real households each and every day.

It used to be true that families would have more money left over at the end of the month. Now they have more month left over at the end of the money. And it has all happened under this government's watch.

Madam Speaker, the Premier likes to say he stands up for Ontarians, but he's not standing up for the family trying to put three kids in soccer this summer or hockey later this fall. He's not standing up for people who are struggling to pay their hydro bill or the parent who's working two jobs to afford groceries. He's not standing up for local small businesses trying to keep the lights on and the payroll met.

What we're proposing today is about common sense—lowering taxes on families and small businesses to provide them fairness and relief. It's about empowering Ontarians to build their own future and giving them a fighting chance to succeed.

Madam Speaker, the Premier likes to often talk about how he gives out his phone number so that Ontarians can call him with their problems. The challenge is, people who are calling him about the affordability crisis are being put on hold. They're being told to wait. They're tired of waiting for housing. They're tired of waiting for child care. They're tired of waiting for affordability. And they're tired of waiting for tax relief.

The time to act is now. This government has had seven years to take action. Instead, they've delivered slogans and photo ops. We're at a tipping point. People are losing faith in their institutions, in their government, and, yes, in politicians who say one thing and do another.

So what are we doing? On this side of the House, we're drawing a line. If you believe families deserve to keep more of what they earn, vote for this motion. If you believe businesses deserve a break, vote for this motion. If you believe that the cost of heating your home isn't a luxury, vote for this motion. It's not complicated. It's a question of priorities.

Do we want a government that delivers practical help or one that keeps breaking their word?

Madam Speaker, the motion is a test. It's a test of sincerity. It is a test of leadership. And it's a test of whether this chamber is ready to stand with those who are being squeezed the hardest.

Ontario Liberals are ready. We're showing where we stand. We're standing with working families, with small businesses, and with the people of Ontario who have built this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today and to speak to this motion that we have here today: an opposition motion by my friends in the third party. It's always an honour for us to get up and speak on behalf of our constituents.

I did want to first begin my speech by mentioning that I did have an outburst, a rather loud chuckle, when I heard my friend the third party leader use the term "modest proposal." I don't think that he understood or interpreted—maybe it was in the heat of the moment, as he was speaking—what I was meaning by that. I would caution all members to never use the combination of those two words, "modest proposal," because what you are suggesting is an allusion to a work by Jonathan Swift, a notable satirist who, in 1729, published what is largely known as *A Modest Proposal*. It's satire, but there are two different versions of satire. One is the Horatian type, which points out human foibles and characteristics in an educative but often lighthearted way. But then there's satire after Juvenal, which is often more biting, more pessimistic, and it is deep and dark. The example from Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*, is biting, dark and

rather nasty. The full title of that work is *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and for Making them Beneficial to the Public*. So even in its title, it doesn't seem that objectionable. But as Jonathan Swift went through the plight of Irish folks and the poor who were struggling at that time, he said, "A young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasee, or a ragout." Jonathan Swift was suggesting that the children of poor people be used as food for the elite class. So any time you say "modest proposal," I just caution you about what you are actually saying.

As we look towards this opposition day motion, small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They comprise 80% of our economic activity here in Ontario. Many people pursuing that dream will put their personal finances at risk. They will also put their family finances at risk, oftentimes risking their homes. They risk their relationships because they're busy all the time, with blood, sweat and tears, trying to make that business succeed. They'll often lose friends; they will lose partners; they will lose spouses. It is a huge leap of faith and one that we should always be making sure that we, as legislators, are supporting.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the southwestern Ontario branch, who had their 30th anniversary. It was a tremendous evening. They have awarded \$300,000 over the last 30 years to young, deserving people who are pursuing a career in manufacturing. It was fantastic. CME has also done some wonderful work that I want to shout out and recommend to all members, which includes their B2B Connections Portal as well their trade and info hub, so that Ontario-located businesses can purchase from other Ontario businesses—something that I think this government should also be looking to support.

As we look towards this opposition day motion, I think back to the pandemic, when we, as the official opposition, put forward our Save Main Street plan, which was endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, to provide that support for those small business owners who were deeply struggling as a result of COVID-19 infection as well as the closures that we saw, which were the longest in Ontario.

Also, we, as the official opposition, have long supported cutting taxes for small businesses to make sure that people can prosper and succeed.

I think, as well, toward our Homes Ontario motion, which I was pleased to bring forward and which has been brought forward a number of times by the official opposition, to have the government get back into the business of building housing.

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To my friends from the third party: I was really quite interested when their leader, the new Prime Minister, had an ad and in that ad he said—and it was like a direct quote from one of my speeches—that we need to have a wartime

effort again to make sure that the government is building housing. What is very strange, though, is that the third party, during some of the votes on this, remained agnostic. They didn't actually vote to support the government building housing.

I think about a great London MPP, J.P. Robarts, who was the Premier of Ontario, who actually built 70,000 to 80,000 permanently affordable units. He was a Conservative.

We should see, in terms of the provision of housing, greater focus on re-establishing rent control between tenancies, plugging that hole of vacancy decontrol that the Liberals opened up, allowing unethical landlords to kick good, long-term tenants out because they realized there is a financial benefit.

Many seniors in my riding, when their building is sold, are scared. They're scared that they're going to live in their cars, because that new owner does not care about them. There is no relationship there. They look at them as a number on a ledger sheet, and looking at them as a number they realize, "That number is awfully low, and if I get rid of them, I can get so much more money." Well, people aren't numbers, and that's why we need to make sure that we plug that Liberal mistake of allowing for vacancy decontrol.

I also think, as we look towards the difficult time in which we live, when our economic sovereignty is at stake, our political sovereignty is at stake—I was honoured to bring forward a motion on employee ownership, which was also endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Right now, there are trillions of dollars at stake, as small business owners are often the baby boomer generation, and they don't have a succession plan in place. They're not sure what they want to do with their small business. As business owners, they have to seek out the greatest possible financial benefit from their business, so they will often sell to the person with the deepest pockets. That can be a multinational corporation that doesn't really care about those employees. They could change the name. They could destroy the community quality and character of it. It has so many different problems with it. But those owners also don't really have a good avenue—or have not had a good avenue—to sell to their employees, up until now.

My employee ownership strategy would promote that idea across Ontario so that owners are aware of that—because employee owners are 92% wealthier. It changes the entire dynamic of what labour is itself. When you are working for yourself, you have a sense of value; you have a sense of purpose. I've heard from employee owners who, when they have made that transition into the owner, will look outside and see a van sitting and they will realize, "Oh, my gosh, why is that van sitting? It needs to be going out and making money." They want to make sure that they are not only making the business succeed but helping themselves succeed.

Employee ownership is also a great tool and a great option during this time of economic strife because, as there is an economic downturn, employee-owned companies

end up being able to maintain their employees. There are fewer layoffs. There are fewer problems. So this is something the government really needs to investigate at this time.

I was thrilled to bring this forward, and I was absolutely thrilled to have the endorsement of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I could not believe that the Conservative government voted against it. In the hallways, I heard lots and lots of Conservative MPPs saying this was great; this was amazing. They liked everything about it, but it was because someone with an orange shirt introduced it that they couldn't vote for it. I get it. It's rather juvenile, and it's rather depressing and distressing to think of the state of our democracy, that someone can't vote for a good idea, even though they're on the government benches—I guess there are no votes of conscience. But I'll accept that for what it is, and I'll accept the candour with which it was delivered to me.

But I was most surprised when the third party—who really weren't the third party at the time; they were the independent Liberals—actually stood and voted against it.

I thought, “How is it possible that here we are in Ontario's Legislature, and the Ontario NDP is bringing forward a motion that has been endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and we have Conservatives voting against it and we have Liberals voting against it”—absolutely jarring. Hopefully somebody on that side will pick this up. You can sign your name to it; I don't care. It's yours. Just get it done. Thank you.

I also want to look at some analysis from the Liberals' opposition day motion and their tax cuts because I think whenever we are talking about the establishment of an organization, a business or a company or really any sort of dialogue, we need to think about terms of reference. We need to make sure that we're speaking the same language, that we understand what each other is saying—hence my little education session on a modest proposal. We've heard the third party talk about how this is going to benefit the middle class. Well, I have to ask the question: What do they really mean when they use the words “middle class”? I don't think that they really know what they mean. When we look at this legislation itself, this is legislation that benefits the highest income earners in a dramatic fashion.

This is an update from the election platform that the Liberals had in 2024, and it's quite similar, but it doubles down on giving more money to the richest people. If you look at household incomes of \$50,000—still zero. For those with \$60,000, it's \$142, and that remains the same. For households with \$70,000 in income, it still remains the same, \$342. But it's when you get to the \$150,000 and the greater than \$250,000 incomes that you start to get the best bang for your buck from this opposition day motion. It's glorious for rich people. They have doubled the payout to the highest taxable incomes, but they've given no additional benefits to those people who are struggling, those people under \$75,000. It has been called aggressively regressive.

What is also curious about this motion, as it stands right now, is that there's no indication of how this will be paid

for, and it has been pointed out that this will actually defund the public sector. The original plan would have defunded the public sector by \$2.7 billion. This plan would defund the public sector by \$4.5 billion.

I want to quote Tom Parkin, who stated: “A high income earner would therefore receive three tax cuts from Crombie's proposal: one from the bracket rate cut, a second because about \$10,000 of income is now not subject to the first surtax, and a third because about \$5,000 of income is now not subject to the second surtax.” The math here is just not mathing.

I'm also surprised whenever I hear the third party talk about hydro. I mean, we should all be shaking our heads and stepping back and just wondering what the heck is going on in this world and if the Twilight Zone is indeed real. This government was the government that continued—it was almost like it was the Conservative-Liberal consortium. They sort of finished what the Conservatives started, because in 2003, as we know, Mike Harris started breaking up Ontario Hydro into different crown corporations, whether it was the transmission, the delivery etc.

I want to quote here:

“While the PC government of Mike Harris set the stage for privatization by dismantling the former Ontario Hydro into separate crown agencies for generating, transmission and system management, it's the Liberals who really embraced giving private corporations the chance to profit from electricity....

“The Wynne government sold off a majority stake in publicly owned Hydro One. It means Hydro One's salaries are no longer disclosed on the sunshine list, its practices can't be scrutinized by the province's Ombudsman and its books aren't open to the Auditor General.”

It's like they took something and then they just ran with it.

We also think about the gas plants where billions were wasted for that very political purpose. I also think about how, in 2014, Kathleen Wynne got rid of the investigation committee that was going to look into the corruption of the entire Ontario Hydro sale and the cancellation of those gas plants.

1420

Almost as audacious as you can possibly imagine, they had a \$7,500-per-plate fundraiser with the same banks that helped them with the privatization. They gave \$163 million to their biggest corporate donors. They had \$11.7 million they took from a low-income hydro-related tax relief program and spent that on advertising and consultants. They took \$6.5 million and gave that to consultants for a sale that was for \$6 million. How do you make up that math? It just makes absolutely no sense.

Speaker, the Ontario NDP has long been in favour of ensuring that there is affordability, but we want to make sure that those measures for affordability don't disproportionately help the super rich. We want to make sure that we're moving the needle for the lowest-income earners.

We also have to think, with this cut, as it stands right now—how is it going to be made up? Is this going to become further program cuts for health care, for education? These are things that are funded through taxes. We have to think about the grey wave that is happening now, where people are getting older and their health care needs are getting greater.

What this proposal also does is, it could decrease the value of tax credits. Think of the example of the caregiver tax credit, the age credit, the disability credit. People may be better off with a lower tax rate, but that benefit is cut, so their tax credits actually decline in value. Small business tax cuts have to have a guardrail to prevent business owners and big corporations from taking advantage of that rate. I'm not sure that this is possible.

The Ontario NDP has been the only party that has talked about the removal of the provincial portion of the HST. It has been consistently opposed by this Liberal government. I believe we introduced this in 2011. At that time, the Liberal government voted against the bill. They dismissed it as a tax grab. They were treating five million Ontarians as if they were some sort of greedy social interest group. The PCs, at the time, voted for our bill—hurray—but then, when they went through the door of power, they must have bumped their head.

As we look at this bill, I don't think that it is ignoble. I think there are potentially good purposes with this. Unfortunately, I think they have to really get out their calculators and check their math a little bit more carefully. I think they should also study their history books and make sure that they're not making references that they don't understand. But I think this government needs to do a heck of a lot more to be supporting small businesses, which are the economic backbone of our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

MPP Andrea Hazell: I rise today to speak on opposition day motion 2, on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood, a community I have been so proud to represent since the summer of 2023. This is a beautiful and diverse community, but also one that is too often overlooked when it comes to affordability and opportunity.

In Scarborough–Guildwood and in Ontario, far too many families are struggling—not just with the rising cost of groceries, but with rent that keeps going up and up, hydro bills that feel impossible to pay, and paycheques that don't last longer than a couple of grocery runs. Many families are working two or three jobs and still falling behind. This is the current Ontario that we are living in. Parents are skipping meals so their kids can eat, and seniors are choosing between heating their home or paying for their medication.

The child poverty rate in my riding alone is 34.1%. That means one in three children is living in poverty—again, this is seven years under this government. Over one million people are at a food bank every year. I'm pretty sure that number is increasing. Every day, I hear about children who are skipping school to stand in lines at the

food banks—I have seen them with my own eyes—just to make sure their family has something to eat that night. No child in Ontario should have to live like this.

During the snap election, I heard from tens of thousands of people—working families, seniors, young parents—who told me the same heartbreaking thing: “We are doing everything we can, and it is still not enough.” They can't save after paying their rent or their mortgage. They are choosing between paying for medication or buying groceries.

I heard from a mother who's skipping lunch every day just so she can make sure her kids have something to eat at dinner. I didn't read this. I heard these stories while knocking at the doors. A senior told me they are breaking their pills in half because they can't afford to refill their prescription. I met a father working three jobs and who is still unable to afford breakfast for his kids before school.

Life in Ontario is unaffordable, and it's just getting worse and worse. It has never been this unaffordable than over the last seven years, under the leadership of this government.

Horrible stats I'm going to share with you right now:

- over one million people visited a food bank in a single year between April 2023 and April 2024;

- the cost of rent has risen by 83%—and last year, this government voted down my bill, the Relief for Renters Act, 2024, which, if passed, would have put real money back into the pockets of Ontarians, who we are representing right here in this chamber;

- grocery prices continue to soar, even as inflation decreases;

- utility bills for home heating and hydro are higher and harder to pay;

- Ontario has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada at 7.5% and the highest youth unemployment rate at 16.4%—it's so sad—and, listen up, in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, the unemployment rate is at 16.3%.

Over 50,000 young people have left Ontario for a better life in provinces where they can actually afford to build a future. They're leaving behind their families and communities, not because they want to, but because they feel as though they have no choice.

No one should have to live like this in the place that we call Ontario, the economic engine of Canada.

This government has spent \$2.2 billion, to a foreign company with no track record at all—and yet, they can't do anything to help the families of Ontario.

Ontarians are doing everything they can. They are working hard, doing everything right and still falling behind, and that is simply just wrong.

This motion is a chance to right that wrong. We have the solutions to give the people of Ontario a quality and affordable life. So let's put money back into the pockets of Ontario workers and families during these uncertain times. Let's bring stability back to the lives of the families who live in Ontario and look to us to make sure that they're having a better quality of life. They elected us as their representatives in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm pleased to be standing here to speak on the Liberals' motion to cut taxes for middle-income and high-income earners.

I just want to summarize the motion a little bit. This motion aims to reduce the tax rate for Ontario's second income tax bracket—people who are earning \$52,000 or more—as well as eliminate the provincial portion of the HST on home heating and hydro bills, and cut the small businesses tax rate in half. It's currently 3.2%, so that would bring it down to 1.6%.

There are some measures in the Liberals' motion that are reasonable. The measures around helping small businesses are important.

In my riding of University–Rosedale, we have thousands of small businesses along main streets—Ossington, Bloor, College, Yonge Street. Just before the election, I went door to door to talk to them about some of the concerns they have, and overwhelmingly, I would meet small business owners and staff who were having difficulty making ends meet. Some of the biggest issues they faced were the need to pay the rent—that was one of the biggest issues they faced, which is why we decided to incorporate commercial rent control reform, to begin that conversation, into our election platform. When we're looking at the biggest expenses small businesses face, it's rent that is one of them.

1430

The other thing that I want to talk about a little bit more is what we're concerned about with this measure. The biggest concern we have about this motion is that this tax cut is regressive. It's helping high-income earners. It's not helping people who are struggling the most in Ontario to get by. When we're talking about the income tax break, it is for people who are earning \$52,000 or less—and the biggest beneficiaries of this bill would be people who are earning \$100,000 to \$200,000.

When I look at who is struggling in Ontario, I think about the people who are lining up for a food bank right now, who might be earning minimum wage or who are on social assistance. They will not be benefiting from this motion. That's not who the Liberals are aiming to help right now. I think about the workers in my riding who are on minimum wage or who are just above minimum wage—our baggage handlers, our baristas, our checkout clerks, our delivery drivers, our customer service staff.

Life is not going to get more affordable for people who are struggling to make ends meet, with this motion. And I wonder why—this is the first motion that you're introducing, and you're making a decision to turn your backs on people who cannot afford their rent right now. You're choosing not to prioritize them, and I do question that.

The other thing that I have concerns about with this motion is the cost. When we're talking about the cost of this motion with the tax cuts, we are talking about reducing the amount of funding that is available for public services by about \$4.5 billion. That's a lot of money.

I think about the budget coming up—it's coming up on May 15—and I think about what that budget is used for and where that money goes.

I think about education. School boards across Ontario, right now, are facing massive shortfalls because they are not given enough money by the provincial government to provide the services they are legally required to provide. We see big class sizes. We see large operating deficits. We see not enough money for mental health. We don't have enough money for kids with special needs. We do not have enough educational assistants in the classrooms. We are seeing vice-principal positions being cut. We are seeing pools within the Toronto District School Board that teach kids life-saving skills being threatened.

So what is going to happen if we cut the government budget by another \$4.5 billion? What is going to be cut? It's a genuine question.

I think about health care. I've seen the Liberals, on numerous occasions, speak up and demand that we need to see improvements with health care. How are we going to pay for the necessary investments to improve health care and to address the primary care provider shortage that we have if we're looking at cutting the budget by \$4.5 billion? Where is that funding going to come from? You get lobbied by the Ontario Medical Association, just like we do. They've got some very compelling arguments to make about how many people in Ontario today do not have access to a family doctor. They're going to walk-in clinics, at best. In order for us to improve our health care system and commit to public health care, we need to be honest with ourselves, and we need to invest in it.

I wonder about where the Liberals' commitments are around affordable housing if this tax cut for middle-income and high-income earners is going to move ahead.

We have the Conservatives, who have done very little to address the affordable housing crisis that we are facing right now. I think the latest estimate is, you've maybe built 1,000 affordable homes in the last seven years. It's a drop in the bucket. You've taken a plastic spoon to a knife fight. There's nothing there.

AMO recently came out with a report that showed that if we move ahead with the mild recession, or more, that the Trump tariffs will bring, homelessness in Ontario will jump from 80,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario. What is the plan? Where is the investment, if we're looking at cutting taxes for high-income earners? What is the investment? What is the plan to address the affordable housing crisis?

On this side of the House, we have the commitment to invest in the Homes Ontario plan. We will invest in the construction of purpose-built housing and non-profit housing to address the affordable housing crisis, not just for low-income people, but for moderate-income people as well. It will also mean that we can invest in manufacturing and job creation opportunities, to build housing in factories in Ontario, to address the crisis we are facing in supply. It requires a yearly investment that's significant. That's the reality of it.

Helping people survive the looming recession means the government should have their backs for people if

they're struggling. If we are talking about tax reform, then we need to also be talking about fairness, especially in an economy as equal as Ontario's. In the last election, we called for a review to our taxation system, to ensure that our tax system is fair. That makes a lot of sense.

If we are talking about affordability, then we also need to be talking about real rent control; we need to be talking about increasing social assistance rates; we need to be talking about raising the minimum wage and about capital gains tax reform. This is your first motion; you could have brought that stuff up, but you didn't.

Those things—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Everything to all people. Everything to all people over there.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, yes, all people. In government, you want to think about all people.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. If we're talking about addressing affordability, the measure that we are proposing will address affordability. Making life affordable is essential, and we need to start with people who are struggling the most with relief first.

While there are some sensible measures in this bill, the regressive nature of these tax cuts along with the detrimental impacts it will have on our services mean that we cannot support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I stand on behalf of my constituents in Don Valley East who are struggling more today than ever before. They're struggling to pay their rent, to afford a home, to put food on their table. They're struggling because their businesses are faltering.

Today we have a chance to remedy those things. We have a very simple, reasonable, pragmatic, inoffensive motion before us that seeks to do three things: First, it seeks to cut the small business tax rate by 50%. It seeks to reduce the income tax treatment for a new second tax bracket. And it eliminates the provincial portion of HST on home heating and electricity. I really, really struggle to understand how anyone could oppose these actions.

That's why today you won't hear members of the government actually debate this motion. They'll chest-thump, they'll talk about everything else, but they won't actually say why they won't give you, the people of Ontario, a tax cut—it's because they won't. They're not interested in doing this. This motion is necessary because Ontario is in an affordability crisis of epic proportions. Rent is higher than ever, housing is higher than ever, groceries cost more than ever, health care is more expensive than ever, and all of these are phenomena that began under this current Conservative government.

This motion is necessary because businesses are struggling to stay afloat because of US tariffs. We heard, just this morning, members of this government say they didn't ask for tariffs. Okay, maybe not all of them asked for tariffs, but the Premier certainly did. He's on the record saying that he was happy when Trump won. This government is bemoaning the US tariffs that they welcomed with open arms. Ontario's businesses are suffering

because of the Premier's support for the American President. But it's more than that.

Businesses are suffering because of this government. For example, when this government shuttered the Ontario Science Centre so that they could fill the coffers of foreign spa companies with almost no equity or experience, to the tune of \$2.2 billion, they sent Don Valley East businesses into a tailspin. Foot traffic declined, tourism fell, and my community is bearing that burden—no wonder, in Don Valley East and across all of Ontario, small business confidence is lower than it has ever been before.

1440

Finally, this motion is necessary to fulfill a broken promise to deliver an income tax cut, which the Premier made seven years ago. There are lots of promises that he has broken. He said he'd end hallway health care but made it worse. He said he'd save the greenbelt; he sold it off to wealthy donors instead—or tried to, until the Integrity Commissioner, Auditor General, RCMP and this House had something to say about it. And he said he'd introduce a tax cut, which never happened.

Today, this government has a chance to fix that problem by reducing income tax, by cutting costs on home heating and electricity. This government has no problem writing letters to other levels of government asking them to act, but when it comes to cutting their own carbon tax or cutting HST on home heating, they can't do it. They can split the second income tax bracket today and reduce the income tax rate from 9.15% to 7.15%.

I want to touch briefly on that. While I have heard some opposition members say that this tax cut hits high-income earners—\$60,000 is not high income. I would like any opposition member who votes against this motion today to turn to their legislative assistant or constituency assistant and tell them that they are high-income earners and don't deserve a tax cut. You don't have to do that; I know your staff are watching.

Finally, this will reduce that tax burden on small businesses by cutting the small business tax rate by 50%, saving up to \$18,000.

Today, Ontarians are hurting now more than ever before; food bank usage is higher than ever before; homelessness is higher than ever before; rent prices, home prices, higher than ever before; and confidence in this government is lower than ever before.

Because of this government, my constituents are being evicted from their homes. Their businesses are being shuttered. They're visiting food banks—and it's not even people who don't have jobs, which is offensive enough to me, but it's people earning income in low- and middle-income jobs who are still resorting to food banks. We're seeing beloved institutions like the Ontario Science Centre shut down, and astronomical unemployment.

Voting for this motion, supporting these changes, is an opportunity for all of us to put \$1,150 back into the pockets of those Ontarians. It's an opportunity to deliver up to \$18,000 in tax savings for small businesses. And it is a chance to restore hope that my constituents and your constituents will be able to keep food on their table.

To all Ontarians: The members of this House have a chance to vote for that. Today, they have a chance to put \$1,150 back into your pocket this year, next year, the year after that, and forever. The members of this House have an opportunity to extend small businesses a lifeline now and into the future.

A vote against this motion says that this Conservative government does not support affordability measures. It says this Conservative government does not support tax cuts. It says this Conservative government does not support my constituents or Ontarians.

To all members in the House: Prove me wrong and vote for the right thing. Vote for this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate? Further debate?

I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to correct my record. Earlier, I said I believe what we are doing is a "modest" proposal. What I meant to say was "reasonable" proposal, and I hope the record can be changed to reflect that. I want to thank the member for London North Centre for so generously pointing out my foible. Sometimes, when you speak extemporaneously, you say things and people can take it the wrong way. I certainly love my children. I don't think they're a burden. But one of the reasons we're putting this forward is that children cost money; people need income tax cuts. So I want to thank the member for his support in that regard.

I don't agree with Tom Parkin's speaking notes. A tax bracket, that we're talking about, is income between two levels—in this case, \$51,000 and \$75,000, and the reduction in tax actually only applies to that part of the income. That's it—that part of the income. It doesn't increase—as a matter of fact, as a share of your income, it decreases as you go farther up.

So I just want to say to my colleagues to my right, who are to my left, that—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry. I know I keep saying that. I'm going to wear that one out until you can get me to stop—badaboom.

Seriously, you need to support this proposal, because I don't want to have to start saying it's the Ford-Stiles government—because that's what I'm going to have to do if you guys vote against it, okay?

To my colleagues on the other side: Most of you were around last year, and I don't know if you remember when the member from Haldimand–Norfolk asked the Premier about taking HST off home heating because the people in her riding were really hurting. I couldn't believe my ears when the Premier tore a strip off her, and the last thing he said was, "You're not going to be back here"—meaning, "You're not going to get elected." I just want to point out that the member is sitting right there, and the reason the member is sitting right there is that she stood up for her constituents and said we need to take the HST off home heating and electricity. That's one of the reasons that she won. Right?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Can you stop banging your desk?

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry. I'll stop banging my desk. I'm sorry. Sorry to Hansard. I'll have to poke at my chest or something like that—I don't know—so it won't make much noise.

Think about that. Why would the Premier say that when people in her riding were hurting and she was saying, "You need to help them"? And what did he say? He basically said, "No. What you're proposing is crazy. You don't know what you're doing. Besides, you're not going to be back there because I'm going to beat you." Well, he didn't. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk is sitting right there. If there's no other reason that you should vote for this motion, apart from all the things that we've said today—that's a lesson over there.

I encourage all members to vote for this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Mr. Fraser has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1449 to 1459.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Order. Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Fraser moved opposition day motion number 2.

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

Ayes

Blais, Stephen	Fairclough, Lee	Shamji, Adil
Bowman, Stephanie	Fraser, John	Smyth, Stephanie
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hazell, Andrea	Tsao, Jonathan
Cerjanec, Rob	Hsu, Ted	Watt, Tyler
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Gretzky, Lisa	Riddell, Brian
Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rosenberg, Bill
Babikian, Aris	Hamid, Zee	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Sandhu, Amarjot
Begum, Doly	Harris, Mike	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bell, Jessica	Holland, Kevin	Sarrazin, Stéphanie
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sattler, Peggy
Bourgouin, Guy	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Schreiner, Mike
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kernaghan, Terence	Scott, Chris
Ciriello, Monica	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Cooper, Michelle	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mamakwa, Sol	Smith, Laura
Darouze, George	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Denault, Billy	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise

Firin, Mohamed
Flack, Rob
French, Jennifer K.
Gélinas, France
Gilmour, Alexa

Pierre, Natalie
Pirie, George
Quinn, Nolan
Racinsky, Joseph
Rae, Matthew

Vickers, Paul
Wai, Daisy
West, Jamie
Williams, Charmaine A.
Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 14; the nays are 78.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO BY UNLEASHING OUR ECONOMY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO EN LIBÉRANT SON ÉCONOMIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to enact the Special Economic Zones Act, 2025, to amend the Endangered Species Act, 2007 and to replace it with the Species Conservation Act, 2025, and to amend various Acts and revoke various regulations in relation to development and to procurement / Projet de loi 5, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les zones économiques spéciales, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les espèces en voie de disparition et la remplaçant par la Loi de 2025 sur la conservation des espèces, puis modifiant diverses lois et abrogeant divers règlements en ce qui concerne le développement et l'approvisionnement.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions and responses on the remarks provided by the member for Essex? I recognize the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to ask a wonderful question to the member from Essex.

Member, we have just gone through an election, and Ontarians chose this party for a mandate to give back to Ontario. What do you think, in this bill, is based on their trust for this government?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Malton for that excellent question. In fact, the member from Mississauga–Malton and I have had several long discussions about how important it is to have a strong mandate to fight against the terrible Trump tariffs that are threatening the economy in Ontario and threatening the workers in Ontario. We're going to move whatever we need to move, we're going to do whatever we need to do to make sure that we protect the workers in Ontario.

One of the ways we're going to do that is we're going to introduce special economic zones—that's something that's in this legislation. A special economic zone would be a zone particularly defined to benefit workers and to get the economy unleashed—unleashing our economy to benefit workers in the province of Ontario, because we

think that there might be some disruption in the workplace. In fact, I think that we can all anticipate that there will be disruption in the workplace as a result of these Trump tariffs.

I think it's important for the government to take steps to protect workers. One of those very important steps that we can take is to have special economic zones. I'm going to say that I appreciate the very lengthy conversations I had with the member from Mississauga–Malton about this subject, and I hope that we can carry on those conversations.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened very intently to the member from Essex in his presentation. During his presentation, he seemed to infer that the special economic zones were going to be picked based on the political affiliation of the riding. Basically, he made a threat that members who didn't vote for this bill—that he would take it upon himself, personally, that they would not participate in this.

He very well laid it out how the government is planning on picking economic zones. Is that actually what he inferred when he said that he was going to personally make sure that people who voted against this were not going to participate in government programs? Is that the belief of that member and of the government?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm sure that the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane listened very carefully to my speech, but he'll have to listen very carefully still, because I said that I would not nominate the riding of any member who spoke against the special economic zones. Because of course, if they don't want one, then I'm not going to inflict that on them, right? If they don't want one, I'm not going to nominate their riding for a special economic zone.

But I do appreciate the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane ascribing to me an exceptional amount of authority and power because, of course, whether I nominate somebody for a special economic zone or not is quite irrelevant to the question because, of course, this is a democracy and we make decisions democratically, not based on the nomination of the member from Essex.

However, I will state it again: I promise every member in the NDP and every member in the Liberal Party, since they don't want economic zones, I will not nominate their ridings for special economic zones. But it sounds like the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane is already changing his mind as a result of the lengthy speech that I gave just Thursday night about the spectacular, spectacular benefits of a special economic zone. So if you want to change your mind, let me know now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Essex. He had an incredible set of remarks on Thursday night. I know the riding of Essex very well; it borders mine. I remember very much in a place like Lakeshore, Amherstburg, LaSalle and even Kingsville and Leamington, we saw businesses fleeing in droves. We saw invest-

ments going elsewhere, including Ohio, because of the policies of the government of the day and our manufacturing sector was hollowed out.

Our government turned the page, landing tens of billions of dollars in new investment, which has revitalized not just Ontario's economy but particularly Windsor-Essex county's economy. So now we face an unprecedented threat from President Trump and his tariffs. So I'm checking to see, through you, Madam Speaker, what are some of the investments that this legislation will help Ontario to secure.

1510

Mr. Anthony Leardi: That's a great question from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. Of course, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh knows very well the spectacular investments that can be landed when a government goes out of its way to pursue investment for the province of Ontario.

Let's talk about that great investment in the riding of Windsor–Tecumseh. It's a multi-billion-dollar investment by automotive concerns. They're building one of the largest automotive assembly and manufacturing plants in the entire province. It's a fantastic investment. It's created immediately over 2,000 jobs, and it's going to continue creating jobs in the future because it was landed by this government going out of its way—going out of its way such as creating special economic zones would be going out of your way—to land that type of investment and in addition to that, reaching across the political lines to have partners to do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: While the Premier's admiration and political support for President Trump has been well known, what was new to me during the member across' bewildering remarks on Thursday was his admiration for the authoritarian regime in China and his comment that we should be more like China.

Would the member across please elaborate on any other authoritarian regimes he would like us to emulate?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, I consider it a breach of the rules of this House for a member to ascribe to another member words which were never spoken. Such words were never spoken, and that member owes me an apology. If I don't get that apology, then I will be sure to enforce the rules against that member as the rules should be enforced. That member's comments were irresponsible, they were wrong, they should be withdrawn, he should apologize, and if he has nothing intelligent to say, then he should sit down and let his House leader correct him in his language.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker.

The government of Ontario thinks this is their land. They think they own the land, but they are wrong, Speaker. This is our land. We have lived on this land since time immemorial. These minerals are not theirs to take as they please, with or without the arbitrary designation of a

special economic zone as Bill 5 seeks to establish. The inherent rights of First Nations are recognized in domestic and international law and predate Canada. They are binding legal obligations that include duty to consult.

My question to the member across is, why weren't any First Nations consulted on Bill 5 prior to tabling of this legislation?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, of course, the member has frequently pointed out that the Indigenous nations of this continent have been here for millennia, and he is absolutely correct by that. He has also correctly pointed out that the treaty obligations towards the Indigenous nations in this continent are treaty obligations and they need to be recognized and respected, and I agree with him on that. In fact, such treaty obligations are entrenched in the Canadian Constitution, and that section of the Constitution cannot be changed. It cannot be abrogated from, and that is correct. Such being the case, it is absolutely necessary for any government that takes action which engages the treaty rights of the Indigenous nations to engage and consult with those nations. Such rights exist. They predate Canada, as the member has stated. They must be respected, and they will be respected.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's an honour today to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park to debate Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act. The Conservative government is advertising this bill on the basis of its "one project, one process" approval model, which they say is meant to cut red tape and streamline approvals to speed up critical mineral and resource development projects, including the Ring of Fire.

In itself, Speaker, I must say that that's not a bad proposal. The NDP does believe in the importance of responsible mining, and we're in favour of helping the process and permitting system to be improved. In the face of Trump's tariffs, we need to strengthen Ontario, get Ontario building and grow the economy. We can't afford another decade of stalled developments, but we have to find a path that works for workers, for communities, for First Nations and for the long haul.

If streamlining this process were the main component of the bill, perhaps there wouldn't be as much debate today, but it is clear that the scope of Bill 5 is so much broader than the government's stated aims.

Alarming, this bill will allow the Conservative government to remove government responsibilities for any project they deem to be a special economic zone. Potentially, this includes environmental protections, labour laws, local bylaws. In other words, there is much more on the chopping block than a few strips of red tape.

TVO's John Michael McGrath has described the special economic zones as a "cheat code" for governments. Can Ontarians trust the Conservative government with a cheat code? After all, this is the government of the greenbelt scandal, the ministerial zoning scandal, the Therme scandal, the Wilmot land scandal—and I stop there, but you do get the idea.

I would like to linger for a moment on the greenbelt scandal, which, as we all know, remains under RCMP investigation today, because, Speaker, there are provisions in this bill that could leave the greenbelt vulnerable once again. If we look briefly at the history, until Bill 136 in 2023, the provincial government always had the discretion to open up the greenbelt since the boundaries and the policies of the greenbelt plan were set by regulation, which can be amended at the discretion of the ministry. However, after the greenbelt scandal unfolded, the Conservative government tabled Bill 136, which not only reversed the previous regulatory changes that opened up parts of the greenbelt but also defined the greenbelt boundaries by statute, not regulation.

As the Conservatives explained at the time, this legislation would also “enhance protections for the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine areas by ensuring any future boundary changes can only be made through a public and transparent process that would require the approval of the Legislature.” After Bill 5 is passed, this will no longer be the case. The government will have in its power to declare the greenbelt property a special economic zone that is no longer within the statutory boundaries of the greenbelt plan and would not require approval of the Legislature to do so. Even more worrisome is how Bill 5 allows the government to use regulation to arbitrarily bypass or rewrite not just regulations but any statute without going through the Legislature for any reason or no reason, with virtually no limit on how or when this power will be used. Given this Conservative government’s record, why should Ontarians trust it with such extraordinary power?

As the shadow minister for women’s social and economic opportunities, I am also mindful of this sombre day. Today is Red Dress Day, the day we honour and mourn the many missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

As we do, I am cognizant of the many broken promises, and I am concerned about the way Bill 5 speaks of consultation with First Nations, because nowhere do I see the important phrase “free, prior and informed consent.” It worries me.

It worries me because while the government says there are Indigenous groups supportive of Bill 5, we know that many Indigenous groups have also expressed concern about the bill. The groups that we have heard from express strong opposition to Bill 5, viewing it as a direct attack on their constitutionally protected rights. There are Indigenous groups who view it as a step back from environmental protections and a move towards potentially environmentally damaging projects.

1520

Others recognize schedule 9 as a way to reduce the government’s obligations to consult with Indigenous communities on development projects, and schedule 7 includes provisions that could impact Indigenous artifacts and archaeological sites. Specifically, the bill expands inspection powers to access the presence of artifacts on sites and allows the minister to issue assessment orders preventing removal or alteration. Some worry this could

lead to fewer archaeological assessments, potentially endangering First Nations history and cultural heritage.

With so many Indigenous groups against this bill and with Indigenous groups travelling thousands of miles to speak against this bill, now is the time to hit pause on this and to ensure that when the government says “partnerships” we mean free, informed, prior consent and not a rubber stamp.

As we have seen in so many of the ways that this government has gone forward on things, we are rushing through a bill that is not in the best interest of our shared future. At this time, for the sake of that shared future, for settler-Indigenous relations, we cannot pass this bill. I encourage instead the members opposite us to look to decoupling this bill, taking another look and certainly not giving the special economic zones as part of this bill.

It is hard as a sixth-generation settler to be in this House today and to watch a bill that speaks to the colonial history that my own ancestors have been part of for multiple generations. With every fibre of my being, I know that this is the wrong direction to go. We need to do better as a Legislature. We need to do better by our Indigenous siblings. We need to listen to them when they travel miles to speak to us, when they tell us of the areas that they want to protect and how they want to develop them, when they tell us of how they want the services delivered and how they want this nation-to-nation relationship to go.

This is not the time to rush forward. This is the time to listen to the wisdom of those who have been on this land for thousands and thousands and tens of thousands of years. Speaker, I encourage us to hit pause on this bill and to not carry forward with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

MPP Paul Vickers: Our government has repeatedly emphasized that upholding our duty to consult is something we won’t waver from. Why is the opposition against enhanced consultation and partnerships with the First Nations communities who want to benefit from responsible resource development?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Pardon me. I am new to this, and I did not hear the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and ask you to repeat the question.

MPP Paul Vickers: Thank you, Speaker. I’d be more than happy to ask my question again.

Our government has repeatedly emphasized that upholding our duty to consult is something we won’t waver from. Why is the opposition against enhanced consultation and partnerships with the First Nations communities who want to benefit from responsible resource development?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I’m glad you asked that question. It is my understanding that we did not share this bill ahead of time with our Indigenous groups that are going to be most affected—

Interjections: “Our”?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Sorry?

Interjections: “Our”?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Well, with the Indigenous groups that are affected by this bill—and so, for me, hearing from the many groups, hearing from my own colleague that we need to take a step back is the reason why I think we need to take a step back.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think the member from Parkdale–High Park actually posed some very good, rational questions for the government.

When you fully examine what Bill 5 does, it actually gives developers, resource companies—it exempts them from regulation, so your economic zones are essentially lawless places across the province.

The member posed a very good question. She said, “Why should Ontario trust this government with unleashing this kind of power?” If you are First Nations or if you are poor or even farmers in Ontario, you have really good cause to doubt and not trust this government.

To the member from Parkdale–High Park: Could you please expand on this excellent point I just made?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank the member for her excellent point that she made.

Look, we were promised that the greenbelt would not be touched, and there is now an investigation with the RCMP currently in place. We know that Ontario Place is at the centre of a scandal right now.

The Wilmot land grab—Dresden’s landfill is suddenly in this bill after, in the last by-election, it was promised that it wouldn’t be. There is a lot of reason why this government should not be trusted with this particular power. But it is not simply this particular government. Any future government going forward would have similar powers. That’s why it’s too much power for one government to have.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I’m really delighted to welcome the member from Parkdale–High Park to the debate. I knew her and I met her about nine years ago, and I have a lot of respect for her commitment to her community of Parkdale–High Park, so a warm welcome.

But I’d say to the member that, when we look at this one project and one process, it goes to the thought that we have so much bureaucracy on all levels of government. One of the things that for me is important is cutting through the red tape, it’s having a coordination of a way of moving things forward, and that helps protect our economy. Would she agree that it’s important to cut the red tape?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: First Nations’ free, prior and informed consent is not red tape, and it cannot be on the chopping block.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I already lost a second.

Madam Speaker, this is the first time I’m debating in the 44th Parliament, so I want to start by congratulating you and our Speaker for creating history.

As you know, every time I stand up, I always like to start by saying thank you. Thank you to God for giving me the opportunity and well-being and health to stand here and represent the wonderful riding of Mississauga–Malton. Thank you to the residents of Mississauga–Malton, my volunteers, my staff and my family members for that trust that I’m able to today talk on Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, a piece of legislation that, if passed, will unlock Ontario’s potential. It will make Ontario a clean energy superpower. It will enable us to lead on the international stage.

Madam Speaker, it’s no hidden secret: We’re facing trying times. Ontario and Canada are facing unprecedented attacks on our economy. Bureaucratic policies are hindering our potential to be a superpower. Our closest partner, our neighbour down south, our biggest trading partner, invoked a trade war with the intention to weaken our economy. As we all know, the US President, who was elected to unleash the economy, create jobs and make America prosper—well, he’s doing quite the opposite.

1530

Let’s look at the data. The President just marked 100 days in the office, and you look at the S&P 500: It has lost 7.9% value, wiping \$11.1 trillion since then—the worst since 1970. That’s not creating jobs, making America prosper. He has imposed tariffs on our province, hurting our economy, and you heard the news, talking about making the 51st state. But the reality is, Madam Speaker, we all know: We are strong, we are strong together and Canada is not for sale.

We will not back down. We will protect our families; we will protect our businesses; we will protect our industries. But at the same time, I hear this all the time—some of the members opposite will stand up and will say, “Oh, Donald Trump is like Doug Ford,” or “Doug Ford is like Donald Trump.” Wait a second. On the one side we just heard Donald Trump equal the reduction in the value. On the contrast, let’s talk about Doug Ford. Since 2018 we have seen businesses create one million new jobs. That’s creating jobs: auto companies investing \$46 billion in expansion and new projects; life sciences companies invest \$6 billion; and this progress is under threat from President Trump.

I don’t know if President Trump hears from the Liberal Party or NDP. If he does at some point in time, you know what? Tell him: Doug Ford is not Donald Trump. But you know what? If he can follow some of the policies of Doug Ford, maybe the US will see the prosperity. Then they can say that Donald Trump is like Doug Ford. This way, we achieved the prosperity and we achieved what you actually wanted—to compare them, equal. But right now, what we see is only one thing: We’re seeing that this Premier is going to stand up for our province, for our Canada, and we’re making sure that we are unleashing our resource development that will create thousands of jobs, billions in GDP. But you can’t do it just by saying. We have to take action.

For an example, an investor coming into Canada, or somebody who’s already here, wants to invest into mining.

Madam Speaker, you'll be surprised it takes 17 years to open a mine—17 years. Somebody born yesterday probably is going to be ready to vote by the time his parents are trying to develop a mine. Can you imagine? And then it's not that—okay, let's assume we take 17 years, we look around the world and somebody is taking 34 years—maybe we are better than others, because the data is comparative.

Let's look at somebody around us. Philippines: three to six years. Western Australia: six to seven years. Especially when we talk about Australia: These are the countries we are actually competing with. If we want to compete and we want to be on the world stage, we have to make sure we change the course the way it is right now. Some 17 years is not going to take us where we want to be.

Ontario doesn't need to lag behind, especially when we have human capital, ingenuity, and the potential to become the global capital of resource development, right here. And these minerals—the US needs it, the world needs it, humanity needs it. So it is our moral responsibility to make sure that we are there to help the world by providing them those resources. Thankfully we have a bill which will cut government approval time by 50%, and I want to emphasize—before, I heard rhetoric on the other side—it's government approval time.

Through the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025, we are rolling out a one-window permitting program that is going to make a real difference for businesses. This isn't just another portal; it's a game-changer.

Speaker, I have over eight years' experience in process improvement. The first lesson I learned when I went into the school was to write down on a board and say, "We cannot do it." The second thing I learned is to cross that and write down, "How can we do it?" Because that is the way to improve a process, and that is exactly what we're doing through this bill.

We're removing U-turns, loops, removing duplicates. We're making sure to identify the critical path. How are we doing it? We're doing it through one access point, one set of information, one seamless experience. From finding out what permit they need, to applying, tracking, managing their approvals, it's going to be faster, simpler and smarter. It's just one other way this government is standing up for Ontario's job creators and workers, because we know, when these job creators and the workers will succeed, Ontario will succeed.

We have seen the examples of the government supporting our job creators. For an example, in Mississauga–Malton, we have First Choice Beverage. When the government supported them, it actually created additional jobs, supported hundreds of existing jobs. These are some of the experiences that we have seen continuously, and that is the reason, when we talk about increase in revenue, from \$154 billion to over \$200 billion, it's not coincidence; it is the proof in the pudding of the good policies of this government.

We want to make sure that we continue to work in the same way and ensure that we are going to make sure those

who are coming to Ontario, invest in Ontario, who have Ontario's interest at heart are supported, but at the same time, we need to be vigilant. That is exactly another thing which we are doing through this bill: the threat posed by states or entities acting contrary to Canada—and I use the word "Canada"—and Ontario's interests, they will not be tolerated.

We must ensure that the immense wealth generated from Ontario's natural resources benefits Ontarians, Canadians, not otherwise. That is why it is very important that we stand up for this bill. We have measures which are carefully designed to prepare Ontario for the challenges and opportunities that exist both today and for tomorrow, that will protect our strategic interest in mining and energy sectors, and it starts with fostering the right conditions so we can work collaboratively with job creators, with Indigenous leaders and communities, with the municipalities, with our workers to responsibly develop our resources and share the benefits broadly.

These initiatives proposed in the bill will help protect Ontario, remove barriers that slow down our development, enhance competitiveness and truly unleash our economic potential. It is very critical legislation, and is an important step forward to position our province on the international stage. We have a time, we have a moment, we have an opportunity, so I urge everyone in this chamber to recognize the significance and support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague for his debate. There are about six pages in this bill that are actually about the one-process design. It's a 229-page bill, so 223 are not really affected on this. But part of his comments he talked about was shortening the time it would take to open a mine from 17 years in the briefing statement we had, cutting it in half, so let's say seven years. The reason we are pushing this apparently, from the government, was that Donald Trump is causing tariffs and chaos, but Donald Trump is the President for the next four years. A plan that cuts 17 years to seven years won't help us four years from now, so what will we be doing in the short term? I made a lot of suggestions during my debate last week about investing in current properties that could expand or process more material. I want to know if the member opposite thinks that we should be doing that.

1540

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for that really important question. For those investors, when they are going to look for uncertainty, they're not going to invest today; that is why it is important. Yes, you are right, it's probably going to take two to four, five, seven years, but if they see that there is no light at the end of the tunnel, they're not going to invest in it today.

Thankfully we have a government who is actually supporting domestic processing. We are actually committed to a \$500-million critical mineral processing fund. Through this fund, Ontario will provide strategic financial support to projects that will excavate provincial critical minerals.

So to anyone who is watching and thinking of investing in Ontario, this is the right time, because you have a government who is going to support the project. With the new Legislature, you are actually going to see the action on the ground and prosperity for everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you for your remarks today.

We have had a lot of discussion about this bill and particularly the special economic zones, concerns around the fact that many of the laws wouldn't apply if designated that way. We are worried about trusted partners as part of that and we're worried about the accountability.

On Thursday, I actually had hoped to ask the previous member this question. On Thursday we heard about a list of 20 countries that also have special economic zones: China, India, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, South Korea, Mexico etc. We heard that if we didn't have them, then we might fall behind those other countries. My question, really, to you is how have these special economic zones that you're proposing in the bill been modelled on the experience of these other countries?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Congratulations to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore on your election.

Technically, what we are trying to do here is very simple. If we want to be the leader and we know we have these critical minerals, so we do not want to wait for them to be developed and the train is gone, because many of these critical minerals are needed today and tomorrow. What if it takes 17 years to take them out, and by that time, the technology is gone and we don't even need them?

That is why everything through this process, what we are trying to do is, one, to stay competitive, and two, to make sure that we are able to get those minerals when needed, not when they are no longer needed. That is what this bill is doing, making sure that under the leadership of Premier Ford and our wonderful minister, that we not only stand up against Donald Trump but at the same time, we bring more prosperity for Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I'd like to recognize the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

MPP Paul Vickers: I'd like to ask my fellow MPP: Modernizing the environmental permissions is essential to keeping Ontario competitive. This is how Ontario will continue to invest in health care and attract doctors into the rural areas—the areas that I come from—that need help. We need to be able to do that with money and this is how we will generate the funds.

With this legislation, the government has indicated they will continue working to streamline other environmental approvals across government. Can the member elaborate on how we can modernize other environmental permissions?

Mr. Deepak Anand: When we talk about the environment—and we are so thankful that we have a wonderful minister who believes in the environment—we want to make sure that as we are working towards developing our

province, we do not want to compromise on the environment.

Let's take a look: Since 2018 our government has funded 215 projects through the species at risk stewardship program, and in the proposed legislation, our government will be expanding the existing program by actually increasing the funding four times, from \$4.5 million to \$20 million a year going forward. This is one more way we want to make sure that when we are doing the development, we are making sure our environment is at the forefront, because we want to make sure that the environment we live in, we breathe in, is supported through this bill as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I'd like to recognize the member from Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Treaty 9 territory covers large areas of ridings we both represent, of Mushkegowuk–James Bay and Kiiwetinoong. Treaty 9 is the only treaty that Ontario is a direct signatory to.

I would like to know from the member about the concerns that you have heard about this legislation from First Nations, from leaders in Mushkegowuk–James Bay and also, not only that, the rights holders and how this government's approach would need to change to fulfill their obligation and respect the treaty rights and inherent rights of First Nations in Treaty 9 territory.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for that question. The intention of this bill is very simple: We want to be stronger. We want to make sure that Ontario is on the world stage. We want to make sure Ontario is prosperous. We want to bring growth. We want to make sure we do it in a timely manner.

But at the same time, Madam Speaker, we want to be perfectly clear: This bill does not impede our government's duty to consult. Our duty to consult—a constitutional obligation. Our government is ensuring that we fulfill our duty throughout the entire process to ensure First Nations communities have a full scope of the potential projects, rather than reviewing the piecemeal projects.

As we are doing this, First Nations communities are best positioned to identify opportunities within their community, and our government has made tailored investments to ensure that they have the capacity to do this. At the core of this bill is to make sure that we are able to support and build a better, stronger, prosperous Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I'd like to recognize the member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Indigenous leaders have raised grave concerns about this legislation and—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Order, please.

Please continue.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Indigenous groups have raised grave concerns about this legislation—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I cannot hear the member. Order, please. I cannot hear the member.

The member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Indigenous groups have raised grave concerns about this legislation and specifically, the Chiefs of Ontario have specifically asked that the government undertake meaningful—

Interjection.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Windsor West.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I know it's not unheard of for us to heckle in this House. I think it is absolutely shameful, and the member from Essex should be called to order and told that he needs to pipe down, basically, or be removed from the chamber. I think it is absolutely disrespectful when the member, my colleague over here, is speaking, that every time he opens his mouth, the member from Essex is very loudly insulting his intelligence—a doctor, nonetheless. And the member from Essex is a lawyer. He should understand decorum and rules of order in this House.

I ask that the Speaker keep reminding the member from Essex.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I would like to suggest that the member from Essex refrain from continuing to heckle in the manner in which he did. Regrettably, we know what the next steps would be if he continues. Thank you.

I'd like to recognize the member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Indigenous groups across the province have raised grave concerns about this legislation and specifically worry that it will not engage in meaningful consultation. In fact, the Chiefs of Ontario have specifically put out a call asking for meaningful consultation to take place prior to this legislation being passed. What steps have been taken by the government to engage in that meaningful consultation prior to the legislation being passed?

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Mississauga—Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I did answer this question earlier as well. The answer is the same. But what I want to ask the member is—we all have a duty. When you were talking about my colleague, and that was not true—it is our duty to make sure that what we speak is relevant to the bill and right with the data. So Madam Speaker—

Mr. Adil Shamji: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Point of order.

Mr. Adil Shamji: The member across just accused me of lying.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Let's please try to get back to the debate taking place.

I'd like to call the next speaker forward, and I'd like to recognize the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: It's always a pleasure to rise to speak about Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act. Once again, we're dealing with legislation for the north but created by people from the south without consultation. Let me make it clear: We are not against development or the mining industry, but we need to follow due process and do this responsibly.

You know, I represent a lot of First Nations. First Nations are not against mining; they're not against economic development. But they want to be part from the beginning to the end. Free, prior and informed consent—it is important. I've been elected now for my third term. Since 2018—since I've been elected—we've been speaking. My colleague for Kiiwetinoong has been speaking about this, First Nations have been speaking, but it falls onto deaf ears. This bill represents that exactly again—not respecting First Nations.

When it comes to First Nations, for them, to ensure the free, prior and informed consent means that they're being respected. I don't believe that this government is respecting First Nations because we're dealing with a bill like this. I've got to say this—my colleague from Kiiwetinoong has said this many times in the House: First Nations are not red tape. They're not stakeholders; they are rights holders. This is what this government needs to understand. They are not red tape. Treaties are not recommendations. They're binding by the constitutional agreements between the crown and sovereign Indigenous nations. The Supreme Court continues to rule in favour of protecting Indigenous rights. Yet we're dealing with a bill like this not respecting First Nations.

The government of Ontario needs to respect this. In the Ring of Fire and everywhere else in this province, they cannot infringe on protected treaty rights without justification, consultation and consent. This bill is enabling legislation that would allow the province to:

- bypass important environmental regulations, labour laws and responsibilities towards engagement with First Nations, among others;

- amend and repeal environmental laws and the infrastructure acts, including the Endangered Species Act, the Electricity Act and the Environmental Assessment Act;

- cancel the requirement to conduct a full environmental assessment for the proposed Eagle's Nest mine;

- grant the government power to create other special economic zones.

In these designated zones, companies attached to special infrastructure projects can be made exempt from the application of any legislation, including bylaws enacted by municipal councils, and are authorized to alter any existing laws and regulations pertaining to the special economic zones.

Some of the key points: We are invested in unlocking the economic potential of our province and supporting mining projects. I said we're not against that. But we've got to make sure we do it right. We've seen what we have. We heard the members from Sudbury and Nickel Belt saying that they have old mines that have cyanure and other dangerous chemicals—

MPP Jamie West: Arsenic.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Arsenic—in our environment. There’s a reason why we have these acts: to protect, so that we don’t make the same mistakes.

This cannot take place without free, prior and informed consent from First Nations and making sure benefits of infrastructure projects are distributed fairly. We need to make sure the development projects will benefit the communities where they are, unlike the De Beers diamond mine in Attawapiskat. We could be investing in existing mining projects that have undergone the duty to consult with First Nations and environmental assessments.

This is a major investment for a project that will not be completed for years. When we talk about the Ring of Fire, we know it’s going to take long—caught up in the lawsuits, does not have the appropriate oversight, and the project’s return on investment is made up of fantasy.

Development cannot take place without, again, free, prior, informed consent from First Nations. Duty to consult is not enough, and Ontario’s consultation process is already flawed. The province did not consult with the Chiefs of Ontario before tabling this legislation. Attawapiskat has already come out against it. The government can’t pick and choose who to consult with on this project or keep transferring the responsibilities to development companies. They need to introduce a standardized process that ensures that they have consulted with all affected parties and received consent.

From a press release from Attawapiskat with Apitipi Anicinapek Nation and KI—Chief Sylvia Koostachin-Metatawabin of Attawapiskat: “Ontario is declaring our homeland open for invasion of massive scale mining and other development, by removing: protections for species at risk; democratic oversight; and protection for our rights and lands.”

Chief Donny Morris from KI: “These lands are not Ontario’s to do with as they wish. They are our ancestral lands. We have always been here and are going nowhere. Whatever Ford and his government might want their base to think, nothing is happening up here without our consent.”

NAN Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who was just here moments ago: “Premier Ford’s promise to ‘unlock’ the Ring of Fire and fast-track development is a direct attack on the inherent, treaty, and Aboriginal rights of First Nations who have governed and stewarded these lands since time immemorial....

“We remind the Premier that he has a duty to engage directly with all leadership to develop a path forward that respects our rights, ensures economic benefits for our communities, and upholds our sacred duty to protect the land for future generations.”

Chiefs of Ontario: ““These “special economic zones” are vaguely defined and could be used to try and undermine our rights and ignore our sovereignty. You can’t “unleash” our rights or our sacred responsibilities to our lands and waters with the wave of a pen,” says Regional Chief Benedict.”

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Matawa Chiefs Council: “Ontario’s decision to unilaterally impose legislation to designate the territory of Matawa member First Nations without government-to-government level discussions and agreement is unacceptable. The proposed legislation will have significant potential impact to current and future negotiations of First Nation agreements with government, the mining industry and business partnerships.”

These are not small words. They are not just—they are telling you, they are warning the government, “You need to speak to us. You need to deal with us.” Free, informed, prior consent: They’re telling you that’s the way to move forward, yet you have failed and failed and failed again.

There is no doubt we need to grow our economy, but we need to do it right. To support this bill, we need to see consent from First Nations addressed in a meaningful way, and need to be assured that fairness, consultation, environmental impact and labour standards are upheld for every project, without the use of special economic zone “cheat codes.” It’s simple.

We have an opportunity to do it right. Let’s do it right and put aside our differences of politics and fix what needs to be fixed in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think there’s a phrase that if you want to go fast, you go alone, and if you want to go far, you go together. This approach: How is it affecting the speed and the trust of the First Nations people of up north?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Great question. I think the trust has been broken for a long time now. Like I said, this is my third term. I work with First Nations. These are press releases that came right after Bill 5 was put out. They’re not looking to fight the government; they want to work with them. How many times have they offered an olive branch? They’ve been offering this olive branch forever now. Yet who has been failing them? The government has been failing them over and over and over again.

Other territories are working with First Nations and it’s moving fast, it’s moving forward. Mines are getting developed a lot faster than us. How do you want them to trust you when you keep burning them and you keep not respecting their rights? Until you figure that one out, I don’t believe anything is going to happen in the Ring of Fire.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I’d like to recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member opposite for their remarks.

Our government has repeatedly emphasized that upholding our duty to consult is something we won’t waver from. Through Bill 5, we are taking decisive action to protect Ontario’s economy, including reducing red tape and streamlining approvals to ensure we stay competitive. Meanwhile, the opposition continues to resist these efforts, even as President Trump’s harmful tariffs threaten jobs and industries across the province.

Why is it that the opposition wants to slow down the very reforms that will help Ontario thrive, especially in the face of these economic pressures?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I guess you weren't listening to what I was saying. We're not against development. We're not against the mining. We're not against the industries. What we are telling you is what First Nations have been telling you. It doesn't matter if we're saying it; at the end of the day, if you want to have economic development in the Ring of Fire, you better start working with them and respecting them, because there will be injunctions and, guess what, nothing is going to be—who is going to pay for it? Industry is going to pay for it. Everybody is going to pay for it. The province is going to pay for it because of your lack of understanding of First Nations. Not that you should not understand, because we've been saying it now, like I said, for close to eight years. My colleague from Kiiwetinoong has been telling you for years. It falls onto deaf ears.

I'm telling you now, there were two grand chiefs here, especially here, because they wanted to listen to what you've been saying. One of them I quoted, by the way: "There will be nothing until you respect free, informed and prior consent." The consent part has to be a part of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks. I know the member mentioned in those remarks other jurisdictions. I think of British Columbia and Quebec, who have had success in accelerating their approvals for mines far faster than Ontario. I would like, certainly, for Ontario to remain competitive with those other jurisdictions.

I would like to ask the member opposite what those provinces and the others that he's referring to are doing, which is different than what's being proposed in Bill 5?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Merci pour la question.

One is the territories; they're doing great, they have a lot of First Nations and they're working with them and they're consulting with them. Also, they have consent with them.

Why do we, in Ontario, keep thinking that we can just bulldoze our way through? I said "bulldoze" for a reason because when we got elected in 2018, that was the first word that came out of our Premier: "If I have to, I'll jump on the bulldozer." Well, there are many ways to drive a bulldozer. You have the mechanical way and you have Bill 5.

Bill 5, to me and for First Nations, is the same as a D5, D12, which are big mechanical bulldozers, and they don't care who you're going through, who you've got to plow through—get out of the way. That's the problem with Ontario. That's the problem with your government when others are working with First Nations, respecting them, consulting, and free and informed consent, and their consent is there. That's the difference.

We're not against working with them and making sure that it doesn't take 15 years. We've said that in many discussions. The critic for mining has said it. It should take

less than 15 years to build a mine—absolutely. But there is a way of doing it, and your way is not working.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I'd like to recognize the member from Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you as well to my colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Many times I've heard the Conservative government talk about how this is going to streamline approvals and move things faster. I keep being reminded—and you just talked about it a moment ago—about the comments in 2018 when the Premier said, "I am going to jump on the bulldozer and do it myself." It felt like that distance had moved apart, but during the election in February, just a couple of months ago, we heard the Premier saying it again: "Enough is enough. We've got to get this over with."

How do you incentivize business to move quickly with an extraction of resources in treaty territories when you have a Premier who keeps stepping on his own feet and embarrassing and frustrating the treaty holders in those areas?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: That's a great question because I've spoken to mining also. I was the critic for a while. I know you're the critic for mining also. Industry has been doing a lot of work with First Nations. They have done great work with First Nations. We have to recognize that also. But there is always a player missing.

In committees, there were some recommendations brought by First Nations, brought by mining—they wanted to work together to make a path forward. Guess who was the player missing? The government. Yet, the two parties—First Nations, mining—were all on board. The government says, "Nope, it's our way." Why? The solution is there. Because we've heard it in committees, yet they won't do it.

I think one of our colleagues said, "Colonialism: It's at its best right now." This Bill 5 is right up there.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for those remarks.

I came to Canada on January 15, 2000. As an immigrant, I want to say thank you to the Indigenous community for giving us an opportunity to meet here.

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My question is very simple. There are many more immigrants like me who come to Canada with a dream to build a family. What can this government do to make sure, as you said, that we're not against development? How can we collaborate and work together to make sure that we stand up today for the need of the hour, which is standing up against Donald Trump, making sure all those immigrants like me, all those Canadians who were already here before me, can live a better life? What is your suggestion for that?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Thank you for the question. What can we do? I thought I spoke about it for 10 minutes. Start by respecting the free, pre-informed consent with

First Nations. Work nation to nation. Respect them nation to nation. That's where you start.

It's not for the First Nations. They've been burnt enough. It should be the government now offering the olive branch, saying, "No, we will respect that. We will work with you. We will find solutions with the industry from the beginning to the end." They want to protect their lands, and rightly so, because they're always thinking, "We have to protect our territories for seven generations."

We have a lesson to learn about that, by the way. Think about Grassy Narrows. Think about Attawapiskat. Think about all the places that we have failed miserably. This is why we have environmental studies. There's a reason. And just from a stroke of a pen, they don't apply anymore? I'm sorry.

And then using the Trump situation just to say, "Well, we have to bypass everything"? We have to work together. The Premier said he would work together with everybody. He's failing miserably on that end.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise here in the House today to speak on Bill 5.

Bill 5 has the words "Protect Ontario" in the title. I want to ask: How do you protect Ontario with a bill that gives the government unprecedented and extraordinary powers to exempt corporations from the very laws, rules and regulations that protect the people and places we love in Ontario?

I want to be clear: Greens support mining. We recognize the importance of a critical-mineral-mining-to-electric-vehicle strategy. We understand the important role that critical minerals will play in renewable energy and helping Ontario attract investment in the transition to a green economy. It's unfortunate that the government doesn't always recognize the importance of renewables when it comes to that transition, but we recognize it.

But we also have to be clear that First Nations' rights, worker health and safety laws and environmental protections are not red tape. Those laws were brought forward to protect people, to protect First Nations' rights, to protect water, to protect the land and the animals that sustain life. To suggest that somehow you're protecting Ontario by putting all of that at risk is not right. It will not facilitate development. As a matter of fact, it likely will slow down development because the government will not have the social licence and the support of the people of Ontario to move forward, and it will not have the consent of First Nations.

I'd like to quote the Attawapiskat First Nation's chief in describing this bill: "Ontario is declaring our homelands open for invasion of massive scale mining and other development, by removing: protections for species at risk; democratic oversight; and protection for our rights and lands."

I want to remind the government that under section 35 of the Constitution, they have a duty to consult. And I would argue they have a moral obligation to obtain consent before moving forward with development.

Let's be clear: Schedule 9 of this bill establishes so-called special economic zones that remove all provincial rules, local planning rules, worker health and safety laws and environmental protections for hand-picked companies, decided not by the people of Ontario but by cabinet—by cabinet—not with legislative oversight. So these zones essentially will have no rules, no oversight and no consultation with ordinary people and First Nations.

This is the exact kind of legislation that the BC government introduced last month and had to withdraw because of public backlash. This is an extraordinary overreach of power by the provincial government to exempt companies from the very laws that we, as a Legislature, should have the right and we should have the duty and obligation and responsibility to our constituents to have oversight over.

Schedule 10 of this bill repeals Ontario's award-winning Endangered Species Act, which the government has already weakened. But let's be clear about some of the things in this bill.

First of all, politics, not science, is going to decide what an endangered species is. The government has now changed the rule that says, "If you're a company that wants to kill species, right now, you have to get permission to do that." Now, the government just says, "You just have to file your intent to kill them. You don't need permission; just let us know you're going to kill them off."

The provisions that narrow the scope of how they define habitat will actually put our communities at risk. Think about what happened this summer with the floods in the GTA: \$1.3 billion worth of damage every hour. Think of the ice storm that just hit Ontario last month, where we had communities that went weeks without power. Would you destroy the environment that protects us? You put us at more risk: our property, our communities, our businesses—our property at risk from the increasing frequency and severity of climate-fuelled extreme weather events.

Schedule 3 of the bill exempts two major projects from environmental assessment: the Eagle's Nest mine and the Dresden dump. I'm sorry—jeez, what could go wrong exempting a garbage dump from an environmental assessment? Those are in place to make sure things don't leach into our waterway, to make sure that land around that dump doesn't become contaminated, especially if it's agricultural land.

Schedule 7 of the bill removes a heritage act, which removes the need for archaeological assessment, which I've had First Nations tell me is like open season on First Nations burial grounds.

Speaker, I say to the government, work with us. Let's get rid of interprovincial trade barriers. Let's work on diversifying our trade partners. But let's not remove the protections for our environment, the people and places we love in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the members opposite for their perspectives. I did want to ask the

member, the leader and all of the opposition members who will vote against Bill 5: What did they know that the president of the Ontario Mining Association doesn't, when they issued an endorsement of this bill?

What do you know that the president of Alamos Gold, the head of the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, the chair of the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, the head of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the president of Frontier Lithium, the CEO of the Toronto board of trade, the CEO of Generation Mining, the vice-president of Agnico Eagle, the executive director of MineConnect, the CEO of Wyloo, the CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the president of Iamgold, the CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the CEO of the Ontario business council—what do you know that every economic institute in the country is endorsing about Bill 5—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I always like to debate with the minister.

What do I know? First Nations in this province are saying this bill violates the duty to consult. What do I know? Workers, everyday people, are saying, "Who gives you the power to create special economic zones to exempt worker health and safety laws, environmental protections and the duty to consult?" What I know is people saying, "Do you know what? Protecting species matters."

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We can work together to facilitate development and to facilitate mining, but we have to do it in a way that is responsible and respects and protects the people and places we love in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As I stand today and listen to the debates, it's almost illogical that we're continuing to bring legislation to this House that literally strips away things that we should be considering. The special economic zones: That, to me, is an egregious piece of overreach when it comes to government. We're all outraged about what's happening in the US where the President is stripping laws and taking away rights, but yet here we are doing something very similar.

I want to ask the member, with regard to consultation, this government doesn't have a good track record of consultation when it comes to land bills or when it comes to development bills. Do you know or has anybody told you if they're actually going to travel this bill? Are they actually going to have public consultation and a committee process when it comes down to passing this legislation?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have no idea what the government's plan is in terms of travelling around the province with this bill. I would hope they would spend time in the north, especially in First Nations communities.

The one thing I can tell you, though, is that it is extraordinary to give the government the kind of power these special economic zones give the government, especially in a political system where you have a unitary executive and legislative branch. To provide no over-

sight—communist China has special economic zones that give the government extraordinary powers. They're kind of doing the same thing here.

I believe in legislative oversight. I believe in the duty to consult. I believe the people of Ontario should have input as part of the debate over rules and laws, not special economic zones that remove that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Speaker, with this legislation our government is making a record \$20-million annual investment in species conservation. My question to the member is, how can his party justify opposing a plan that makes an unprecedented government investment in supporting, protecting and restoring species?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the opportunity to answer my first question from my neighbour from Wellington-Halton Hills. To say that removing or repealing the Endangered Species Act and replacing it with some watered-down act that is based on political decisions and not science decisions, that actually says to proponents, "You don't have to ask permission to kill species, you just have to let us know you're going to kill them," that narrows the definition of habitat in a way that's actually going to make it harder for us to protect ourselves from flood, fires and other extreme weather events—it's just the wrong way to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's truly an honour to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025. Building on this is my own experience working with the systems that we have and the designations that have come up for habitat even though there are no species present in that identified habitat.

I want to thank the Minister of Energy and Mines for bringing forward this important legislation, as well as the many other ministries that contributed to its development. This legislation continues the important work of removing barriers to growth while reinforcing our government's steadfast commitment to sound environmental stewardship.

Madam Speaker, the challenges before us are truly serious. We face global economic uncertainty, trade disruptions, inflationary pressures and increasing competition for investment, making it more urgent than ever for Ontario to position ourselves as a competitive jurisdiction that can stand on our own two feet without compromising our environment or our natural heritage. I can assure you the processes are intensive.

Some members opposite may continue to frame this as a zero-sum game, that we can have economic progress on one side or environmental responsibility on the other, but no. As the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks said last week when he spoke to this legislation, that is a false choice. We can and we must do both.

In fact, it's only by having a strong economy that we'll have the resources that we need to invest in environmental protection, improving quality of life and building long-

term resilience. That's why our government is taking bold action through Bill 5 to build our economy, protect Ontario and get projects moving.

We are introducing a "one project, one process" approach for mining projects: a white-glove concierge service that will work with proponents and Indigenous communities directly to reduce delay and provide clarity. And you know what, Speaker? I've heard in my entire municipal career, prior to being here, that this is what people who apply for permits truly want: To deal with one person, give clarity and allow them to do what they need to do, but just give that clarity. So we're setting clear review deadlines for those permits and authorizations, seeking to reduce the overall government review time burden for designated mine permitting by at least 50%.

We're proposing the introduction of a new tool that will further enhance our ability to drive economic development through the implementation of special economic zones. The member from Essex spoke of that very eloquently on Thursday night.

We're also proposing critical amendments to protect Ontario's minerals from the hands of hostile foreign authoritarian entities and limit foreign control of Ontario's critical energy infrastructure. And we are taking swift action to modernize and streamline the way we do environmental approvals in this province, and boy, it is long past due.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, I'm going to focus primarily on this initiative in my remarks because I know it incredibly well. The truth is we cannot afford to allow outdated regulatory processes to stand in the way of urgently needed housing, infrastructure or job-creating projects of every type.

I think of the NextStar development in my home riding. Imagine where it would be without the minister's zoning order that came through. It would not be built at this time. It would've gone to another jurisdiction.

Speaker, Ontario's current environmental permitting system, as it stands today, is too slow, too complex and too costly. Projects that meet our tough environmental standards shouldn't take years to get off the ground. I'm aware of projects that had to have taken 13 years to get to this point and they're nowhere closer to a resolution. These unnecessary delays only lead to lost jobs, lost opportunities and lost confidence in Ontario as a place to do business. It's why one of the minister's first priorities after joining the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in March was to launch a comprehensive review of environmental permissions across the ministry, and the goal is simple: identify areas where we can maintain or even strengthen environmental protections while ensuring approvals move at the speed required to compete in today's global economy.

One of the key areas identified for improvement involves environmental permitting for activities that impact species at risk. Down our way in Windsor-Essex I can name two that come up a lot: the willowleaf aster and

Butler's garter snake, and they're found in just about every project that you will bring forward in our area.

Let me be clear: Ontario has a proud legacy of protecting species, and we are not backing away from that. But the way that we've been managing these authorizations isn't working as effectively as it could. It has become overly complicated, and in many cases takes far too long to complete. Take for example Fire Station No. 5 in the Windsor West riding, located at Daytona and Northwood. A much-improved emergency response took an additional four years of work as a result of the current rules that are in place. This compromised public safety and really did not deliver any additional benefits and, worse, it's not delivering on the intended outcomes.

I look to the Twin Oaks industrial park in my riding. It's not a viable, sustainable habitat for species at risk; it's an industrial park. Yet infill development in that industrial park is being stopped and industry is being forced onto farmland. That's ridiculous, and that's why Bill 5 proposes a new, more effective approach to species conservation—one grounded in transparency, clarity and compliance.

It begins by introducing a "permit by rule" model for certain activities affecting species at risk. This model—which has been successfully applied in other areas under Ontario's environmental laws—allows proponents to proceed with their projects by meeting the clear, pre-established requirements that we set out in this regulation. That means that instead of waiting two years or more for individual ministry reviews—sometimes it's two years between emails to get more information—businesses and proponents will be able to register, follow the guidance set out for them and proceed with their projects. This is not a shortcut. It's a smarter way to deliver environmental protection. The rules and regulations will focus on activities most likely to have negative impacts on species, in line with the changes proposed in this legislation. Should this legislation pass, those regulations will be developed in the coming months, following consultation with Indigenous communities, the public, and other stakeholders.

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Let me emphasize: Under this system, our enforcement capabilities will be significantly strengthened. We are introducing stronger powers for provincial officers, including the ability to inspect project sites without a warrant. This will enable the ministry to take swift and decisive action against non-compliance. And these actions will be backed up by serious consequences: fines of up to \$2 million for repeat offences by corporations; and up to \$500,000, or imprisonment, for individuals. We're also giving the ministry new enforcement tools, including mitigation orders and contravention orders that can be used when prosecution may not be appropriate.

Let me be clear: There will be no tolerance for cutting corners or breaking the rules. The environment is too important. Under the proposed legislation, the rules will be clear and the consequences for violating them even clearer.

At the same time, we recognize that legislation and permitting alone cannot solve every conservation challenge. That's why we're significantly increasing our direct investments in species recovery and habitat protection. That's what we need to invest in—not delays for the sake of delays. We need to increase our habitat, increase our biodiversity and make sure species have a shot at surviving for generations to come.

Since 2018, our government has funded more than 200 species conservation projects, restoring tens of thousands of acres of critical habitat. We're building on this positive track record with a new and expanded species conservation program—a \$20-million annual investment, more than four times the current funding levels for the predecessor program. This program will support the hard work being done by local communities and partners across Ontario to recover species and preserve Ontario's biodiversity. It's about doing the right thing for our natural environment and doing it in a way that reflects Ontario's leadership and commitment.

Bill 5 also includes important changes to the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry, or EASR. This online registry allows businesses in low-risk sectors to register certain activities directly with the ministry, rather than go through a lengthy approval process. Currently, there's a fee associated with registering in the EASR. But to help ease the burden on everyone, especially small businesses, we are proposing to eliminate this fee entirely. It's about recognizing that a healthy environment and a healthy economy go hand in hand. It's about building a regulatory framework that is modern, efficient and capable of responding to the realities of today's economy and tomorrow's challenges.

Speaker, I'm proud of the work that the ministry has done to bring forth these proposals. They reflect a thoughtful, evidence-based approach, and they reflect our government's steadfast commitment to building a stronger, more competitive and more sustainable Ontario.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in supporting Bill 5. Let us send a clear message to the people of Ontario and to future generations that we will not be held back by the false choice between growing our economy and protecting the environment. We can and we will do both.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): It's time for questions.

MPP Wayne Gates: I've listened very carefully, and what I've got from the debate today is about consultation with all Indigenous leaders on Bill 5. You're not going to do that, because what I've seen with the bills that we debate in here is that your party is a stranger to consultation, with a number of bills.

My question has to do with the government. Has the government conducted an economic impact assessment to evaluate how the changes to Bill 5 will affect different sectors like agriculture, tourism and small business in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I thank the member from Niagara Falls for his question.

We have the evidence every single day. I'll take the fire station project that identified \$1 million added to the \$5.6 million cost as result of the added permits, the consultants, all the time spent in the monitoring and that—not to say that that's not the kind of expense that will be incurred; however, the delays and the paperwork and the non-response is what does need to change.

So when we have a business or a resident or housing that requires permissions, this is about making sure that we can get off the ground and have enforcement, ensuring that we have a business case for all the services that we need, including housing, including economic development, and ensuring that our people have a place to live and a place to ensure that they can make a livelihood.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to ask the member if they can speak to their understanding of the carbon emissions that are in the peatlands. It's the biggest undisturbed peatlands in the world. It stores 10 years of Canada's emissions in one spot. I know these CEOs who have approved this project will get very rich quick, but at the expense of future generations. This is our Amazon forest, and we are lighting it on fire.

Can you tell me what you know about carbon emissions in general and the impact of disturbing this on any ability to have a livable planet in the future?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her question. I can stand to be better educated on peatlands.

What I do know is that environmental regulation is something that's necessary, but economic development for our well-being is also necessary. We need to have opportunities to work, we need to have opportunities to have a place to live, and we can and will work together—have those, both sites, tandem. Protecting the environment, protecting our planet, ensuring carbon emissions come down is absolutely part of this government's approach.

I look to the steel plants in Hamilton and Algoma as examples of how we can partner with business to reduce our carbon emissions.

If there are opportunities out there, absolutely, this government is looking out for them, seeing where we can partner together to reduce our environmental footprint.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): The member from Niagara West.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I just want to build on a point that the member spoke about, because it speaks to what I have seen from this government in a number of different areas, and that's reducing fees.

By getting rid of the fees that these businesses would have had to pay in order to send in their applications for these permits and, in fact, removing some of that requirement for a number of these low-risk permits, you're saving millions of dollars for small businesses. This builds on other fee reductions that have been made in a number of different parts of the government.

I'm wondering if you could speak to why that's important for small businesses, entrepreneurs who are seeking to invest in jobs, invest in our future and don't want to be burdened with more fees, like we see from the other parties in this chamber.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I thank the member from Niagara West for his question.

We know that the fees collected for the EASR are \$2.6 million a year. We know that is going to be back in the pockets of those residents and those businesses that are putting forward the application. That's important. That's a sizable amount of money.

Our government is conducting a comprehensive review of all environmental permissions to identify further opportunities to expand the registration for its "permit by rule" approach, with appropriate enforcement. This allows businesses to register the project online and commence activities immediately, provided that they follow clear, enforceable standards that are set out to protect the environment. That's the way it should be.

Have trust in your biologists, have trust in your engineers—have trust in your professional practitioners who are looking to make the world a better place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions? The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to ask a question.

I've been listening—with the enthusiasm that you've spoken about this bill, and why you think it's going to be actually quite beneficial to our environment.

I think I heard you say as well, though, there will be a set of regulations that would give you that set of assurances. I think there's quite a big gap between what's in the bill in front of us and some of the vision that you've laid out here.

What would be some of the minimum things in regulation that you would envision being coupled with this bill?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for their question.

I think in regions across Ontario, you see evidence of the knowledge that if you follow the process that we have today, unscrupulous people will go and clear the habitat from their site before registering for permissions. That comes to an end because we have enforcement under this bill, and we also make it so you're not having to wait years and years and years to actually see action on your file. So there's an incentive to follow the rules that's strengthened through Bill 5.

Under the current Endangered Species Act, the process to obtain a permit is slow and complex. I experienced it myself—four years for a fire station; I have 13 years for a housing development in Sarnia. There are countless examples. I'm running into three years in the Twin Oaks for an expansion to a building—to get a contract, actually accept a contract that they bid on. People buy land in order to expand their buildings. Right now, legislation does not allow for it, and that has to change.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): I see the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le député de Windsor–Tecumseh. Je sais qu'il parle bien français, fait que je vais poser une question en français.

Quand j'ai parlé, moi, sur le projet de loi 5, j'ai nommé au moins six ou sept Premières Nations, des conseils de bandes, comme quoi, comme c'est là, ils ne supportent pas le projet de loi 5. Pourquoi? Parce qu'ils disent qu'ils n'ont pas été consultés, qu'ils n'ont pas eu la chance de pouvoir faire leur consentement. C'est quoi l'approche que vous allez faire pour—parce que, comme c'est là, les Premières Nations s'accroissent; elles ne supportent pas ce projet de loi. Qu'est-ce que vous allez faire pour définitivement amadouer ou faire ce que vous avez besoin de faire pour que les Premières Nations acceptent le projet de loi 5?

M. Andrew Dowie: J'aimerais remercier le député pour sa question. Je vais faire mon possible pour répondre en français.

Ce projet de loi ne nuit pas à nos obligations constitutionnelles d'avoir de la consultation autochtone. On fait notre possible pour que le processus assure que les communautés autochtones aient toutes les informations pour les projets dans leur totalité au lieu d'introduire un projet à la fois où on ne peut pas faire une route entre les conséquences des projets. Les communautés autochtones sont mieux positionnées pour—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Response?

M. Andrew Dowie: —ceux qui vont affecter leur communauté. On va faire les investissements dans ces communautés pour s'assurer de la capacité de donner des commentaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke quite accurately about the fantastic economic development that occurs when the government goes above and beyond—in his particular riding, he knows first-hand, because of the spectacular multi-billion dollar investments that were made as a result of this government going above and beyond to make those things happen.

I invite the member to expand on his explanation and tell us more about how this bill will assist communities in Ontario and the entire province to go economically above and beyond, with the assistance of this government.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Essex for his comments.

I actually had the privilege of working on the NextStar project before it was announced. The partnership and collaboration I saw between the governments was astounding, and I wish all projects could advance that way. It was only because of the dogged determination of those governments to support that project that it actually had the ability to be constructed quite quickly.

Is it really fair that we pick winners and losers, about who gets to get off the couch and go, or are we best to treat

everybody the same and give those same opportunities across the board?

I have no doubt that those in my riding and across Ontario will benefit from having concise, quick regulation that is enforced so that all rules are the same across the board.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): That's the allocated time for the debate.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This debate is basically a déjà vu. I say that because when the Auditor General did the MZO reports, it seems very similar to the pattern that's happening in this legislation.

I'll read some of the comments made by the Auditor General:

"Before the Ford government took office, MZOs were a relatively rarely used tool, generally considered necessary only in urgent situations or where the municipal planning process had ground to a halt.

"When Ontario Premier Doug Ford took office, with an eye on massively increasing the supply of privately built housing, the zoning tool was relied upon heavily. Between 2019 and 2023, according to the Auditor General, an average of 23 MZOs were issued every year, a 17-fold increase."

That is exponentially excessive, when it comes to the fact that the Auditor General said they were very rarely used. That goal of the government was to build affordable homes, but the government has failed in that goal. I point that out because the methods that are being legislated in order to accomplish that goal are not working for the people of Ontario.

The other part of that report talks about how in cases where zoning orders were subject to analysis and advice sought either from municipalities or other government ministries, it often appeared to go unheeded. This is why there's a real concern when it comes to this piece of legislation that's before us today. Your track record and your pattern of behaviour show that you don't listen to the experts, and you don't even listen to your own ministry staff and public officials. The MZO Auditor General report was very clear. You can't ram things through and get things right, and the results show it. You don't have the housing projects that you promised the people of Ontario.

Now we're in another situation where we're in the same boat, where you're claiming that we need to unleash the economy because of Donald Trump and his threats. But do you know what? There are people who have emailed my office—and I'm sure everyone here receives the same ones.

This one particularly impressed me because this gentleman, Brian, wasn't sending me an e-campaign; he was actually speaking about his own experience, and he lives in the area. I'm going to read that out to the Legislature so people can understand that when we debate our pieces of legislation, it's to inform, it's to propose, and it's to make the government take a second pause and

thought about where they're going in this direction. We've been down this road before, and it's not a good one.

Brian emailed my office, and he said, "I am writing to you today from my home in Dresden Ontario. A small farming community in southwestern Ontario. I know many of you will have no idea where it is as I didn't grow up in Toronto but it's where I ended up. This town is about to be destroyed by the implementing of Bill 5. You see Bill 5 will allow one of Premier Ford's donors to put a mega-dump 500 metres, yes less than one half of a kilometre on the outskirts of our town. Allowing this bill to pass will take away the environmental assessment required to determine if this piece of property is suitable for a dump. I am not sure how any property this close to a town and" 20 kilometres away from a major highway can be a suitable location for a dump.

"Let me tell you how we got here. Sixty years ago Dresden burned their garbage like many small communities. The ash created had to be stored somewhere close by so they found this piece of land backing onto a creek that fed the Sydenham River to place the fly ash as they called it. Well they stopped burning garbage 50 years ago and cleaned up the property which was then turned into a tile yard and then into a yard that turned wood into mulch for gardeners. Well that closed down about 15 years ago but the zoning on the property had never changed from the time they were storing the fly ash. Along comes York1 who searched the records all over Ontario looking for properties carrying a zoning suitable for a dump. They found our old storage site and because of zoning bought the property to build their mega-dump. This was all done quietly without the knowledge of the townsfolk until someone stumbled upon a request in an ERO about a year ago. No one could believe that anyone in government would allow them to build a dump this close to a town, this far away from a highway, this close to a creek and river with endangered species. I guess we were just a little naive. Now we fought tooth and nail to stop the dump or at least to get an environmental assessment so any issues with the property would be brought to light. We won that fight six months ago"—pay attention to this one—"only to have Premier Ford bring Bill 5 to circumvent the rules and allow the dump to move forward with reckless abandon.

1650

"So here we are fighting again against Queen's Park in a place where no one knows who we are or where we are. We are out of sight of Toronto so in a lot of cases out of mind. Thanks to Queen's Park there are many dumps down here in SW Ontario, there is one in Blenheim, one in Ridgetown, one in Petrolia and one in London so why not one more in Dresden. This dump will be a town killer. The town has been here since 1849, is the home to Uncle Tom's Cabin and is a farming community that feeds Ontario. They want to move 700 trucks per day through this town ... These roads are used by mainly school buses like all rural communities and lots of farm equipment. This is a disaster waiting to happen. I am asking all of you, every MP in Ontario to consider what will happen in this community if this bill is put into law and York1 is allowed

to build a dump on the edge of a town with no rules, no concern for the environment or the health of the community they are on top of.

“I appreciate you taking the time to consider our situation and if you have any questions please feel free to ask. You are welcome to view our Facebook page ‘Say No to the Dresden Dump.’”

I challenge this government, if they would like Brian’s contact information—because he did send them to a lot of MPPs in this Legislature. I am happy to forward that information.

The reason I bring this particular example up is because an MPP used to be a councillor in that riding, and that MPP stood against that dump. I will quote from the newspaper—it’s called the Independent. It was in Chatham-Kent. The councillor, who is now the MPP, basically said—“When residents first learned of York1’s proposal at the time, he spoke against the project.”

One of his quotes: “I suggest York1 look for a different site. I don’t think this is a good fit for anybody. Lord knows we’ve dealt with enough water well issues that this could potentially affect water wells in the area as well.”

I’m going to conclude with the final remarks that this MPP said as he got elected: “Lambton–Kent–Middlesex MPP ... says he’s disappointed the province won’t require the York1 project at the Dresden dump to undergo a full environmental assessment. But he seems to be supporting the government’s move, saying ‘we must ensure that we have tools and resources to respond to any unpredictable decisions from the Trump administration.’”

I don’t think that’s a justified reason to carry on with this elimination of the environmental assessment when it comes to this dump. When you were a councillor, you were against that dump, and now, because of the tariffs, you actually believe that this dump should be going ahead with all the regulations stripped of that site. It’s not correct. It’s not right. If you don’t listen to the people who live in your area—and I’m really stunned about how the member got re-elected if that was one of the main issues. How does that happen in today’s political world?

So I say to this government, you have to listen to the voices that we bring to the Legislature. It’s just not us talking about why things aren’t correct; it’s average, everyday citizens who want answers as to why these laws are being put in and superseding the protections that allow things to go up safely and to actually create the results that you want.

As I talked earlier about the Auditor General’s report, you failed on your housing projects, but you’ve created all those MZOs that trashed—you allowed the developers to just walk all over.

So I ask this government: Please, if nothing else, make sure this goes to committee in a fulsome way so you can hear from the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: My colleague, in debating Bill 5, talked a lot about the Dresden landfill. I was thinking about, in articles that I read as well—the people from that

area found out about this the day that the bill was tabled. Interestingly, treaty rights holders for the mining companies that have been discussing this found out from our party on Thursday, after the bill was tabled.

Considering that two large organizations being directly affected by this bill did not learn anything from the government about it, does it make sense to you that the government would travel this bill and visit those areas to hear first-hand from those community members about how it will affect them?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I do want to say, I heard the minister’s lengthy list of all the people who support this bill, but he did not talk about Brian and he did not talk about First Nations, and that’s the concerning part.

In order for you to make decisions—when it affects people like Brian in Dresden or First Nations’ livelihoods and their legacy of what can happen when a mine is produced or operated without consideration of consultation—I ask this government to please commit in this Legislature that you will be travelling this bill, you will be going out to First Nations, you will be going out to Dresden and you’re going to hear from the people you represent, not just the list of the sponsors the minister mentioned today in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: In August 2022, I learned from our government House leader an expression that I had never heard before: “not in my backyard”—or NIMBYism. It’s this concept that we live on an island just by ourselves and that the entire world revolves around us but we don’t change with the times.

When I look at, specifically, in this bill—and I’ll bring it back as I made a comment in the debate before—“one project, one process,” it means that we have to look to do things quicker—not to do things without consultations with our stakeholders, but to do them quicker by eliminating the bureaucratic red tape that is embedded within government. That’s why we have a Ministry of Red Tape Reduction.

So the question to the member from London–Fanshawe is, what is wrong with realizing we’re not on an island by ourselves?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: With all due respect to the member—you said, “not in my backyard.” Fences are built, and when you have a neighbour and your fence is so high you can’t see what your neighbour’s needs are, that is a problem. This is the thing that’s happening in this Legislature. You’re not paying attention to neighbours. You’re just building these big fences and ignoring them and allowing chaos to happen when you pass bills like this and when you create special economic zones and get the power to do that arbitrarily. You don’t even have that information in the bill—you’re waiting until regulations. Well, people can’t just sit and wait for this government to decide what their fate is.

Good for the residents of Dresden for standing up to their MPP. Travel the bill to Dresden and hear what their neighbours are saying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for that very excellent debrief of what the measures regarding the Dresden landfill actually mean for the community and the environment. I think it's important context that we haven't heard from the government side, even though that area is represented by a Conservative who promised that community that this landfill would not go ahead without an environmental assessment. I'm really curious about what changed in between that promise from the government side and this bill.

The bill is entitled Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act. Am I missing something? Is allowing people's well water to be contaminated by toxic sludge actually protecting our economy in some way?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Unleashing” is really not a good word. I don't think that's a word you would want to use. You would want to use “building”—you've used that a lot of times. “Unleashing” just sounds like it's open season on communities.

When you talk about not having environmental assessments, when you put in special economic zoning areas, then you leave the environment open to things like contaminated water. People in Dresden have wells—they live in a rural community—and their water source is very important to them. This is not a new issue when it comes to contaminated water, so let's not keep repeating the mistakes that we make.

Let's be productive, proactive, and figure out how our actions today are going to impact people in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

1700

MPP Wayne Gates: I appreciate it. It has been an interesting afternoon.

Under the special economic zones, they can bypass local bylaws—that means local councillors who are elected to those councils—or their legislation, and just amend it or ignore it altogether. That just means that you guys can do whatever you want—which we're seeing, quite frankly, in the States, under Trump. He basically does whatever he wants; it doesn't go through anything else except himself.

Then the last one was—to the member—big-mayor powers are doing the same thing. Most of the mayors in Ontario are Conservatives. I saw that in the election, when three Conservatives would come out and supported the other candidates.

So my question to you: Do you think this is helpful, to just allow the Ford government to do whatever they want in any community across the province of Ontario, with absolutely no consultation, not going through the proper procedures—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Thank you. The member from London–Fanshawe to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Ultimately, we are responsible to our constituents, and we are here to serve

them, not ourselves. In order to serve our constituents, when we create legislation, we should be confident enough, no matter what party you're in, to take that legislation and present it to the people it affects, and to hear honest, proactive feedback, whether you like to hear it or not. Do you know what? You can bring people on side when you do that, and they might have great ideas to actually change some of these things, that will make it work.

So I say to this government, it's not just you alone who rules. Yes, you have a majority, but you can't keep trampling on municipalities and constituents when they are telling you that you're going in the wrong direction. Hear them out, make those changes, and make the legislation where everybody can actually work with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for your comments today. I like your idea of taking this bill on the road, around Ontario, and really hearing from the people it could affect more.

We've talked a lot about this idea of the trusted partner that's built into the bill. So there's what the bill enables the government to do, but it also lays out how we would hold accountable the people we would trust to do this, and actually, in some ways, it creates a way for the government to hide behind that trusted partner.

I just wondered if you had any comments, more generally, on some of that aspect of the bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I guess you can explain or justify any kind of decision—in this case, legislation—when you really want something but you don't want to hear the other person's side. I feel like that's the intent of this legislation.

Earlier today, we had a member who was quite boisterous about the legislation. That does not open up communication. It doesn't open up dialogue. It shuts it down.

When we don't travel a bill—and I haven't heard any government member actually say, “Yes, we're actually going to travel the bill. Yes, we're going to open up committee. We're going to have public consultations.” I haven't heard that, and that's very concerning, when you have legislation that impacts people's livelihoods.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): The member from Niagara West for a quick question.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I have to say, folks, it's going to be a long four years, listening again to the members of the opposition complain and contrast every single piece of legislation that's brought forward with their inability to move major projects forward here in the province of Ontario. We saw this over the past term. I think we're already beginning to see the trend. They love to complain. They love to say that they are really concerned about legislation, but they never provide proactive solutions.

We have a situation in Ontario where it takes 17 years to open a mine; we see other neighbouring jurisdictions that are also OECD-equivalent that can do it far faster.

My question to the member opposite would be simply, how many years do you think it should take to open up a mine?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I only have a few seconds, so I'm just going to let the member know that I don't complain. I'm actually bringing the voices of this Legislature to you.

Open your ears and listen to other people. You don't have the *carte blanche*, that you know everything. Wake up. Listen to other people too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to put my support of Bill 5 on the record today, and I want to paint a bit of a picture. I know that the minister did a fantastic job when the bill was introduced, talking about mining projects in Ontario and the fact that it can take 15 years for a mining project to be approved, where in other jurisdictions, like the EU, permitting is completed in 27 months.

The one thing that gets lost—and especially when there's a lot of back and forth, as there has been in the Legislature—is the fact that it does take too long to permit and to get a mine online. There's no question about that. Regardless of what the opposition parties have said this afternoon, it is very, very difficult.

I'm going to put into perspective my riding, just briefly. In my constituency office, I can literally look out my window over the St. Lawrence and see Morristown, New York. For those that know my riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, I have two international bridges: the Prescott–Ogdensburg bridge and the Thousand Islands bridge. So dealing with the US is something that people in my riding have been dealing with my entire life.

I do know this: The last time Donald Trump was President of the United States, when the Liberals were in government, I lost the biggest taxpayer in the city of Brockville—Procter and Gamble—to a US jurisdiction. What were they prepared to do? They were prepared to deal with the permitting, to deal with the building construction, and they took those jobs back to Donald Trump. I don't want that repeated.

I've had situations in the past, when the Americans, because of special economic zones, have come right after people in my riding, businesses in my riding, written them letters, knocked on their doors, tried their best—just like we hear from President Trump—to try to take those jobs and to build those new plants in the United States. We've done it before, when we've had an all-of-government approach.

I've got an N95 plant in the city of Brockville that we needed. It's the gold standard of respirators. If you ask any nurse what they want to wear, they're going to say an N95 made in Brockville. We didn't have that capability—we all know that during the pandemic, we didn't. We built that plant in Brockville in seven months. We didn't have any municipality complaining—as the opposition has done this afternoon—that the government was doing anything untoward. We didn't have any environmental group at all

come up and say that what we were trying to do in building that plant in seven months broke any laws, put anybody at risk, but it took an all-of-government approach.

So I'm going to put up that experience in my riding, the close proximity my riding has with the United States, and the fact that I want to make sure that we do everything we can so that we don't lose another Procter and Gamble to West Virginia; so that we don't lose a 3M plant to some other jurisdiction in the United States. I don't want to make Donald Trump the winner in this. I want to make sure that we do whatever we can and work together to ensure it.

We've had a lot of rhetoric this afternoon. I think in terms of moving things forward, Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): The government House leader has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 29, 2025, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): At this time, the member for—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):—has the floor.

Laughter.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ha ha—that's a good one. Merci, monsieur le Président. Écoute, ça me fait plaisir encore de continuer mon discours. Il reste deux minutes. Ça va me donner l'opportunité de juste parler de deux sujets.

1710

J'aurais aimé voir, dans le discours du trône, les services d'obstétrique. Vous savez, chez nous, il y a juste à Kapuskasing—si tu regardes de Thunder Bay à Timmins, qui est 800 kilomètres; de Kap à Thunder Bay, c'est six heures, puis pour Timmins, c'est deux heures. Ce n'est que pour vous donner une perspective de comment ça fonctionne. Les femmes enceintes, comme ma fille—ma fille est enceinte. Ma fille est correcte par ce qu'en étant à Val Côté, elle qualifie pour venir accoucher à Kapuskasing, qui est à 40 minutes. Mais si tu restes à

Hearst, il faut que tu ailles accoucher à Timmins ou à Thunder Bay.

Puis quand tu penses qu'en 2025—pourtant, il y a un hôpital, là, à Hearst. On avait des services d'obstétrique à Hearst avant, mais avec les coupures qu'on a vues constamment dans notre système de santé, on a perdu ces services-là dans le Nord. Là, on en a à Kap. Je sais que, financièrement, ils ont eu de l'argent, mais c'est encore un projet pilote. On a besoin de plus qu'un projet pilote. On a besoin du financement adéquat—adéquat pour maintenir nos services.

Ce n'est pas correct qu'une femme de Hearst doit partir quelques semaines avant d'accoucher, aller rester dans un motel à Timmins, ou avec de la famille si elle est chanceuse, ou aller à Sudbury où il y a de la famille, ou à Ottawa. Pourquoi se déplacer quand on est capable de livrer des enfants, puis qu'on devrait avoir notre système d'obstétrique, dans nos régions? On les avait avant. On est capable de le financer pour avoir les spécialistes où le monde est capable d'accoucher, de faire des césariennes? On le fait à Kapuskasing. Pensez-y, là : 800 kilomètres. Si la seule à Kap ferme, pour 800 kilomètres il n'y aura même plus de services d'obstétrique. Il n'y en a pas pour les femmes de Hearst.

Ce sont de jeunes familles. On connaît nos routes; on a eu des fermetures de routes. Ça va mettre des vies en danger. C'est dommage qu'on n'ait pas vu ça, puis qu'on ne voie pas les investissements nécessaires pour répondre à ce besoin-là.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): It's time for questions.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much to my colleague for his debate on the throne speech.

I was curious. Many people listen to the throne speech. They're listening for key phrases and terms, things that are very near and dear to them. Perhaps even you yourself heard things at the door during the election that you wanted to hear in the throne speech. I know you talked in depth about many things, but I'm just wondering if you'd like to share a few things that you heard at the door or that people reached out to your office saying, "I really wanted to hear about this in the throne speech, and I maybe didn't."

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you for the question. I'll be honest: The subject we heard the most was road safety. I'm here because I advocated for road safety. At every door, we heard about the safety on our highways—Highway 11, and how many times it closed.

We had snow again two days ago. This weekend there was snow, and the road closed the day before. Of course, you have cherry blossoms here—flowers. I took a picture and I sent it to my wife. I said, "See? The trees also have snow here in Toronto." But she sent me a picture with real snow on our trees. That shows you the difference that we have in this province and how road safety is so important for us.

I said it a little bit in French, when people have to go to school, go to their appointments, if somebody has to deliver a baby—we've never seen road closures or

accidents on our roads like we've seen this year. Government needs to do better. We need to make sure our roads are safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for his very brief remarks today, and for his remarks earlier last week as well in response to the speech from the throne.

It's a new Parliament, colleagues, a new day—one can hope that the NDP will vote for some of those historic investments, whether it's in health care or road safety, infrastructure in northern Ontario. And so I want to ask my colleague, Speaker, through you, will they be standing with those communities in northern Ontario and voting for those important investments in this Parliament?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I know he wants me to tell him what I'm going to vote for, but it's always a surprise, as you know. Why would I spoil it? Why would I spoil it for you?

But I just want to touch on highway safety. We've heard the minister talk about the 2+1. I believe in a 2+1, but it shouldn't stop at New Liskeard. Northern Ontario, from North Bay—

Interjection.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Yes, from North Bay to New Liskeard, it has to—because it's the second election we hear about it, but we still haven't seen it. We laugh, but it's not a laughing matter. People die on our roads. People die.

Is it another election promise that we won't see? Because if you don't, you know my vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: Je remercie mon collègue de Mushkegowuk—Baie James pour ses remarques sur le discours du trône. Je sais que mon collègue est un très grand défenseur de notre système d'éducation francophone en Ontario, et le discours du trône n'a pas vraiment touché sur l'enjeu de l'éducation, même si notre système est très sous-financé, ce qui cause de très grands problèmes pour le système francophone. Il y a la pénurie de main-d'oeuvre; il y a l'immeuble qui est trop vieux et le manque de soutien pour le transport scolaire.

Qu'est-ce que mon collègue aurait aimé voir dans le discours du trône pour soutenir notre système d'éducation francophone?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour ta question, puis merci de l'avoir posée en français.

C'est sûr que j'aurais aimé voir beaucoup plus de financement de notre système d'éducation français. Je pense juste aux garderies : on a une pénurie de garderies dans nos régions—pas juste dans la mienne, mais à la grandeur. Nos écoles sont en piètre état. On a un manque de professeurs.

Tu sais, le monde ne le réalise pas, mais les lettres de permissions dans le système français, là, c'est nous qui en avons le plus. Ma femme, c'est une aide-enseignante. Ma fille a été aide-enseignante. Elle ne l'est plus maintenant, mais elle l'a été longtemps.

Je trouve qu'on a des classes où on n'a même pas de profs francophones pour enseigner; ce sont des personnes non qualifiées avec des lettres de permission. Pourtant, on a le droit au même niveau d'éducation et à avoir des profs qui devraient donner à nos enfants le même qu'aux anglophones. Je trouve que c'est un gros manque. C'est un manque de respect envers la communauté franco-ontarienne. On doit investir dans nos écoles puis faire sûr qu'on répond aux besoins des Franco-Ontariens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you for your remarks.

It's been interesting to hear how road safety is high on the priority list. I will say, I listened very closely to the throne speech to hear about health care; I didn't hear anything until at least 40 minutes into the speech.

I'm curious if, for the residents in your riding, the issues around health care are also important. It's one of the largest budget lines that this government needs to manage, and I'd like to see a little bit more action versus talking on that file. I'm curious, again: Is that of interest to the people that you're serving?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Thank you for the question, and yes, it is. It's at the top of the list, honestly. Because the more you go north, the less services you have, and we have to travel. We talk about the roads because we have to travel to see specialists. Sometimes, we get stuck on the roads, we don't see our specialists, and it takes another year to see our specialists. But the lack of doctors in northern Ontario that we need and then also for French services that she just asked the question—when you have a community that's 99% francophone, like Hearst, we welcome English-speaking doctors, but we don't have any. Sometimes we want a francophone, but there is none.

So, yes, we would have loved to see a lot more investment to address the needs of our communities up north. If you go up James Bay coast, multiply by 10.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

MPP Wayne Gates: You don't have to go up north to worry about health care. Health care is a problem right here in Ontario and in my riding, in Fort Erie, very clearly. We have an urgent care centre that this government cut the hours from 24/7—38,000 people live in that community, 45% of them are seniors, and they shut down the urgent care centre and now only operate 10 hours a day.

1720

Now, we have to drive on a highway during the winter—your winters are bad, but as we see here, sometimes our winters are really bad too. We have storms. And guess what? They had to drive to a hospital 20 minutes or a half hour away—no urgent care centre. So it's not just the north that has health care problems, it's right across this province of Ontario, and they didn't even mention it in the throne speech—absolutely disgusting.

My question is, do you believe that health care is at a crisis level in the province of Ontario and that this government is not investing the money in the right places to correct it?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Thank you to my colleague from Niagara Falls. He's absolutely right: It's not unique. But like I said, you multiply by five when you go on Highway 11 or 17, and you can multiply that by 10 when you go on the James Bay coast. But it's a crisis, and I've said that at the door when I was door-knocking. It's not unique to our area, but the underfunding—the underfunding. We had hospitals having a hard time making payroll. It's a public institution. How do you explain that? It shouldn't happen. They were asking that we had a hard time making payroll. I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I talked about obstetrics. People from Hearst have to go either to Thunder Bay, Sudbury or else out of their community to give birth. Where in Ontario does that make sense? We travel long distances, our roads are unsafe, and yet we can't even deliver babies in our own communities when we used to.

The solutions are there. We have experts in these hospitals, they're giving the solution, yet you do not respond to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Thank you so much. There's not enough time for another question.

With that, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 19, the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader, indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore the afternoon routine on Wednesday, May 7, 2025, shall commence at 1 p.m.

At this time, further debate? I do see the member from Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you Speaker and colleagues. It's with deep gratitude and a sense of pride that I rise here today in this historic chamber to deliver my inaugural address as a newly elected member of the provincial Parliament for the riding of Carleton. To stand in this assembly, where generations before me have debated, legislated and envisioned the future of Ontario, is both an honour and a duty I will not take lightly. I thank the people of Carleton for placing their trust in me to be their voice, their advocate and their representative in Queen's Park.

I would like to take a moment to thank all the people who have helped me to get to this point in my career. My amazing family, including my wife, Sue; my sons, John and Tony; my mother, Teresa; and my late father, John; as well as my siblings Tony, Eli and Marianne; and my entire family, including my nieces and my nephews, have been supporters of my goals to represent my community over the years—first as a city councillor and now as a member of provincial Parliament. Without the support of my amazing wife allowing me to seek these opportunities, I would not have been able to continue to represent my community. Even though these jobs can be demanding, and I cannot be home as much as I would like to be, she has always supported me in my dreams and her care to the community is equal to mine.

My mother and my father, especially, sacrificed so much to ensure that they could give myself, my siblings

and the rest of my family an opportunity to seek education and a more prosperous life. Their support, along with all the others who are sadly no longer with us, has pushed me to continue to strive to represent this community to the best of my ability, and I know that my dad is looking down proudly as I give this inaugural address today.

Personally, the biggest blessing of the campaign was the way it brought my family together. It was the first time my sons, John and Tony, have been fully engaged in the community. John was my campaign manager for my office and Tony played a big role in my signs team. I will always be grateful for the way in which this election campaign strengthened our relationship.

I would also like to thank Owen Murdoch, who was my campaign manager. Owen was tireless in the work he put in during the election campaign. Richard was my CFO—and Raynold—and Stephanie was our volunteer coordinator. Rick Cheslock was my sign chair. Mickey Stackpole and Tony Darouze were on the sign team with Bob, Cal, Wehbe, Phil, Mike, Scott and several others. Putting signs into the frozen ground and icy Ottawa snowbanks when it was minus 20 degrees was not easy, but somehow my sign team did it.

We had a great team of volunteers who worked tirelessly door-knocking and making the dream team complete, winning the election. Jane, Gabby, Candice, John, Anne, Ketcia, Betty, Gerard, Colette, Flo, Nikki, Paul, Mark, Lori, Olmes, Maria, Ben, James, Charlie, Steven, Evan, Grant, Patti-Ann, Arfan, Gus, Darwin, Peter, Carley, Lucas and many more. I don't want to miss anyone. There are so many volunteers that help you on the campaign, and you don't want to forget anyone.

This was definitely the first campaign where my team had to actually do the signs multiple times. We had to put up the signs and take them down. The snow came and it covered them, so we had to go back out and put the signs out again. It was amazing, the snowstorm that we received this year. I'm hoping next election hopefully will bring us some warmer temperatures so we won't be campaigning in the snow and cold. I am sure everyone in this House will agree with me on that one.

As I first swore an oath of allegiance and I took my seat in the historic chamber, I started reflecting on the journey that has brought me here to this point today and the amazing opportunities that are present in this province and this country as part of the Canadian dream.

I was raised in Lebanon during a time when bombs fell more often than rain. We didn't grow up with power or running water; we grew up with fear, with struggle, and with hope through our bond together. I remember nights spent not in bed but on cold concrete floors. Our pillows were our shoes. Weeks passed without showers because there was simply no water. We would share a single piece of mouldy bread between us kids, tearing it into smaller pieces than seemed humanly possible because hunger was real, but love and sacrifice were even more real.

Those early days taught me the true meaning of community, of sacrifice and never giving up, and those lessons never left me. A vivid memory I have is when we

would come out of the shelters to continue moving because the bombing had stopped, and we knew we were safe. We would see white trucks with United Nations symbols. The first thing I would see is the Canadian flag on their uniforms. Canadian soldiers, through the United Nations and all their other peacekeeping efforts, inspired me to come, to immigrate to Canada.

When I came to Canada, I came with a heart full of dreams, a suitcase that barely held anything besides a few pieces of clothing and \$200 to my name. I could barely speak English. It's not that I speak better now, but I'm trying. I didn't know the system, but I knew I had the chance to succeed as long as I worked hard and became accustomed to Canadian living.

Of course, first coming to Canada and barely speaking English, I had to begin working in multiple different sectors to get ahead. I worked jobs as a busboy, dishwasher, worked at fast-food restaurants, owned my own restaurant, and most of the time I was working two or three jobs at a time to try to have a safe and secure future in this country. The jobs that I worked when I first got to Canada reinforced the fact that if you work hard, you can get ahead and have a good life in this beautiful country. I would work 14 to 15 hours a day in these jobs to sponsor my family and make sure that they could join me here in Canada.

1730

My brother actually reminded me last week that it was the 34th anniversary of my family coming to Canada and immigrating here. That was the best thing that's ever happened for our family—

Interjections.

MPP George Darouze: After this, I spent 17 years in private life working in the corporate telecom industry, and I learned so much from different mentors, colleagues and clients throughout my experience in this industry. This experience allowed me to gain experience in developing deep relationships with people, something that I have carried into my role as an elected official.

Canada didn't just give me safety; it gave me an opportunity. It gave me dignity. It gave me a chance to work, to serve, to raise a family and now to stand here as the member of provincial Parliament for Carleton.

The journey to get here, where I am today, inspires me to continue to work on behalf of all those who are born in Canada or immigrate to Canada, to provide them with the best quality of living possible in our amazing province, Ontario.

I would like to talk about my community involvement prior to being an elected official. For me, it all began with a simple love of the outdoors and the connection that came from sharing that passion with others.

Joining the Osgoode Carleton Snowmobile Trail Club was more than just about trails and snow; it was about connection, commitment and giving back to the community that has given me so much. Whether it was organizing local events, maintaining safe and accessible trails or simply lending a hand when it was needed, every

moment spent with the club reinforced the value of working together for the greater good of the community.

That passion eventually led me to serve in a broader capacity as district governor for the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. In that role, I had the privilege of working with volunteers and community leaders from across the province, people who poured their hearts into making snowmobiling safe, fun and sustainable for future generations.

It's been inspiring to witness what can be accomplished when people with shared values come together to support both their sport and their communities. Whether it's fundraising for local causes or enhancing regional tourism, snowmobile clubs across Ontario continue to do remarkable things, and I am proud to have played a part in that.

I enjoyed many of the joys of Ontario recreation, such as my passion for snowmobiling—I snowmobiled thousands of kilometres in Ontario and Quebec—hunting, skiing and camping in the outdoors of Ontario. Ontario has a beautiful geography, and I have always enjoyed our recreational tourism opportunities in this province.

I have also been a proud member in engaging with local community associations and organizations, including the Greely Community Association, the local Legions, the local Lions Clubs and many other service clubs and providers in our area. Getting involved and giving back was something that my parents always taught me at a young age, and it was always an honour to give back to the community.

In 2011, I was named Volunteer of the Year by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. That same year, I was named the Osgoode Ward Community Volunteer Award also.

The following year, I became of a recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. That award is a reflection of the many dedicated volunteers who showed up year after year with no expectation of recognition, just a desire to make a difference. Receiving this honour was truly one of my proudest moments and achievements.

Nearly 11 years ago, I made the decision to run for our Ottawa city council to represent Osgoode ward, and it was one of the best decisions that I ever made in my life. Representing a rural community in Ottawa truly allowed me to see the best of our rural area, which is the case for so many other rural parts of Ontario.

My focus has always been simple since I have held public office: ensuring transparent access to your elected representative and advocating on your behalf for investment in the services that matter the most for you. These guiding principles have always shaped how I represent my community, and I intend to continue to do so as an MPP for Carleton.

Having an open-door policy, coordinating meetings between various community stakeholders and groups, and always ensuring that I'm visible and accessible to members of the community will continue to guide how I represent the residents of Carleton over the coming years. This commitment to public service will ensure that resi-

dents receive the representation that they deserve at Queen's Park. My advice to anyone who is ever thinking about running for elected office is to do it.

Passion for representing residents across this amazing province is at the core of advocating on behalf of residents who may feel that their voice is not being heard. It is the most amazing feeling to be able to help residents with their concerns on a daily basis.

Carleton is a riding of unique character and vast geography. From the quiet rural landscapes of Osgoode or Metcalfe to the growing communities of Riverside South, Stittsville and Findlay Creek, Carleton demonstrates the very best of what Ontario has to offer: innovation alongside tradition, hard work mixed with compassion, and a strong belief in community.

There is an amazing business community in Carleton which spans multiple sectors, and it's truly my honour to represent them over the coming years. Whether it's Carleton Mushroom or SunTech tomatoes or any of the other amazing businesses that operate in Carleton, you are the core of what makes our local economy so diverse. Ontario residents were clear that we need to do everything possible to protect Ontario from the threat of tariffs and economic pressures, and supporting our businesses and business community is something that I look forward to doing.

There is also, equally, an amazing group of local community associations, organizations and other groups in Carleton that work tirelessly to provide services, events and advocacy on behalf of different villages and sectors across the riding. I always say that the work and value of these volunteer groups cannot be measured. I am elected to represent my community as my job, but these people take time out of their lives to volunteer and create the best version of their communities. I can never thank them enough for all that they do in our city, in our communities and in our province.

Residents of Carleton riding were clear at the doors in recent months. They want a provincial government that listens to them and invests in the core services that they depend on daily, and I know that myself and this government will do everything possible to make Ontario an even better place than it already is.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to the new MPP from Carleton and my former colleague as the city councillor from Osgoode. I'm not sure who's following who, but I think it's you following me.

I want to ask you, through the Speaker, if you could share with us some of what you've experienced so far here in the House and how you see the work that you did at a very local level as a city councillor helping to inform your work here.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you very much, colleague, and thank you very much for asking me the question. I don't really know who followed who, but when I got elected in 2014, you and I were in the same class, and today we're here at the Legislature in the same class also, 2025.

It's an honour and privilege to be here, and it's a very good question. At a municipal level, we work hard every day to make sure to deliver the core services and make sure our city is delivering the services that our community needs. Since I came to the Legislature, I can't explain to you the gratitude and how I feel about how I'm going to be impacting my community from a perspective of being an MPP. Most of you know that all the policies and everything we do, day in and day out, in our city—and Ottawa is a huge city geographically; 80% of it is rural, and 20% is urban and suburban. Even with the challenges, the geography we have—we have 24 wards, and each one of them has a different challenge—we have to actually do policies and find a way to govern under the provincial policies.

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So being here and being able to be part of doing the policies that are going to go down to the municipal level of government, basically, governed by—it's an honour and pleasure to be able to be at that level of government. Because also the experience it gives us—we understand our city. My ward, when I was councillor—or your ward; each person has it differently. I'm proud to be here to be able to deliver those services, not only for my riding, but for all the city of Ottawa and respective geography.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's amazing to have you here with us, George. I apologize for my back; the microphone won't pick me up if I'm not turned around all the way. I had the honour of serving with you on Ottawa city council as well, and I think you're both following me here to the chamber.

One of the first times we met, George, you might remember: You took me on a snowmobile ride down to our favourite place, Carlsbad Springs. I'm surprised we didn't hear more about snowmobiling—and rally driving, if I remember correctly—during your presentation today. I'm wondering if you might share one of your more exciting moments taking colleagues snowmobiling on your favourite pastime.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you to the member for Orléans for asking me that question at the Legislature and putting me right on the spot. But I remember I took you out and I took care of you. It was you and your son, Stephen. We did a nice tour, and we had an amazing day on the snowmobile enjoying those trails.

The member is trying to remind me. I remember I took the mayor of the city of Ottawa, Jim Watson, on a tour a while back, and it didn't go well. But you know, I'll tell you: He fell off the machine. I'm sure most of you heard the story about it—

Mr. Stephen Blais: No, no. Share.

MPP George Darouze: Oh, share?

So the mayor at that time—we went to do a little, small tour in Osgoode. I was trying to give him an orientation on how to use the machine. He was too excited. Well, he mixed the gas with the brake, and when he tried to come—after he did the small orientation—to a stop in front of the

clubhouse, actually he hit the gas instead of the brake and he flew off the machine. He broke his hip. He ended up spending so much time in the hospital in rehabilitation.

But you know what? Jim and I, we always talk about that. But he always tells me, everything happens for a reason. Why I say that: Because at that time he didn't spend a lot of time with his father, and his father was at a home on Bank Street. They had to put Jim in a home because he lived alone and he needed care. So they put him in the same home where his father was, and he had to spend 30 days with his dad. Shortly after, his father passed away. It's always that something happens for a reason. Unfortunately, he lost his dad, but he got to spend some time with him before he passed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I'd like to recognize the House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: As some of you know, I don't represent the city of Ottawa, but I'm the last riding on the 416 before you get into the Carleton riding, and I met the member for Carleton when he was involved in snowmobiling. I saw someone who took his community activism, put it into action as a member of Ottawa city council and then used that as an opportunity to serve in the Legislature.

On our behalf, I know certainly the people that I represent—because we're literally next door to each other—are really, really happy that you're sitting where you're sitting in the Legislature, and I just want to congratulate you. As an eastern Ontarian and someone who knows the people in Ottawa aren't shy at telling us their priorities, why don't you tell us your priorities for the great people of Carleton?

MPP George Darouze: Thank you for the question. I really appreciate the warm welcome. I would also like to share that you're my colleague and friend from a long time ago, but you're also my mentor, and you're helping me navigate the hallways and find out where everything is at Queen's Park. I personally appreciate it.

The priority for me is making sure that our residents in Carleton—and not only Carleton, but everywhere in Ontario—making sure that we're making great decisions and protecting Ontario.

At the door, I heard from the communities and my residents that the tariffs and everything were impacting the economy. The threat on the economy, what's coming towards it, is real. One of my priorities is to be able to finish the war that's happening right now south of the border, and making sure to protect jobs in Ontario, making sure our community is well protected from those tariffs, and also making sure that we're delivering the services that they need to be able to do their daily routine, from health care to education.

And infrastructure: I want to make sure our rural infrastructure has been well taken care of. One of the things I'm really looking forward to being able to achieve—Ottawa, the government, always looks at it as a rural area. I want to make sure to change that lens. I want to make sure when we have an opportunity for grants and when ministries look at Ottawa—not only from a large

city. We want to make sure we address that we do have rural communities, and some of those grants, one day, to also be shared with the city of Ottawa from a rural perspective. So those are some of the priorities I'm working on.

I'm also looking forward to learning from my colleagues in this House, and through my work through the ministry, to be able to serve my community and Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened very intently. Congratulations on your win. I was going to ask a question about snowmobiling. I learned about your snowmobiling history because I come from the capital of snowmobiling—Cochrane, Ontario—and you're always welcome.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a hard time with the thumb on the snowmobile.

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: My son-in-law is Lebanese. He's very proud to be a Canadian but very proud of his country. I had the opportunity to visit Lebanon. I wonder if you go back and if you could describe the country as you see it and how beautiful it is?

MPP George Darouze: Thank you very much for the great question. Do you know what? I'm glad that you visited Lebanon, because so many people don't have the opportunity all their lives to go out and travel around. For you to have that opportunity—and I'm sure, to have a son-in-law from a Lebanese background, the value of family that comes from Lebanon. We strive for that in our country.

But Lebanon is amazing because you can go swimming in the morning or at noon, and then you can go skiing in the afternoon. It's a huge, beautiful country. They call it the "Swiss of Europe," and people used to go to Lebanon to enjoy the weather—no different than any other country—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I regret that we have to end the debate here. Thank you.

Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is very cordial of us all.

It's a little over 10 minutes away from us having to rise for the day, so I won't get through all of this. But we are debating the throne speech today.

It's an interesting opportunity to talk about the throne speech because it sort of sets the direction and talks about priorities for the government. For some people who aren't involved with politics and who are very busy in their lives, they see it as a formality, but I think that it is an important part of our debate.

1750

And the reason we're having a throne speech almost two years earlier than we would've expected is because we had a February election in 2025. It was an early election called in the middle of the winter and actually probably

one of—at least where I lived—the darkest time of the year. It literally was dark at 6 o'clock in my riding, and bitter cold. There was one day where the high was minus 20. I know my colleagues from all sides of the House, we had a couple of injuries to report from people slipping on the ice or falling in the snow, so I hope that the amount of injuries was minimized.

The thing that I mentioned earlier, talking to my colleague from Mushkegowuk–James Bay was—in the throne speech, you tend to listen for certain things, thinking about what's the path forward, how are things going to go. I have to say, I compare that to what I heard at the doors, because I always see my role as amplifying and elevating the people I represent, that all of us, we're renting these chairs. We're most successful when the people of our ridings are heard and their voices are prioritized. I have to say that the three things that I heard the most was how expensive housing was, how expensive life was, and the doctor shortage. And those were the three things that really stood out to me.

I remember—and I talked about this a couple of times during the election, with other people—there was a nice couple, a retired couple, and very accommodating in terms of explaining to me the situation they were living in. Both the husband and wife had very small pensions, and the entire pension for the husband went towards paying for their rent. Everything he made went towards paying for the rent, and everything she made went towards utilities. And the way they got food was by going to food banks. I really want to thank the wife for telling me that she was not embarrassed about it because they had worked hard their whole life and they had pensions, and it wasn't their fault that the cost of living went up so high. But they were frustrated with the cost of rent.

Rent in Sudbury in a lot of places has doubled since I was elected, and that's not a reflection of me, because on this side of the House, we're advocating for rent control policies. The Conservative government, in 2018, removed rent control for anything built after 2018. They seem to have loosened the ability for people to renovate people. And I saw this in my riding in 2022, knocking on doors, where these small apartment buildings—these sixplexes, eightplexes. You go to knock on the door to see if someone was there, and you would notice there were no curtains on any of the windows. Everyone has been evicted because they're doing a renovation. But I used to work in construction: A renovation is a big job. These buildings, they painted them and they would change the windows, but they would keep everybody out for three months and then they doubled the rent.

These were large property owners from southern Ontario that we haven't seen before. Most of our landlords in Sudbury are our neighbours: You live on one side; your landlord lives on the other side—or maybe you rent the apartment above or below them, or somebody with a larger portfolio might own one of these buildings. But we're having a lot of these corporate, faceless landlords, and people are being evicted and the rules are being bent in ways that they're not intended to be, to the point where unscrupulous landlords will come to tenants and tell them,

“I’ll give you this much money to leave. I’ll give you this much money to leave. I’ll give you this much money to leave,” or they’ll turn off the heat in the winter, and it’s very difficult to track them down and force them to turn it on. That’s a major change in my riding because we didn’t have this before.

The other thing we didn’t have in my riding before 2018 was tent cities. We had a homeless population. We had people who were struggling to make ends meet. But we didn’t have this visible poverty that we’ve seen in the last six-and-a-bit, almost seven years, where people are—almost everywhere you go, there is somebody standing on not the street corner but where the street lights are, and they panhandle as people come by. And all through the downtown, you see visible poverty from people, and it’s growing, and I think part of this is the fact that life is becoming so expensive.

There was a time that the majority of people who were living unhoused were single men, but now, more and more, they are families. They couch-surf for a while, but they can’t afford their rent and they lose their rent, and they couch-surf and try to get back on their feet and they can’t get back on their feet.

That becomes a crisis for them, because once you’re unhoused, once you don’t have a place to live, you’re very vulnerable. You don’t have a place to put your stuff. It’s subject to possible theft. You don’t have safety and security. When the high during the daytime is minus 20, it’s going to be a bitterly cold night. And so, I worry about my friends and neighbours who could freeze to death, because we lose a couple every year.

I won’t go on too much anymore on housing, but we do need to start building affordable housing. I grew up in geared-to-income housing, and I know that because my mom didn’t have to worry about rent. My mom worked all the time but didn’t have enough money to cover all of our bills, and so geared-to-income housing helped us.

We were there for just over 10 years, but then my mom opened a small business afterwards. It gave my sister and I opportunities that we wouldn’t have had if she was struggling to make ends meet by paying market rent.

Every year, I go back to the neighbourhood where I grew up and I talk to people there. When I was canvassing in this last election, it struck me how many people there had really good jobs. They got back on their feet, and they got jobs that paid \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, and they couldn’t afford to leave. They would tell me, “I don’t need to be here anymore. I did for a while, but I finished school, I went back to work, I got a better job and now I have a good income. But because geared-to-income rises with what you make, I can’t save first and last to go somewhere else and I’m taking up this space for someone who desperately needs it.” We need to be able to address that.

My son as well had said—he graduated last year, and he’s teaching for the first time this year. He has a decent job. He works really hard and has a difficult class. But my son has told me a couple of times—and he says it

sometimes as a joke but I don’t think he’s really kidding—that the only way he’ll ever own a house is when my wife and I move along and we leave it in our will, and I guess him and his two siblings will have to fight over it.

That’s not the world I had when I was his age. When I was his age, I worked on the weekend and I had my own apartment. Now none of his friends have an apartment unless they have a couple of roommates.

My wife and I had a little money after my son was born. We were able to put a little money aside and save towards a house, and with the help of our parents, we made a down payment and were paying towards a mortgage. That dream of home ownership that was so important to me, having grown up in geared-to-income housing and being able to afford to buy a house and have that journey—I want my kids and your kids to have that experience, and I think we’re failing them right now.

It’s easy as opposition to blame the government. We point out the flaws but there is nobody in the group who is looking at us any differently, at any party. They just think we’re getting it wrong, and you’re seeing that reflected in the number of people coming out to vote because they feel like government doesn’t care. We need to care about workers. We need to care about people moving up.

I mentioned the doctor shortages. I’m one of the people in my riding who doesn’t have a doctor. I am fortunate that I’m relatively healthy, but I’m also getting older, and I should be having prostate checks—as my friend from Niagara Falls would advocate—on a regular basis. I should be getting medical checkups so that something bad doesn’t happen and I cost the system even more, but I don’t have a doctor.

I’m on a wait-list that is basically—it’s probably going to be the rest of my life that I’m on that wait-list. I have no hope of ever getting back into a doctor’s office because of the massive shortage that we have. All over our communities—all of our communities—we’re facing this in a big way.

I met with the CEO of Health Sciences North, our local hospital, and he posed a question to me that I thought was very interesting. We’re debating Bill 5 this week and last week. Many times in here, we’ve talked about the Critical Minerals Strategy. The CEO said, “Where is our health strategy? Where is that plan to fix things? Not piecemeal, but where is the real plan that people can look at as citizens who are looking for doctors, who don’t have a doctor right now; people who want nurse practitioners—just someone who could see them that’s not in emergency rooms and walk-in clinics?” We don’t have that as a plan today, and that’s something that has to be really invested in—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Regrettably, I have to stop you here.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The time being 6 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow, May 6, 2025.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly
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	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
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	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
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
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
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 Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Cooper, Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
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 Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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 Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
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 Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
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	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones 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	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
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 Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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, Chris (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente 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	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
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 Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
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	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
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	